

Niigata University Next Generation Project

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

Application Guidelines for AY2027(including AY2026fall) 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 2027, 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 *2 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.*3 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 Niigata University has been selected for the Japanese Government(MEXT) program "Future-Leading and Advanced Graduate-schools (FLAGS)." With internationalization and industry-academia collaborative education as its pillars, and within an environment of humanities-sciences integration and interdisciplinary studies, the university aims to create "Comprehensive Knowledge" and to establish a graduate school education hub that cultivates "Doctoral Innovators" capable of solving complex societal challenges.

For details, please visit <https://www.niigata-u.ac.jp/flags-jp>



*2 Following revisions to the SPRING program, certain details of the support scheme will be modified

beginning in AY 2027.

*3 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 Q&A, please visit

AY 2027 JST SPRING Application Guidelines

<https://www.jst.go.jp/jisedai/spring/dl/fy2027/application-guideline-2027SPRING.pdf>

(in Japanese)



JST SPRING Q&A

<https://www.jst.go.jp/jisedai/spring/dl/fy2027/faq-2027SPRING.xlsx>

(in Japanese)



[Eligibility for application]

Applicants must not be on a leave of absence.

Category of openings	Classification	Eligibility for application (Program; nth year etc.)
AY2027Application (including AY2026fall)	I	Applicants who are scheduled to enroll and be enrolled in the following doctoral program ad year at Niigata University in April 2027(or October 2026). <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The first year of the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Modern Society and Culture, Science and Technology, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences.
AY2026 Application (additional openings)	II	Applicants who will be enrolled in the following Niigata University graduate school doctoral programs/years in October 2026. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The first year of the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Modern Society and Culture, Science and Technology, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. (Excluding applicants enrolling in October 2026.• The second year of a four-year doctoral program of Graduate School of Medicine and Dentistry Sciences
	III	Applicants who will be enrolled in one of the following Niigata University graduate school doctoral programs/years in October 2026. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The second year of the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Modern Society and Culture, Science and Technology, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences.• The third year of a four-year doctoral program of Graduate School of Medicine and Dentistry Science

	IV	<p>Applicants who will be enrolled in one of the following Niigata University graduate school doctoral programs/years in October 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The third year of the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Modern Society and Culture, Science and Technology, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. • The fourth year of a four-year doctoral program of Graduate School of Medicine and Dentistry Science.
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[Support Category]

- Category1 : Japanese students, including foreign nationals who have acquired Japanese nationality through naturalization.

They are required to complete a practice-oriented transferable skills curriculum designed to cultivate comprehensive knowledge and practical competencies. As doctoral innovators with a strong international outlook and entrepreneurial mindset, they are expected to drive social transformation across diverse fields at both regional and global levels, not only in academia and industry but also through entrepreneurship and university-based start-ups.

- Category2 : International students (individuals whose status of residence is "Student")

International students are expected to pursue careers that contribute to Japan's science, technology, and innovation, with a view toward establishing themselves in Japan after graduation and contributing to the enhancement of Japan's international competitiveness.

We expect them to become doctoral-level innovators who possess both an appreciation for the unique attractions of Japan and Niigata and a global mindset. By promoting social transformation through strengthened industry-academia collaboration in addressing the various challenges faced by Niigata, a region at the forefront of social issues, they are expected to serve as a bridge connecting the local community with the world. Furthermore, they are encouraged to seek employment in Japan and ultimately aspire to become entrepreneurs.

- Category3 : Working adult students (individuals with stable and regular annual income exceeding JPY 2.4 million)

For working adult students, the emphasis is shifting from the traditional individual research-oriented model to a more organized industry-academia collaborative model. Through a process that links the outcomes of industry-academia collaborative research to the early acquisition of doctoral degrees, students are expected to further cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset through entrepreneurship education and related programs.

As doctoral innovators capable of driving social transformation through the social implementation of research outcomes across diverse fields, they are expected to take the lead in establishing self-sustaining mechanisms through revenue generation based on

industry-academia collaborative entrepreneurship, thereby creating independent financial resources for the university. Ultimately, they are expected to become individuals who proactively promote sustainable innovation and value creation through collaboration among academia, industry, and society.

Please refer to Appendix 2, “Classification Determination Chart,” to determine which category you belong to.

[Number of Positions Available]

The number of positions available in each category is as follows.

Classification I

Category1	approximately 22 positions
Category2	approximately 2 positions
Category3	approximately 1 positions

Classification II

Category1~Category3 a few positions

Classification III

Category1~Category3 a few positions

Classification IV

Category1~Category3 a few positions

[Support Period]

The support period shall be from the time of hiring until the completion of the standard program duration.

However, for Classification I, students admitted in 2026 October may, in some cases, begin receiving support in April of the following academic year. In such cases, the support period shall be up to two years and six months (or three years and six months for students enrolled in a four-year doctoral program).

For students who have experienced life events such as childbirth or childcare, the suspension or extension of the support period may be permitted on a case-by-case basis, taking into account individual circumstances.

[Eligibility 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.

The eligibility requirements applicable to each Support category are set out in the table below.

Selection Category	Support Category	Eligibility Requirements	Support Details
FY2027 Recruitment (including Fall FY2026 Recruitment) and FY2026 Supplementary Recruitment	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals for whom eligibility is indicated as “○” in Appendix 1, “Classification of Students Eligible for Research Incentive Grant Support under the New System.” <u>Excluding the following individuals:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Students receiving government-funded research support of a nature similar to that of the SPRING Program, namely support intended to allow students to devote themselves to independent, challenging, and interdisciplinary research. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students selected for the JST Next-Generation AI Human Resources Development Program for Doctoral Students. Research Fellows of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). ii) Individuals deemed to receive stable and fixed income, such as salary or remuneration, at a level sufficient to cover living expenses (JPY 2.4 million per year). *1 iii) Individuals receiving scholarships or other forms of financial support that are not permitted to be combined with support under this Project. 	Research Incentive Grant and Research Expenses
	2	<p>Individuals whose status of residence in Japan is “Student.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This also includes individuals for whom eligibility is indicated as “×” in Appendix 1, “Classification of Students Eligible for Research Incentive Grant Support under the New System. <u>Excluding the following individuals:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Students who receive government-funded research support similar in purpose to the SPRING Program, namely research funding intended to enable students to devote themselves to independent, challenging, and interdisciplinary research. Examples: 	Research Expenses

	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students supported under the JST “Next-Generation AI Human Resources Development Program (Doctoral Students).” • JSPS Research Fellows. • International students supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). • Individuals selected for the young researcher development component of the JST “Japan-ASEAN Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperative Research Network (NEXUS)” Program. <p>ii) International students who are enrolled in a graduate program while simultaneously serving as executives, employees, or in similar positions at institutions or organizations in Japan or abroad (if they satisfy the eligibility requirements for Category 3, they may be eligible for research funding support).</p>	
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals who are recognized as receiving stable and fixed income of JPY 2.4 million or more per year through salary, executive compensation, or similar remuneration, and who are employed by a Japanese corporation, the national government, a local government, or another legal entity, such as an independent administrative institution, foundation, incorporated association, medical corporation, or NPO. • Individuals affiliated solely with overseas institutions or organizations, provided that such institutions or organizations are non-profit entities, including overseas universities and public research institutions (regardless of income level). *2 • International students receiving scholarships from the Government of Japan (MEXT Scholarship students) who are affiliated with a government organization (regardless of income level). *3 	Research Expenses

*1 Income earned from part-time employment is not considered stable and fixed income. Compensation received for Teaching Assistant (TA) or Research Assistant (RA) duties is likewise not regarded as stable and fixed income.

*2 Even if an individual is affiliated exclusively with an overseas for-profit organization or corporation, they may be supported under Support Category 3, provided that the eligibility determination in Appendix 1, "Classification of Students Eligible for Research Fellowship Support under the New System," is marked as "Eligible (○)."

*3 Even if an individual is affiliated with an overseas government agency, students who receive support under

the Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship Program may be supported under Support Category 3.

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*4
(excluding working adult students under Support Category 3)
- (3) Participating in the PhD student exchange meetings*5
- (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) Register as a student in the Job-type Research Internship Program (including working adult students).
- (8) 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).

*4 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)

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

[Support details]

1. Financial support for living and research expenses

(1) Financial support for living expenses:

Japanese students who satisfy the eligibility requirements for Support Category 1 will receive a living allowance of JPY 175,000 per month, paid once every two months.

(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 under Category 3).

[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_2027)

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

(2_drshien suisensho_en_2027)

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

(3_drshien douisho_en_2027)

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)).

PhD Recruit Office Website: Application Guidelines and Q&A

<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.cloud.microsoft/r/M2z608tkL2>).

- (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_2027” 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 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.

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_2027rec”, 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_2027rec”, 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]

From Friday November 13, 2026 to Monday November 16, 2026 (no later than this date)

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, December 3. The second screening will be conducted on Thursday, December 10 or Friday, December 11. 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 Friday, December 25. 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.)

Please note that we are unable to respond to any inquiries regarding the details or results of individual selection assessments.

[Suspension, Discontinuation, or Revocation of Program Support]

Support will be suspended, terminated, or revoked in any of the following cases.

(1) If the recipient no longer meets the eligibility requirements.

(2) If the recipient takes a leave of absence, withdraws from the university, or is expelled.

(3) If, due to circumstances such as childbirth or childcare, the Program Director determines that special consideration is required.

(4) If the recipient becomes subject to disciplinary action.

(5) If the recipient is determined to have failed, without justifiable reason, to fulfill the mandatory requirements of this program.

(6) If the recipient commits research misconduct or engages in the improper use of research funds.

(7) If the recipient submits false or fraudulent information in the application.

[About Research Units and Related Matters]

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: 5 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: 5 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: 13students 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 mandatory activities and other obligations for working adult students will be prescribed separately.

Assignment to each unit will be determined based on applicants' preferences, which will be ascertained through questionnaires completed during the application process and mentor interviews conducted after selection, as well as their prior achievements and activities.

As each unit has a target number of participants, applicants may not necessarily be assigned to their preferred unit.

The unit structure described herein is tentative and subject to change. Depending on the progress of the program and changes in the operating budget, the framework of the units and the number of supported participants may be revised.

For details regarding the unit system under the Next-Generation Project, please refer to the website below.

Next-Generation Project, PhD Recruit Office Overview and Features

<https://www.phd.niigata-u.ac.jp/next-generation-project/about/>



doctoral portal

https://portal.phd.niigata-u.ac.jp/category/fellowship_next_gen/common



[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.
- As the Research Incentive Grant is treated as miscellaneous income and is therefore subject to taxation, students are responsible for filing their own tax returns and paying any applicable income tax.

[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)

