

UTFORSK

Call for applications 2020

Four-year project funding

1 Invitation

Diku is pleased to issue this call for applications for funding of joint projects between higher education institutions in Norway and Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the United States of America (USA). The projects may engage in bilateral or multilateral cooperation involving partners in one or more of the eligible countries.

The call is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

- The total funds made available in this call are NOK 100 million.
- This call for applications is open to project partnerships for four (4) years. Applicants may define the project period from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2025.
- Each project may be awarded up to NOK 3 million.
- The final deadline for submitting applications is 1 February 2021 at 12:00 CET.

Below you will find more information about the objectives and funding framework of the programme, eligibility and selection criteria, and an outline of the administrative process of project selection under the programme.

2 Background

UTFORSK is a measure under the Norwegian Government's Panorama strategy, targeting cooperation on higher education and research with Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia, and South Africa, and, from 2021, Canada, the USA, and South Korea.

The Norwegian Government's Long-term plan for research and higher education 2019–2028 states that international cooperation is a prerequisite for quality in Norwegian higher education. The significance of international cooperation as a measure for benchmarking quality is also emphasised in the white paper on "Quality Culture in Higher Education" (Meld. St. 16 (2016–2017)), which states that internationalisation should be an integral part of education.

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

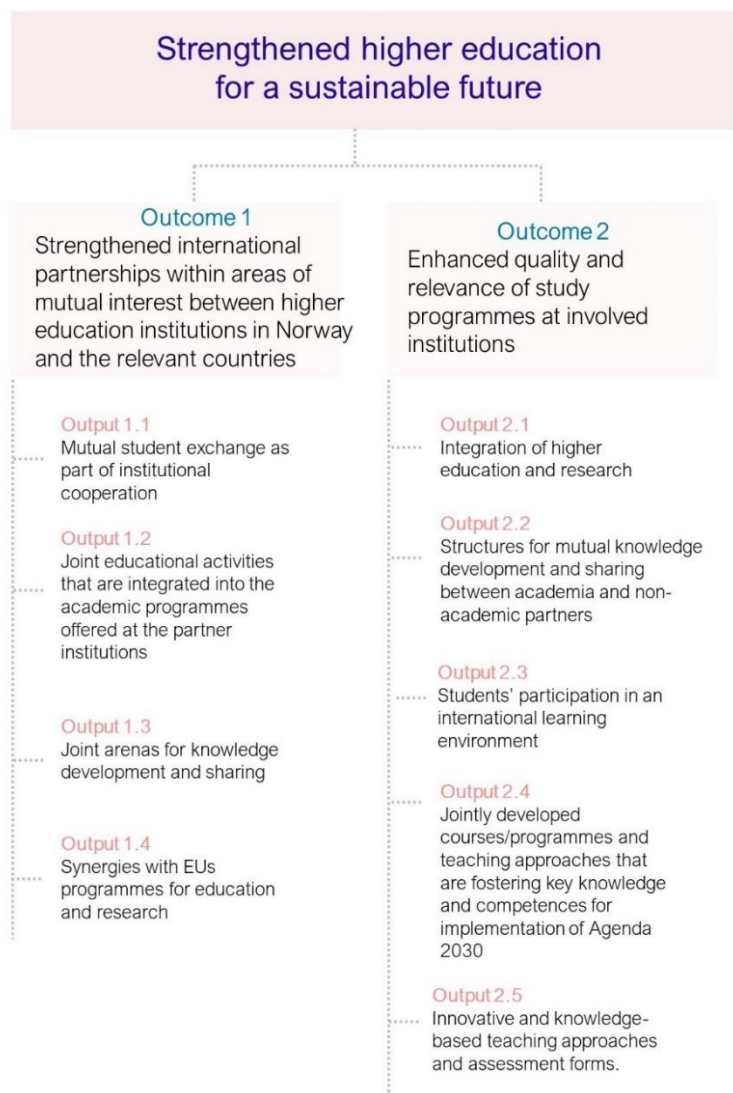
3 Goals and priorities

Programme goals

The overall goal of UTFORSK is to strengthen higher education for a sustainable future.

The programme has the following main objectives:

- strengthened international partnerships within areas of mutual and strategic interest between higher education institutions in Norway and the relevant countries
- enhanced quality and relevance of study programmes at the institutions involved



Please see [the UTFORSK programme document](#) for more information about the programme's theory of change.

A special emphasis is given to projects including plans for student mobility of minimum 3 months duration both within and beyond the project period.

Applicants should design their projects in the way they consider to be best suited to achieving the goals of the programme and based on a needs assessment at the partner institutions and among relevant stakeholders. Applicants are asked to describe the expected results and effects of the project as specifically as possible. Project activities should be proposed by partners based on jointly identified challenges and opportunities. Activities may include all levels (Bachelor, Master and PhD) and all academic fields. Cooperation across disciplines and sectors is encouraged.

Diku will monitor project results and the degree to which project activities contribute to achieving the objectives of the programme. Project results that contribute to achieve the goals of the programme are outlined above.

4 Who can apply?

Applicant institution

The applicant must be an accredited Norwegian higher education institution or an institution with accredited higher education programmes.

Partners

The main partner must be an accredited higher education institution from Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, or the USA. The main partner institution must provide accredited education programmes that are relevant to the proposal and at a level equivalent to that offered at the Norwegian applicant institution.

The application may include higher education institutions, public or private enterprises, research institutes, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or other organisations in Norway, Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, and the USA as partners.

5 What can you apply for?

Funding and own contribution

Each project may be awarded up to NOK 3 million. Diku may reduce the amount awarded based on an assessment of the individual applications.

Applicant institutions and/or project partners must make available resources equivalent to a minimum of 20 per cent of the project budget. These contributions may be in cash or in kind.

Any contributions from the applicant and other project partners must be specified in the application form.

How long can the projects last?

The projects can have a duration of up to four years. Applicants may define the project period from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2025.

What can the funds be used for?

Please see *Budget guidelines* (Appendix 1) for specifications of what costs may be covered through project funding and how to budget and calculate

budget items. Information about the rates applicable to student and staff mobility is also included in the budget guidelines.

The project may include funds for salaries and indirect expenses (including administration and overheads). The funds may be shared between the applicant and the project partners.

Information about the different budget items and the guidelines on calculations are also available in the application form.

Please note that investment in scientific equipment and infrastructure is not an eligible cost and may not be included in the application. The same applies to costs related to research activities not clearly linked to educational activities.

6 Eligibility & selection criteria

Eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible, applications must meet the following requirements:

- The **applicant** must be an accredited Norwegian higher education institution or an institution with accredited higher education programmes.
- The application must include a **main partner** that is an accredited higher education institution in Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia, South Africa, South Korea or the USA providing accredited education programmes that are relevant to the proposal and at a level equivalent to that offered at the Norwegian applicant institution.
- The institutions must contribute with own funding (in cash or in kind) amounting to a minimum of 20 per cent of the funds applied for.
- All project activities described in the application must be completed within the project period.
- The following attachments must be included:
 - **Letters of commitment** from all project partners, including the applicant institution, documenting their interest in and commitment to the project by the leadership at the relevant level.
 - A **curriculum vitae** (CV) for the project coordinators in Norway and the partner country.
- The application must be written in English.
- The application must be submitted through Diku's application platform [Espresso](#) fully completed, including attachments.

- The application must be submitted within the call's final deadline.

Please note that failure to meet the above requirements will lead to the application being rejected.

Selection criteria

Applications that meet the above requirements will be assessed on the degree to which they are deemed able to meet the following selection criteria:

- The project's relevance to the goals of the programme (30 per cent)
- The quality of the project design (20 per cent), including:
 - The application's overall clarity, coherence and quality
 - The quality of the needs assessments
 - The project's feasibility
 - Cost-effectiveness and reasonable resource allocation in the project
- The quality of the partnership (20 per cent), including:
 - The complementarity of the participating institutions' and organisations' profiles
 - The composition of the project team and their expertise and experience in producing the expected results
 - The distribution of tasks and responsibilities and active contribution from all participating institutions/stakeholders
 - The level of formalised commitment from the participating institutions and organisations, and the potential for long-term collaboration between the partners
- The impact and dissemination of project results (30 per cent), including:
 - Expected impact for the participants, participating institutions and other target groups
 - The likelihood that project results may be sustained beyond the project period
 - The quality of the plan for dissemination of project results

Diku presumes that all projects adhere to a high ethical standard in research and higher education. Diku emphasises the importance of gender equality, inclusive practices and anti-corruption measures in all project activities.

Please note that these criteria correspond to various compulsory fields in the online Espresso application form and that the application's ability to meet these relative criteria will be assessed on the basis of the description provided. To ensure coherence and a logical order in the description of

your project, please read the relevant help texts in the online application form carefully. Remaining questions may be directed to Diku.

7 How are applications evaluated?

Applications that meet the minimum requirements for the call will be assessed by two evaluators with the relevant competencies. Diku appoints evaluators who will constitute a committee facilitating peer-review of the applications.

Applications will receive a grade on a scale from 1 (poor) to 7 (outstanding) for each of the four assessment criteria mentioned above, weighted according to the percentage specified for each criterion.

The committee will rank the applications based on the weighted average of the sub-grades. Diku makes the final funding decision based on the assessment committee's recommendation.

In cases where two or more applications are given the same average grade, applications with higher partial grade on the criterion "Project relevance", including long-term student mobility, may be ranked above the others. Diku may also take into consideration the geographic distribution of the project portfolio.

To qualify for a grant, the application must achieve a minimum average grade of 4.

Applications that receive an average grade of less than 4, or less than 4 for one or more criteria, will be rejected.

Feedback to applicants

All applicants will be informed of the outcome of the evaluation process, tentatively by the end of April 2021.

The final decision will be communicated in a decision letter to each applicant, including information about the reasoning behind the final, consolidated grade and information on the right of access to the case documents and the right to appeal.

Applications that receive an average grade and sub-grades that exceed the minimum grant thresholds but for which there are not sufficient funds to offer a grant will be placed on a waiting list prioritised in accordance with the grading. Any approvals of applications on the waiting list will be announced once any complaints have been considered for conversion.

[Information about how appeals against rejection decisions are processed can be found here.](#)

Contract and reporting obligations

The applicant will be required to enter into a contract with Diku. The contract will be subject to Diku's standard terms and conditions and must be signed by a representative holding the requisite authority to legally bind the applicant. The obligations on part of the applicant include a duty to submit progress reports, project accounts, and a final report upon completion of the project.

Until a binding contract has been entered into, Diku reserves the right to at any time revisit any evaluation and decision on the basis of newly discovered facts which may adversely affect the planned implementation of a project.

8 How to apply

Applications must be written in English and be submitted through Diku's application portal [Espresso](#). The application must include:

1. Completed application form in Espresso, including budget.
2. Attachments, uploaded as PDF files:
 - a. CVs for project coordinators.
 - b. Letters of commitment from all project partners, including the applicant institution.

Guidance

In the application form you will find help texts that provide detailed guidance on what kind of information you need to provide in the various fields.

9 Contact

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Appendix 1

Budget guidelines

Project budgets will be assessed on the basis of their cost-effectiveness and reasonableness. The official Norwegian travel regulations (*Statens reiseregulativ*) will be used as a starting point in Diku's assessment of the reasonableness of budgeted travel and accommodation costs. Where available, moderately priced alternatives for travel and accommodation should be chosen. Please explain the budgeted amounts as necessary in the *Specification of budget items* field in the application.

Student mobility

The tables below describe eligible costs that may be included in project applications with regard to incoming/outgoing student mobility.

Please ensure that the project budget distinguishes between mobility up to 4 weeks and mobility exceeding 4 weeks.

MOBILITY UP TO 4 WEEKS	ELIGIBLE COSTS
To/from Norway	<p>Bachelor/master/PhD students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project applications may include accommodation and living costs for students related to the planned project activities (e.g. work placements/teaching practice, fieldwork, intensive courses, workshops, supervision, research activities, etc.). Costs related to participation in conferences not clearly linked to the planned project activities may not be included.

MOBILITY OVER 4 WEEKS	ELIGIBLE COSTS
To Norway	<p>Bachelor/master students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project applications may include scholarships for students to cover accommodation and living costs in Norway. The scholarships may not exceed the applicable rate set by the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (<i>Lånekassen</i>). In 2020/21 the monthly rate is NOK 11,229.

	<p>PhD students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project applications may include accommodation and living costs associated with the PhD students' stay in Norway up to the applicable monthly rate set by the Norwegian Research Council ("Overseas Research Grants") for individuals. In 2020 the rate is NOK 19,000. Additional grants for dependents are not given.
<p>From Norway</p>	<p>Bachelor/master students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project applications may include scholarships for students from Norway to cover costs which are not covered by student funding available from the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (<i>Lånekassen</i>). The scholarships may not exceed NOK 7,000 per student per month. These rates also apply to international mobility for work placements. <p>PhD students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project applications may include specified cost items which are not covered by other external funding up to the applicable monthly rate set by the Norwegian Research Council ("Overseas Research Grants") for individuals.

The rates for student accommodation and living costs are based on rates and net amounts paid to bachelor and master students by the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (*Lånekassen*) and to PhD students by the Norwegian Research Council.

The rates cover the individual student's costs. Additional funding for dependents/family members may not be included in the budget. As the relevant rates are adjusted annually according to the retail price index, the rates may be adjusted accordingly for the coming years.

Travel, visa and insurance costs incurred in connection with student mobility may be supported if not covered by funding attainable from the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (*Lånekassen*) or other external funding sources.

Visa costs for students doing internships abroad may be costlier than for students going on a regular student exchange. Costs related to this may be covered by the project. Students participating in internships may also get insurance for occupational injury covered by the project if the company or organisation is not covering this locally.

Travel costs for staff

Projects may include travel costs and expenses for academic and administrative staff related to the project activities. Please note the general guidelines set out above regarding reasonableness and cost levels.

Costs related to participation in conferences not clearly linked to the planned project activities may not be included.

Infrastructure and scientific equipment

Investments in infrastructure and scientific equipment may not be included in the application. The same applies to costs related to research activities *not clearly linked to* educational activities at master's and PhD level. However, lab fees and consumables related to students' research may be included to a reasonable extent. All obtained equipment must be depreciated by the end of the project period.

Project-related salary costs

The projects may include costs for salaries, remuneration of consultants, honorariums and indirect costs involved. The amount may be shared among the project partners based on agreement between the partners. Please specify how these costs have been calculated and how many months of work will be carried out by whom on the basis of the costs budgeted.

All such costs must be included under the budget items "Salary, remuneration of consultants and honorariums" and/or "Indirect costs".

Own contribution

Applicant institutions and/or project partners must make available resources equivalent to a minimum of 20 per cent of the project budget.

These contributions may be in cash or in kind.

Any contributions from the applicant and other project partners must be specified in the application form.