

Guidelines for Applying to the SOKENDAI Special Researcher Program
(Appointment begins in April 2026)

1. Overview

The SOKENDAI Special Researcher Program is designed to develop future leaders who will contribute to science, technology and innovation in Japan by appointing SOKENDAI students as 'SOKENDAI Special Researchers' and providing financial support as well as various opportunities for developing a wider scope of research and career paths to them.

There are two categories of this program as follows.

Category	Outline
General Category	Students in all research areas enrolled in the equivalent of 3-year doctoral course at SOKENDAI, who satisfy conditions listed in section 3, are eligible to apply.
Special Category (BOOST)	This category is designed to develop leading scientists in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Conditions listed in section 3 must be satisfied.
Collaborative Research Type	Students who are conducting or are willing to conduct collaborative research with researchers from other programs (departments), institutions or companies, who satisfy conditions listed in section 3, are eligible to apply.

**General Category is subsidized by Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) under "SPRING: Support for Pioneering Research Initiated by the Next Generation" and Special Category (BOOST) is subsidized by JST under "BOOST: Broadening Opportunities for Outstanding young researchers and doctoral students in Strategic areas."*

2. Expected Number of Students to be Selected (For April 2026)

Category	Expected Number of Students to Be Selected	Breakdown
General Category	16 or more	<p>16 students from those who, as of April 2026, will have been enrolled in the 5-year doctoral program for 24 months or more but less than 30 months, or in the 3-year doctoral program for less than 6 months.</p> <p>A few students from those who, as of April 2026, will have been enrolled in the 5-year doctoral program for 36 months or more but less than 42 months, or in the 3-year doctoral program for 12 months or more but less than 18 months.</p>
Special Category (BOOST)	2	2 students from those who, as of April 2026, will have been enrolled in the 5-year doctoral program for 24 months or more but less than 36 months, or in the 3-year doctoral program for less than 12 months.

Collaborative Research Type	4	4 students from those who, as of April 2026, will have been enrolled in the 5-year doctoral program for 24 months or more but less than 48 months, or in the 3-year doctoral program for less than 24 months.
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3. Requirements for Applicants

[General Category]

Applicants are required to meet all of the following conditions as of April 1, 2026. ^{*1}

- 1) They meet one of the following enrollment conditions:
 - enrolled in SOKENDAI's 5-year doctoral course and have been enrolled for:
 - 24 months or more but less than 30 months, or
 - 36 months or more but less than 42 months; or
 - enrolled in the 3-year doctoral course and have been enrolled for:
 - less than 6 months, or
 - 12 months or more but less than 18 months.^{*2}
- 2) They must not be receiving a scholarship under the government-sponsored international student system, a research grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) for special researchers^{*3}, any foreign government-financed scholarship, or a scholarship from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).
- 3) They must not be receiving stable income such as salary or executive remuneration at a level sufficient to cover living expenses (JPY 2.4 million/year (before tax) or more) from SOKENDAI, a parent institute^{*4}, or a company.

[Requirements for Special Category (BOOST)]

Applicants are required to meet all of the following conditions as of April 1, 2026. ^{*1}

- 1) They meet one of the following enrollment conditions:
 - enrolled in SOKENDAI's 5-year doctoral course and have been enrolled for 24 months or more but less than 36 months, or
 - enrolled in the 3-year doctoral course and have been enrolled for less than 12 months^{*2}
- 2) They must not be receiving a scholarship under the government-sponsored international student system, a research grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) for special researchers^{*3}, any foreign government-financed scholarship, or a scholarship from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).
- 3) They must not be receiving stable income such as salary or executive remuneration at a level sufficient to cover living expenses (JPY 2.4 million/year (before tax) or more) from SOKENDAI, a parent institute^{*4}, or a company.
- 4) They must be planning to conduct research in the field of AI or the emerging/integrated fields with AI.

※“Research in the field of AI or the emerging/integrated fields with AI” refers to a variety of AI-related

R&D that contributes to the creation of innovation and enhancement of industrial competitiveness, including the followings:

- Advanced research and development in AI
- Application of AI to other fields
- Fusion research between other fields (biotechnology, materials, socioeconomics, medicine, etc.) and AI
- Research and development that contribute to resolving social problems using AI

[Requirements for Collaborative Research Type]

Applicants are required to meet all the following conditions as of October 1, 2026. ^{*1}

- 1) They meet one of the following enrollment conditions:
 - enrolled in SOKENDAI's 5-year doctoral course and have been enrolled for 24 months or more but less than 48 months, or
 - enrolled in the 3-year doctoral course and have been enrolled for less than 24 months^{*2}
- 2) They must not be receiving a fellowship under the SOKENDAI Special Researcher Program (Field-specific Type, Pioneering Research Type, General Category or Special Category (BOOST)), a scholarship under the government-sponsored international student system, a research grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) for special researchers^{*3}, any foreign government-financed scholarship, or a scholarship from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).
- 3) They must not be receiving stable income^{*4} such as salary or executive remuneration at a level sufficient to cover living expenses (JPY 2.4 million/year (before tax) or more) from SOKENDAI, a parent institute, or a company. ^{*4}
- 4) The application must be coordinated to obtain the PhD degree based on co-creation with fields different from the applicant's own, such as other scientific disciplines or different sectors and industries.
- 5) They are currently conducting or planning to conduct any of the following:
 - "Internal Joint Advising Program" that you receive joint research guidance from your current supervisor and a faculty member of another program (department). ^{*5}
 - "International Collaborative Degree Program" based on agreements with overseas universities. ^{*6}
 - "Collaborative Research" with researchers from other programs (courses), universities, institutes, companies, etc. (It must be coordinated toward the PhD degree under the joint supervision by the advisor of his/her own course and the research collaborator(s). It does NOT include simple research guidance, short-term visit, provision of knowledge, technology, or equipment, etc.)

^{*1} The period of a leave of absence (calculated by rounding up to the nearest month) is not counted within the enrollment period. Students in the long-term course system are not eligible to apply.

^{*2} Those who have completed (or are expected to complete) a master's degree course at a university other than SOKENDAI and have passed or are currently applying for the entrance examination for a 3-year doctoral course at SOKENDAI (expected enrollment on April 1, 2026) are also eligible to apply.

^{*3} Those who intend to apply for JSPS DC Research Fellowship (DC2) are eligible to apply. However, if selected for DC2 in FY2027, financial support under the SOKENDAI Special Researcher Program will end at the end of FY2026.

^{*4} Parent Institute: The Inter-University Research Institute, where the program of SOKENDAI is located.

^{*5} Reference URL (Japanese text only): <http://kitei.soken.ac.jp/doc/gakugai/print/582.html>

^{*6} Reference URL: <https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/education/curriculum/cotutelle-program/>

4. Appointment start date

April 1st, 2026

5. Period of appointment

The period obtained by subtracting the period of enrollment up to the day before the start of appointment from the standard period of study stipulated in Article 16 of the School Regulations.

Note: If you complete the doctoral course and obtain a doctoral degree during the period, the appointment will be terminated at the end of month in which you obtain the degree.

6. Scholarship

1) Fellowship (for living expenses)

General Category	JPY 190,000 per month
Special Category (BOOST)	JPY 300,000 per month
Collaborative Research Type	JPY 190,000 per month

2) Research grant (for research expenses)

General Category	JPY 320,000 per year
Special Category (BOOST)	JPY 300,000 per year
Collaborative Research Type	JPY 320,000 per year

Please note that the above scholarship amounts are subject to change depending on the budget situation.

7. How to Apply

Please submit your application via the following online application system. The application is evaluated by the reviewers in the broad academic field from literature to science. The application form should be prepared accordingly. (The Admission Office):

https://admissions-office.net/en/applicant/university_recruitments/12703

8. Application Documents

[General Category and Special Category (BOOST)]

1) Application Form

Please fill out the form according to the “Instructions for filling out the application form”, convert it to a PDF file, and submit it via the online application system (The Admission Office).

Notes:

- The application form differs depending on whether you are applying for the General Category only or for the Special Category (BOOST) only and for both categories.
- It is prohibited to prepare the application form by using generative AIs.
- Current SOKENDAI students must have an ORCID ID and have completed the linkage with SOKENDAI. If you have not yet registered an ORCID ID, please contact “orcid@ml.soken.ac.jp” and we will guide you how to register.

2) Reference letter

Please ask your academic supervisor to prepare the document and submit it to the project office (jisedai-jimu@ml.soken.ac.jp).

Notes:

- Current SOKENDAI students should ask their chief supervisor to prepare the reference letter. However, with the consent of the chief supervisor, the secondary supervisor may be asked to prepare it.
- If you have completed (or expect to complete) a master's course at a university other than SOKENDAI and plan to enroll in a doctoral course at SOKENDAI (or are currently applying for the entrance examination), please ask either your current research supervisor or a faculty member who will supervise you after you enroll in SOKENDAI to prepare a reference letter.
- The reference letter should be submitted directly from the supervisor to the promotion office, and the promotion office will not disclose it to the applicant.

[Collaborative Research Type]

1) Application form

Please fill out the form according to the “Instructions for filling out the application form”, convert it to a PDF file, and submit it via the online application system (The Admission Office).

Note:

- To apply, you will need to obtain an ORCID ID and have completed the linkage with SOKENDAI. If you have not yet registered an ORCID ID, please contact “[orcid\(at\)ml.soken.ac.jp](mailto:orcid(at)ml.soken.ac.jp)” (Please replace (at) with @.)” and we will guide you how to register.

2) Research Guidance Plan (指導計画書)

Please ask your chief supervisor to prepare the document, convert it to a PDF file, and submit it via the online application system (The Admission Office). However, with the consent of the chief supervisor, the secondary supervisor may be asked to prepare it.

9. Application deadline

February 2nd , 2026 15:00 (Japan Standard Time)

10. Selection process

1) Selection

[General Category]

The first screening (document review) and the second screening (online interview) will be conducted by the Screening Committee for SOKENDAI Special Researcher. In the first screening, the committee will refer to the document review in the Program (Department) with which the applicant is (or will be) associated.

[Special Category (BOOST)]

The first screening (document review) and the second screening (online interview) by the BOOST Screening Committee will be conducted. In the first screening, the committee will refer to the document review in the program with which the applicant is associated.

[Collaborative Research Type]

The first screening (document review) and the second screening (online interview) will be conducted by the screening committee. In addition, the opinions of the supervisor may be heard if necessary.

2) Standard for screening

[General Category]

- (1) The research plan must be specific and appropriate for a doctoral dissertation.
- (2) The applicant must be competent enough to carry out the research plan.
- (3) The applicant must be willing to expand his/her interests to other research fields beyond his/her own field of specialization as well as social problems and innovation.

[Special Category (BOOST)]

In addition to the requirements for the General Category, the research plan must meet one of the following conditions.

- (1) Research and develop next-generation AI technologies.
- (2) Develop new research fields by integrating AI with other research fields.
- (3) Use AI as a transferable skill to solve social problems and innovate.

[Collaborative Research Type]

- (1) The collaborative research plan must be well-constructed, in accordance with the purpose of this program and aimed at obtaining a doctoral degree.
- (2) The applicant must be competent enough to carry out the research plan.
- (3) The applicant must be willing to expand his/her interests to other research fields beyond his/her

own field of specialization as well as social problems and innovation.

3) Notification of the first screening results and the schedule of the second screening

The result of the first screening ("Passed (Exemption from the second screening)", "Proceeding to the second screening" or "Rejected") will be notified to each applicant by March 17th, 2026.

Scheduled dates for the second screening are as follows.

General Category	March 23rd , 2026
Special Category (BOOST)	March 30th , 2026
Collaborative Research Type	March 25th , 2026

The result of the second screening ("Passed" or "Rejected") will be announced by the end of March 2026.

The promotion office will not respond to individual inquiries regarding the selection process.

11. Information regarding application documents and selection

- (1) Application documents must be submitted in the prescribed format.
- (2) Any information in the documents cannot be changed or supplemented after submission.
- (3) If any falsehood is found in the application documents, the application may be canceled even after the applicant is appointed.

12. Obligations of Special Researchers

- (1) Special researchers must be enrolled in a doctoral course at SOKENDAI during the appointment period.
- (2) Special researchers must devote themselves to research based on the research plan described in the application form during the period of appointment.
- (3) Special researchers must submit a research status report at the designated time each year and cooperate in tracking career information for 10 years after leaving.
- (4) Special researchers must participate in various activities (inter-field seminars, overview lectures on social problems, lectures on AI/data science, regular interviews by an academic mentor in a different research field, career seminars, etc.) designated by SOKENDAI to improve their research ability and expand the scope of their carrier paths.
- (5) Special researchers in General Category or Special Category (BOOST) must participate in "SOKENDAI Student Dispatch Program", "International Collaborative Degree Program", or "Internal Joint Advising Program" *1 in principle. Note that this requirement can be exempted that they already conducted one of the programs or have essential difficulty to participate in any of the programs.
- (6) Special researchers may not receive stable income such as salary*2 or executive remuneration at a level sufficient to cover living expenses (JPY 2.4 million/year (before tax) or more) from SOKENDAI, a parent institute, or a company during the appointment period.

- (7) Special researchers must attend research ethics and compliance training provided by SOKENDAI or parent institutes.
- (8) Special researchers must register for “Research Internship Program” account.
- (9) Special Researchers in Special Category (BOOST) must conduct their research in collaboration with the AI specialist in SOKENDAI, if their chief supervisor is not an expert of AI.
- (10) International students are required to take Japanese Language courses, but those with sufficient Japanese language skills are excluded.

*¹ For details of each program, please refer to the following SOKENDAI websites.

- SOKENDAI Student Dispatch Program:

https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/education/dispatch/sokendai_studentdispatchprogram/index.html

- International Collaborative Degree Program:

<https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/education/curriculum/cotutelle-program/>

- Internal Joint Advising Program (Japanese text only.):

<http://kitei.soken.ac.jp/doc/gakugai/print/582.html>

*² Temporary income from research assistant or other part-time works are not counted.

13. Termination or cancellation of appointment and request for refund

In the event that the performance of the obligations listed in the previous section is found to be inadequate, or if the president determines that the special researcher meets any of the disqualifying conditions mentioned below, the appointment of the special researcher may be terminated or canceled. Additionally, the payment of scholarship may be stopped or a request may be made for the return the scholarship amount that has been already disbursed. The disqualifying conditions are:

- (1) If the special researcher completes the doctoral course and receives a degree.
- (2) If the special researcher receives a scholarship under the government-sponsored international student system, a research grant from JSPS for research fellowship, or any foreign government-financed scholarship.
- (3) If it is clear that the research cannot continue due to illness, etc.
- (4) In case of the special researcher taking a leave of absence*³ from SOKENDAI.
- (5) In case of the special researcher’s withdrawal from SOKENDAI (including expulsion).
- (6) In case of disciplinary action against the special researcher.
- (7) In case of poor academic performance or conduct.
- (8) If there is a significant problem with the progress of the research and it is judged that the desired research results cannot be achieved.
- (9) If the documents required for the post-application procedures are not submitted on time.
- (10) If any falsehoods are found in the documents submitted for the post-application procedures.

- (11) If research misconduct (fabrication, falsification, plagiarism etc.) is discovered.
- (12) If research funds are misused.
- (13) If the special researcher declines the appointment.
- (14) In the event of other clearly inappropriate behaviors as a special researcher.

³However, if the leave of absence is due to childbirth, childcare, or nursing care and is approved by SOKENDAI, the scholarship may be suspended for up to two years and resumed upon the student's return to the university after the review of performance.

14. Policy on Handling Personal Information

SOKENDAI shall not use the personal information of applicants for purposes other than the execution of the Special Researcher Program, which includes outsourcing operations on the condition that SOKENDAI reaches an agreement with the outsourcers regarding the appropriate handling of personal information. Additionally, it will not disclose such information to third parties without the student's consent, except as otherwise stipulated in Article 9 of the Act on the Protection of Personal Information Held by Independence Administrative Agencies.

15. Online Briefing Session

The online briefing session for those who are interested in this program will be held on the following date.

- **Wednesday, January 14, 2026, 10:00–11:00 (JST)** (Online; first half in Japanese, second half in English)
- **Friday, January 16, 2026, 14:00–15:00 (JST)** (Online; first half in Japanese, second half in English)

Advance registration is required to attend the information session (or to view the recorded session).

If you wish to participate, please register using the URL below by **15:00 on Friday, January 9**.

<https://jp.surveymonkey.com/r/GBZX883?lang=en>

16. Contact

Promotion Office for Pioneering Research Initiated by the Next Generation

Email: jisedai-jimu@ml.soken.ac.jp