Niigata University Next Generation Project

—A Project to Develop Pioneering Doctoral Human Resources with Global Comprehensive Knowledge to Lead Future Society—

Application Guidelines for AY2026 and AY2026 (Additional Openings)

Niigata University has been selected by the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) to be funded under its program "Support for Pioneering Research Initiated by the Next Generation (SPRING)" for Academic Year (AY 2024, which is designed to support doctoral course students' endeavors. With this funding, Niigata University will implement a Project to Develop Pioneering Doctoral Human Resources with Global Comprehensive Knowledge to Lead Future Society.

[Purpose]

In order to develop next-generation doctoral talents capable of performing challenging and interdisciplinary research that goes beyond existing frameworks and creating innovation in diverse areas, Niigata University has established a Project to Develop Pioneering Doctoral Human Resources with Global Comprehensive Knowledge to Lead Future Society [1] (hereinafter referred to as the "Next Generation Project") with an aim to improve treatment and help form career paths for doctoral course students with excellent academic performance. Students accepted for the Next Generation Project are not only provided with financial support for covering their living and research expenses under a research grant, but also are required to participate in career path support programs held on campus and to undertake challenging and interdisciplinary research under the Short-term Cross-laboratory Study Program, among other requirements.[2] After earning degrees, they are expected to take advantage of the abilities developed during the period of the project to play active roles in various social fields, mainly industrial. We hope that many doctoral course students who fully understand the purpose of the Next Generation Project and are highly motivated to play prominent roles in science and technology as well as innovation of Japan in the future will apply for the project.

[1] We have established the Niigata University Vision 2030 with a mission of "Becoming a front-runner of future *life innovation*." Our definition of "life innovation" is not confined to the fields of medical care, health, and welfare, but is also innovation that creates new value and meaning of our "existence," "whole life," "way of living," "the ideal society," "involvement with the environment," as well as the bases of these: the earth and nature as we live through the 21st century.

For details, please visit https://www.niigata-u.ac.jp/en/university/about/mission-vision/vision2030/

[2] The JST SPRING program requires fund recipients to submit a report every academic year. JST plans to make mid-term evaluations based on these reports. JST clearly states that depending on such evaluations, it may cut or withdraw funding. For the JST SPRING application guidelines and FAQ, please visit

https://www.jst.go.jp/jisedai/spring/dl/application-guideline-2024SPRING.pdf (in Japanese)

https://www.jst.go.jp/jisedai/spring/dl/fy2025/faq-2025SPRING.pdf (in Japanese)

In addition, the JST SPRING program has undergone a revision of its support system, and as a result, certain aspects of the support provided will be changed for students selected through this application call. The details of the changes are as follows:

・International students will not receive financial support for living expenses. (However, for a period of one year only from April 2026, financial support for living expenses may be granted in exceptional cases.)

・A new category of application has been established for working adult stidents and similar applicants who will receive research expenses only. This category applies to applicants falling under Category of application [1] - Eligibility of application ⟨2⟩ in this application.

https://www.jst.go.jp/report/2025/250709.html (in Japanese)

[Eligibility for application and number of openings]

Category of openings	Category of application	Eligibility for application (Program; nth year etc.)	Number of openings
AY2026 Application	[1]	⟨1⟩ **Applicants who are scheduled to enroll and be enrolled in the following doctoral program and year at Niigata University in April 2026.** **・The first year of the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences**	12
		⟨2⟩ **Working adult students and similar applicants who are scheduled to enroll and be enrolled in one of the following doctoral programs and years at Niigata University in April 2026.** **(Examples include students who are recognized as having a stable source of income, and the Japanese Government (MEXT) scholarship students affiliated with governmental organizations. For details, refer to the section [Application Requirements] "○For Category of application [1] - Eligibility for application ⟨2⟩" below.)** **・The first year of the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Modern Society and Culture or the Graduate School of Science and Technology** **・The first year of the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences**	
AY2026 Application (additional openings)	[2]	**Applicants who will be enrolled in one of the following Niigata University graduate school doctoral programs/years in April 2026.** **・The second year of a four-year doctoral program of medical and dental sciences**	Approximately 1
	[3]	**Applicants who will be enrolled in one of the following Niigata University graduate school doctoral programs/years in April 2026.** **・The second year of a segment-type doctoral program** **・The third year of a four-year doctoral program of medical and dental sciences**	Approximately 2

		Applicants who will be enrolled in one of the following Niigata University graduate school doctoral programs/years in April 2026. ・The third year of a segment-type doctoral program ・The fourth year of a four-year doctoral program of medical and dental sciences	Approximately 2
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With regard to students in the Graduate School of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, as the timing of the application call was postponed in the previous call, this circumstance may be taken into consideration during the screening process in order to secure a certain number of students to be supported.

[Support period]

The period of support is from April 2026, for a maximum of three years (or four years for four-year doctoral programs) for Category of application [1], for a maximum of three years for Category of application [2], for a maximum of two years for Category of application [3], and for a maximum of one year for Category of application [4]. If the length of enrollment exceeds three years (or four years for a four-year doctoral program), the period thereafter will be outside the scope of support.

For a person who has experienced major life events such as childbirth and childcare, the support period may be suspended or extended, or other arrangements may be made according to his/her personal circumstances.

[Application requirements]

1. The applicant must understand the purposes of the JST SPRING program and the Niigata University Next Generation Project, have outstanding research capabilities or qualifications and motivation, be willing to concentrate on challenging and interdisciplinary research projects with an open and flexible mind, and satisfy the above eligibility for application and the following requirements. The project has no limits on age or area of research.

Keep in mind that the Application Guidelines for the JST SPRING program require international students to take a career path that will contribute to Japan's science, technology, and innovation with a view to remaining in Japan after completing the program and to helping Japan become more internationally competitive. The Application Guidelines also require inviting applicants from diverse countries and regions, with a special emphasis on ASEAN nations. This requirement may be taken into account in the screening process. International students eligible for support are those who reside in Japan under the status of residence "Student" (including cases that fall under "×: not eligible" in the attached "別紙「研究奨励費 支援対象確認表」").

○For Category of application [1] - Eligibility for application ⟨1⟩, Categories of application [2], [3] and [4]
The following persons cannot apply:

(1) A student receiving a grant-type scholarship that is enough to cover standard living expenses (2.4 million yen per year)

(2) A student who is recognized to be receiving a stable income as salary, executive compensation, etc. from the university, company, etc. to which he/she belongs, at a sufficient level to cover his/her living expenses*3

(3) A student receiving government-funded research grants or similar support intended for students to devote themselves to free, challenging, and interdisciplinary research, to the same purpose as the JST SPRING program[*4]

(4) An international student who belongs to any domestic or overseas institution or corporation as an executive, employee, or in any similar capacity, while being enrolled in a graduate program

(If the student meets the conditions under Category of Application [1] - Eligibility for Application ⟨2⟩, the student may be eligible for research expenses support.)

〇For Category of application [1] - Eligibility for application ⟨2⟩

Applicants who satisfy any of the following requirements.

(1) A student receiving a grant-type scholarship that is enough to cover standard living expenses (2.4 million yen per year)

(2) A student who is recognized as receiving a stable and fixed income, such as salary or executive compensation, at a level sufficient to cover living expenses[*3], and who is employed by a company incorporated in Japan, a national or local government office, or a non-corporate organization (such as an independent administrative institution, a foundation/association, a medical corporation, or an NPO), as a working adult student

(3) A student who holds positions only in overseas institutions or corporations, and whose affiliations are exclusively with non-profit institutions or corporations, such as foreign universities or public research institutions, regardless of whether the student receives any income

(4) An international student receiving a scholarship from the Japanese government under the Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship Program, and who is affiliated with a government organization, regardless of whether the student receives any income

However, a student receiving government-funded research grants or similar support intended for students to devote themselves to free, challenging, and interdisciplinary research, to the same purpose as the JST SRING program, is excluded. [*4]

〇An international student who holds positions exclusively in overseas for-profit institutions or corporations is not eligible for support.

[*3] The standard annual compensation for adequately covering living expenses is set at 2.4 million yen per year.

[*4] Examples include: ・JSPS (the Japasn Society for the Promotion of Scientists) Research Fellowships
・JICA international students receiving support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
・Participants of young talents development in the JST "Networked Exchange, United Strength for Stronger Partnerships between Japan and ASEAN"(NEXUS)

2. The successful applicants must comply with all of the following requirements:

   (1) Concentrating on research activities according to the research plans they have submitted

   (2) Taking career development and training opportunities*5 (excluding working adult students who fall under Category of application [1] - Eligibility for application ⟨2⟩ - Application requirements (2) to (4))

   (3) Participating in the PhD student exchange meetings*6

   (4) Submitting a research plan at year-start and a research accomplishment report at year-end

   (5) Having regular interviews with their mentor

   (6) Registering at researchmap and updating your research achievements, as well as cooperating in various surveys, most notably follow-up surveys on your career paths over a period of more than ten years after completing their doctoral programs

   (7) Complying with various research-related laws and regulations and the university regulations, as well as autonomously ensuring research integrity (the soundness and fairness of research)

*5 Career development and training opportunities, which involve both support for research capacity development and classes for career path development, can be divided under the following headings. The career development and training opportunities that students must take vary depending on their elective unit (explained later). Check the details at information sessions and the like.

   (i) Cultivating an international mindset

   Presentations at international academic meetings, overseas education and training, contribution of papers to international English-language journals, and exchange events with international students.

   (ii) Strengthening industry-academia collaboration

   Career management seminars, exchange with corporate researchers through hands-on participation programs, business matching with corporations, Cooperative Education through Research Internships and other internships as needed

   (iii) Supporting the acquisition of transferable skills

   Generic skills seminars, intellectual property education, presentation skills seminars, academic writing seminars, and events held by graduate student associations and affiliate centers

   (iv) Securing career paths for young researchers

   PhD recruitment forums, career seminars for doctors, and company information sessions for doctors jointly organized by partner universities (company-student matching events)

   (v) Supporting student startups and university-launched ventures

   Entrepreneurship education

   (vi) Supporting the acquisition of expertise and skills related to data science

   Seminars and workshops for gaining various skills, the Young Data Scientists Colloquium (YDSC)

   (vii) Promoting interdisciplinary research

   The Short-Term Cross-Laboratory Study Program (Multi-Laboratory System), and the U-go Salon, an event for interdisciplinary exchange hosted by university research administrators (URAs)

*6 Campus-wide interdisciplinary exchange meetings for PhD students. They may involve an overnight stay.

3. The first year of adoption of the Next Generation Project involves gaining basic academic skills, transferable skills, and information and AI skills under the common menu, as well as nurturing the foundations for launching challenging and interdisciplinary research via mentor interviews. In the second year of the project (D2), students are divided among four talent development units. Students work on the activities they choose from among the compulsory activities defined, and other opportunities offered, in their respective units. We introduce a point system to evaluate student performance in these activities.

(1) Common menu (the first year of adoption)

Compulsory requirements include participating in the guidance session for successful applicants, career management seminars (except for those who have already gained the credits concerned), and mentor interviews, as well as registering at researchmap and cooperative education through research internships system.

(2) Talent development units (from the second year (D2))

    (i) Research exploration unit (standard quota: 3 students for each doctoral year)

        This unit is designed to develop doctoral talents who try to further deepen their specialty research capabilities through the acquisition of transferable skills and academic skills under the career support menu.

        Students must contribute as many papers as or more than needed to complete the doctoral program by the end of the support period, apply for a Research Fellowship for Young Scientists of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) every year, and participate in an academic writing seminar at least one course per year.

    (ii) Career development unit (standard quota: 6 students for each doctoral year)

        This unit is designed to develop doctoral talents who create scientific technologies and innovations across industry, academia and government through the acquisition of transferable skills and generic skills from the career support menu.

        Students must participate—at least once during the support period—in the PhD recruitment forum and a generic skills seminar (three sessions in total).

    (iii) Creative research unit with crossover AI (standard quota: 6 students for each doctoral year)

        This unit is designed to develop doctoral talents who can create innovations in the cross-AI field through the acquisition of not only transferable skills but also expertise and skills related to data science—which is being accelerated and diversified—under the career support menu.

        Students must organize and manage a YDSC once during the support period and participate in a seminar or workshop organized by the Big Data Activation (BDA) Research Center at least once during the support period.

(iv) Interdisciplinary research unit (standard quota: 14 students for each doctoral year)

This unit is designed to develop doctoral talents who can create innovations in diverse fields through the use of knowledge and expertise gained through interdisciplinary research.
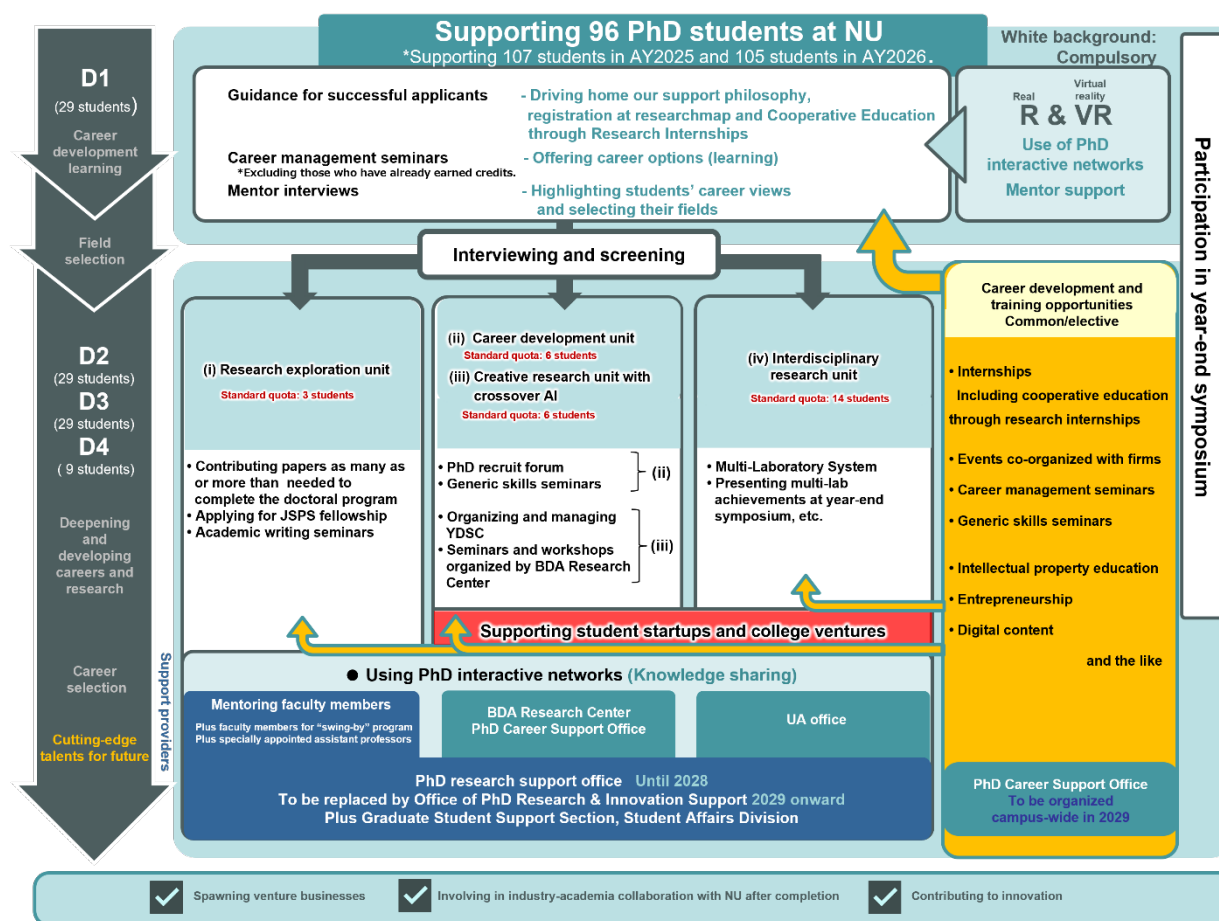
Students must participate in the Short-Term Cross-Laboratory Study Program (Multi-Laboratory System) except for the last academic year of the support period, during which students are encouraged to do so. With an aim to promote students' interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and foster their challenging and interdisciplinary research capacity, we encourage active implementation of interdisciplinary research exchange across the humanities and social sciences, science and technology, and medicine and dentistry by allowing them to engage in research at another laboratory on campus for a given period (three months as a standard for each doctoral year in and after the second year). Students must also present their multi-laboratory achievements at the year-end symposium or an on-campus research exchange meeting (the U-go Salon, etc.) at least once during the support period.

In addition to the above, students must participate in the year-end symposium every year during the support period.

The compulsory activities for additional openings students with a support period of two years or less (for those falling under [3] or [4] of 'Category of application') and working adult students who fall under Category of application [1] - Eligibility for application ⟨2⟩ - Application requirements (2) to (4) are determined separately. (https://portal.phd.niigata-u.ac.jp/category/fellowship_next_gen/common (in Japanese))

We will decide how students are divided among these four units based on two factors. One is their wishes as expressed in the questionnaire form they submitted at the time of application and in their subsequent mentor interviews. The other is their previous performance. (However, for additional openings students with a support period of two years or less, the Career development unit is recommended.) Because each unit has its own standard quota, it is possible that some students cannot move on to the units of their preference. The above description reflects what these units are expected to look like as of now. Their frameworks and quotas may be subject to change depending both on progress in the project and on possible changes in the project budget. Separately, this project will launch a new initiative aimed at developing doctoral talents who will start up businesses and university-launched ventures.

Supporting 96 PhD students at NU
*Supporting 107 students in AY2025 and 105 students in AY2026.

White background: Compulsory

D1
(29 students)

Career development learning

Field selection

D2
(29 students)
D3
(29 students)
D4
(9 students)

Deepening and developing careers and research

Career selection

Cutting-edge talents for future

Support providers

Guidance for successful applicants — Driving home our support philosophy, registration at researchmap and Cooperative Education through Research Internships

Career management seminars — Offering career options (learning)
*Excluding those who have already earned credits.

Mentor interviews — Highlighting students' career views and selecting their fields

Real / Virtual reality
R & VR
Use of PhD interactive networks
Mentor support

Interviewing and screening

(i) Research exploration unit
Standard quota: 3 students

- Contributing papers as many as or more than needed to complete the doctoral program
- Applying for JSPS fellowship
- Academic writing seminars

(ii) Career development unit
Standard quota: 6 students
(iii) Creative research unit with crossover AI
Standard quota: 6 students

- PhD recruit forum
- Generic skills seminars } (ii)

- Organizing and managing YDSC
- Seminars and workshops organized by BDA Research Center } (iii)

(iv) Interdisciplinary research unit
Standard quota: 14 students

- Multi-Laboratory System
- Presenting multi-lab achievements at year-end symposium, etc.

Career development and training opportunities Common/elective

- Internships
  Including cooperative education through research internships
- Events co-organized with firms
- Career management seminars
- Generic skills seminars
- Intellectual property education
- Entrepreneurship
- Digital content

and the like

Supporting student startups and college ventures

● **Using PhD interactive networks** (Knowledge sharing)

Mentoring faculty members
Plus faculty members for "swing-by" program
Plus specially appointed assistant professors

BDA Research Center PhD Career Support Office

UA office

PhD research support office Until 2028
To be replaced by Office of PhD Research & Innovation Support 2029 onward
Plus Graduate Student Support Section, Student Affairs Division

PhD Career Support Office
To be organized campus-wide in 2029

Participation in year-end symposium

✓ Spawning venture businesses   ✓ Involving in industry-academia collaboration with NU after completion   ✓ Contributing to innovation

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[Support details]

1. Financial support for living and research expenses

(1) Financial support for living expenses

Japanese students who satisfy Eligibility for application and Application requirements for Category of application [1] - Eligibility for application ⟨1⟩, Categories of Application [2], [3] and [4] will receive financial support for living expenses in the amount of 175,000 yen per month, paid every two months.

International students will not receive financial support for living expenses (see the attached "別紙「研究奨励費 支援対象確認表」"). However, among privately financed international students who satisfy Eligibility for application and Application requirements for Category of application [1] - Eligibility for Application ⟨1⟩, Categories of Application [2], [3] and [4], those who are recognized as exceptionally outstanding through the selection process may be granted financial support for living expenses for one year only from April 2026. Working adult students and similar applicants who satisfy Eligibility for application and Application Requirements for Category of Application [1] - Eligibility for Application ⟨2⟩ will not receive financial support for living expenses.

(2) Financial support for research expenses is shown below:

First year (under the common menu): 200,000 yen/year

Second year onward   **Research exploration unit: 200,000 yen/year**

                                      Career development unit: 200,000 yen/year

                                      Creative research unit with crossover AI: 300,000 yen/year

                                      Interdisciplinary research unit: 400,000 yen/year

The amount may be increased depending on the nature of the research project. If the support period for the applicable year is six months or less, the amount to be paid will be half the yearly payment, as a rule.

2. Support by mentors: research environment assistance, as well as advice and suggestions regarding the development of career paths to academia or industry

3. Support by the PhD Career Support Office: career development and training opportunities, such as generic skills seminars (excluding working adult students who fall under Category of application [1]- Eligibility for application ⟨2⟩ - Application requirements (2) to (4))

[Application documents]

1. The following application documents ((i) to (iii)) must be submitted.

   (i) Application Form for Support of Niigata University Next Generation Project
      (1_drshien shinseisho_en_2026)

  (ii) Letter of Recommendation for an Applicant for Support of Niigata University Next Generation Project
      (2_drshien suisensho_en_2026)

  (iii) Letter of Consent for an Applicant for Support of Niigata University Next Generation Project
      (3_drshien douisho_en_2026)

2. The applicant must submit the document (i).

3. The applicant must find his/her recommender who knows the applicant well and ask him/her to submit the document (ii). (The recommender should preferably be the applicant's host faculty member (doctoral advisor) in the doctoral program.) The applicant is prohibited from reviewing the content of the letter of recommendation. The applicant must ask his/her host faculty member (doctoral advisor) to submit the application document (iii). (Application documents (i) and (ii) could be prepared and submitted by the same person.) The host faculty member (doctoral advisor) who prepares the Letter of Consent must carefully review the application documents, in particular the Research plan.

4. The applicant must download the prescribed forms from the following URL and complete the application documents ((i) to (iii)). (https://www.phd.niigata-u.ac.jp/next-generation-project/application-details/)

The application form must be in a language that he/she understand, either Japanese or English.
The second screening (online interview: Zoom) will be conduct of a 3-minute presentation and a 5-minute Q&A session by the language indicated in the application form.

If fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other misconduct is detected in the application documents, a strict response will be taken.

[Application procedures]

1. The applicant must take the following steps to apply.

   (1) Register the applicant's information

     The applicant must register the necessary information in the application registration form (https://forms.office.com/r/Ur2P3L3iSX).

   (2) Submit the application documents

     The applicant must submit the application document (i) to fs-spring@gs.niigata-u.ac.jp. Convert the document to the **PDF file format** (if necessary, sign the document and capture it with a scanner), add the password "**drshien_2026**" to the file, and submit it by email. (If the applicant uses generative AI in preparing the application documents, the applicant must clearly state the name of the generative AI used and specify the sections in which it was used.) The subject of the email must be "**Application for Support of Niigata University Next Generation Project ([Applicant's name])**." The email text must include **the name of the applicant, the title of the course the applicant is taking or has taken, and the email address <u>the applicant provided on the form that is being used currently and will be used during the period of enrollment and after the completion of the doctoral program</u>**. If the applicant has no choice but to change the email address after the application, make sure to inform the Niigata University Administrative Office for Support for Pioneering Research Initiated by the Next Generation of the change.

2. The recommender must submit the application document (ii) to **fs-spring@gs.niigata-u.ac.jp**. Convert the document to the **PDF file format** (if necessary, sign the document and capture it with a scanner), add the password "**drshien_2026rec**", and submit it by email. The subject of the email must be "**Letter of Recommendation for Support of the Next Generation Project ([Applicant's name (Student's name)])**." The applicant's host faculty member in the doctoral program (doctoral advisor) must submit the application document (iii) to **fs-spring@gs.niigata-u.ac.jp**. The recommender must convert the document to the **PDF file format** (if necessary, sign the document and capture it with a scanner), add the password "**drshien_2026rec**", and submit it by email. The subject of the email must be "**Letter of Consent for Support of the Next Generation Project ([Applicant's name (Student's name)])**."

[Application period]

<u>From Friday, January 23, 2026 to Tuesday, January 27, 2026 (no later than this date)</u>

If he/she does not receive an email confirmation of receipt of application in three days (not counting Saturday, Sunday, or holidays), contact us by phone using the contact information below.

Note that applications will not be accepted after the deadline under any circumstances.

[Screening policy]

We are looking for excellent students with scholarly promise and potential for the future as well as an open and flexible mind and brilliant execution skills that go beyond the areas of study or fields of activity, and in the screening process, we value the following criteria:

(1) The applicant understands the purposes of the JST SPRING program and the Niigata University Next Generation Project and complies with all the requirements that are listed under the heading "**Application Requirements**" (pages 3–8 of the Application Guidelines).

(2) The applicant is willing to concentrate on research.

(3) The applicant has excellent research abilities.

(4) The research contains a component that can contribute to Japan's science, technology, and innovation, and therefore has the potential for further development.

(5) The applicant has the promising potential to lead society in the future and is open to diverse career paths.

(6) The applicant is willing to create challenging and interdisciplinary research and new fields of research not bound by existing frameworks.

(7) The applicant is willing to gain comprehensive global knowledge and resolve social issues that may surface in the future.

(8) The applicant is willing to undertake collaborative research with businesses and research contributing to regional revitalization and activation.

(9) The applicant complies with various research-related laws and regulations and the university regulations and autonomously ensures research integrity (the soundness and fairness of research).

[Screening and notification of results]

Our screening committee conducts the first screening (document screening) and the second screening (interview). Applicants who have passed the second screening will be admitted to this project. We will notify applicants of the results of the first screening by Thursday, February 26. The second screening will be conducted on Wednesday, March 4 or Thursday,March 5. The second screening will be conducted online (Zoom) and will consist of a presentation (3 minutes) and Q&A (5 minutes). Based on the purpose of this project, we plan to ask the applicants to explain "Reasons for applying for this Next-generation Project and career goals as an academic researcher", using one or two slides. (If the applicant uses generative AI in preparing the slides, the applicant must clearly state the name of the generative AI used and specify the sections in which it was used.) We will notify applicants of the results of the second screening by Monday, March 23. If the quota is not filled by the end of the final screening, or if one or more of the successful applicants decline, we may admit additional applicant(s) or call for additional applications.

These notifications will be sent to the email address provided on the application registration form. (The applicant must provide an email address that is being used currently and will be used during the period of enrollment and after the completion of the doctoral program.)

[Other matters]

The numbers of openings and the details of support may be subject to change due to the Japanese government's budgetary appropriations, revision of support systems, or for other reasons.

The names, research titles, and graduate schools of accepted applicants will be disclosed on the university website.

Personal information will be managed appropriately in accordance with the Act on the Protection of Personal Information Held by Independent Administrative Agencies.

[Contact information]

Niigata University Administrative Office for Support for Pioneering Research Initiated by the Next Generation

(Graduate Student Support Section, Student Affairs Division)

Phone number: 025-262-6110　Fax number: 025-262-6991

Email address: fs-spring@gs.niigata-u.ac.jp

【Niigata University Doctoral Support Related Websites】

・PhD recruitment office：https://www.phd.niigata-u.ac.jp　(in Japanese)

・Doctoral Portal Site：https://portal.phd.niigata-u.ac.jp/en/

・Next Generation Project：https://www.phd.niigata-u.ac.jp/next-generation-project/　(in Japanese)