

**Application Guidelines for NIG Global Scholar (NIG-GS) Selection
Genetics Program, SOKENDAI
5-year PhD program in Life Sciences
Enrollment: October 2025 / Application Deadline: October 28, 2024**



Eligibility:

【Important notice】

- ◆ Please note that the NIG Global Scholar Selection is different (in both process and timeline) from [the Embassy Recommendation for the Japanese Government \(MEXT\) scholarship](#).
- ◆ The Genetics Program, SOKENDAI should be the applicant's first-choice for graduate studies. Applicants who passed the tertiary (final) screening must provide a decision on acceptance/decline by the designated date of February.

Note:

This year, SOKENDAI apply for the Japanese government (MEXT) scholarship program “The International Priority Graduate Programs (PGP)” that supports this NIG-GS program, and the results from MEXT are supposed to be announced around the end of November 2024. On one hand, if the program is adopted, we can recommend the selected applicants as MEXT scholarship recipients to the MEXT. **On the other hand, if the program is rejected, applicants can choose to continue admission process to aim to enroll in SOKENDAI as privately financed students or withdraw from the admission.** Applicants will be kept informed of the status of scholarship program.

【Qualifications】

(1) Applicants:

NIG-GS is designed for **international students** residing outside Japan at the time of application. The applicants should have earned a bachelor's degree or have academic ability equal or superior to that of a Japanese university graduate and achieved a minimum GPA of 2.3 on a 3.0 scale as calculated by the Japanese government official formula (see FAQ, Q7). The applicant is expected to maintain a GPA of 2.3 or higher for the entire duration of the 5-year PhD program.

In case the applicant's GPA cannot be calculated based on the Japanese government formula, it is necessary to submit a letter of recommendation from the Dean or higher of the attended school, which includes a statement that the applicant is ranked within the top 30% in the school, or university.

(2) Nationality:

The applicant must hold a nationality of a country that has diplomatic relations with the Japanese government (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/index.html>). Applicants who hold Japanese citizenship at the time of application are not eligible.

We encourage applications from the “specified nationalities” (especially Southeast Asian countries). For the selection of the MEXT scholarship recipient, the slots for the students whose nationality is in countries not listed as the “specified nationalities” are limited. Please see the document of “NIG Global Scholar (NIG-GS): Financial Support.”

* See the attached list for “[specified nationalities](#)”.

<Important exception> We accept applications from Taiwanese students even though they are not eligible for the MEXT scholarship. Because Taiwanese applicants cannot receive the MEXT scholarship after enrollment, they are encouraged to apply for other scholarships such as Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association Scholarship (<https://www.koryu.or.jp/tw/business/scholarship/>), which is equivalent to the MEXT scholarship.

(3) Age:

According to the eligibility of the MEXT scholarship, the applicant must be under 35 years old as of April 1, 2025 (that is, born on or after April 2, 1990).

(4) Academic Background:

The applicant must have completed a total of 16 years of study at educational institutions or expect to have completed a total of 16 years by September 30, 2025.

* Please see [FAQ, Q1 for more information](#). Those with questions or concerns regarding the qualifications are advised to contact the Genetics Program <info-soken@nig.ac.jp> well ahead of the application deadline.

(5) Study Area:

The study area must be in a related field that the applicant has already studied. The field of study must be one that is available at the Genetics Program.

(6) Language ability:

The applicant must have sufficient English ability to pursue his/her studies. Specifically, the applicant must fulfill either of the following requirements.

- a) Holds an English proficiency test score equivalent to B2 or above on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).
To see the CEFR Equivalency Chart, please confirm the following webpage.
[CEFR Equivalency Chart](#)
- b) Has completed an educational program whose primary language of instruction is English.

(7) Health:

The applicant must not have any physical or mental conditions that would prevent his/her graduate studies at the Genetics Program.

(8) Arrival in Japan:

The accepted applicant must be able to arrive in Japan in the period between the middle of September and the beginning of October, 2025. Those who arrive in Japan before the designated date for personal reasons will NOT be provided traveling expenses to Japan.

(9) Visa Requirement:

If selected, the applicant will be required to acquire a “Student” visa in the home country prior to coming to Japan and enter Japan with “Student” status upon arrival. Therefore, the successful applicant who is already in Japan under a different resident status must change his/her resident status to “Student” by the end of September, 2025 and change the visa status to “Student” status. (The applicant who comes to Japan with a visa or resident status other than “Student” will NOT qualify for the Japanese government scholarship. Also, please note that the applicant who changes his/her resident status to any status other than “Student” after entry into Japan will lose his/her status of a Japanese government scholarship student.) Please understand that there is no guarantee the original resident status such as Permanent or Long-term resident status will be restored even if you apply again after expiration of the "Student" visa.

(10) Others:

Applicants to whom any of the following restrictions apply will NOT be considered as candidates.

- [1] Military personnel or military civilian employees registered on the active list.
- [2] Applicants who are not able to arrive in Japan on the appointed dates.
- [3] Applicants who have received the MEXT scholarship within the past three years. (This restriction does not apply, however, to students who were enrolled as a scholarship student in a Japanese language and culture program or as a scholarship student in the Japan-Korea Joint Undergraduate Course for Science and Engineering.)
- [4] Applicants who have already won a scholarship from another institution (including scholarships from the government of their home country).
- [5] Applicants who have applied for the MEXT scholarship through another university or for the support system for foreign students by MEXT and JASSO simultaneously. (This restriction also applies to students who have been selected and are to be registered continuously through 2025 with the support system for foreign students conducted by MEXT and JASSO.)
- [6] Applicants who have enrolled in a Japanese university with “Student (ryugaku)” status at the time of the application and have enrolled/will be enrolled in a Japanese university as a privately-financed foreign student between the time of application and the beginning of the scholarship payment. If applicants who have enrolled/will be enrolled in a Japanese university as a privately-financed foreign student surely know at the time of the application that they will return to their home country before the scholarship period starts and will acquire a new “Student” visa and enter Japan with the visa, the preceding paragraph shall not apply to those applicants.

Timeline for the admissions process:

Before initial application:

Contact your [prospective mentor\(s\)](#) and discuss possible research projects.

* Faculty members who are scheduled to retire within the standard period of study (5 years from the time of admission for the 5-year PhD program) cannot be appointed as prospective mentors.

Primary screening

Noon on October 28, 2024: Deadline for submission of initial application documents

Please assemble all the required information in one file for each category (.doc or .pdf) and send it as an e-mail attachment to <info-soken@nig.ac.jp> by **noon on October 28, 2024 (Japan Standard Time)**

Required information

- Application form ([download the form from here](#))
- An essay describing why and what you want to study in the Genetics Program (no more than 1000 words). ([download the form from here](#))
- Books, papers, or lectures that were particularly interesting to you ([download the form from here](#))
- Latest academic transcripts (with GPA) issued by the college or university you attend/attended. If the explanation of grading scale/grading system is available, be sure to include that information.
- Examinee’s Score Record for TOEFL iBT or Test Report Form for IELTS (Academic Module)

The language test must be taken no longer than two years prior to the online exam day (January 20, 2025).

Please include a scanned copy of your score report form in your application document.

- Write "NIG-GS application" in the subject line of the e-mail
- Name the file as follows: Start with "FAMILY NAME (in capitals)", followed by underscore "_", and "given name". If your name is "Gregor Mendel", your filename should be "MENDEL_ Gregor".
- If a bachelor's degree course is/was offered in English, a proof that the language of instruction at attending/attended university is/was English can be substituted for a score report form of an English proficiency examination (TOEFL/IELTS).

Secondary screening

Noon on November 6, 2024: Deadline for submission of online exam

The applicants who passed the primary screening will be notified by October 31 and will be asked to take a written exam via e-mail (to be submitted by noon on November 6 (JST)). In this exam, the applicants will be asked to submit a mini report. The mini report is designed to test analytical ability rather than background and/or knowledge; no particular preparation is necessary.

Applicants are not allowed to contact any faculty of the Genetics Program from October 31 (distribution of the online written exam) until noon on November 18 (JST).

Submission of required documents for the tertiary screening

December 23, 2024: Deadline for submission of scanned copy

The applicants who passed the secondary screening will be notified by December 2, 2024.

The documents listed below will need to be submitted **only** by those who proceeded to the tertiary screening.

Due to the short submission timeframe of required documents for this year's tertiary selection, we recommend that applicants start preparing the required documents before the results of secondary screening are notified.

- Scanned copies of the documents for revision purposes should reach the Academic Services Division <info-soken@nig.ac.jp> as e-mail attachments no later than **December 23, 2024**.
- If the applicant will be accepted for enrollment, the applicant must submit the original official transcript and certification of graduation.

<NOTE> The submitted documents will NOT be returned under any circumstances. Please keep a copy of all the documents for personal reference.

In the case that any of the documents is not re-issuable, please submit an attested (notarized) copy of it instead.

The main application documents are:

- a) Application form
- b) Field of Study and Research Plan
- c) Photograph (Digital)
Digital image sized 4.5 cm x 3.5 cm taken within the past six months (Full-faced photograph. When photographed, the applicant must not wear a hat or cap hiding a part of his/her face or head.
- d) Proof of nationality (preferably a copy of the applicant's passport)
- e) Diploma or degree certificate (originals or certified copies)

The applicants must submit a diploma or degree certificate from all the universities attended (or a document certifying that the applicants will graduate from the university by September 2025).

- Applicants must submit the Certificate of Graduation from their undergraduate school. Applicants who graduated from graduate schools must submit the Certificates of Graduation from graduate schools.
 - Applicants who have not yet graduated from a university must submit an attested document certifying that the applicants will graduate before entering the doctoral program.
- f) Proof of the applicant's academic level, such as the academic ranking in his/her previous university (e.g., GPA, ABC grading, and ranking of academic achievement)
- g) A recommendation letter from the applicant's home institution, addressed to the President of SOKENDAI (original)
- A recommendation letter must be issued by the Dean or equivalent (or higher) of the applicant's current university or the most recent university the applicant attended if he/she is not enrolled in any university. SOKENDAI cannot accept a recommendation letter from the department head or the academic supervisor.
 - Please attach a document indicating the position of the person who wrote the recommendation letter.
- h) Abstracts of thesis
If the applicant has no thesis or publications, please submit a summary of his/her current research project.
- i) Proof of the applicant's specific knowledge and capability in his/her field, such as a commendation for research achievement (optional)

The documents above must be prepared in English or Japanese using word-processing software. Print all required documents on A4 size paper. For documents prepared in languages other than Japanese or English, attach a Japanese or English translation to each document.

Tertiary screening

January 20 - January 22, 2025: Online exam

The applicants who proceeded to the tertiary screening will take the online written exam on January 20, be interviewed on January 21, January 22 is spare and the examination is usually carried out within the first two days.

Decision for the enrollment

Late February, 2025

Applicants who passed the tertiary screening will be contacted by late February.

All the applicants who passed the tertiary screening must make an accept/decline decision and inform it by the designated date.

NIG-GS Selection Eligibility and Admissions FAQ

Q1: Is completion (or expected completion) of a bachelor's course in any country sufficient for eligibility for NIG-GS application?

A1: Bachelor's degrees from any country will be honored, as long as the applicant has completed (or is expected to complete) 16 years of formal education (from elementary school to undergraduate college). We will also consider applicants with 15 years of formal education if they have excellent school records. This includes applicants from countries whose period of formal education is less than 16 years and those who have advanced placement. Please inquire in advance if you have any questions on eligibility. Exceptional cases that may not qualify by the criteria above may also be considered. Details of the qualifications for application can be found at the following URL: https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/admission/general_admission/qualification/

Q2: If I already have a master's degree, can I still apply to NIG-GS?

A2: Yes, you can. Several of our current students indeed had master's degrees before entering. Please also note that having a master's degree on its own does not satisfy the eligibility for application; applicants must have had 16 years of formal education, as described in A1.

Q3: If I have a master's degree, can I graduate in less than 5 years?

A3: It is not automatically true. Like any graduate program, completion of coursework is not sufficient to obtain a PhD; one needs to conduct and report original research that contributes to the advancement of science and defend your thesis. [https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/education/curriculum/requirement/Degree_Criteria / Diploma Policy](https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/education/curriculum/requirement/Degree_Criteria/Diploma_Policy)

If it is recognized that a student has demonstrated "outstanding research performance", he/she may graduate before reaching the standard period of study.

Q4: When can I submit my NIG-GS application for next fiscal year?

A4: Please refer to the application guidelines which are revised every summer.

Q5: I am an international applicant currently residing in Japan. Can I apply to the NIG-GS?

A5: NIG-GS is open to applicants residing abroad (at the time of application). If you live in Japan at the time of application, please apply via General Admission. [General Admission](#)

Q6: Are there any options other than NIG-GS selection for applying to get the MEXT scholarship?

A6: Yes, there is at least one option. In some specific countries, the MEXT Scholarship is available through the Embassy Recommendation.

https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/admission/mextscholarship/scholarship_jpn/index.html

Please check the Japanese embassy website in your own country for more information.

Q7: How can I estimate my GPA (grade point average)?

A7: Your official GPA score is calculated by the SOKENDAI administration office. The calculation method is described at: [Grade Point Average](#)
You may follow the link to learn how to estimate your GPA.

Q8: What is the minimum score of each English proficiency test required to apply to NIG-GS?

A8: Your TOEFL or IELTS score must be equivalent to CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) B2 level or above.

(There are minimum scores for the MEXT scholarship selection as follows:

TOEFL iBT: 72

<https://www.ets.org/toefl/institutions/scores/compare/>

IELTS: 5.5

<https://www.ielts.org/ielts-for-organisations/common-european-framework>

Q9: If I pass NIG-GS selection, will I receive financial support? Will my tuition be waived?

A9: Please see "[NIG-GS Financial Support](#)".