

STEP-ALICE Program (Expanded) Implementation Guidelines

Supporting Travel Expenses Program to Activate Ladies' International Collaboration in Engineering

1. Program Objectives

The STEP-ALICE program subsidizes part of the travel expenses for female engineering researchers (associate professors and below) and female engineering students (on masters' and doctoral programs) to participate in conferences both in Japan and overseas, to hold joint research meetings, and to undertake training. It also helps with the costs of submitting papers, proofreading English-language documents, and participating in academic conferences.

Support was initially provided only to female researchers, but from FY2022 onward, the provision of support has been expanded to include female graduate students, with the aim of helping to foster the next generation of female researchers.

The scope of what will be supported has also been expanded from just support for travel expenses. Support will also be provided to help with the cost of submitting papers, the proofreading of English-language documents, and for students, the cost of participating in academic conferences.

The program is expected to help female engineering researchers and future female researchers improve their skills and to expand the scope of their activities. It is thereby expected to help with the university's desire to 'develop female leaders' and to realize 'further leaps for female researchers to become world-class'.

The objectives for providing this support are based on Tohoku University's 'Action Guidelines for the Promotion of Gender Equality' announced in 2013, and include those linked to the TUMUG Support Project (Project to Promote Gender Equality and Female Researchers) Next Step Research Grant (hereinafter referred to as the 'University-wide Next Step Research Grant').

2. Details

For female engineering researchers (associate professors and below)

(a) Support for faculty members' travel expenses (in conjunction with the University-wide Next Step Research Grant):

Assuming that the researcher applies for the University-wide Next Step Research Grant, a portion of the expenses (such as daily allowances and accommodation costs as stipulated in the Regulations on Travel Allowance at National University Corporation Tohoku University) will be provided.

(b) Support for faculty members' travel expenses (support specifically from STEP-ALICE):

Part of the travel expenses for those making presentations at conferences both in Japan and overseas, holding joint research meetings, and undertaking training will be provided. Travel support for those

making presentations at conferences in Japan or overseas will be limited to instances where the researcher is unable to apply for the University-wide Next Step Research Grant for exceptional reasons.

(c) Support for the proofreading of English-language documents on behalf of faculty members (support specifically from STEP-ALICE):

A portion of the costs for submitting papers and for the proofreading of English-language documents will be provided.

For female engineering students (on masters' and doctoral programs)

(d) Support for students' travel expenses (support specifically from STEP-ALICE):

A portion of the travel expenses (such as daily allowances and accommodation costs as stipulated in the Regulations on Travel Allowance at National University Corporation Tohoku University) for those making presentations at conferences both in Japan and overseas, and a portion of the conference participation fee, will be provided.

(e) Support for the proofreading of English-language documents on behalf of students (support specifically from STEP-ALICE):

A portion of the costs for submitting papers and for the proofreading of English-language documents will be provided.

3. Eligibility

Female engineering faculty members (associate professors and below) and female engineering students (on masters' and doctoral programs) at Tohoku University who are conducting research in engineering are eligible to apply. However, faculty members who are not primarily affiliated with Aobayama Campus or whose employment is 100% externally funded are not eligible.

For example, if the ratio of external funding to operating expenses is 95:5, it is possible to apply for:

(a) Support for faculty members' travel expenses (in conjunction with the University-wide Next Step Research Grant):

The making of an application to the University-wide Next Step Research Grant is assumed.

(b) Support for faculty members' travel expenses (support specifically from STEP-ALICE):

Those making presentations at conferences in Japan or overseas, holding joint research meetings, or undertaking training are excluded if they have already obtained external funding for the relevant research topic.

(c) Support for the proofreading of English-language documents on behalf of faculty members (support specifically from STEP-ALICE):

Support will not be provided if the costs for submitting papers or for the proofreading of English-language documents have already been covered by external funding.

(d) Support for students' travel expenses and (e) Support for the proofreading of English-language documents on behalf of students:

Female graduate students enrolled in the Graduate School of Engineering, Graduate School of Information Sciences, Graduate School of Environmental Studies, and Graduate School of Biomedical Engineering are eligible. (Applicants must be enrolled during the application and travel period; traveling after graduation is not allowed. Furthermore, only graduate students are eligible; research students are not eligible.)

* The application must relate to engineering research.

4. How to apply

Applicants must make their application during the application period using the STEP-ALICE Program Application Form (a Google Form at <https://forms.gle/2NKVFsdCybUjMZpQ6>).

The documents required for each type of application are as follows:

(a) Support for faculty members' travel expenses (in conjunction with the University-wide Next Step Research Grant):

Applicants must attach their application form for the University-wide Next Step Research Grant, their review result (a copy thereof), and a written estimate of the airfare* (if travelling by air). If the result of the University-wide Next Step Research Grant application has not yet been provided, it should be submitted to ALICE as soon as possible after it has been received.

(b) and (d) Support for travel expenses (support specifically from STEP-ALICE):

If travelling by air, a written estimate of the cost or a written estimate together with a receipt.*

Students who would like to apply for the costs of participating in a conference should please attach documentation indicating the conference participation costs and a receipt. The participation costs will be paid in advance.

(c) and (e) Support for the proofreading of English-language documents (support specifically from STEP-ALICE):

A written estimate or receipt must be submitted. Deliverables must also be submitted when making an application or submitting a report.

* In order to help us support as many applicants as possible, you should use the most economical routes and cheapest airfares possible. Those who are making an application after having travelled should please submit not only written estimates, but also receipts and air ticket stubs (or equivalent documentation).

The periods within which applications should be made are basically those shown below, but applications can be made until the end of the fiscal year. However, applicants should try to make their application in advance as far as possible.

First half of the year (May-June): Implementation and travel from April 1 to September 30 of each fiscal year

Second half of the year (November and January): Implementation and travel from October 1 to March 31 of each fiscal year

The deadlines for the 2024 fiscal year are as follows:

First half of the year: Friday, June 14, 2024

Second half of the year, first round: Friday, November 22, 2024

Second half of the year, second round: Friday, January 31, 2025

5. Selection method

The Gender Equality Committee in Engineering will review applications and decide on which applicants are to be supported and how much they shall receive. In the event of a large number of applications, those applying for ‘(a) Support for faculty members’ travel expenses (in conjunction with the University-wide Next Step Research Grant)’ will be given priority.

6. Submission of reports

After a business trip, the proofreading of English-language documents, or the submission of papers has been completed, recipients must promptly submit an electronic report in the format presented in Attachment 2. The report must include details of participation and work at academic conferences, etc. (both through text and images) that can be used for engineering-related public relations matters and for mention on the ALicE website. The report must identify the applicant, where the applicant works, and the results.

7. Amount of expenses to be subsidized

Support for travel expenses (a, b, d): The amount provided will be determined in accordance with the Regulations on Travel Allowance at National University Corporation Tohoku University.

(With respect to faculty members, conference participation fees are not included as a general rule.)

For business trips within Japan, the maximum amount is 80,000 yen, and for overseas business trips, the maximum amount is 200,000 yen.

Support for the proofreading of English-language documents (c and e): Will be determined depending on the applicant's circumstances.

Regarding the allocation of support funds

- Applicants must cover necessary expenses using their own financial resources.
- Once an applicant has been accepted, ALicE will carry out the budget allocation using the designated financial resources.
- The allocated budget can be used for specified matters such as travel expenses and the proofreading of English-language documents, and it can also be used (appropriated) for other expenses.

For further details, please contact the office within your department that deals with accounting matters.

8. Notes

Applications for support for faculty members' travel expenses (in conjunction with the University-wide Next Step Research Grant) (a) will in principle be accepted twice a year, following the notification of the result of applications to the University-wide Next Step Research Grant. Applications for support specifically from the STEP-ALICE Program (b to e) are scheduled to be accepted three times a year, but the actual number accepted, and the timing thereof, may change depending on the budget implementation status. Any surplus funds must be returned.

Recipients are kindly asked to cooperate as much as possible with requests related to the promotion of DEI in engineering, such as participating in exchange events and seminars, responding to surveys, and participating in interviews.

Starting from the second half of the 2024 fiscal year's first round, support will only be provided once per year per person.

For more information about the STEP-ALICE Program, please contact:

Association of Leading Women Researchers in Engineering (ALicE)

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