The University of Manchester and Manipal Academy of Higher Education

Joint Research Seed Fund - 2026 Call for Proposals

Guidelines for Applicants
Deadline: 18 February 2026, 12 noon GMT (17:30 IST)

Overview

The University of Manchester (UoM) and Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) are pleased to announce the launch of a new research fund to support collaborative research initiatives between the two institutions.

The purpose of the fund is to initiate or develop new research partnerships. Funds will be awarded to projects which encourage the building of networks of researchers and have clearly defined plans for future funding.

The proposed collaborative project should present a balance between partnership building activities and direct research, as appropriate, considering the key objectives of the funding opportunity. Projects can include:

- joint research activities: scoping, feasibility, or proof of concept studies
- travel and networking
- exchange visits
- skills training

The Fund is open to applications from all research areas, and we encourage applicants from any discipline to submit proposals. If you are looking for collaborators, please get in touch with us (contact details at the end of the document) and we will help identify researchers with similar interests.

We encourage the involvement of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) either as the principal investigators (PIs) or as members of the project team.

Proposals will be assessed and recommended for selection by a panel composed of staff from both universities.

Projects

- To be eligible, a proposal must include a lead PI from UoM and a lead PI from MAHE, and at least one other researcher on each team, i.e. **at least two researchers** from each partner institution. Researchers can include PhD students and post-doctoral staff.

- The funding envelope comprises up to £30K from UoM and £30K (equivalent in INR) from MAHE. We expect to support up to 6 projects in this round for a funding period of 18 months. Recipients will be awarded up to:
  - 5,000 GBP from UoM to support Manchester applicants.
  and
  - 5,000 GBP (equivalent in INR) from MAHE to support MAHE applicants.

- The fund is open to proposals across all research areas.

- Projects will be funded for a period of 18 months starting from 1 May 2026 onwards. There is flexibility on start dates, but all projects must be underway by July at the latest.

- Proposals demonstrating strong relevance to strategic priorities at the participating institutions and with the potential for sustainability beyond the initial funding period are encouraged.

- Mutual external collaborators (including researchers from other universities internationally, or those working in non-academic contexts such as industry or government) cannot lead an application but can be involved in the proposed activities at their own expense, where the benefit of their involvement to the collaboration is justified in the proposal.

Costs and proposal

- Proposals may include workshops (face-to-face and virtual), symposia, staff exchanges, research seminars/presentations and formation, development of a collaborative network and/or practical pilot or feasibility research activities (such as experiments, surveys, etc.).

- The funding provided is intended to support expenses, including but not limited to costs of travel between the institutions, and necessary related consumables. Details of eligible and ineligible costs are detailed in the table below.

- Each partner should pay its own costs and there can be no transfer of funds between institutions. For example, travel costs for Manchester staff should be in the Manchester budget, costs for a workshop taking place in MAHE should be allocated in the MAHE budget.

- Each institution will pay funds directly to its researchers. Approval of expenditure will be governed by each university for the portion of funding provided.

- **UoM:** A fEC costing is not required. Please note that only directly incurred costs are allowed and not directly allocated.

- **UoM:** We ask that Manchester applicants take into consideration the University Travel Policy and the Before Travelling guidance, including the associated Travel Decision Tree. These documents and links are designed to assist colleagues in making informed decisions about travel and where possible, reduce the university's overall carbon footprint

Eligible Costs	Ineligible costs
• Travel costs including flights, hotels and subsistence • Directly incurred staff e.g. Research Assistant* up to a maximum of 20% of the budget. • Research consumables and materials, i.e. data collection, shipping** up to a maximum of 20% of the budget. • Costs associated with organising workshops and meetings	• Replacement research/teaching costs • Directly allocated costs including applicants' time** • Indirect costs/estates costs • Equipment • Scholarships • Conference attendance • Costs for external speakers or workshop participants from other universities • Tuition fees • Honoraria

Directly incurred and directly allocated costs are terms used by UK funders:
*Directly Incurred costs are project-specific (i.e. they arise as a direct consequence of the project taking place).
** Directly Allocated costs are not project-specific (i.e. they are incurred whether or not the project takes place), and are estimated at project level e.g. Investigator time, Technician time (where not directly incurred).

Eligibility

UoM: Academic staff members from all disciplines and at all levels are welcome to apply. We encourage early career researchers[1] to apply. Applicants do not need to have a permanent post, but they must have an existing contract at the time of application, and that contract must cover the full period of the grant. Emeritus and honorary staff are not eligible to apply as PI but may be members of the project team.

Timeline

Call for proposals opens	12 January 2026
Deadline for submission	18 February 12 noon GMT (17:30 IST)
Applicants notified	By 17 April
Project start date	1 May

How to apply

This is a joint call and a single application should be submitted online using SmartSurvey. The form can be previewed here. It can be completed collaboratively, and applicants should use the 'save and continue' feature to save the form and continue later (a link is sent to the applicant's email address). The link can be shared with collaborators to contribute to the application.

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[1] **Manchester:** an individual who is within six years of their first academic appointment. This duration excludes any period of career break.

The full proposal is comprised of the following elements:

- **Applicants' details – affiliations from each institution with contact details**
  - **Principle Investigator information (Manchester)**
  - **Principle Investigator information (Manipal)**
- **Research Proposal – details of the project**
  - **Title:** of the Research Project
  - **Key words** that relate to the main topic of your proposal
  - **What is your project idea – a brief, plain English description of your project** (project design and rationale)**?**
  - **Why is this impactful and important work** (project design and rationale)**?**
  - **Proposed Timeframe** (project design and rationale): project dates, a project timeline and a description of the planned activities.
- **Collaborator complementarity**: A description of how the proposed activities combine mutual areas of interest and strength and the added value of these combined expertise.
- **Potential impact:**
  - **Potential scholarly impact** - description of the expected academic gains for the project as a result of the proposed collaboration and the identification of corresponding performance indicators e.g. a publication, blog, meeting report etc.
  - **Potential broader impact** – describe how your proposal aligns with the strategic priorities of the participating institutions and the anticipated benefits of the activities to local or international communities.
- **Capacity for future collaboration**:
  - What plans do you have for future funding after the end of the project?
  - What other potential future collaborations and outcomes do you anticipate as a result of having undertaken the current collaboration? For example: joint publications, joint supervision of graduate researchers, joint teaching, growth of research team size at each partner, collaborations with corporate partners.
    - **Proposed budgets -** a breakdown of the cost of the activity e.g. travel, hotels etc.
    - **Project team information**
    - **Supporting documents**
      - Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae (not more than 2 pages) from each institution's PI (Principal Investigator) with a selected list of publications.
      - A letter of support from your Head of Department/Research Domain which includes an explanation of how the project aligns with the Faculty's research strategy.
    - **Communication feedback**
      - Confirmation of how you heard about this fund, this will help us to promote future funds.
    - **Declaration and approval**
      - Confirmation you understand the rules and regulations of the fund.

Evaluation criteria

A joint review panel will assess each proposal according to the academic merit and the following criteria:

- **Project design and rationale (25 points)**: How clearly presented and justified is the basis for, and design of, the Project? How do the proposed activities assist with establishing new and emerging research collaborations? How does the team contribute to building our institutional cooperation

(researchers, PhDs, postdocs)?
- **Collaborator complementarity (25 points)**: What is the added value of the new or emerging collaboration? How do the proposed activities combine mutual areas of interest and strength?
- **Potential impact: (20 points)** What desired outcomes do the planned activities set out to achieve? What are the anticipated benefits of the activities to local or international communities? How does the proposal demonstrate strong relevance to strategic priorities of the partner institutions?
- **Capacity for future collaboration/funding (30 points)**: What is the potential for this project to foster ongoing collaboration and through what mechanism(s)? How well does the proposed collaboration plan to access external funding? Provide an outline for potential follow up steps following the project.

Reporting after project completion

All awardees must, as a condition of receiving an award under this call, complete a narrative report that describes the outcomes, nature of collaboration, project impact, trainee involvement and opportunities for future collaboration that evolved from their project.

Once the project has been completed, the grant holders will be sent a report form to complete. The report should be submitted within three months of the project end date.

Contact information about this call

If you have additional questions that are not answered in the above document, please email the contact at your institution with your query:

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