

UTFORSK

Call for applications 2024

The Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) announces up to NOK 90 000 000 in grants to educational partnerships between higher education institutions in Norway and Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, South Africa, South Korea, and the United States of America (USA). The projects may engage in bilateral or multilateral cooperation involving partners in one or more of the eligible countries.

Application deadline: 15 April 2024, at 12.00 ([Norwegian time](#)).

Please note the following changes as of March 21, 2024:

- Subject to annual approval by the Parliament, the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills announces **up to NOK 150 million** for the period 2025 to 2028.
- The next call for applications is foreseen in 2028, subject to approval by the Parliament.

Who can apply?

Under this call, the following types of organisations can apply for funding:

- Accredited Norwegian higher education institutions or institutions with accredited higher education programmes*.

Each application must include a main partner institution that is an accredited higher education institution in Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, South Africa, South Korea, or the USA.

Applicants are generally encouraged to establish collaboration with other actors where this can strengthen the project. Other partners may include higher education institutions, higher vocational education institutions, public or private enterprises, research institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or other organisations in Norway, Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, South Africa, South Korea, and the USA.

Please note that requirements may apply to the involvement of partners. Any such requirements can be found under 'Requirements of the application'.

*Clarification as of February 6, 2024: the applicant institution is specified to also include institutions with accredited higher education programmes.

Goals

The overall aim of UTFORSK is to contribute to enhanced quality and relevance of higher education in Norway and in the prioritised partner countries, preparing candidates to address local and global societal challenges.

The purpose of this call is to fund projects that aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Strengthened institutional partnerships for education between Norway and prioritised partner countries.
- Sustained student mobility between Norway and the partner countries.

- Increased integration between higher education, research and working life within the institutional partnerships.
- Enhanced international learning environment for students through collaborative initiatives with project partners.

The project's planned results will be assessed on the basis of their ability to contribute to these goals.

Applicants should design their projects in the way they consider to be best suited to achieving the goals of the programme and based on a needs assessment at the partner institutions and among relevant stakeholders. Project activities should be proposed by partners based on jointly identified challenges and opportunities.

Activities may include all levels (Bachelor, Master, and PhD) and all academic fields. Cooperation across disciplines and sectors is encouraged.

What can you apply for?

Grant amount and duration of project

You can apply for up to NOK 3 million in funding per project.

Projects may have a duration of up to four years. Projects must have planned start-up no later than *1 March 2025* and be scheduled to end by *31 December 2028*. Note that the project must have at least one budgeted activity in each year of this four-year period.

Requirement for own contribution

In order to receive a grant, you must contribute a minimum of 20 per cent of the total budget. [Learn more about how the own contribution is calculated](#). See also further guidance in the application form in Espresso.

Earmarked funds

Of the total grant limit for this call, NOK 15 000 000 is earmarked for projects that are considered to clearly fall within one of the following thematic fields:

- Oceans and coastal areas: collaboration within study programmes for ocean-based industries and the management and understanding of oceans and coastal areas.
- Climate, the environment, and energy: collaboration within study programmes in the field of climate, the environment, and energy.

What can the funding be used for?

The funding you apply for from HK-dir can be used to cover the following types of costs:

- Personnel and administration costs
- Procurement costs for services
- Procurement costs for equipment
- Scholarship costs - for student mobility between four weeks and 12 months
- Travel and accommodation costs
- Other project-related costs

[Learn more about what the different types of costs include and how to budget and calculate them.](#)

How to apply

Information is provided below about the minimum requirements that apply to this call, and which criteria will be used to assess the applications.

Applications must be submitted through the HK-dir application portal [Espresso](#).

The application form includes texts that provide guidance on what kind of information is requested in the different fields.

Requirements of the application

The application must meet the following minimum requirements:

- The application must be submitted by the application deadline applicable to the call.
- The application must be submitted through the HK-dir application portal [Espresso](#).
- The application must be written in English.
- The application must be submitted on behalf of an organisation that can be entered as applicant under this call.
- The application must involve at least one partner institution that is an accredited higher education institution in Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, South Africa, South Korea, or the USA providing accredited education programmes that are relevant to the proposal and at a level equivalent to that offered at the Norwegian applicant institution.
- The application must meet the duration and own contribution requirements that apply to the call.
- The application must include a signed version of [HK-dir's declaration of participation](#) from the person in the applicant organisation with legal responsibility for the application.
- The following attachments must be included:
 - Letters of commitment from all project partners, excluding the applicant institution, documenting their interest in and commitment to the project by the leadership at the relevant level.
 - A curriculum vitae (CV) for the project coordinators at the applicant institution and the main partner institution.

Applications that do not meet these requirements may be rejected or considered incomplete. Applications with errors will be given a short additional deadline to correct such errors where possible. The content of attachments/links that are not a requirement will not be included in the assessment of the application.

What will be emphasised in the assessment?

Applications that meet the requirements that apply to the call will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

Relevance of the project (30 %)

Under this criterion, the following factors will be considered:

- To what extent the need for the project and its significance for the target group(s) are clearly demonstrated.
- To what extent the project's planned results are concrete and suitable to achieve the call's objectives.
- Level of ambition of the results.
- To what extent the project is innovative and/or complementary to other initiatives/activities already initiated by the participating institutions/actors.

Quality of project design and implementation (30 %)

Under this criterion, the following factors will be considered:

- To what extent the project has a concrete, comprehensive and realistic implementation plan.
- Occurrence and quality of risk assessments.
- The extent to which the project is cost-effective and has allocated sufficient resources to the implementation of the activities.
- The ability of the project to take into account the needs and interests of the target groups.

Quality of the project group and collaborative structures (20 %)

Under this criterion, the following factors will be considered:

- The complementarity of the participating institutions/actors and the overall experience and expertise of the project group.
- Whether the division of tasks and responsibilities shows commitment and active contribution from all participating institutions/actors.
- To what extent the project has a clear and comprehensive plan for interaction between the participating institutions/actors, as well as with any stakeholders.

Project impact (20 %)

Under this criterion, the following factors will be considered:

- Potential impact for the project's target groups, participating institutions, and actors in and outside the project.
- The quality of planned measures to ensure that the impacts are maintained after the end of the project period.
- The quality of planned measures to evaluate and document the project's impact.

The criteria will be weighted according to the percentage indicated in brackets behind the individual criteria. [Further guidance is available here on how these criteria will be understood and applied when assessing applications.](#)

How the application is processed

Applications will be considered by two people with special expertise and knowledge of the area covered by the call. In these individual assessments, the applications are given a sub-grade for each assessment criterion that applies to the call, according to the [HK-dir grading scale](#). The assessments will then be consolidated, so that each application receives one set of grades. In case of disagreement about the grading of applications, the application will also be considered by a third person.

In order to qualify for a grant, all of the final sub-grades must be higher than 2, and at least three out of four sub-grades must be 4 or higher.

The overall grades for the applications are calculated on the basis of the final sub-grades and the weighting indicated for the criteria (weighted average grade). In cases where two or more applications are awarded the same overall grade, the applications will be ranked based on the highest sub-grade for the criteria in the order they are listed. In the case of applications that are still equal, their ranking will be determined by lottery.

Final decisions on grants are made by HK-dir based on the final ranking of the applications.

When can you expect an answer to the application?

All applicants will be informed of the outcome of the application process. We estimate that grant decisions will be sent out at the end of October 2024. The grounds for the grading of the applications will follow as an appendix to the decisions.

What conditions will apply to projects that receive a grant?

[HK-dir's standard terms for project funding](#) will apply to the implementation of projects that receive funding. [Here you will find a detailed guide on how HK-dir follows up and monitors projects that receive funding.](#)

Projects subject to restrictions under the Export Control Act and regulations based on this act, must ensure that all required assessments/licences are obtained.

Contact persons

Do you need guidance during the application process? HK-dir can answer questions about the call but cannot read through or comment on specific application drafts. Guidance can be given by email, over the phone, in a video meeting or face-to-face. Feel free to contact one of the people responsible for the call in HK-dir:

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About UTFORSK

UTFORSK is a measure under the Panorama strategy (2021-2027), targeting cooperation on higher education and research with Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, and the USA. Currently UTFORSK does not support new collaborations with Russia.

The purpose of the strategy is increased quality and relevance in higher education, research, and innovation in Norway through internationalisation and cooperation with the business sector.

The Panorama-strategy is based on the following principles of cooperation: quality, relevance, reciprocity, long-term perspective, and accountability. *Accountability* was added to the revised strategy in 2021 and is defined as “(w)hen entering into specific cooperations, consideration should be given to fundamental academic values and national interests, including security interests”. To support relevant assessments [national guidelines for responsible academic cooperation](#) were developed.

The strategy forms part of the follow-up on the *Long-term plan for research and higher education* (2023- 2032) and the White Paper *A world of opportunities — International student mobility in higher education* (Meld St.7 (2020-2021)). The latter is also linked to the White Paper *Quality culture in higher education* (Meld St. 16 (2016- 2017)) and the ambition that, over time, half of those graduating with a degree in higher education in Norway will have had a study or training period abroad.

Education is a key factor in *Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development*, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (the SDGs). Quality education is a goal in itself but education, research, and innovation are also essential components for achieving the other SDGs, as expressed in SDG 17 – “Partnerships for the goals”. International cooperation is a prerequisite for achieving Agenda 2030. The SDGs demonstrate that the major economic, social, and environmental challenges facing the world today require international cooperation and global solutions. Knowledge collaboration in the form of broad international partnerships that include actors across disciplines and sectors is an important part of the solution. The countries included in this call are all significant stakeholders in achieving these goals.

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