

# Sakura Science Program (Open Application)

Annual Mutual Exchange Course (Course D)

## Application Guidelines for FY2026 (Overview)

**Application must be prepared and submitted by the Japanese host organization.**

### 1. Basic Framework of the Program

#### 1.1 Purpose

Countries share the challenge of advancing science and technology while transforming R&D results into innovations. In 2014, the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) established the “Sakura Science Program.” Since then, the program has invited talented young individuals to Japan, giving them the opportunity to experience Japan’s cutting-edge science and technology as well as its culture. The Sakura Science Program’s objectives include:

- To support the development of talented individuals from overseas who have the potential to spark innovation in science and technology.
- To promote international talent circulation efforts.
- To foster sustainable collaboration, cooperation, and networking between Japanese and overseas educational and research institutes.
- To strengthen friendly relations between Japan and other countries and regions, contributing to the advancement of science diplomacy.

**Annual Mutual Exchange Course** (hereafter referred to as the “Course D”), in principle, is intended for students, researchers, faculty members, or individuals working in science and technology-related fields and are 40 years of age or younger. The goal is to strengthen the relations between people and institutions in Japan and India/Africa by fostering exchange activities that are sustainable and promotes international talent circulation.

For example, Japan and India/Africa will select a shared social issue as a theme and implement a project-based exchange (\*) (dispatch/invitation) through inter-institutional collaborations (\*\*) throughout the year. These collaborations will be realized by utilizing the existing networks and relations between Japanese organizations and counterpart country organizations cultivated by the past Sakura Science Program (Course A/B/C) exchange activities, etc.

#### \*Project-based exchanges:

Exchanges that will achieve research or education goals shared by the universities and other institutions in Japan and the partner country. Examples:

- Exchanges that foster the development and networking of students, post-doctoral fellows, and other laboratory personnel, with the aim of contributing to talent circulation efforts and promoting future joint research in fields agreed upon by the universities.
- Exchanges that support the training and facilitate networking among faculty members for activities

such as faculty dispatch, joint supervision (JS), double degrees (DD), etc.

- Exchanges to foster networks and develop human resources to establish internships, joint degree programs, start-ups, joint campuses, etc. between the organizations.

**\*\*Inter-institutional cooperation:**

Cooperation based on an agreement between universities, etc. (including faculties, departments, research institutes, centers, etc.) in Japan and the partner country. Examples:

- Development of exchange from symposiums, etc.
- Development of exchange through public external funding or technical cooperation.
- Development from international exchange at universities, etc.  
(inter-institutional cooperation agreements, joint degree programs, exchange programs, etc.)

## **1.2 Countries or regions for invitation**

India and African countries are eligible for this course. For exchanges with India, multiple Indian institutions can be involved in one exchange, but Institutions from outside of India cannot participate. Exchanges with African countries can include institutions from multiple African countries but cannot include institutions from outside of Africa.

## **1.3 Fields of exchange**

Science and technology (natural sciences, humanities/ social sciences)

Project-based domestic and international youth exchanges through inter-institutional collaboration is targeted.

## **1.4 Requirements for Exchange plan**

Exchange plans must align with "1.1 Purpose".

Specifically, the institutions of the two or more countries, with extensive experience in talent exchange, should strengthen mutual understanding and co-create effective two-way exchanges aimed at achieving shared research and education goals.

## **1.5 Requirements for Participants**

Participants must meet the following requirements at the time of the exchange:

### **(1) Affiliation / Age (※)**

Technical college students, university students, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, educators involved in science and technology, individuals working in science and technology related fields at public institutions, and research and development personnels at private companies, who are under 40 years old.

- ※ Unlike the other courses of the Sakura Science Program, it is not necessary for invitees to be first-time visitors to Japan, but the same exchange host organization cannot invite participants who were invited under the Sakura Science Program Courses A, B, and C in the same fiscal year to participate in Course D. The participants from Japan do not have to be a first-time visitor to the counterpart country.
- ※ The same exchange plan may be submitted for multiple years. Participants from previous years are permitted to participate again in the same program in subsequent years.

- ※ Those who were enrolled at an exchange institution at the time of application but have graduated or left their job before the exchange cannot participate, unless they have decided to continue their enrollment by entering a graduate school at the exchange institution.

Supervisors who can lead the invited/dispatched participants and are able to ensure that the exchange proceeds safely and effectively are allowed to participate as a chaperone in the D Course. The requirements for supervisors are those who can take on the above-mentioned roles, and there is no age requirement.

(2) The number of participants

**The total number of invited and dispatched participants should not exceed 10.**

- ※ No more than 10 participants in total regardless of the number of institutions involved in the exchange (There is no set ratio of invitees/dispatched participants, however, please make sure that the ratio is optimized to achieve the objectives of your exchange plan when drafting your exchange plan).
- ※ Supervisors (no more than one per exchange organization involved) may participate but will count toward the total participant number.

### 1.6 Eligible Japanese organizations

Universities, technical colleges, national research and development agencies, independent administrative agencies, private enterprises, local public entities, organizations having corporate status such as public corporation, or general corporation in Japan.

### 1.7 Exchange activity types not covered

- i. Those not relevant to science and technology (language training, etc.)
- ii. Those with the purpose of profit.
- iii. Those training its own employees of the exchange organization or its subsidiaries, or students from its own school or local subsidiary in the partner country.

## 2. Recruitment period

	Opening date	Deadline	Result notification	Exchange period
FY2026	February 16 (Mon)	April 2 (Thu) 5PM	Late May	Early July ~ March 12 (Fri), 2027

## 3. Selection criteria (Abstract)

(1) Purpose and outline

Evaluations will be based on how well the proposed exchange plan meets the "1.1 Purpose" of this program. We will evaluate specifically how the activities proposed will advance the following goals:

- Develop and recruit talented individuals who can contribute to science and technology innovation and the promotion of international talent circulation efforts
- Promote sustainable collaboration, cooperation, and exchanges between institutions in Japan and the partner country
- Strengthening the foundations for sustainable collaborations and have a positive ripple effect through the exchanges.

• **Fostering and recruiting talented individuals who will contribute to scientific and technological innovation and promote international talent circulation efforts**

We will evaluate how the activities of the exchange plan will support the development of talented individuals who can play an active role internationally, promote study abroad and employment, foster sustainable cooperations and strengthen relations (joint research, etc.), and facilitate international talent circulation between the participants of both countries.

• **Promote sustainable collaboration, cooperation, and exchanges between institutions in Japan and the partner country that have a positive ripple effect on the surrounding areas.**

We will evaluate how the program activities promote sustainable collaboration, cooperation, and exchanges between institutions in Japan and the partner country. We will especially be looking at whether the proposed exchange program will strengthen the foundation for sustainable collaboration, and its potential to positively impact the surrounding areas and encourage further networking and participation in the program. The exchange activities should also enhance mutual understanding and be co-created two-way exchanges aimed at achieving shared research and education goals.

For example, establishing new opportunities to foster mutual exchanges regularly, and concluding or strengthening agreements with specific initiatives such as study abroad, internships, joint degree programs, etc.

(2) The counterpart institution and the Main Implementer

The organization (institution, faculty, laboratory, etc.) to which the participant from the counterpart country belongs must be an institution with top talent that is well-suited for achieving the objectives and implementing the activities of the exchange plan. In addition, the organization's proposal on how they plan to further develop and utilize the results of this exchange, such as strengthening exchange and joint research efforts, will also be evaluated.

The “Main Implementer” in the counterpart country will be evaluated on their ability to advance the exchange plan’s goals, such as their knowledge in implementing initiatives that promote international talent circulation efforts and their experience in leading or guiding research at their institution.

(3) Japanese Exchange Organization and the Main Implementer

The organization (institution, faculty, laboratory, etc.) to which the Japanese participant belongs must be an institution with top talent that is well-suited for achieving the objectives and implementing the activities of the exchange plan. In addition, the organization's proposal on how they plan to further develop and utilize the results of this exchange, such as strengthening exchange and joint research efforts, will also be evaluated.

The “Main Implementer” will be evaluated based on the institution’s competitiveness in international academic exchanges (not limited to relations with the counterpart’s county) which promotes international talent circulation efforts, such as its international network or their experience with international joint research and teaching.

(4) Program content and alignment

The activities detailed in the proposal must be well suited and effective for achieving the purpose and objectives of the exchange plan. The exchange program must set a theme mutually decided upon by Japan and its India/Africa counterparts and include complementary exchange activities that leverage the strengths of each country to support the development of talent and promote innovation aligned with this theme.

We will also evaluate whether the exchange program is a hybrid exchange program with a well-balanced combination of online exchanges and face-to-face exchanges through dispatch and invitation. Additionally, we will assess the effectiveness of the balance between dispatch and invitation, as well as the efforts to establish a solid foundation for cooperation between the institutions.

(5) Effective utilization of the existing exchange infrastructure

Proposals will be evaluated on how well it leverages the achievements and relationship built up over many years through various exchange programs between Japan and India/African countries in the fields of science and technology (example: Sakura Science Program Course A/B/C) and how it plans to build on this existing foundation.

For consecutive applications in FY2025 and beyond, we will evaluate the application based on how the exchange proposal fully utilizes and develops the results obtained from the previous exchanges.

#### **4. Other**

(1) Safety Management Responsibilities

All organizations involved with the exchange program are requested to implement thorough safety measures for the participants.

Exchange organizations are solely responsible for managing the procedures and arrangements for verifying visa requirements for travel and stay, determining the appropriate visa type, and confirming all the necessary conditions for invited and dispatched participants.

(2) Joining Sakura Science Club

All participants in the exchange program will be certified as members of the alumni organization at the conclusion of the exchange (member ID will be issued).

Members will be able to access and receive useful information from the Sakura Science website, get information on upcoming alumni association meetings in various regions, and help continue to foster connections between Japan and India/African countries. We also kindly ask all members to cooperate by filling out questionnaires and other forms to help us improve our activities.

#### **5. Expenses covered by JST**

JST covers direct costs required for the execution of the exchange program, the items listed below, and for the compilation of results. We kindly ask for your understanding and cooperation, as this program is designed to cover only essential expenses to invite and dispatch as many participants as possible.

- I. Travel expenses: Travel expenses (airfare, accommodation, meal fee, etc.) for participants
- II. Cost of goods: Consumables
- III. Gratuities: Lecturers, speakers, etc., part-time students, etc.
- IV. Others: Outsourcing expenses (miscellaneous service expenses), printing and bookbinding expenses, conference expenses, other (miscellaneous expenses), and consumption tax equivalent