

[RENKEI](#) (Research and Education Network for Knowledge Economy Initiatives), a partnership of universities in Japan and the UK aiming at strengthening the knowledge exchange and research collaboration between the two countries, is delighted to announce that it is inviting 2 UK universities to join this community.

How RENKEI was formed:

The origin of RENKEI dates back to 2010 when the then Foreign Secretary William Hague visited Japan and both governments announced that the British and Japanese university leaders will hold dialogues to share best practices in internationalisation and would promote student and researcher exchanges. In that year, the 2nd Japan-UK Higher Education Symposium was held at Kyushu University in Japan and university leaders identified a need for a new model of international university-industry partnerships as action points. At this symposium, both UK and Japanese universities were openly invited to come forward to form a working group. 12 universities responded to this call and join an initiative to develop a new strategic bilateral partnership.

RENKEI was formally launched on 13 March 2012, with the British Council, Japan, as its secretariat, to meet the challenges of living in a complex, rapidly changing and globalized twenty-first century. Collaboration across sectors was becoming ever more important as the result of economic and societal changes. Through RENKEI projects, member universities in Japan and the UK were committed to exploring how they can develop fresh and innovative engagement with third-party organisations such as industries, governments and social enterprises to address common societal challenges.

Over the last 6 years between 2012 and 2017, RENKEI served as an effective platform for the members to develop close networks especially through its annual face-to-face Steering Committee meetings. Such networks also led to strong partnerships between individual institutions. Member universities jointly organised altogether 12 workshops in the form of summer or spring schools, mainly targeting early career researchers including PhD students. More than 231 researchers from 12 member universities participated in the workshops organised by [RENKEI working groups](#) and 90 external bodies were engaged. The workshops achieved excellent feedback both from participants and organisers.

The aim of RENKEI after April 2018:

The first phase of RENKEI will come to an end in March 2018, and founding members have decided to shift its direction and focus. “RENKEI 2.0” will have more focus on showcasing bilateral research between members to wider external stakeholders and promoting new joint research through researcher networking, potentially leading to partnerships with the government, industry and civil society. RENKEI will deliver these objectives mainly through organising a RENKEI conference and adjoining researcher networking workshop held in rotation in Japan and the UK.

RENKEI after April 2018 will prioritise “climate change” and “health” as themes for researcher networking leading to new joint research. Both areas were specified in the [Japan-UK Joint Declaration on Prosperity Cooperation](#) released in September 2017 when Prime Minister Theresa May visited Japan. As a group of leading research intensive universities in the two countries which are among the world’s foremost producers of cutting-edge research, enormous potential exists for RENKEI institutions to meet these common research challenges with innovative solutions.

In addition to the RENKEI conference and researcher networking workshops, members will also continue to enjoy opportunities for maintaining strong relationships between members through annual

face-to-face Steering Committee meetings. As this innovative form of bilateral research collaboration develops, it will result in shared values, agendas and action points among the participating individuals and institutions. The long-term benefits of RENKEI will be a sustainable dialogue and strategic relationship that transcends academic disciplines, industrial/public sectors and national boundaries.

Confirmed members of RENKEI for 2018-2019 onwards (as of January 2018):

Japan:

Kyoto University
Kyushu University
Nagoya University
Osaka University
Ritsumeikan University
Tohoku University

UK:

University of Leeds
University of Liverpool
Newcastle University
University of Southampton

Application criteria:

Institutions must:

1. be a UK research intensive university which can engage senior as well as early-career researchers with RENKEI activities and contribute to world-class, bilateral research collaborations with member universities on priority themes (see above).
2. agree to be bound by the terms and conditions specified in the RENKEI Membership Agreement¹.

Membership fee:

As a condition of participation in RENKEI, the member university will be requested to pay an annual membership fee of 1,000,000 Japanese Yen at the beginning of each financial year (April to March). The British Council, Japan, as the RENKEI secretariat, will hold and manage the Membership Fees paid by all the RENKEI universities. The fee will be converted into British Sterling Pounds for UK universities using the British Council Book Keeping Rate in April of the respective year. The membership fee will be allocated to fund organisation of joint RENKEI activities, such as Steering Committee meetings, conferences, researcher workshops and the secretariat's operations. Member universities may be required to cover some additional costs to organise or participate in RENKEI activities.

¹ Please note that the RENKEI Membership Agreement will be shared with successful applicants only. Please see "selection process" below.

Q&A session:

A Q&A session via webinar will be held at **09:00 – 10:00AM (GMT), Tuesday 23 January** to enable interested universities to ask any questions about RENKEI. The Q&A session will be organised by the British Council.

Universities interested in joining this webinar should register interests through the [online form](#) by **midnight (GMT), Thursday 18 January 2018**. You will then receive a separate instruction to register for the webinar system by Monday 22 January. Participants will be asked to dial in a toll-free number to join the webinar. If more than one person wishes to attend the webinar from different locations within the university, we will need registration from each participant.

Please kindly note that, depending on the number of registrants, one-to-one briefings may be arranged as an alternative to the joint Q&A session.

How to apply for RENKEI membership:

A completed [application form](#) and one supporting document should be submitted to the British Council by email (renkei@britishcouncil.or.jp) by **midnight (GMT), Tuesday 6 February 2018**.

Our mail server can receive files up to 8MB. If you plan to submit a supporting document larger than 8MB, please kindly use an online file transfer service.

Supporting document:

A PowerPoint presentation (maximum 3 slides) on how your institution can contribute to the priority research themes, “climate change” and “health”, citing potential researchers to engage. Please refer to the [Japan-UK Joint Declaration on Prosperity Cooperation](#) as appropriate.

Selection process:

Step 1:

Application forms and the supporting document will be assessed by the RENKEI Steering Committee, which consists of representatives from all member universities.

Step 2:

Successful applicants will be contacted by the British Council by the beginning of March 2018. Each institution will be requested to examine the RENKEI Membership Agreement at this stage and confirm if it agrees to be bound by the terms and conditions specified in the Agreement no later than Friday 30 March 2018.

Step 3:

Once confirmation is received, the execution of the agreement (with signature) will take place by post. This is expected to be completed by Monday 23 April 2018. Invoice for the annual membership fee will be arranged by the end of April 2018.

Contact:

RENKEI Secretariat

British Council, Japan

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