

ASHBi KAKENHI Writing Seminar 2024 Q&A

Links to KAKENHI Basic resources (Please check the links below for basic information)

1. KAKENHI website (Top page)

<https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-grants/index.html>

2. Application Instructions & Document Set

https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-grants/grants09_kiban.html

- *Application Procedures (Kiban A/B/C, Challenging, WAKATE)*

https://www.jsps.go.jp/file/storage/kaken_kiban_2024_g_2330/r7_7_kobo_e.pdf

- *Table of Restriction on Parallel Grant Application/Receipt*

https://www.jsps.go.jp/file/storage/kaken_kiban_2024_g_2307/table_of_restriction_e.pdf

- *Review Section Table*

https://www.jsps.go.jp/file/storage/kaken_kiban_2024_g_2307/review_section_table_e.pdf

3. Peer Review Process (Assessment Criteria)

https://www.jsps.go.jp/file/storage/kaken_kiban_2024_g_2307/review_section_table_e.pdf

1) [Basic Info] Eligibility

Question	Answer
<p>1)-1 Since Kakenhi funds research only (no salary), what happens if you get KAKENHI but are not able to procure salary income?</p>	<p>The applicant must be an individual belonging to a research institution in Japan with a job assignment (paid/unpaid, full-time/part-time) including a research activity within the said institution. Before applying, please read the "Application Procedures -III. Instructions for Prospective Applicants" (1. Procedures to Be Completed Prior to Application). If you are unclear, please contact your university/institution admin.</p>
<p>1)-2 Does researcher with Visiting Assistant Professor appointment in the Japanese university eligible to apply?</p>	<p>Please contact your university/institution admin for eligibility at your university.</p>
<p>1)-3 Can you apply for WAKATE if you are presently studying for your PhD but haven't completed it yet? (e.g. MEXT Scholar, graduating in Sep. 2024, etc.)</p>	<p>Eligibility for FY2024 WAKATE call is; <i>Individual researcher who is less than 8 years after his/her acquisition of Ph.D. (as of April 1st, 2025) including those who are expected to acquire their Ph.D. by April 1, 2025.</i> For details, please check the "Application Procedures" (II. Call for Proposals - 3. Details of Each Research Category - (3) Early-Career Scientists, A) Funding Target).</p>
<p>1)-4 I am expecting to graduate and will be in a faculty position after graduation. Which is a better option, early-career or start-up?</p>	<p>It depends on when you become eligible for KAKENHI. Since you can receive both Research Activity Start-up and WAKATE at the same time, so if you become eligible after Sep 18, 2024, then it might be advisable to start from the Research Activity Start-up call coming up in spring 2025.</p>
<p>1)-5 Which grants should researchers apply for who (1) are older (40 years and above) or (2) have limited experience as a researcher (e.g., five years or less)?</p>	<p>Age limit has been excluded from the eligibility of WAKATE, hence in this case you will be eligible to apply for WAKATE.</p>
<p>1)-6 How many times at maximum that I can apply for Grant-in-Aid for Early-Career Scientists (WAKATE) within that 8 years?</p>	<p>You can obtain WAKATE for a maximum of 2 times if you are eligible.</p>

2) [Basic Info] Application Category

Question	Answer
2)-1 Is it possible to submit multiple KAKENHI grants in one year (e.g. C & WAKATE, Startup & WAKATE)? Which combinations of KAKENHI grants can be applied for at the same time?	The combination of the categories which you can apply or receive at the same time differs among each category. Please check the " Table of Restriction on Parallel Grant Application/Receipt " before application.
2)-2 Last year I was awarded a WAKATE. Is it possible to apply this year? If not, how long I should wait to apply for KAKENHI C.	You cannot receive 2 projects in the similar category (e.g. WAKATE & Kiban) at the same time. You can start applying from the final year of the current project.
2)-3 Can I apply both JSPS postdoctoral fellowship and WAKATE together?	For PD/RPD recipients, you will be able to apply for several categories (e.g. Kiban B/C, WAKATE) when the university grants you the eligibility. Please check the " Table of Restriction on Parallel Grant Application/Receipt " and your university admin for details.
2)-4 What considerations differ when submitting a KAKENHI Challenging Research (Pioneering/Exploratory) proposal compared to a Basic KIBAN A/B/C proposal?	Please check the Assessment Criteria of the Grant-in-Aid for Challenging Research (Pioneering/Exploratory) as it is different from that of Kiban or WAKATE. Funding Purpose from the " Application Procedures ". <i>Research conducted by a single or multiple researchers that aims at radically transforming the existing research framework and/or changing the research direction and has a potential of rapid development.</i>
2)-5 Is it wise to apply directly for a Kiban B, without previously having received a Kiban C, if your track record is good/have support from other researchers/etc.?	The category should be selected based on the project's research scope and budget size. Therefore, Therefore, you must balance your research scope and the budget size of the Kiban B. If the reviewers determine that your track record, accomplishments, and environment are appropriate to achieve the expected results, you may be selected. However, many of your competitors have successfully received Kiban C/WAKATE before, which can be a convincing evidence by itself.
2)-6 When applying for a second WAKATE grant which builds on the first successful application, should one assume the reviewer cannot access the first proposal?	Reviewers will receive and evaluate only submitted proposals. Since past proposals will not be provided, you need to explain how the past adoption have led to the current proposal to demonstrate its validity and appropriateness.
2)-7 Is it better to write a proposal that is a continuation of the previous project published recently in a high-impact journal?	It may be helpful if you took a leading role in the published achievement. You can utilize the past achievement as a convincing evidence to explain the validity and/or appropriateness of your research.

3) [Basic Info] Budget & Duration

Question	Answer
3)-1 The maximum funding for a 5-year project in early research career category is 5 million JPY. Is this amount including direct and indirect expenses?	The requested budget (for each category) covers your direct cost. Indirect cost to the universities will be provided in addition to your requested budget.
3)-2 Does the applied grant length (e.g. 2 yr vs 3, 4, or 5 yr) influence the proposal chances?	It is advisable to set the duration of the study to the most logical and appropriate length to complete the proposed study.
3)-3 How should we decide the amount of research grant when applying? Is it better to ask for less amount of funding than the maximum amount?	It is advisable to request the most logical and appropriate amount of money to conduct the research. Please note that it is highly likely that the amount will be reduced from the requested budget.
3)-4 Should the project include a budget for the purchase of research equipment? Is it possible to hire a postdoc?	Please read the " Application Procedures " (3. Requirements for the Appropriation of Research Expenditure - 1) Expenditures that can be covered by direct expense) for the expenses which can be covered by KAKENHI.

4) [Evaluation] Reviewers & Assessment Criteria

Question	Answer
4)-1 Are there any differences between the reviewers for English and Japanese KAKENHI grant proposals? Is review section related to the academic society we belong to?	For each basic section, the same group of reviewers evaluates all proposals regardless of language. Review sections are determined by JSPS, so researchers from the same academic society may be reviewers for different sections.
4)-2 Are there non-Japanese reviewers? What is the percentage?	It is possible that non-Japanese will be reviewers, but we do not know the percentage. In any case, since most proposals are submitted in Japanese, reviewers must be able to read and understand Japanese fluently.
4)-3 Do you know how many reviewers look at Research Start-Up and Early Career grants?	The number of proposals varies for each basic section. Statistics on the number of applications for each category and basic section can be found on the KAKENHI website. (https://www.jsps.go.jp/file/storage/kaken_27_kdata/3-1-2_r6_0531.pdf)
4)-4 What method does the evaluator read the application? Digital data or paper?	For Kiban A/B/C and WAKATE, the reviewers receive a black & white printed copy of the proposals. Therefore, it would be advisable to prepare your figures to be distinguishable in gray scale.
4)-5 What are the evaluation criteria for the reviewers? Do they use a checklist where they give points in criteria that add up? (not just broad categories)	The reviewers are instructed to review based on Assessment Criteria which are provided in the KAKENHI website. An example of the Assessment Criteria for Kiban B/C & WAKATE is provided in the appendix (slides 55-64).
4)-6 Does it mean that the proposal rejected by 1 reviewer and accepted by 2 others will be rejected?	The reviewers do not decide on acceptance or rejection, but rather assign a score. If only one reviewer gives a low score and the other reviewers give a high score, that application will most likely be sent to a second round for re-evaluation.
4)-7 What is the measure to assess the International ripple effect and why it is important to include International ripple effect in research proposal?	<p>In the JSPS briefing, "International Ripple Effect", the new Rating Element for Kiban A/B/C, it was explained that it will not be directly used for selection. Instead, amount of research funds allocated maybe enhanced to highly rated research projects which can create an environment in which researchers can challenge internationally competitive research.</p> <p>The reviewers are requested to assess as shown below (NOTE: this is a provisional translation of the Japanese content)</p> <p><i>Can this research proposal expect to demonstrate internationality (e.g., to lead global research in the future, to contribute to the development of global research through collaboration, to create high value as research unique to Japan, etc.) through its implementation?</i></p>

5) [Proposals] Language, theme, etc.

Question	Answer
5)-1 Is it better to submit in English or have the application translated to Japanese?	In my opinion, if you cannot read/write in native Japanese, I would recommend you to prepare your proposal in English. The reasons for this are: 1) you cannot evaluate the quality of the Japanese translation yourself, and 2) the judges will think that you have the writing ability of a native Japanese speaker, so unnatural phrasing or poor writing may provide negative impression to your proposal.
5)-2 For English proposals, is it better to use simple language? How well can the reviewers understand English?	Since the English proficiency of each reviewer is unknown, it is advisable to use simple sentences and expressions to reduce stress on the reviewers. It is also effective to describe the indicated keywords in Japanese (e.g., 学術的問い、研究目的、独自性) as a guide for the reviewers' eyes.
5)-3 Is it better to write up a proposal that builds on one's previous research (e.g. their PhD thesis or previous successful proposals) or a proposal that challenges new topics?	It is better to choose a topic that you find more compelling in terms of academic importance, relevance, and appropriateness. However, in general, a continuation of a previously successful project (including a doctoral dissertation) may be easier to convince the reviewers. For very challenging topics, KAKENHI Challenging Research (Pioneering/Exploratory) is another option.
5)-4 Do the projects which do not relate to Japan have chance to get funded?	Since KAKENHI aims to support research in all fields, it is possible to propose research not directly related to Japan (e.g. European literature, field research in the tropical rainforests of Southeast Asia).
5)-5 If you were rejected for one of the grants, can you apply with the same proposal to a different grant?	Rejected proposals may be reapplied for by reinforcing the identified weaknesses or selecting a more appropriate basic section, category, or different grant program. However, when reapplying, please make sure that your new proposal meets the purpose and evaluation criteria of your target grant.
5)-6 For early research career category, can we apply with two co-principal investigators?	For WAKATE, it is not possible to appoint a co-investigator (whom you will allocate budget to). However, mentioning advisors, collaborators, or supporting individuals who can provide the skills and resources necessary to carry out the research can help convince the reviewers that you are appropriate for the proposed research.
5)-7 What to do if your research is very interdisciplinary? What is the best strategy for deciding which Basic Section to submit to?	You can check which basic section is most suitable for your research by reviewing the list of past reviewers and past adopted proposals (results of similar proposals adopted) in the KAKEN database . Please refer to slides 18 & 19 for links etc.

6) [Proposals] Part 1

Question	Answer
<p>6)-1 is there a rule in which order we write (1) scientific background (2) the purpose, (and etc.) ? can I invert some?</p>	<p>There are no rules on how to write your document. However, to reduce stress on busy reviewers, you may wish to structure your document in accordance with the instructions and/or emphasize keywords (e.g., Key Scientific Question) in the instructions so that reviewers can easily find the information they need to evaluate.</p> <p>In addition, please check the instruction and the "Notes to observe when preparing the Research Proposal Document" carefully to include necessary information for the reviewers.</p>
<p>6)-2 What is the difference between the "key scientific question" at the beginning of the proposal and the "goal" later on? How can we determine the "Key Scientific Question"?</p>	<p>One interpretation of the "Key Scientific Question" can be an important unanswered problem in your research field which you wish to solve. It can be a focused problem that can be solved within your research project or a larger problem which you will challenge as a long-term vision. You may want to consider a question for which you are the only one with a solution, as shown on slide 41.</p> <p>On the other hand, the "Goal" can be interpreted as the goal of the project to be reached at the end of the proposed research period.</p>
<p>6)-3 What if my application deals with a very important academic question but has no societal impact (e.g. my application will explain the origin of the universe)?</p>	<p>If you are dealing with a very important academic question/problem that many people are looking for answers to, it may be assumed that your findings will be used by many researchers in the field. Explaining how your findings will benefit other researchers can be an example of the positive impact on the academic community and others.</p>
<p>6)-4 How much detail should you use in your methods sections? How should you structure this section?</p>	<p>It should be detailed enough so that the reviewers can understand that your approach and methods are reasonable to achieve the milestones/objectives within the given time frame and budget. It may be beneficial if you can briefly describe your protocols, etc.</p>
<p>6)-5 Is preliminary data necessary for the WAKATE and Kiban C? How much preliminary data is necessary?</p>	<p>Sufficient preliminary data in direct support of your methods should be provided, as this will provide compelling evidence to explain the validity of your methods. However, those data should be provided in a concise manner because the main content to be explained should be what "will" be elucidated in the future, not what has "already" been elucidated.</p>

7) [Proposals] Part 2

Question	Answer
7)-1 Any tips for Part 2 - Feasibility?	<p>Please review the instructions and notes carefully before writing.</p> <p>In my opinion, it is a good idea to briefly describe the skills and accomplishments you have acquired so far and show how these will be effective in carrying out your proposed research. This part can be used as an supplementary evidence to effectively demonstrate that your approach and methods are effective and that you have the necessary resources (facilities, equipment, advisors, etc.) to begin your research as soon as you are selected.</p>
7)-2 In publication list, should I explain simply about the role of the essential research in publication? Is it kind to the reviewer ?	<p>Please check the Note 1 shown below:</p> <p><i>The description in this column is to explain the feasibility of the research plan. On citing research achievements (research papers, books, patents, invited talks, etc.) they should be given not as an exhaustive list but as supporting evidence to prove the applicant's ability to conduct the proposed research.</i></p>
7)-3 I do not have any instruments for my proposal, do I have a chance with a simple "Research environment" section?	<p>It is advisable to explain as much as possible about the resources (databases, research collaborators/counterparts, etc.) used in your research as well as their functions.</p>
7)-4 How much does one's position within University (e.g., tenured/tenure-track or limited-term contract) affect the Kakenhi approval?	<p>JSPS requires reviewers to eliminate unconscious bias, so as long as you are eligible to apply, your current position will not affect your evaluation.</p> <p>However, it is advisable to clearly state your past accomplishments to demonstrate that you are suitable to conduct the proposed research and that you have easy access to the necessary infrastructure and resources for your research environment.</p>
7)-5 Do publications in high-impact journals increase acceptance chances compared to those with fewer low-impact publications? How important is it to already have multiple publications in the topic I want to apply for?	<p>Publishing in journals with a high impact factor can be effective. However, in terms of demonstrating your ability to carry out your research plan, publications of the first author/corresponding author, especially those directly related to your proposed topic/solution, may be more important. These publications can be used as evidence that your solution is effective.</p>

8) Others

Question	Answer
8)-1 Should we create the researchmap? What is the purpose to check it?	A link to the researchmap will be sent to the reviewers with your proposal application, so we recommend that you create a researchmap and update it when you submit your proposal. Although reviewers are expected to evaluate proposals based on the proposal content alone, researchmap allows them to understand and reconfirm the proposal content.
8)-2 Would LinkedIn be as valid as researchmap for personal page?	Since researchmap is the only database information provided to reviewers, LinkedIn and other databases do not constitute valid information.
8)-3 Are there statistic numbers for international researcher's and/or English applications?	Unfortunately, there are no statistics on the language or nationality of applicants.
8)-4 Are there stats for acceptance rates per review section as well?	JSPS keeps statistics on the adoption rate for each field. As you can see from the attached data (slide 70), basically the adoption rate is almost the same for each field and division.
8)-5 How much is too much when using graphical abstracts, figures and tables in the research plan?	Generally speaking, if it takes reviewers more than a few moments (e.g., more than 15 seconds) to understand the content, it should be considered too much. The diagram/figures should be designed so that it can be understood at a glance.
8)-6 Can a figure/graphical abstract be included in the Summary section?	Diagrams/figures may be placed freely within the proposal, including the graphical abstract. The graphical abstract should be placed close to the summary so that reviewers can see that it is a clear summary of the summary.
8)-7 I understand color figures would become allowed starting this year?	Unfortunately, applications for Kiban A/B/C and WAKATE categories will be sent to reviewers in black & white print. Please check the KAKENHI website for the categories that will be printed in color.
8)-8 In my proposal, I made some pictures using different colors. Should I make all these images in black and white?	Color is acceptable as long as it is distinguishable in grayscale. Reviewers will receive a black & white printout.
8)-9 Should the proposal be written in first person (e.g. I will..., I propose...,)?	There are no restrictions so you can use the first person pronoun " I " in your proposal. " The applicant " (申請者) is generally used by Japanese applicants which may also be a nice option.