

AY2025 Support Project for Pioneering Research Initiated by the Next Generation  
in Doshisha University Doctoral Course

Students eligible for support // FAQ on Application [2nd edition (2024.12.12)]

Revision details: Each question was assigned a number.

## **【About Application】**

### **<General>**

Q1: May I fill out the application in English?

A: Yes, you may. Please submit your application using the English version of the application form in the Application Guidelines on our website.

Q2: I found an error in the application form and would like to replace it. What should I do?

A: You may not revise or resubmit your application for any reason after it has been submitted. Before submitting your application, please check the following: Are there any errors in the entries? Are there any missing attachments? Are there any errors in the attached documents correct?

Q3: I have no changes to my application, but I would like to submit an additional file, because I made a mistake when attaching the file. What should I do?

A: same as above.

Q4: I am from an English-speaking country and am exempt from submitting a copy of an official score proving my English language proficiency, but when filling in the application form, I am asked for an attachment and cannot complete the application. What should I do?

A: Complete and submit the prescribed form 'Exemption from submitting English Language Proficiency Certificate'.

Q5: When I enter a doctoral course, I will change my department or faculty, and my supervisor will also change. In this case, which supervisor should I ask for a letter of recommendation?

A: Please obtain a letter of recommendation from your academic supervisor as of 1 April 2025.

Q6: I am currently affiliated with another institution (not Doshisha University), and plan to enter the doctoral course at Doshisha University from 1 April 2025. In this case, which supervisor should I ask for a letter of recommendation?

A: Please obtain a letter of recommendation from your academic supervisor as of 1 April 2025.

### <Reason for applying>

Q7: What kind of research do you expect to be 'pioneering and interdisciplinary research'?

A: We expect research that goes beyond existing frameworks, such as your different values and worldviews or your graduate schools and labs, to challenge societal issues, develop new fields and practice globally.

Q8: I am an international student. I will return to my home country to become a researcher after completing my postgraduate studies. Can I receive support under this project?

A: This project aims to develop highly specialized professionals who will maintain a passion for research, become leaders in advanced science and technology, and create innovation in future Japan, ethically and conscientiously respecting individual dignity and humanity. Therefore, whether you are an international student or not, if it is clear that you will not contribute to the creation of science, technology and innovation in Japan in the future, you will not be eligible for support. However, you will be eligible if you are going to work in Japanese academia or industry after completing your postgraduate studies. This is an important point in the application form, so international students in particular should try to describe how you plan to contribute to this.

### <Overseas activity plan>

Q9: What specific information should I include in my overseas activity plan?

A: First, please clarify the global position of your research. Then, please describe what kind of overseas activities are necessary to develop and deepen your research. For example, if you need new technology or know-how, you can plan to visit laboratories at overseas research institutes to hold discussions with overseas researchers, or conduct joint experiments at overseas research institutes. In addition, you can plan to attend international conferences and workshops held overseas to have the opportunity to discuss with researchers, gain new ideas for your research, and develop these ideas into collaborative research.

Q10: Does the overseas activity plan require an actual visit to a foreign country?

A: In principle, Project Students are required to travel abroad. The Project expects you to actually go to the local area and take part in overseas internships, study abroad programs, and international exchange programs.

Q11: What should I do if it is difficult to carry out my overseas activities due to a pandemic or other reason?

A: If you are unable to travel abroad due to circumstances such as the pandemic, it may be possible to attend the online instead. In that case, please contact with the Project Team. Please prepare the "Reason for Application and Research Plan" without thinking such as circumstances like a pandemic or others.

Q12: How long should I plan for my overseas activities?

A: There are no particular rules. Please make use of overseas activity expenses (up to 400,000), research expenses, research incentive, etc. to create a highly feasible plan. However, please be careful about long-term overseas activities. It may not be possible to accept long-term overseas activities while still enrolled, or this may affect the courses you are taking while enrolled. If you take a leave of absence to engage in overseas activities, you will lose your qualification as a Project Student, so you will need to make a plan within the scope of what is permitted by your graduate school. Furthermore, today, there are various infectious diseases and conflicts all over the world, so you have to be aware of necessary certain procedures within your graduate school before traveling abroad. Therefore, when planning and implementing your overseas activities, regardless of the length of the overseas activity, please consult thoroughly in advance with your supervisor and your affiliated graduate school.

Q13: I am an international student. Will research in my home country be recognized as an overseas activity plan?

A: One of the purpose of overseas activities is to expand global views through understanding other people and different cultures. In principle, activities are expected to be outside your home country, but there are different circumstances, depending on the research field and research content, so please contact with the Project Team.

Q14: Can I include overseas study plans after the fourth year of my doctoral program? Also, will plans after the fourth year of my doctoral program be eligible for overseas activity expenses?

A: Support is available for plans up to the third year. In addition, even if long-term enrollment is approved, support is only available within the standard period of study (1st to 3rd years of doctoral course, 3rd to 5th years of integrated doctoral course), so overseas study abroad beyond that will not be covered by the overseas activity expenses.

## **【Eligibility】**

Q15: Does it matter what nationality?。

A: There is no nationality requirement.

Q16: Are international students eligible?

A: Yes, they are, but must satisfy "7. Eligibility" in the Application Guidelines.

Q17: Are working adults also eligible?

A: Even if you have been admitted through the working adult entrance examination, you may apply if you do not fall under the exclusion criteria in "7. Eligibility" of the Application Guidelines.

Q18: Is there an age limit?

A: No, there is.

Q19: I currently earn income through part-time work. In that case, can I apply?

A: There are no income requirements at the time of application. In addition, income from part-time work is not considered to be "stable income," so you can continue to do it after adoption. However, the project expects you to concentrate on your research by providing Research incentive and to devote as much time as possible to research activities. Note that Project Students are not exempt from the obligations required by this project (such as participation in various programs) by the reason of part-time work.

Q20: What does "(6) Those who does not correspond to the condition of the support target of the SPRING" in "7. Eligibility" refer to?

A: If you are receiving support that overlaps with the support provided by this program, you will not be eligible. For more details, please contact the Project Team.

Q21: Will submitting an official score proving English proficiency affect the review (will a higher score result in additional points)?

A: A certain level of English proficiency is required to take various programs. Therefore, it is used to confirm that you have the English proficiency necessary to take part in the program of the Project.

Q22: Is there a validity period for official scores of English proficiency? (For example, it must be scored from a public exam taken within the past year, etc.)。

A: There is no validity period for official scores.

## **【Examination】**

Q23: Is it necessary to submit a letter of recommendation from my supervisor? Will the content of it affect the selection process?

A: Yes. If you are selected for this project, you will be required to work on developing your career as a researcher in addition to your own research activities (see "8. Obligations"). In order to balance these two, please submit a letter of recommendation from your supervisor. Please note that the letter of recommendation must be in a specified format and will not affect the selection process.

Q24: Can I take the interview online? What should I do if I can't attend in person?

A: The interview is scheduled to be a face-to-face interview at Imadegawa campus. There are no plans by online. We will announce the schedule in advance, so please make the necessary arrangements to attend. If you are unable to attend the interview, you will not be given a score for the interview.

Q25: Can I take the interview in English?

A: Both the presentation and Q&A will be conducted in English.

Q26: Can I bring presentation materials for the interview on a USB memory stick or similar device on the day?

A: You have to submit your presentation materials in advance and cannot replace after submission, as well replace on the day of the event, so please submit the completed version by the deadline. As stated in the Application Guidelines, there is not enough time between announcement to interview candidates and the deadline for submitting presentation materials, so we recommend that you start preparing your presentation materials as soon as possible.

Q27: Which is more important: the application document or the interview examination?

A: We will treat both of them equally and make selections from a comprehensive perspective throughout the entire review process.

## **【Research Incentive, etc.】**

Q28: Are Research incentive subject to tax?

A: Yes, it is treated as miscellaneous income, it is subject to income tax and local resident tax. You will need to file a tax return yourself.

Q29: Can I manage my research expenses myself? Are there any restrictions on how I can use them? Can I carry them over to the next fiscal year and use them to purchase expensive equipment?

A: The research expenses will be managed by Doshisha University (they will not be paid to project students). You will need to follow the University's research funding rules for the execution of them. We ask you to prepare a research expenses plan at the beginning of each fiscal year in order to use limited research expenses effectively and in a planned manner, and execute them based on that plan. As a general rule, you cannot carry over to the next fiscal year, so please make a plan to use them effectively within the current fiscal year.

Q30: Will the use of research expenses be limited to overseas activities?

A: No, it is not limited to overseas activities. You can use them for general research activities, including overseas activities. Details will be explained in the Briefing session after adoption. If it is difficult to judge whether it can be used or not, please contact with the Project Team.

## **【Obligation】**

Q31: What happens if I fail to meet my obligations?。

A: We believe that you will fulfill your obligations, but we may ask you to return the research incentive, etc. if you fail to fulfill your obligations. Some programs have already scheduled. We will announce the date as soon as possible, so please adjust your schedule and participate. In addition, since we expect that it may be difficult to make arrangements, we expect you to plan your participation as early as possible after the start of support.

Q32: Why do you impose a part of obligations to students who have completed support?

A: Supported students are required to cooperate with follow-up surveys by Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) after completing their doctoral programs and to update your information on JGRAD, even after the support ends. JST requires us to follow up on the careers of graduates for at least 10 years, so Project Students give us your contact information if it changes.

## **【Support Program】**

Q33: Could you tell us more about the overseas activities of this project, and the support and efforts being made to expand global views?

A: Basically, we expect you to make and flesh out by yourself at the time of application. We would like you to plan and utilize the resources of Doshisha University and the graduate school you belong to, the network of laboratories and supervising professors, and various programs out of campus according to the characteristics of your research field. When implementing this, the doctoral career coordinator will provide opportunities for individual consultations and interviews, and will consult with you as a mentor. In addition, we will provide various training programs to strengthen your research skills, so please encourage your skills development.

Q34: I have heard from past project students that overseas activity expenses are only allocated on a competitive basis. Overseas activities are required for project students, but if I don't have an allocation of overseas activity expenses, do I have to do overseas activities at my own expense?

A: In 2024, it was as you said, but in 2025, we are preparing an overseas activity expenses for all project students who are planning to participate in overseas activities. If you have submitted an overseas activity plan for the fiscal year at the beginning of the fiscal year, you will be eligible to receive the overseas activity budget for that year. However, if your plan does not meet the purpose of the overseas activity expenses, we will ask you to review your plan. If you have no plans of overseas activities in the relevant fiscal year or your plan is extremely difficult to carry out, you will be not allocated overseas activity expenses.

Q35: Is there any support for improving English language skills?

A: At this time, we are not planning to provide support to improve language ability itself. However, we are planning to provide training for improving presentation skills in English, etc. As stated in the application guidelines, some programs require English proficiency to participate. If you are unsure about your English skills, please encourage on improving them yourself.

### **【Accelerating Challenging and Interdisciplinary Research Expenses】**

Q36: In addition to the 400,000 yen in research expenses provided to Project Students per year, approximately half of the Project Students who wish to get additional research expenses will be allocated up to 300,000 yen per person as accelerating challenging and interdisciplinary research (competitive funds within the project). But how will these be allocated?

A: After adoption, we will start applications for additional research funding within the project. Please suggest a challenging, and interdisciplinary research plan. Applicants

will be required to give a presentation to the faculty members involved in the management of this project, including the project supervisor, and to all project students. Even if you do not apply, you are required to participate in the presentations given by applicants and to further develop your own research by coming into contact with various research themes. Details will be notified after the adoption. Please note that the number of support for this program (the total amount of additional research funds to be allocated) is determined based on the balance with other support programs, such as overseas activities, so the selected number of projects (the selection rate) will be possible to be changed from year to year.

Q37: If I am selected as a Project Student, do I have to apply for the Accelerating Challenging and Interdisciplinary Research Expenses (competitive funds within the project)?

A: No, you should only apply if you wish to receive additional research funding. It is up to the project students to decide whether or not to apply. This is a good opportunity to ask yourself how you can develop your research with additional research expenses, so we hope you will consider applying. In addition, we hope that you will participate in the presentation, which will encourage you to study research in different fields and gain new insights, so we ask for your active participation whether you apply or not.

Q38: The Project expects us to participate in joint research with companies, but do I have to find companies by myself?

A: It is expected that the activities in this project will develop into collaborative research with companies etc. Collaborative research will be carried out in coordination with the supervising professor.

## **【Others】**

Q39: What is the difference between this and the JSPS Research Fellowship?

A: The JSPS Research Fellows are a system of special researchers (DC1, DC2, etc.) run by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. It employs doctoral students in Japanese graduate schools who have excellent research ability and wish to devote themselves to research at their affiliated universities as "Special Research Fellows-DC" and provides them with research grants. It is expected that students will devote themselves to research under the guidance of a supervisor. This is expected to be particularly appreciated by those hoping to find employment in academia. On the other hand, students supported by this project are expected to pursue a variety of career paths, not just in academia, and we have prepared a support program for this purpose.

Furthermore, after being selected for this project, many students have taken on the challenge and have been selected as DC2 students. We look forward to seeing them make great strides and develop as researchers through this project.

Q40: When applying for this project, is it necessary to have applied for a JSPS Research Fellowship (DC)? Also, will it be evaluated as a positive?

A: It is not necessary to have a history of application for the JSPS Research Fellowship (DC). In addition, whether or not you have a history of application will not affect the screening process. However, since the JSPS Research Fellowship (DC) is an important and effective system for the career development of doctoral students, in the future, we may require a history of application for the JSPS Research Fellowship (DC) (including the evaluation results in the same system) as an application requirement for this project. We encourage you to actively apply for the JSPS Research Fellowship (DC) as part of your career development.

Q41: If I am selected as a Project Student, will I be required to apply for a JSPS Research Fellowship?

A: Currently, we do not require applicants to apply for a JSPS Research Fellowship, but in the future, we may review the system and require applicants to apply for a JSPS Research Fellowship. Since a track record of being employed as a research fellow is a certain level of recognition, especially for those who wish to work in academia, we hope that even after adoption in this project, you will take on the challenge of becoming a JSPS Research Fellow (DC2).

Q42: I am thinking of applying for SPRING in the next year (2026), but what will the recruitment schedule be like?

A: The Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST)'s application guidelines (FAQ) state that "We will decide whether to continue the program each year, taking into account the university's efforts and the support measures that will be implemented using the investment income from the university fund," and it is currently undecided. When we open the program, we will announce it on Doshisha University website, so please check it out.