

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and University of Warwick (Warwick) Joint Seed Fund Call for Applications: Developing Collaboration in Research

Purpose

The VUB-Warwick Seed Fund has been established to develop collaborative research between the two institutions, and strengthen or initiate connections, by enabling researchers to jointly undertake preliminary research or pilot initiatives, and organise meetings, workshops and events.

Proposals

To be eligible, a proposal must include a minimum of one faculty member from each university. The call invites proposals in all disciplines that are of mutual interest to the project team and will strengthen the partnership between VUB and Warwick.

Up to eight (8) joint proposals will be selected for the 2026-2027 academic year. The funding is intended to enable activities such as, but not limited to:

- In person meetings to facilitate planning and development of external funding proposals;
- the organisation of virtual, hybrid or in-person research-focused workshops, conferences, symposia;
- reciprocal or non-reciprocal visits to establish new research collaborations;
- preliminary research, experiments and pilot studies.

Applicant eligibility

- **VUB:** Faculty members who meet the University's definition of "Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel" (ZAP) during the full duration of the grant's funding period are eligible to apply.
- **Warwick:** The fund is open to staff from all Departments and Centres at Warwick. Applications should specify a Principal Applicant who must be a permanent (including probationary) member of academic staff or hold a fellowship awarded by an external funder, the duration of which extends beyond the duration of the award.

Funding amount and duration

Up to eight (8) successful joint proposals will be chosen each year, with two (2) funded by each university in each biannual round. Each project will receive *either* up to €5,000 (EUR) of funding from VUB *or* up to £5000 (GBP) from Warwick. Each institution will provide funds to its own Principal Applicants. The first projects can start from 1st August 2026.

Funding will be provided for projects lasting maximum 12 month and according to local financial year regulations.

Funds cannot be carried over beyond the agreed 12-month term of the project.

Timeline for Call 2

Call for proposals	Tuesday 1 September 2026
Deadline for submission of proposal	Friday 30 October 2026, 23:00 UK time
Communication of results to applicants	18 January 2027
Start date of projects	1 February 2027 – 30 March 2027

Subsequent calls will open biannually in March and September.

Evaluation

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Joint capacity:** applicants' academic credentials, joint ability to carry out the project, complementarity of the partners (including why the initiative could not occur at either university on its own, or the additionality achieved through collaboration) **(10pts)**
- **Excellence and meaningful contribution:** the novelty of the project must be articulated for a non-specialist audience, clearly demonstrating how the proposed project will contribute to disciplinary innovation. The project must demonstrate its relevance and potential to make a meaningful contribution to tackling the challenges it seeks to address. **(10pts)**
- **Strategic focus:** the proposal should state how the initiative advances the interests of both VUB and Warwick, and the impact of the proposed activity and expected benefits for the Schools/Departments and the collaboration. **(10pts)**
- **Impact and potential:** a clear pathway to impact and/or external funding. Applicants are advised to clearly indicate:
 - how they envisage the collaboration developing beyond this project (e.g. research projects, building links with industry, using preliminary data collected to scale-up the project);
 - which external funding sources are available, or in development, to sustain the collaboration. **(10pts)**

Assessment Process description:

1. Applications will be jointly received by (i) VUB's Secretariat for Research Council "Onderzoeksraad VUB"; and (ii) Warwick's International Strategy and Relations Team (ISR).
2. All complete applications will be forwarded to an internal review committee in each institution, along with a template for ranking the proposals.
3. The internal review committees will assess each proposal according to academic merit and the evaluation criteria above.

4. Respective reviews will be returned to (i) VUB's Secretariat for Research Council "Onderzoeksraad VUB"; and (ii) Warwick's International Strategy and Relations (ISR), and results/scores tabulated to support ranking.
5. A joint committee will convene to select up to four (4) successful proposals each round.
6. The outcome of the results will be announced by email to all applicants.

Application process

1. Only one proposal should be submitted per project (either from a proposer at VUB or Warwick, not both).
2. An online application must be submitted through University of Warwick VUB-UW Joint Seed Fund Application Portal by Friday 30 October 2026. The completed proposal must include the following elements and be uploaded as a single PDF document:
 - **Initiative overview** that includes a title, project summary, and strategic focus.
 - **Initiative description** that includes the following elements:
 - i. Articulation of joint capacity/complementarity of the project team
 - ii. Description of the planned activities, rationale, and timeline
 - iii. Budget Tables: Warwick applicants with projects running across two financial years (31 July) will need to complete budget tables showing the spread of costs over the two periods
 - iv. Expected academic theoretical or practical outputs, and the potential impacts and benefits for stakeholders
 - v. Description of how the partnership may evolve over time and the potential for long-term sustainability beyond the proposed timeframe.
 - vi. Abbreviated two-page CV from the Principal Applicant at each institution.
 - vii. Statement of Support: all Warwick applicants must be endorsed to ensure activities align with Faculty/Department priorities and that sufficient resourcing is available. An e-mail from respective Heads of Department/School is sufficient as statement of support.

The full proposal should be no longer than four (4) pages, not including the CVs and Statements of Support.

Costs

Eligible costs include travel and subsistence, consumables and event costs. Existing staff time, including joint- Principal Applicants time, cannot be costed to the project. The fund does not support equipment, scholarships, conference attendance, PhD stipends, or tuition fees. All expenditure will require receipts.

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
• Reasonable travel costs e.g.s, flights, visas, accommodation and subsistence • Research costs, including consumables and transcription costs (up to 20% of the total requested budget). • Costs associated with organizing workshops and meetings that are directly related to the project's development	• Replacement research/teaching costs • Directly incurred e.g. teaching assistants • Directly allocated costs e.g., applicants' time • Indirect costs/estates costs • Equipment • Scholarships • Conference attendance • Tuition fees • Per diems • PhD stipends (Warwick only) • Salaries/ honoraria of permanent and fixed term staff • Costs already incurred prior to submission of the proposal

Reporting Requirements

All successful applicants will be required to provide a brief report within four months of the end of the funded project using the seed funding template. This report should detail the use of the funds; achievement of outputs and outcomes from the award; future plans to build on the work done, and further funding applications made or anticipated.

VUB and The University of Warwick reserve the right to ask you for follow-up reports for up to three years after the completion of your project, or as agreed with successful applicants, in order to gauge the longer-term impact of the funding.

Warwick only: Research Integrity and Ethics

Ethics

Research projects that involve human participants, their data or tissue, or animals **will** require appropriate ethical review. Research involving secondary analysis of publicly available data e.g. systematic reviews does **not** require ethics review, but secondary analysis of other data that are not publicly available does. Please note, data taken from social media, does **not** count as publicly available.

Ethics approval does not need to be applied for until funding has been awarded but **must** be obtained **before** projects can begin. Further information about ethics and other approvals, and how to apply for these is available on **Warwick's** the [Research & Impact Services](#) webpages.

Please note that it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure the ethics application is submitted and approved before the project begins. Warwick researchers are advised to complete a Research Integrity online training module [here](#).

Export Control Due Diligence

Warwick applicants are expected to undertake the Epigeum Research Integrity Training, including the Export Control Training Module, which can be accessed [here](#). The Principal Applicant is responsible for ensuring that the research complies with the UK Export Control Legislation. Follow the [guidance](#) by R&IS to determine whether export controls apply to your proposed research.

VUB only: Research Integrity and Ethics

VUB applicants are expected to comply with VUB's regulations on ethics, research integrity, export control and associated guidelines. Follow the [guidance](#) to determine whether your proposed research meets VUB's institutional standards.

Contact

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