

UK open call for RENKEI membership

Open call guidelines

RENKEI is a partnership of leading universities in the United Kingdom and Japan, collaborating to strengthen and further the knowledge exchange and research collaboration between the UK and Japan, particularly in the higher education sector. We are delighted to announce that RENKEI is now seeking one UK university to join this community through an open call process.

This document provides an overview of RENKEI, its members and activities, and sets out the application process for eligible institutions.

About RENKEI

RENKEI (the Japanese word for “collaboration”) is a partnership of research-intensive leading universities in the UK and Japan. Established in March 2012 with the British Council as its secretariat.

The bilateral relationship between the UK and Japan is attracting more attention than ever from governments, industry, and the higher education sector. The two countries have a long history of partnership and share many common interests and concerns. They each have strong economies and are among the world’s foremost producers of cutting-edge research and technology. They face similar demographic, political, social and industrial challenges, and thus are ideal partners in meeting these demands with innovative solutions.

RENKEI’s engagement with both governments over the years has consolidated recognition and support, particularly those activities that nurture and provide early career researchers with international experience and networks to develop research collaborations. RENKEI’s work to seed new areas of collaboration and joint research was referenced in the UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee July 2023 report which acknowledges the huge potential for an increase in higher education exchanges between the UK and Japan. The Hiroshima Accord signed at the G7 summit in 2023, confirmed the UK and Japan are ‘the closest of partners and will stand shoulder to shoulder in tackling the unprecedented global challenges we now face’.

Current members

UK

- Durham University
- University of Leeds
- University of Liverpool
- Newcastle University
- University of Southampton

Japan

- Keio University
- Kyushu University
- Ritsumeikan University
- Sophia University
- Tohoku University



Activities

RENKEI has served as an effective platform for the members to develop close networks, leading to research collaborations, including joint funding applications, and strong partnerships between individual institutions.

Over the years RENKEI members have jointly delivered over 20 international workshops in the UK and Japan, together with stakeholders in the government, industry, and non-profit sectors. These workshops have engaged early career researchers including PhD students as well as more senior researchers in mentoring/advisory capacities. RENKEI maintains connections with these researchers through RENKEI network events and collates a RENKEI researcher catalogue to promote researcher collaborations.

The annual in-person Steering Committee Meeting is another opportunity for members to engage and maintain strong relationships with each other at a more strategic level, and the regularly held RENKEI Coordinator meetings afford members the opportunity to connect and exchange information in a timely and informal manner.

As this innovative form of bilateral research consortium develops, it will result in shared values, agendas and action points among the participating individuals and institutions. The long-term benefits of RENKEI will be a sustainable dialogue and strategic relationship that transcends academic disciplines, industrial/public sectors and national boundaries, leading to increased UK-Japan research collaborations that address global challenges.

Open call details

Open call information and documents

- Open call information published on the British Council Opportunities and Insight website: <https://opportunities-insight.britishcouncil.org/opportunities>
- Open call guidelines (this document) available as downloadable PDF from the RENKEI website: <https://www.britishcouncil.jp/en/programmes/higher-education/university-industry-partnership/renkei/uk-open-call-2025>
- Membership application form – available upon request through online contact form: <https://bit.ly/RENKEI-apply>

Online briefing and Q&A session

Interested institutions are invited to join an online briefing and Q&A session where they may ask questions regarding RENKEI. The session will be hosted by the RENKEI Secretariat (British Council) and several representatives of current UK member universities.

Date and time: **Thursday 16 October at 9:00-10:00 AM BST**

Depending on the number of registrants, one-to-one briefings may be arranged, at a different date and time, as an alternative to a joint Q&A session.

To participate in the Q&A session, please register your interest through the online contact form by **23:59 BST on Monday 13 October 2025**: <https://bit.ly/RENKEI-apply>

Application/Eligibility criteria

- Applying institutions must be a university with its main base in the UK.
- Applying institutions must have a strong commitment to research, with a high volume of research activity.
- Applying institutions must have doctoral programmes with commitment to developing the next generation of researchers.
- Applying institutions must have a strong interest and commitment to collaboration with RENKEI member institutions.
- Applying institutions must be able to engage both senior and early-career researchers in RENKEI activities.
- To join RENKEI, the selected candidate institution must agree to be bound by the terms and conditions specified in the Operational Alliance Agreement for the RENKEI Partnership¹. The current partnership agreement covers the period up to the end of the 2029/30 financial year (31 March 2030).
- RENKEI member institutions are required to fund their own costs relating to participation in, or organisation of RENKEI activities.

Membership fee

As a condition of membership and participation in RENKEI, members are required to pay an annual membership fee. The annual membership fee amount is set in British Pound Sterling (GBP) and is reviewed annually by the RENKEI Steering Committee to assess whether any inflationary adjustments are necessary. The annual membership fee is invoiced by the RENKEI Secretariat (British Council) in April each year. The membership fee for FY2026/27 is confirmed as 6,000.00 GBP.

Timeline and key dates

- **Monday 22 September 2025:** Open call details published and application period opens
- **Thursday 16 October 2025:** Online briefing and Q&A session for prospective applicants
- **Tuesday 28 October 2025:** Deadline for requesting the 'membership application form' and submitting any questions regarding the open call.
- **Monday 3 November 2025:** Application period closes
- Candidate notified for interest confirmation and agreement details
 - Target date: Thursday 18 December 2025
 - Target offer acceptance deadline: Friday 16 January 2026
- Contractual agreement issued to candidate for signature
 - Target date: Monday 16 February 2026

¹ The Operational Alliance Agreement for the RENKEI Partnership will be shared with the selected candidate institution only.

How to apply

Application documents

Eligible institutions wishing to join RENKEI should complete and submit the 'Membership application form' which can be obtained on request through the online contact form: <https://bit.ly/RENKEI-apply>

Completed application forms to be sent by email to <renkei@britishcouncil.or.jp> by the application deadline, **23:59 GMT on Monday 3 November 2025**.

Selection process

1. The RENKEI Secretariat (British Council) will screen all applications received by the application deadline for eligibility.
2. All eligible applications will be assessed by the RENKEI Steering Committee, which consists of representatives from all current RENKEI member universities.
3. The selected candidate will be notified and requested to examine and confirm their agreement to be bound by the terms of the RENKEI membership agreement.
4. Once confirmation is received, the Operational Alliance Agreement for the RENKEI Partnership will be issued.

Enquiries relating to this matter

For all enquiries relating to this 'call for UK universities to join RENKEI', please contact the **RENKEI Secretariat** (British Council, Japan Education Team) from the online contact form: <https://bit.ly/RENKEI-apply>