

UUKi UK – France Science, Innovation, and Technology pump-priming scheme – call 2

Guidelines

DEADLINE: Monday 13 October 2025

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1. Background and overview of the scheme

Following the UK-France bilateral research dialogue ([UK Science and Innovation Network summary: France - GOV.UK](#)) which took place on 29 February 2024 in London, the UK government and the French government each committed funding to support the establishment and development of research collaborations on a bilateral basis between the UK and France. In line with this objective, Universities UK International (UUKi, an operating unit of Universities UK (UUK)) launched Call 1 of the UK-France Science, Innovation, and Technology pump-priming scheme in November 2024 which received funding via the International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF).

Following the success of Call 1, UUKi are now launching a second call of the UK-France Science, Innovation and Technology pump priming scheme. This programme of competitive grants is available exclusively to [UUK member institutions and UUKi subscribers](#) to use in the context of research and innovation partnerships with France. We welcome creative applications from institutions for activities that support the development of new, recently established or dormant partnerships between the UK and France as they relate to research and innovation, with a goal of developing and submitting a [Horizon Europe](#) application building on their grant idea for the first time. Priority will be given to those with a particular focus on energy transition and hydrogen, space and earth observation, artificial intelligence including ethics, and quantum, as defined by the two countries during recent bilateral dialogues.

The funding for this pump-priming scheme has been provided by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) via the Tactical Fund. The Tactical Fund is an international science and technology fund which enables DSIT to respond agilely to political science commitments and new science and technology opportunities.

2. Objectives and aims of the scheme

Successful institutions will be expected to demonstrate how the targeted activities will support or enable researchers to develop collaborative activity between the UK and France, with a goal of working towards a submission of a Horizon Europe application, building on their grant idea when a relevant call opens. Applications from Lead Researchers who have previously not received any Horizon Europe (or predecessor) funding are particularly encouraged.

Project activity could include:

- feasibility studies
- project development workshops
- application advice and training
- partnership building
- resource to develop an application for Horizon Europe participation.

In line with UUK's charitable objectives, the primary beneficiaries of the funding programme must be UK higher education institutions.

The outcomes that this second call will deliver include:

- UK universities will have resources to build long-term strategic partnerships that support both institutional and UK-wide research and innovation priorities.
- Shared resources and capabilities that will better position UK universities to participate in Horizon Europe, and particularly within the areas of:
 - Energy transition and hydrogen;

- Space and earth observation;
- Artificial intelligence including ethics;
- Quantum.
- Partnerships between the UK and French research ecosystem that advance existing, and develop new, research and innovation collaborations, with a particular focus on Horizon Europe
- Applicants who have never received EU Framework Programme funding will be supported to develop Horizon Europe applications, including Early Career Researchers.

3. Eligibility

The second call of the **UK-France Science, Innovation and Technology pump-priming scheme** is open to all UK HEIs that are UUK members and UUKi subscribers ([Our members](#)), and eligible to receive grant funding from one of the UK higher education funding bodies (such as UK Research and Innovation). It is expected that the Lead applicant from the UK HEI will lead the relationship with the existing or new partner in France.

Completed application forms must be submitted **online** by a designated Lead applicant from a UK HEI and signed off by an appropriate senior representative of the institution. A senior representative might constitute a head of department, school or faculty. Please note that the Lead applicant must obtain the appropriate level of institutional sign off (this will depend on the UK HEI's internal approval processes) before submitting the application.

To be eligible to apply the Lead applicant must:

- be a researcher
- hold a PhD or equivalent qualification
- be a permanent employee or treated as one throughout the proposed research project
- be employed at an institution which receives grant funding from one of the UK higher education funding bodies
- devote a set amount of their working hours to delivering this project
- be proposing to establish either a new partnership, or nurture a recently-established or dormant partnership with academic institutions, organisations or companies in France
- confirm that the proposal has been discussed with their French counterparts
- not have received any funding via the first call of the UK-France pump-priming scheme
- have identified a Horizon Europe cluster or call they would like to apply to.

If your French counterpart has received funding via the [Sophie Germain Funding Scheme](#) by the French Embassy in London, please share this with us in your application.

4. Available funding

The total amount of funding available for the second call of the **UK-France Science, Innovation and Technology pump-priming scheme** is **£190,000**. Proposals should be for **up to £10,000**; however, applicants should think carefully about their ability to spend all awarded funds and carry out funded activities by 16 March 2026. UUKi expects to make around 20 awards altogether, but this is highly dependent on the number of applications and the amount of funding requested. Applications are welcome from all eligible institutions. There is no limit to the number of researchers or research related staff that can be included in an application for the scheme, nor is there a limit on the number of applications an institution can submit, but in the instance of multiple applications, they would need to be distinct projects/partnerships. UUKi will however be looking to award a diverse range of institution types/models as part of this scheme so institutions are expected to prioritise applications that are most closely aligned to the call's objectives.

Funding will be provided in a single transfer within 90 days upon receipt of an invoice following acceptance of final budget and report. Final budget and report will need to be submitted by 16 March 2026.

5. Eligible costs and profile of spend

The expectation is that this funding will be utilised in a variety of ways. Supported pump-priming activities for this second call could include, but are not limited to:

- **Research/Feasibility studies aligning with Horizon Europe** (due to the short timeframe by which projects need to be completed, such studies cannot involve lengthy processes for orders and/or approval [i.e., do not require consumables, do not require ethics for human subjects etc]).
- **Partnership development** (e.g. partnerships development workshops, stakeholder meetings, public engagement events)
- **Resource/capacity building** (e.g. sustainability-themed hackathon or innovation challenge for researchers to generate ideas for future projects aligning with a Horizon Europe application, application advice and training etc.)

Eligible funding:

1. costs for concept or proof of market work and proposal development
2. costs of meetings for the organisations involved in the UK or France to prepare the Horizon Europe proposal
3. travel and subsistence in line with institutional policies
4. salary costs for temporary research and/or clerical assistance (based in the UK)
5. due diligence work on partners
6. contributions towards support services such as proposal writing

Ineligible funding:

The following items are **not** eligible for funding:

1. institutional overheads, or any element that should properly be ascribed to institutional overheads
2. salaries for the Lead applicant or other permanent members of staff
3. purchasing of assets
4. computer hardware including laptops, electronic notebooks, digital cameras, etc.
5. books and other permanent resources
6. subventions for direct production costs (printing, binding, distribution, marketing etc.)
7. costs of publication in electronic media
8. travel and maintenance expenses for purposes such as lecture tours or to write up the results of research
9. carbon offsetting

All grants will be paid to the employing institution of the Lead applicant, and not to the individual researchers involved.

6. Terms of application

- This guidelines document is not an agreement and is neither an offer nor invitation of offer by UUKi to the prospective applicants or any other person.
- The purpose of these guidelines is to provide interested parties with information to assist in the formulation of their application.
- Applications that are not duly authorised and /or not received by the specified deadline will not be accepted.
- UUKi will notify both the Lead applicant and administrative contact where the UK HEI has been provisionally selected for funding (subject to agreeing a contract between UUK and the UK HEI).
- UUKi reserves the right to publish the names of selected UK HEIs. By making an application to the scheme you are giving your consent for your details to be published in this way, provided your application is successful.
- Offers of awards (including Terms and Conditions) are subject to UK local law and practices and are subject to change by UUKi.
- UUKi may in its absolute discretion, but without being under any obligation to do so, update, amend, or supplement the information, assessment or assumptions contained in these guidelines.
- Due to the volume of applications expected, UUKi will not provide feedback on individual applications.

7. Data Protection

- UUKi will use information provided in the application solely for the purposes of processing the application, making any consequential award, for the payment, monitoring, and review of the Award.

- UUKi shall share any necessary data on the application with the UK Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) for reporting purposes.

8. How to apply

- The deadline for applications is **Monday 13 October at 5pm (GMT)**

All applications must be submitted via the dedicated call webpage using the designated online application form. This is available at: [UUKi UK-France Science, Innovation, and Technology pump-priming scheme - call two application form](#)

Frequently Asked Questions have been compiled and added to the call webpage: [UUKi UK-France Science, Innovation, and Technology pump-priming scheme – call two](#)

9. Evaluation criteria

Please refer to detailed criteria for applications in the call document ‘Selection Criteria’. As stated in the ‘Selection Criteria’ document, applications will be scored out of 20 in total with each of the following criteria being scored out of 5 and equally weighted:

- Strategic partnership fit
- Project fit
- Deliverability in the time available
- Alignment with Horizon Europe priorities

All applications will be subject to an eligibility check undertaken by appropriate UUK staff before being put forward for assessment. Applications that are not completed correctly or on time will not be considered. All eligible proposals submitted in response to this call will be assessed by an independent Selection Committee. The decision of the Selection Committee is final and confidential. No appeals will be considered. UUKi is unable to enter into any communication on the Selection Committee's decisions.

10. Timeline

Call opens	Friday 19 September 2025
Call closes	Monday 13 October 2025 (5pm GMT)

Review and selection process	Completed by 5 November 2025
Institutions notified of outcome	By 10 November 2025
Project start date upon signing Offer of Award letter	Early December 2025
Interim report	Thursday 15 January 2026
Project end date	No later than 16 March 2026
End of project report	Monday 16 March 2026
Follow up reports	6 months post project closure, no later than 16 September 2026 12 months post project closure, no later than 16 March 2026

11. Key call documents

The following key call documents can be found on the call webpage: [UK-France Science, Innovation, and Technology pump-priming scheme – call two](#)

- Application form
- Call guidelines
- Selection criteria
- Budget spreadsheet
- Reporting templates
- FAQs – on the call webpage

As part of the application form Lead applicants will be asked to confirm that they have read, understood and agree with the call guidelines and selection criteria.

12. About Universities UK International (UUKi)

[Universities UK International \(UUKi\)](#) is the international arm of Universities UK, representing UK universities and acting in their collective interests globally. We actively promote universities abroad, provide trusted information for and about them, and create new opportunities for the sector.

13. Contact

If you have any questions, please contact the UUKi Strategic Partnerships Team:

Universities UK International

Woburn House

20 Tavistock Square

London WC1H 9HQ

Email: uk-france-grants@international.ac.uk

14. Applicant Eligibility checklist

The application form is completed in full and complies with instructions given	
The budget spreadsheet has been uploaded as part of the submission of the online application form	
All the necessary institutional approvals to submit the application on behalf of applying UK HEI and partner organisation have been obtained	
The institution applying is a UK HEI that receives grant funding from one of the UK higher education funding bodies	
Lead applicants submitting this application are employed by the Lead UK HEI and are resident in the UK at the point of application	
The partner organisation is an existing or new partner of the applying UK HEI and is aware of this proposal	
The institution has identified a Horizon Europe cluster or call they would like to apply to	
The institution applying has confirmed they have not received any funding via the first call of the UK-France pump priming scheme	