

Guidelines for Applying to the SOKENDAI Special Researcher Program
(Appointment begins from October 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 three 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.

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

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

General Category	Up to 6 persons
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*There is no recruitment for Special Category (BOOST) and Collaborative Research Type in October.

3. Requirements for Applicants

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

- 1) They have been enrolled for 24 to 30 months (exclusive 30 months) in a 5-year doctoral course or have been enrolled for less than 6 months in a 3-year doctoral course. ^{*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.

^{*1} The period of a leave of absence (calculated by rounding up to the nearest month) is not counted within the enrollment period. Students on leave of absence and 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 plan to apply the entrance examination for a 3-year doctoral course at SOKENDAI (expected enrollment on October 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 Income from positions such as research assistants (RA), teaching assistants (TA), and part-time jobs is not considered "stable income"; however, whether RA or TA income may be received together with this fellowship depends on program (department), and so, please check it with the administration office of your program.

*⁶ Reference URL (Japanese text only): <http://kitei.soken.ac.jp/doc/gakugai/print/582.html>

*⁷ Reference URL: <https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/education/curriculum/cotutelle-program/>

4. Appointment date

October 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 the month in which you obtain the degree.

6. Scholarship

1) Fellowship (for living expenses)

General Category	JPY 190,000 per month
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2) Research grant (for research expenses)

General Category	JPY 320,000 per year
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Please note that the above scholarship amounts are subject to change depending on the budget situation.

7. Application form

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 link under "8. Application destination (Same for the reference letter)."

Since reviewers from a wide range of fields, including the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, will review the applications, applicants should write clearly and in an easy-to-understand manner.

Notes:

- The use of generative AI tools is prohibited in the preparation of application form.
- 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\(at\)ml.soken.ac.jp](mailto:orcid(at)ml.soken.ac.jp) (Please replace (at) with @.)” and we will guide you on how to register.

2) Reference letter

Please ask your supervisor to prepare it and to submit it via the link under “8. Application destination (Same for the reference letter).”

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 enter the doctoral course at SOKENDAI in October 2026, 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.

8. Application destination (Same for the reference letter)

(Student) Application form <https://jp.surveymonkey.com/r/KZGGGBW>

(Faculty) Reference letter <https://jp.surveymonkey.com/r/RT9JW2M>

9. Application deadline (Same for the reference letter)

Monday, July 27, 2026, 3:00 PM (Japan Standard Time)

*No replacement of application documents will be accepted after submission.

10. Selection process

1) Selection

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.

2) Standard for screening

- (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.

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 Friday, September 4, 2026.

The second screening (online interview) will take place on the afternoon of Friday, September 11, 2026.

The result of the second screening (“Passed” or “Rejected”) will be announced by the end of September 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 career paths.
- (5) Special researchers 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 for the case 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) International students are required to take Japanese Language courses, but those with sufficient Japanese language skills are excluded.

*¹For 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>

*²Temporary income from research assistant or other part-time work is not counted. However, Special Researchers may be required to report such income and any overlap with this program.

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 SOKENDAI may request the return of scholarship/research funds 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.

^{*3}However, 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 Independent Administrative Agencies.

15. Online Briefing Session

The online briefing session will be held for students who are eligible to apply.

Wednesday, June 24, 2026, 10:00-11:00 (JST) *The first half will be in Japanese and the second half in English.

• Pre-registration is required to attend the briefing (and view the recorded data).

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/AyeiQQIeQYGu664BCMBWtw>

16. Contact

Promotion Office for Pioneering Research Initiated by the Next Generation

Email: jisedai-jimu(at)ml.soken.ac.jp *Please replace (at) with @.