

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Relating to assistance in general

Q0-1. I will transfer to another department during the academic year. Can I continue to receive assistance?

A0-1. Yes, you can, as long as the transfer is to another department within Tohoku University. However, because of administrative matters relating to the remittance of funds, etc., you should notify TUMUG once the transfer is confirmed.

Q0-2. Are there any programs open to Research Fellows or other people who are not academic staff members?

A0-2. The fee-assistance programs for hiring babysitters and other childcare services are also available for Research Fellows, JSPS Research Fellows, and doctoral students.

Q0-3. Are there any programs for male academic staff?

A0-3. Male academic staff are eligible to apply for 1. Research support staff (if for “Work-life balance support”) and 2. Fee-assistance programs for hiring babysitters. See the application guide for details.

Q0-4. What is the purpose of the information I provide in the questionnaire on cooperation for gender equality activities?

A0-4. Recipients of assistance are asked to cooperate with requests from the Tohoku University Committee of Gender Equality and TUMUG (the university organizations involved in the promotion of gender equality), and to actively participate in symposiums, seminars, and other events for advancing gender equality. In some cases, the information provided in the questionnaire, including past cooperation and participation, is taken into consideration in the selection process. Be sure to include any pertinent information on your cooperation that merits consideration, such as the timing of your appointment, and life events.

Q0-5. The program guidelines require me to acknowledge the support received whenever I publish research work done under that support. How do I do this?

A0-5. Refer to the following acknowledgement example.

This work is (partially) supported by Tohoku University Center for Gender Equality Promotion (TUMUG) Support Project (Project to Promote Gender Equality and Female Researchers).

### 1. Research support staff

Q1-1. Can graduate students be hired as research support staff?

A1-1. Yes, graduate students can be hired as research assistants (RA) or administrative assistants (AA). For positions working 12 hours or less per week, we ask that you hire from the Tohoku University community whenever possible.

Q1-2. What’s the difference between research assistants (RA) and administrative assistants (AA)?

A1-2. Research assistants provide support necessary for research activities, so these positions are filled with doctoral students or people who are deemed by the relevant department head to possess competencies at least equivalent to those of doctoral students. Administrative assistants (AA) provide clerical assistance and other support to administrative operations, so these positions are assigned to Tohoku University undergraduate and graduate students. Make your request for support staff based on the type of duties to be performed.

Q1-3. Can I hire Master’s students or students in the fifth/sixth year of a 6-year undergraduate program as research assistants (RA)?

A1-3. Yes, provided that they are deemed by the relevant department’s head as possessing competencies at least equivalent to those of doctoral students, as indicated in item (4) under “3. Qualification” in Tohoku University Research Assistant Guidelines.

Q1-4. Are academic staff in the humanities also eligible to apply?

A1-4. Yes, they are. This program makes no distinction between humanities and science, but is intended to facilitate ongoing research, through deployment of research support staff, for researchers with family responsibilities such as raising children, given the potential restrictions on their time and movements posed by the need to conduct experiments and use equipment.

Q1-5. If selected for this program, am I obliged to newly hire support staff?

A1-5. You may partially apply the funding assistance to the labor costs of hourly staff employed by Tohoku University or RA/AA, but since this program is intended to support your research work, you are asked to clearly distinguish between work performed for your research and work performed for other purposes by tracking the work days, hours, amount of effort, etc.

Q1-6. Can temp agency personnel be hired as research support staff?

A1-6. Temp agency personnel may be hired based on considerations such as the type of work involved, the hours, and the amount of funding received, provided that you directly hire the personnel. Please establish a contract or other documentation that clearly indicates that the personnel was hired to support your research work.

Q1-7. Can someone hired as research support staff apply for KAKENHI?

A1-7. Yes, they can. However, this program is intended to assist with personnel expenses by way of supporting the research of the awardee, therefore if support personnel are involved in activities not envisaged under the program, such as conducting their own research, there will need to be a separate adjustment of the expenses by keeping records of the amount of effort allocated to projects.

Q1-8. Can it be used during maternity leave and childcare leave?

A1-8. Yes, it can. However, when applying, you should indicate how you will ensure that the support staff can smoothly perform their duties during your absence, such as how instructions will be given and who will serve as supervisor in your place.

Q1-9. Why has this program been set up as a way to maintain or foster female academic staff's contributions to society?

A1-9. One effect of the effort to promote gender equality nationwide has been to increase opportunities for female researchers to participate in national or local government advisory committees or to fill posts in academic associations. Female researchers have always been in short supply and the burden on each is considerable. This system has been introduced to help women secure sufficient time for their research.

## **2. Fee-assistance programs for hiring babysitters and other childcare services program**

Q2-1. Does the fee assistance cover the entire cost of the service used?

A2-1. The scope of services covered and the amount of assistance provided depend on the information listed in your application and the budget available, so please note that there may be cases where service fees cannot be reimbursed, in part or in whole. Also, this assistance is considered earned income under Japan's income tax law, and accordingly income tax will be withheld from the amount of assistance awarded to you.

Q2-2. Is fee assistance available for extended-hours nursery childcare, off-hours kindergarten care, and after-school supervision of elementary school children?

A2-2. Off-hours kindergarten care, extended-hours nursery childcare, and after-school supervision services provided for a monthly fee are considered within the scope of standard childcare and thus are not eligible for fee assistance. Temporary/extended-hours childcare, after-school care, and other such services provided for hourly or daily rates are eligible, provided that they are not used regularly. While we do not set specific criteria for what constitutes regular use (e.g., frequency or number of days), please note that usage of those services may be deemed ineligible for fee assistance in cases where the need for the services is reasonably foreseeable with respect to the user's normal research and teaching duties.

Q2-3. Does the program cover payments for babysitting by an individual?

A2-3. The program does not cover services contracted with individuals. To receive reimbursement, you need to receive service from a corporation or other organization that publicly discloses its service information (types of services offered, hourly rates, etc.).

Q2-4. The receipts I get are made out in my child's name. What should I do?

A2-4. Where possible, have the service provider issue the receipts in your name. If this can't be done, make a written statement saying that you paid the fee and include it with your reimbursement request.

Q2-5. I forgot to file for fee assistance before the first period's deadline. Can I include the services received in the first period in my filing for the second period?

A2-5. No. You can request fee assistance only for services received in the period covered by each filing date. If certain circumstances, such as the date of the receipt, prevent you from filing as expected, contact TUMUG.

Q2-6. My child couldn't attend nursery/school on a weekday due to a fever, so I put him/her in a daycare service for sick children. Can I receive fee assistance for this?

A2-6. Yes. This program covers babysitting and sick-child care services provided to children unable to attend nursery, kindergarten, or school due to illness, when the parents' research or educational activities would be hindered by the need to stay home to care for the child. This includes services received during the daytime on weekdays.

Q2-7. Can the fee assistance be used for a children's taxi service to transport my child from school to a juku (cram school) or other afterschool learning programs, and back home?

A2-7. No, it cannot. Juku and other afterschool learning programs are not considered childcare services.

Q2-8. Can JSPS Research Fellows use this program?

A2-8. Yes. Since this fee assistance is provided by a host research institution that contributes to the development of the environment for hosting JSPS Research Fellows, it is not subject to the JSPS's prohibition against receiving funding other than research grants and JSPS Fellowships.

### **3. Start-up research costs**

Q3-1. Why doesn't this program cover research associates?

A3-1. MEXT defines an assistant professor as someone whose main occupation is to carry out his or her own teaching and research. It defines a research associate as someone whose main occupation is to assist with teaching and research. The objective of this program is to nurture female research leaders. For that reason, it is targeted at persons of assistant professor and higher status, whose main occupation is to carry out their own research.

Q3-2. Can people promoted from research associate to assistant professor apply to this program?

A3-2. Yes. For purposes of this program, you are considered newly hired from the time you became eligible, so please apply for this program for the academic year in which you became eligible.

Q3-3. In what cases are Fixed-Term Employees ineligible to apply?

A3-3. This program is intended to help female researchers a sustained program of research at Tohoku University. Hence, applications are not taken from those who will clearly not be continuously employed by the university up to the end of the academic year following the academic year in which the application would be made.

Q3-4. Can I apply for both start-up research costs and the Next Step Research Grant for the same academic year?

A3-4. As a rule, no. You may not apply for them for the same period because both are research grants intended to support the nurturing of women leaders. If you are newly hired, apply for the start-up research costs grant. If you apply for start-up research costs after being selected for the Next Step Research Grant, your application may be declined or the amount of start-up research costs assistance awarded may be reduced.

Q3-5. What sorts of expenses are covered by this assistance?

A3-5. Please apply this grant to expenses directly necessary for pursuing your research as outlined in the "Proposed uses of start-up research costs" listed in your application. This grant may not be used for setting up your research environment or other purposes for which use of the KAKENHI allowances for indirect expenses is deemed appropriate.

Q3-6. What happens if I have to alter the "Proposed uses of start-up research costs" listed in my application due to a reduction in the amount awarded or due to the progress of my research?

A3-6. Minor changes in the budgeted items and their amounts are allowed, provided that they represent expenses directly necessary for pursuing your research toward the aims and expected outcomes stated in your application. However, the maximum awardable amount of this grant remains the same. If you need to make major changes to your budget, please consult with TUMUG in advance.

Q3-7. Can I use this grant to pay for expenses partially covered by other funding sources?

A3-7. Yes, you can, provided that those expenses are directly necessary for pursuing your research toward the aims and expected outcomes stated in your application, and that the other funding source sets no restrictions on cost splitting. If the other grant has such restrictions, which is the case with Contracted Fees and KAKENHI allowances, among others, then please consult with the funding source.

#### **4. Next Step Research Grant**

Q4-1. Can I apply for both the Next Step Research Grant and start-up research costs for the same academic year?

A4-1. As a rule, no. See A3-4.

Q4-2. A higher proportion of the funding for my employment comes from external sources rather than Tohoku University's operating budget. Can I still apply?

A4-2. Yes, you can. You are still eligible to apply if your employment is funded from multiple sources, as long as a portion of any size comes from Tohoku University's operating budget.

Q4-3. In what cases can those whose employment is 100% externally funded apply for this grant?

A4-3. This grant is intended to support independent, original research led by female researchers. It is not available to those whose employment is 100% externally funded if they are required to focus exclusively on a project supported by that funding source. However, if the external organization that employs them has rules allowing them to engage in independent research efforts at their discretion, then they may apply for this grant.

Q4-4. What sorts of expenses are covered by this assistance?

A4-4. See A3-5.

Q4-5. What happens if I have to alter the "Proposed uses of start-up research costs" listed in my application due to a reduction in the amount awarded or due to the progress of my research?

A4-5. See A3-6.

Q4-6. Can I use this grant to pay for expenses partially covered by other funding sources?

A4-6. See A3-7.

#### **5. Science Angels**

Q5-1. Can international students apply?

A5-1. Yes, female graduate students of any nationality can apply. However, applicants need to be able to talk about their research and experiences with junior high and high school students in Japanese. Please thoroughly discuss this with your supervisor before applying.

Q5-2. I will be entering/transferring to a graduate school different from my current school. Which school and year of study should I list on my application?

A5-2. List your school and year of study as of April 1 of the academic year for which you are applying. If your student ID number will change due to your entry into a doctoral program, list the ID number current at the time of application, and promptly notify TUMUG of your new one after it has been assigned to you.

Q5-3. The application has a space labeled "Approval of department head." Whose approval do I need to obtain?

A5-3. You need to get the approval of the dean of your graduate school. This includes members of the university's research institutes; obtain approval from the dean of the school with which your institute is affiliated, not from your institute's director. For details on how to do this, contact the relevant coordinator in your graduate school.

Q5-4. I am a recipient of the JSPS Research Fellowship for Young Scientists (DC). If selected as a Science Angel, will I be able to receive remuneration for my participation?

A5-4. Science Angel postings are part-time positions intended in part to provide training opportunities that enable participants to grow their skills as researchers in ways that help them to pursue research, within the scope of their obligation to concentrate on research activities. You can receive remuneration for up to 19 hours of Science Angel work per week, provided that you receive advance approval by your mentor and have him/her sign and stamp the

JSPS notice of receipt of remuneration.

Q5-5. I receive financial support from my position as an RA (or other such Tohoku University program). If selected as a Science Angel, will I be able to receive remuneration for my participation?

A5-5. Yes, you can, but keep in mind that the combined working hours of all your positions (Science Angel, TA, RA, AA, etc.) must not exceed 30 hours per week. Also, if you receive financial support from a graduate degree program, etc., your work as a Science Angel is capped at 19 hours/week. Please check with the coordinator of each program that provides you financial support to make sure that you can apply to the Science Angels program.

Q5-6. I am an adult graduate student who holds an off-campus job. Can I serve as a Science Angel?

A5-6. Those who hold a job, on or off campus, that does not allow them to work in another paid position can serve as a Science Angel Volunteer, which is an unpaid position. Indicate your desire to do so in your Science Angels application.

## **6. Zonta Club of Sendai I financial assistance for overseas travel by Tohoku University female graduate students**

Q6-1. After participating in the conference, I would like to stay in the same area to conduct a survey. Can I obtain financial assistance in such circumstances?

A6-1. Travel support is available up to and including the conference, but not for the period after conducting a survey.

Q6-2. Can I apply for assistance when I still don't know whether I have been accepted to give a presentation at the conference?

A6-2. No. Travel expense support is available only to applicants who are already scheduled to speak at a conference at the time of application.

Q6-3. Can international students apply?

A6-3. All female graduate students of Tohoku University can apply, regardless of nationality or field of research. However, everyone who receives this assistance is required to appear at a regular meeting of Zonta Club of Sendai I and give a report in Japanese on their overseas conference presentation and experiences (if necessary, have your lab furnish you with an interpreter). Please thoroughly discuss this with your supervisor before applying.