

国立天文台
NAOJ
National Astronomical Observatory of Japan

Guidebook for International Researchers

on Invitational Systems and Programs

OIR November 2026

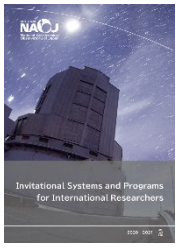
Guidebook for International Researchers on Invitational Systems and Programs for Research at NAOJ

This guidebook is intended to introduce invitational systems and programs both inside and outside NAOJ for international researchers who wish to conduct research at NAOJ. In addition, this document also serves as a useful reference for NAOJ staff who are seeking to invite international researchers to work on joint research projects.

February 2021
Office of International Relations
National Astronomy Observatory of Japan (NAOJ)

First Edition: February 2021
Second Edition: August 2022
Third Edition: April 2023
Fourth Edition: November 2026

© 2026 NAOJ All rights reserved.
Any duplication or other use of this publication without written permission of NAOJ is prohibited.



Cover Photo: “Images Connect Subaru Telescope and the International Space Station”
© Subaru Telescope, NAOJ

Subaru Telescope is an 8.2-meter optical-infrared telescope at the summit of Maunakea, Hawaii, operated by the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (NAOJ).

Table of Contents

I. NAOJ Staff and Visiting Research Collaborators 1

(A) Research and Academic Staff 1

(B) Engineering Staff 1

(C) Administrative Staff 2

2. Visiting Research Collaborators 2

3. Recruitment and Application Process 2

(A) Open Calls for Applications 2

(B) Applications from Host Researchers at NAOJ 2

II. Recruitment Systems and Programs for Research and Academic Staff and Collaborators 3

1. NAOJ's Recruitment Systems 3

(A) Tenured Research and Academic Staff 3

(B) Specially Appointed Academic Staff 3

(C) Project Researchers 5

(D) Other Invited Researchers 6

2. Programs in NAOJ-related Organizations 6

(A) EACOA Fellowship 6

3. Programs of External Organizations 7

(A) JSPS International Fellowships for Research in Japan 7

(B) Fellowship Programs of Other External Organizations 8

III. Doctoral Course at the Graduate University for Advanced Studies (SOKENDAI) (for graduate students) 9

1. NAOJ Junior Fellowship 9

2. NAOJ Associate Researcher Support System 9

3. Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarships 10

(A) Embassy Recommendation 10

(B) University Recommendation 11

(C) International Priority Graduate Programs (PGP) 11

I. NAOJ Staff and Visiting Research Collaborators

The NAOJ workforce is made up of staff and collaborators. Staff are engaged under an employment contract with NAOJ, while collaborators are not bound to such employment relationship. NAOJ staff include Research and Academic Staff, who are engaged in research activities, as well as Engineering Staff and Administrative Staff.

1. NAOJ Staff

NAOJ staff fall into three categories: Research and Academic Staff, Engineering Staff, and Administrative Staff.

(A) Research and Academic Staff

Research and Academic Staff are engaged in research activities related to astronomy. Their scope of work involves a wide range of job duties and tasks including promotion of their personal research; management of projects; development and operation of large telescopes/observation instruments; and public relations activities based on their expertise. Staff belonging to this category are called Research and Academic Staff because of their integrated roles in both research and education. NAOJ forms the core of the Department of Astronomical Sciences of the Graduate University for Advanced Studies (SOKENDAI), and Research and Academic Staff who take the position of a professor or an associate professor serve as academic supervisors for graduate students studying astronomy at SOKENDAI or other universities.

Research and Academic Staff are employed on either a permanent or a fixed-term contract. In many cases, they are recruited from academic-degree holders in astronomy or related fields through open calls for application. However, there is another recruitment system using an internal procedure, whereby a host researcher at NAOJ makes an application in accordance with relevant NAOJ rules, and a subsequent evaluation process determines whether the candidate should be invited.

For details about the recruitment systems and programs for Research and Academic Staff, see section II “Recruitment Systems and Programs for Research and Academic Staff” below.

(B) Engineering Staff

Engineering Staff support the research activities at NAOJ based on their technical expertise. Their scope of work includes maintenance of large telescopes; design and development of observation instruments/software; and maintenance/operation of network infrastructures.

They are employed on either a permanent or a fixed-term contract. In either case, they are recruited through open calls for application.

(C) Administrative Staff

Administrative Staff are engaged in a broad range of duties and tasks to support research activities and organization management. Their scope of work includes organizing conferences; management of personnel and salary administration; support for research and graduate school education; promotion of internationalization; financial management; procurement of supplies and equipment; and management/maintenance of buildings and facilities.

They are employed on either a permanent or a fixed-term contract. In either case, they are recruited through open calls for application.

2. Visiting Research Collaborators

NAOJ also accepts international researchers who have no employment relationship with NAOJ. Such researchers can visit NAOJ on a business trip or by enrolling in systems or programs of related/unrelated organizations to conduct joint research projects while being affiliated with their home institutions or universities.

3. Recruitment and Application Process

Recruitment and application processes vary depending on which system the applicant enrolls in: open applications or applications from host researchers made in accordance with relevant NAOJ rules.

(A) Open Calls for Applications

Open calls for application are available at the website below. Make sure to read the requirements before you apply.

https://www.nao.ac.jp/en/about-naoj/employment/job-vacancy.html

(B) Applications from Host Researchers at NAOJ

For details about this system, contact a staff member with whom you have already performed a joint project. If you have no contact with a NAOJ staff, refer to the following faculty lists and contact a member in the area of your interest.

- https://www2.nao.ac.jp/~open-info/reslist/index.html
- https://guas-astronomy.jp/eng/Supervisors/index.html

II. Recruitment Systems and Programs for Research and Academic Staff and Collaborators

Recruitment systems and programs intended for Research and Academic Staff and collaborators fall into three categories: NAOJ's recruitment systems, recruitment programs of NAOJ-related organizations, and recruitment programs of external organizations. Among such systems and programs, this section describes those which receive a large number of applications from international researchers.

1. NAOJ's Recruitment Systems

(A) Tenured Research and Academic Staff

Tenured Research and Academic Staff are those who are engaged in research and education duties, and fall into several positions such as: Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, and so on. With some exceptions such as Tenure-Track Assistant Professors, staff belonging to this category are employed on a permanent basis and are assigned to each project at the time of hiring based on their expertise and experience.

The employment period of Tenure-Track Assistant Professors is limited to 5 years and their projects are already specified at the time of recruitment. However, depending on the results of the fifth-year review, there is an opportunity for such tenured staff to be promoted to a permanent position.

Tenured Research and Academic Staff are recruited on an as-needed basis through open calls for applications. The job announcements will be posted on the website below.
https://www.nao.ac.jp/en/about-naoj/employment/job-vacancy.html

(B) Specially Appointed Academic Staff

Specially Appointed Academic Staff is a collective term used for describing staff who are engaged in research and education duties at a specific research project, and fall into either of the following positions: Project Professor, Project Associate Professor, and Project Assistant Professor. They are all employed on a fixed-term contract and their projects are already specified at the time of recruitment.

Specially Appointed Academic Staff also includes "International Visiting Scholars" and "NAOJ Fellows", as more fully described below.

◆ **International Visiting Scholars**

International Visiting Scholars are those who are affiliated with research and educational institutes (in astronomy and related fields) overseas and engage in joint research projects as Visiting Professors, Visiting Associate Professors, or Visiting Research Fellows at NAOJ in order to promote research in astronomy and related fields, as well as education and training for young researchers.

Their visiting period can vary from 1 month to 1 year (within a given fiscal year) and their benefits include salary and round-trip airfare. (In certain circumstances, individuals may choose to apply for a non-employee position. In this case, their visiting period is limited from 1 month to 90 days. They will be provided with round-trip airfare and accommodation allowance, but will be not included in the "Specially Appointed Academic Staff" category.)

Open Recruitment for this position is held once a year (usually from late August to early September) and an application is made by a host researcher at NAOJ. If you wish to stay at NAOJ as an International Visiting Scholar, please refer to I.3.(B) and contact a possible host researcher at NAOJ.

◆ **NAOJ Fellowship**

The NAOJ Fellowship is a position for independent, highly qualified young researchers of any nationality who wish to explore the cutting-edge frontiers in astronomy and become global leaders in their new fields. This program provides such ambitious researchers with opportunities to engage in their own research/development project at NAOJ as a Project Assistant Professor employed under the annual salary system.

Call for applications for the NAOJ fellowship opens once a year.

NAOJ Fellowship	
Number of Open Positions	Several persons/year
Research Areas	Astronomy, development of astronomical instruments, or related fields.
Eligibility	Applicants must hold a Ph.D. degree or be expected to receive one by the starting date.
Recruitment Process	Application period usually runs from late June to late July prior to the year of award and successful candidates are usually selected around November.
Term	5 years in principle
Annual Salary	6,600,000 JPY (550,000 JPY/month)
Research Funds	1,000,000 JPY/year

More details and the latest updates can be found on the website below.
https://www.nao.ac.jp/en/careers/jobs-fellow.html

(C) Project Researchers

Project Researchers are those who are engaged in research activities at particular projects. They are employed on a fixed-term contract.

Project Researchers also includes “Project Research Fellows”, as more fully described below.

◆ **Project Research Fellowship**

The Project Research Fellowship is a position designed for excellent young researchers of any nationality. Project Research Fellows are recruited separately through three different categories.

Project Research Fellows are expected to spend up to the amount of time specified by their categories or funding programs for duties assigned by their projects, but can use the rest of the time to pursue their own research interests.

Eligible candidates must hold a Ph.D. degree in astronomy or related fields, or be expected to earn one by their starting date. The term of appointment is 3 years in principle, but depending on their categories, it may be extended for up to another 2 years subject to an end-term review.

The following table provides an overview of each of the fellowship categories.

Project Research Fellowship			
Recruitment	Annual Salary	Research Funds Per Year	Application Period (FY 2026)
General	4,200,000 JPY	500,000 JPY	Early September to early October
Project/Center	4,200,000 JPY	500,000 JPY	As-needed basis
External Funding including Subaru, ALMA, and TMT	4,200,000 JPY	Varies depending on the programs	As-needed basis

For more details, please refer to each job description at the following links.
https://www.nao.ac.jp/en/about-naoj/employment/fellowship-program.html

Open calls for application are available at the website below.
https://www.nao.ac.jp/en/about-naoj/employment/job-vacancy.html

(D) Other Invited Researchers

Other than those described in the above, there are several invitational programs devoted to international researchers. Neither of these programs is open to the public, but instead is implemented using an internal procedure, whereby the host researcher at NAOJ makes an application in accordance with relevant NAOJ rules, and a subsequent evaluation process determines whether the candidate should be invited.

If you wish to visit NAOJ under one of these programs, please refer to I.3.(B) and contact a possible host researcher.

Listed below are major invitation programs for international researchers.

◆ **NAOJ Internship**

NAOJ Internship is for international graduate students who belong to universities overseas and studies astronomy or related fields. Under this program, students gain an opportunity to engage in research activities while receiving education and training at NAOJ. The visiting period for the internship is less than 1 year. This program comes in two types: paid or unpaid. Paid interns will be employed by NAOJ as a research assistant and will receive a salary (on an hourly basis) for engaging in the duties assigned by NAOJ.

◆ **Sabbatical Researchers**

This program is for researchers currently affiliated with other academic institutions either in Japan or abroad, and who are on sabbatical leave to conduct an autonomous research project at NAOJ. The visiting period can vary from 1 month to 1 year. In principle, salary and accommodation/travel expenses are not provided.

Researchers who are interested in being hosted under this program are kindly requested to consult with a researcher at NAOJ who may serve as their host. If you have no contact with a NAOJ staff, refer to the following lists and contact a member in the area of your interest.

https://www2.nao.ac.jp/~open-info/reslist/index.html
https://guas-astronomy.jp/eng/Supervisors/index.html

2. Programs in NAOJ-related Organizations

(A) EACOA Fellowship

The EACOA Fellowship is a scholarship program established by the East Asia Core Observatories Association, which is comprised of four East Asian institutes (listed below) including NAOJ. This program aims to promote the collaborative astronomical research in the East Asian region by supporting outstanding young researchers of any nationality to conduct research activities at EACOA member institutions. EACOA fellows are expected to work in at least two EACOA member institutions during

their 3-year fellowship period (at least one year at each institution).

Member institutes of EACOA are:

- Japan: National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (NAOJ)
- China: Center for Astronomical Mega-Science (CAMS)
- Korea: Korea Astronomy and Space Science Institute (KASI)
- Taiwan: Academia Sinica Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics (ASIAA)

As an EACOA member institution, NAOJ accepts EACOA Fellows although they have no direct employment relationship with NAOJ.

EACOA Fellowship	
Number of Fellowships Awarded	One person/year
Research Area	Astronomy or related fields
Eligibility	Those who received a Ph.D. degree within 5 years before the starting date.
Application Deadline	November prior to the year of award.
Term	3 years in principle (subject to annual review and renewable for an additional 2 years)
Scholarship	5,000 USD/month (as of 2026)
Research Funding	20,000 USD/year (as of 2026)
Relocation Expenses	Reimbursed up to 4,000 USD

More details about EACOA and the EACOA Fellowship can be found at the website below.
https://www.eacoa.net/fellowship.php

3. Programs of External Organizations

(A) JSPS International Fellowships for Research in Japan

The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) provides fellowship programs for overseas researchers who have an excellent record of research achievements to conduct collaborative research, discussions, and opinion exchanges with researchers in Japan. NAOJ accepts international researchers enrolled in these programs.

JSPS's invitation programs come in two categories: "Postdoctoral Fellowships for Research in Japan" for young researchers and "Invitational Fellowships for Research in Japan" for mid-career to professor-level researchers.

Except for some programs, JSPS Fellows are provided with round-trip airfare, maintenance allowance,

and research support allowance (or Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research).

Some programs need a pre-approval and/or an application from a host researcher at NAOJ. If you wish to visit NAOJ under such program, please refer to I.3.(B) and contact a possible host researcher at NAOJ.

More details about JSPS's programs can be found at the website below.
https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-inv_researchers/index.html

✧ Leaflets for JSPS International Fellowships for Research in Japan
https://www.jsps.go.jp/file/storage/e-inv/pamphlet/fellowship_2026_EN.pdf

(B) Fellowship Programs of Other External Organizations

Apart from JSPS, there are a few external organizations that offer invitational programs that are available for international researchers who wish to work at NAOJ. The following table provides brief descriptions of major external invitation programs in the fields related to astronomy and the development of observational instruments. More details can be found at the website for each program.

Some programs need a pre-approval and/or an application from a host researcher at NAOJ. If you wish to visit NAOJ under such program, please refer to I.3.(B) and contact a possible host researcher at NAOJ.

Organization Program	Eligibility/Requirement	Duration	Website
Canon Foundation Research Fellowships	Nationality: European countries Requirement: Within 10 years of receiving master's or Ph.D. degree in principle	3 months to 1 year	https://www.canonfoundation.org/programmes/research-fellowships/
National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT) NICT International Exchange Program	Discipline: ICT Requirement: Candidates must have a Ph.D. degree or equivalent. (Ph.D. candidates may be allowed depending on their achievements.)	within 1 year	https://www.nict.go.jp/en/promotion/intprog/int_prog.html
Iketani Science and Technology Foundation (ISTF) International Exchange Grant (invitation)	Discipline: Advanced materials or other related scientific technology fields	—	https://www.iketani-zaidan.or.jp/system/?page_id=05 (Japanese only)

III. Doctoral Course at the Graduate University for Advanced Studies (SOKENDAI) (for graduate students)

As the host institute of the Astronomical Science Program of the Graduate Institute for Advanced Studies at SOKENDAI, NAOJ provides education and research guidance for graduate students, and welcomes international students.

More details about SOKENDAI can be found at the websites below.

- ✧ The Graduate University for Advanced Studies (SOKENDAI)
  https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/
- ✧ Astronomical Science Program of the Graduate University for Advanced Studies (SOKENDAI)
  https://guas-astronomy.jp/eng/index.html

Described below are scholarship and financial aid programs for international students accepted to NAOJ. (Please check the application requirements when applying as some programs do not allow duplicate grant awards.)

1. NAOJ Junior Fellowship

The NAOJ Junior Fellowship is intended for students with exceptional research abilities and motivations for pursuing a career in research.

Students applying to SOKENDAI are automatically considered for this scholarship program. Recipients are selected based on the results of their entrance examinations.

The scholarship benefits include:

- Admission fees
- Tuition fees
- Monthly allowance of 150,000 JPY
- Travel expenses

More details about the NAOJ Junior Fellowship can be found at the website below.
https://guas-astronomy.jp/Intro/pdf/junior_fellow.pdf

2. NAOJ Associate Researcher Support System

The Associate Researcher Support System is designed for SOKENDAI students belonging to the Astronomical Science Program with outstanding academic records to work on NAOJ's research projects in order to develop their research abilities as young scientists. It also aims to provide an opportunity for these students to gain experience on how they can conduct research effectively and enrich their research environments.

If you wish to become an Associate Researcher, you need to apply for this program after your admission to SOKENDAI. Recipients are selected based on their submitted research plans and are further categorized into three ranks. They will receive monthly research support funding ranging from 60,000 to 100,000 JPY, depending on which category they fall into.

More details about this system can be found on the application guidelines delivered after the admission.

3. Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarships

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) offers scholarships for excellent international students who wish to study in graduate courses at Japanese universities as research students. SOKENDAI accepts international students selected for this program. This program is only available for those with the nationality of a country that has diplomatic relations with Japan.

Successful candidates are provided with the following benefits until the end of their course (but not exceeding the standard course duration for a Ph.D. degree).

- Scholarship
- Round-Trip Airfare
- Educational Fees (tuition, admission, and exam fees)

More details about the Japanese Government Scholarships can be found at the relates websites below.

- ✧ SOKENDAI
  https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/admission/mextscholarship/
- ✧ MEXT
  https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/ryugaku/boshu/1330944.htm

To receive a MEXT Scholarship, applicants must submit their applications and be selected before being admitted to SOKENDAI. Those who are applying for other scholarship programs are not eligible to this program.

There are the following three ways to apply for this program.

(A) Embassy Recommendation

To receive an Embassy Recommendation, applicants must first apply to the Japanese Embassy or Consulate in their home country. Then, after an evaluation process, selected candidates are recommended to MEXT, which carries out the final selection.

More details about Embassy Recommendation can be found at the related websites below.
https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/admission/mextscholarship/scholarship_jpn/index.html

(B) University Recommendation

To receive a University Recommendation, applicants must first apply to SOKENDAI. Then, after an evaluation process, selected candidates are recommended to MEXT, which carries out the final selection.

More details about University Recommendation can be found at the relates websites below.
https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/admission/mextscholarship/university_recommendation/index.html

(C) International Priority Graduate Programs (PGP)

International Priority Graduate Programs (PGP) are intended for international students who wish to enroll in a special program adopted by MEXT. As in the case of "University Recommendation," applicants must go through an evaluation process conducted by SOKENDAI before receiving a recommendation to MEXT, which carries out the final selection.

More details about PGP can be found at the related websites below.
https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/admission/mextscholarship/university_recommendation_pgp/