Going Global Partnerships

Guidance Notes

**2023 UK-China Institutional Partnership Exploration Fund**

August 2023

Grant call for 2023 UK-China Institutional Partnership Exploration Fund

Countries: China

Going Global Partnerships

[Going Global Partnerships](https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/he-science/going-global-partnerships) supports universities, colleges and wider education stakeholders around the world to work together towards stronger, equitable, more inclusive and internationally connected higher education, science and TVET.

Through international partnerships, system collaborations and opportunities to connect and share, we enable stronger transnational education, more collaborative research, higher quality delivery, enhanced learner outcomes and stronger, internationalised, equitable and inclusive systems and institutions.

We help to strengthen higher education and TVET in five core areas:

* **Enabling research** – supporting research, knowledge and innovation collaborations to address local and global challenges and promote inclusive growth.
* **Internationalising higher education and TVET** – supporting systems, institutions and individuals to benefit from internationalisation, including enabling transnational education and system alignment.
* **Strengthening systems and institutions** – improving the quality and efficiency of higher education and TVET institutions and systems.
* **Enhancing learner outcomes** – addressing the qualities of the global graduate, including soft skills, employability and community outcomes.
* **Increasing equality, diversity and inclusion** – making higher education and TVET more accessible, equitable and accountable.

See open and upcoming Going Global Partnerships opportunities [on our portal](https://education-services.britishcouncil.org/opportunities?sort_by=created&field_programme_tid%5B%5D=404).

Opportunities are being launched continually, so please check this page regularly.

Call Name: 2023 UK-China Institutional Partnership Exploration Fund

Overview

The British Council is committed to make positive contributions to the people, institutions and governments of the UK and other countries. We do this by creating opportunities, building connections, and engendering trust. Our work in higher education aims to extends and strengthens the connections and our Going Global Partnerships programme builds stronger, more inclusive, internationally connected higher education and supports partnerships between universities, colleges, education policy makers, civil society organisations and industry partners in the UK and overseas.

To further support this, the British Council China is launching the **2023 UK-China Institutional Partnership Exploration Fund**, which is designed to explore new opportunities, develop new partnerships, encourage innovative and sustainable collaboration, so as to contribute to a long-term and sustainable UK-China higher education cooperation.

Applications are open to all UK higher education institutions who is seeking and developing new and innovative partnerships with China. The British Council will provide the funding to the winning UK institutions whose selected projects will enable new partnerships, boost innovation and sustainability, and enhance higher education internationalisation and collaboration between the UK and China.

Projects can be delivered online, offline or blended. All applications must demonstrate key characteristics of gender equality and inclusion.

Objectives

* To explore and develop new TNE partnerships
* To share knowledge and best practice in internationalisation and TNE
* To promote student and faculty mobility and exchange
* To enhance teaching cooperation, innovation, and excellence

Eligibility criteria

Proposals must fulfil the following criteria in order to be eligible for funding under this call:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA | Y/N |
| Each proposal must have both:   * one Lead institution from the UK, submitting one joint application, and * one Lead institution from China; |  |
| UK lead institution must be one of the following:   * Higher Education provider with [degree awarding powers](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/degree-awarding-powers/).   + England - Check the ‘awarding degrees’ drop down section on the specific provider’s entry on the [OFS register](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/#/). The OFS register lists all institutions which offer UK degrees, not all of which have degree awarding powers.   + Northern Ireland – <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/universities-and-colleges-northern-ireland>   + Scotland – <https://www.gov.scot/policies/universities/>   + Wales – <https://www.gov.uk/check-university-award-degree/recognised-bodies-wales> |  |
| China lead institution must be one of the following:   * Higher Education provider, recognized by Chinese Ministry of Education |  |
| The Lead institution in China must have the capacity to administer the grant and capacity must be confirmed in the support letter. |  |
| The partnership can include in their proposals Associated Partners (from both the China and the UK) affiliated with:   * *Higher Education providers* * *Not-for-profit research institutions, establishment and organisations* * *TVET/FE providers* * *Other education organisations/charities/foundations/membership bodies* * *Not-for-profit organisations, including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)* * *For-profit/commercial organisations, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs)* * *Branch and satellite campuses of UK Higher Education providers* * *Government organisations* * *Employer organisations and industry bodies* * *Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Social Enterprise organisations* |  |
| For-profit non-education organisations are not eligible to receive any grant funds, except to cover travel-associated costs. |  |

Please send an enquiry to [partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org](mailto:partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org).cn if you are in doubt about the eligibility of your organisation.

Eligibility checks will be applied to all applications after the grant call closes. Those which are not led by an eligible institution will be rejected during these checks. Please see **Annex 1** for the eligibility criteria check list.

Funding

A funding of no more than GBP40,000 will be awarded to each winning UK lead applicant. 80% of the funding will be disbursed in 2023/24, while the remaining 20% by March 2026. Projects in receipt of funding will be expected to start no later than March 2024 and can run for two years (until February 2026). The funding is for the duration of the project and not per annum.

This funding is subject to ODA requirements (<https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/how-we-work/finance/official-development-assistance>).

Funds will be disbursed directly to the Lead Institution in the UK according to the approved final budget. Applicants may be asked to adjust their budget if their request does not fit within funding guidelines or if this is considered not appropriate by the application reviewers.

For an equitable partnership, the Lead Institution should be able to timely transfer funding to other institutions in partnerships for activities which support the objectives of the collaboration and the overall project, allowing activities implementation to be implemented without delay.

For-profit associate partners are only eligible to receive funds to cover travel-associated costs. Funds to be allocated for all travel can be up to 20% of the total grant per project.

In some cases, the national partner will also provide funding to the partner country institution. Please note that this will not apply for all countries. Matching funds are encouraged but not a requirement.

Eligible Costs

The budget requested in the proposal should cover only costs that are essential, appropriate, and relevant to the collaboration to ensure value for money. The proposal should specify any cost sharing through direct and indirect institutional contributions.

A list of eligible and ineligible costs can be found in Annex 2. Applicants should contact the British Council if in any doubt about the costs covered by the grant.

In the case of an eventual underspent due to unforeseen circumstance, there should also be a plan to spend the grant amount on activities that are related in Higher Education (e.g., activities that strengthen young researcher mobility and collaboration).

Operational Requirements

Proposals must meet the following operational requirements:

Value for money: Projects must achieve the best possible outcomes with the funding and resources available, while ensuring funding and resources are used effectively, economically and without waste.

Deliverability: Proposals must incorporate a credible delivery plan with realistic milestones for progressing the different elements of the project to completion on time and within budget. This will require a team with relevant skills and experience.

Affordability and sustainability: Project proposals must be affordable in relation to the overall funding available and be financially sustainable with benefits that can endure beyond the funding period.

Partnership: Projects in the proposal must include UK and Chinese institutions. Letters of support from relevant authority within the universities must be attached to the proposal.

Monitoring and evaluation plan: Projects must have a clear monitoring and evaluation plan. The plan should explain what the key performance indicators are and how monitoring will be carried out. Tangible milestones should be set, with an explanation as to how they will be measured. A risk management plan should also be included.

EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion): Measures are in place to ensure equal and meaningful opportunities for people of different background, races, faith background, ages, gender, sexual orientation, and dis/ability to be involved throughout the project. This includes involvement as people who run the project, project activity participants and also beneficiaries.

Assessment Criteria

Project proposals will be assessed based on the information provided in the application form. Shortlisted applicants may be contacted for further information about their proposals.

The proposals will be assessed based on the following criteria:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Selection criteria (max score = 100) | Weight of score |
| Alignment with strategic objectives   * Proposals must show a clear understanding of and fully address the strategic objectives. * Proposals must demonstrate the ability to generate outcomes that are of benefits to the UK and China. * Proposals must clearly explain what the project expects to achieve and how this will create opportunities and increase collaboration between the UK and China. | 30% |
| Potential to deliver target outcomes and impacts   * Project deliverability: Proposals must incorporate a credible delivery plan with realistic milestones for progressing the different elements of the project for timely completion. * Monitoring and evaluation: Proposals must have a clear monitoring and evaluation plan. The plan should explain the key performance indicators and monitoring procedure. Tangible milestones should be set, with an explanation as to how they would be measured. A risk management plan should also be included. * Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate significant growth potential for the UK and China, innovative services and/or products, access to other sources of funding, and partnerships with Chinese institutions. | 30% |
| Capacity to deliver on time and within budget   * Projects must be led by a team with the skills and experience necessary to successfully deliver the proposed work. * Sustainability: Proposals must be financially sustainable with benefits that can endure beyond the funding period. * Proposals must demonstrate the commitment of the project team towards successfully developing the programme. | 30% |
| Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)   * Measures must be in place to ensure equal and meaningful opportunities for people of different backgrounds, race, faith, ages, gender, sexual orientation, and dis/ability throughout the project. This includes those running the project, activity participants, and beneficiaries. * Applications must outline how they have taken meaningful yet proportionate consideration as to how the project will contribute to reducing gender inequalities in the Gender Equality Statement section of the application form. | 10% |
| Total | 100% |

Timelines

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Activity | Timeline |
| Call for proposal | 7 August 2023 |
| Clarification questions submitted by applicants and response from British Council | 7 August – 8 September 2023 |
| Application deadline and to submit amendments to Term of Contract (if any) | 25 September 2023 |
| Proposal assessment and due diligence | 26 September – 31 October 2022 |
| Notification of proposal’s outcome | mid November 2023 |
| Agreement signing | November 2023 |
| Allocation of funding (80%) | December 2023 |
| Inception meetings | March 2024 |
| Project implementation | March 2024 – February 2026 |
| Progress reports | Every six months |
| Submission of final reports | 1 March 2026 |
| Allocation of balance of funding (20%) | 15 March 2026 |

Payment of the Grant

Following announcement of the results, the British Council will sign Grant Agreements with the successful UK lead applicant. The UK institutions are expected to allocate funding to their Chinese partners to co-deliver the project if required.

Unless otherwise stated, the British Council will administer 80% of the funding within 60 days of receiving the signed Grant Agreement. All funded applicants must submit a declaration confirming they have received the funds. The 20% balance of payment will be paid by March 2026 upon completion of project.

The British Council reserves the right to recover payment in full if the final report and supporting documents are not satisfactory, or the activities have not been delivered as planned.

In cases where the project expenditure is less than the funding awarded, the underspend cannot be used for further activity unless agreed by the British Council. Requests to utilise the underspend should be sent to [partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org](mailto:partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org).cn prior to additional expenditure. Requests should be submitted before 31 Dec 2025.

Implementation

Successful applicants must agree to the terms and conditions which will be stipulated in the agreement and other formal/written communications provided by the British Council prior to project commencement. The agreement will be signed with the British Council in China. Any changes to the proposed commitment, scope or project activities must be approved by the British Council prior to execution.

Project Reporting, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Funded projects will be expected to provide project progress reports, including half-yearly progress reports, end of project report as well as baseline / end of project surveys to the British Council during and at the end of the project, containing a narrative and financial information to track project milestones. A report template will be provided.

A project manager from the British Council in China will monitor all projects and activities. Funded universities are also expected to report gender equality-related indices such as the benefits to participants from working on specific projects.

The British Council will conduct regular monitoring and evaluation, including the commission of independent evaluations for selected activities of strategic importance to the project.

A detailed record of activities, including important communications, documents and spending, should be kept in case an external audit is carried out.

Please note if the project progress reports are not completed on time, the British Council will reserve the rights to recoup funds or not give future instalments of funds that are due.

Ethics

It is essential that all legal and professional codes of practice are followed in conducting work supported by this call. Applicants must ensure the proposed activity will be carried out to the highest standards of ethics and research integrity.

In the application form, applicants must clearly articulate how any potential ethical and health and safety issues have been considered and how they will be addressed, ensuring that all necessary ethical approval is in place before the project commences and all risks are minimised.

Please refer to the Research Councils UK ‘Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research’ (<https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/UKRI-050321-PolicyGuidelinesGovernanceOfGoodResearchConduct.pdf>) , the Inter Academy Partnership report ‘Doing Global Science: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in the Global Research Enterprise’ (http://www.interacademycouncil.net/24026/29429.aspx) or contact us for further guidance.

Safeguarding and protecting adults at risk

The British Council is committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk and to upholding their rights in accordance with all applicable legislation and statutory guidance. As part of that commitment, we require that all staff, and those we work with, including partners and suppliers, operate within our Safeguarding Policy which articulates our approach to protecting children and adults at risk and promoting their wellbeing.

We have robust systems and procedures in place to both prevent incidents (covering, for example, the recruitment of appropriate staff, training and support given so that staff can work safely, and standards regarding the way in which we carry out activities) together with responsive actions necessary to address situations where we become aware that a child or an adult at risk may have been harmed. As part of our policy, all countries have a named Safeguarding Focal Point (SFP) who is supported by a Regional Safeguarding Manager (RSM) and the British Council Safeguarding Team.

For further information please see: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/how-we-work/policies/safeguarding>

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Applicants are encouraged to ensure equal opportunities in the teams implementing their proposed activity. Applicants may apply for additional funding to cover any specific requirements necessary to ensure full participation.

Please make additional costs in the ‘human resources’ section of the budget request within your application. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Please contact us for further information on the British Council’s approach. See our Equality Policy here: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/our-values/equality-diversity-inclusion>

Gender Equality

To comply with the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014, applications must outline how they have taken meaningful yet proportionate consideration as to how the project will contribute to reducing gender inequalities in the Gender Equality Statement section of the application form.

**Gender Equality Statement**

Applicants are required to consider the impact their project will have on gender and provide a gender statement. It should not be a re-statement of your Institution’s policy; you may refer to the policy but should show how the policy will be implemented in terms of the project.

Below are the project aspects that can be taken into consideration for the gender statement but not limited to.

* Outputs
* Outcomes
* Make-up of the project team; participants, stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project
* Processes followed throughout the project.

The statement is part of the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) assessment criterion in this call. The following questions should be answered when writing the statement.

* Have measures been put in place to ensure equal and meaningful opportunities for people of different genders to be involved throughout the project? This includes the development of the project, the participants of the research and innovation, and the beneficiaries of the activities.
* The expected impact of the project (benefits and losses) on people of different genders, both throughout the project and beyond.
* The impact on the relations between people of different genders and people of the same gender. For example, changing roles and responsibilities in households, society, economy, politics, power, etc.
* How will any risks and unintended negative consequences on gender equality be avoided or mitigated against, and monitored?
* Are there any relevant outcomes and outputs being measured, with data disaggregated by age and gender (where disclosed)?

Not all questions will be applicable. If a question is not applicable, you will need to articulate the reasons why.

British Council reserve the right to reject the application if no consideration has been given to gender equality or if the proposal is assessed to result in a negative impact for gender equality.

Impact on the Environment

The British Council is committed to minimising its environmental impact. For this call, we have developed a set of questions which will enable us to understand the expected impact of a proposed project on the climate (and environment more broadly). We welcome information from Applicants regarding environmental considerations such as reducing carbon emissions for their projects (for example, alternatives to national or international travel such as virtual delivery), minimising waste or promoting resource efficiency.

Please note, responses to these questions will not form part of the grant assessment criteria and will not be subject to peer review. The British Council collects this information for internal purposes only. Please contact us via email ([partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org](mailto:partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org).cn), if you have any queries about the environmental impact section.

Applicant screening

In order to comply with UK government legislation, the British Council may at any point during the application process, carry out searches of relevant third-party screening databases to ensure that neither the applicant institutions nor any of the applicants’ employees, partners, directors, shareholders are listed:

* as an individual or entity with whom national or supranational bodies have decreed organisations should not have financial dealings;
* as being wanted by Interpol or any national law enforcement body in connection with crime;
* as being subject to regulatory action by a national or international enforcement body;
* as being subject to export, trade or procurement controls or (in the case of an individual) as being disqualified from being a company director; and/or
* as being a heightened risk individual or organisation, or (in the case of an individual) a politically exposed person.

If the applicant or any other party is listed in a Screening Database for any of the reasons set out above, the British Council will assess the applicant as ineligible to apply for this grant call.

The applicant must provide the British Council with all information reasonably requested by the British Council to complete the screening searches.

Please read the text to this effect on the application form and tick the box to show that you understand this.

Covid-19 guidance

Should COVID-19 impact global travel, we would advise that applicants consider, and put in place, contingency plans for remote working and digital collaboration where possible, for example utilising video conferencing in place of face-to-face meetings.

The British Council’s Global Information Security Policy has banned Zoom usage for the British Council and for contracted suppliers and grant award holders. The British Council recommends using Microsoft Teams to deliver virtual activities. Should you be successful in securing a grant, and if you require a Microsoft Teams licence, you will need to discuss this with the British Council. Applicants who want to use other online tools or online platforms, must follow British Council safeguarding and security protocols. Online tools or platforms other than Microsoft Teams must be discussed with the British Council and requests to use a different platform or tool would need to be approved for successful grant recipients.

Please consider flexible and technological solutions to progress activity for planned work where feasible.

British Council contractual requirements

* The contracting authority is the British Council which includes any subsidiary companies and other organisations that control or are controlled by the British Council from time to time
  + (see: [www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/structure/status](http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/structure/status)).
* The Grant Agreement Holder for the partnership will be the UK Lead Institution.
* The successful applicants will be expected to undertake activities in the UK and in the overseas countries listed in these guidelines.
* The British Council is subject to the requirements of the UK Freedom of Information Act, (“FOIA”). Please indicate in your application whether FOIA also applies to your organisation, so that we can reflect this in the Grant Agreement should you be successful in your application.
* (Terms and Conditions of the Grant Agreement) (“Grant Agreement”). **By submitting a response to this call for applications, you are agreeing to be bound by the terms of these guidelines and the Grant Agreement without further negotiation or amendment.**
* In the event that you have any concerns or queries in relation to the Grant Agreement, you should submit a clarification request to [partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org](mailto:partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org).cn in accordance with the provisions of this call for applications by the application deadline. The British Council reserves the right not to make any changes to the Grant Agreement.
* The British Council is under no obligation to consider any clarifications / amendments to the Grant Agreement requested following the application deadline.

Privacy Notice

The British Council and UK partners comply with UK GDPR and the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and data protection laws in other countries that meet internationally accepted standards. The British Council will use the information that you provide for the purposes of processing your application, making any awards and the monitoring & review of any grants. The legal basis for processing your information is agreement with our terms and conditions of application (contract).

We may share all application data with individual assessment panelists in the UK and China in order to assist with management of the application process. We may share selected non personal data with agencies responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the **2023 UK-China Institutional Partnership Exploration Fund**.

Your information will not be used/shared beyond the partners listed above for any other purpose without your specific consent. British Council and its partners reserve the right to publish and share anonymised aggregated information with stakeholders.

Organisation details, where collected, are used for monitoring and evaluation and statistical purposes. Gender information and country of origin, where collected, is used solely for statistical purposes. If we need to contact you, we will do so using the contact details you have provided.

Under UK Data Protection law, you have the right to ask for a copy of the information we hold on you, and the right to ask us to correct any inaccuracies in that information. If you want more information about this, please contact your local British Council office or see our website: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/privacy-cookies/data-protection>. We will keep your information for a period of seven years after the project.

How to Apply

* Please complete the attached application form and email it along with all supporting documentation (such as CVs and supporting letters etc) to [partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org](mailto:partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org).cn by 23:59 GMT on 25 September 2023.
* Any enquiries about the grant opportunity can also be sent to the above email address.

* End -