

National University of Singapore
Office of Deputy President (Research and Technology)
Call for Proposals: Agentic AI for Research Discovery Grant

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This Agentic AI for Research Discovery grant call aims to drive deployments of AI agents to enable domain experts to tackle more challenging research problems, improve the quality and rigor of research, and/or accelerate knowledge discovery. Instead of deploying generic, off-the-shelf agents, proposals should exploit domain knowledge to develop AI agents that are purpose-built for the domain of interest in order to address the challenges effectively.
- 1.2 This grant call also aims to foster a close inter-disciplinary collaboration between the AI experts and the non-AI domain experts, and, as a consequence, train a future-ready cohort of “AI-bilingual” researchers as well as produce domain-specific, high-quality datasets and benchmarks that can serve as shared research infrastructure for the NUS research community and beyond to drive future Agentic AI + X research.

2. Theme: Developing and Deploying Domain-Specific AI Agents

The grant call invites proposals that focus on building and deploying domain-specific AI agents, which involves, where appropriate, curating novel domain-specific, high-quality datasets and designing benchmark evaluations, for boosting the capability of the domain experts and the quality of their research outcomes. Demonstration of its success in accelerating the workflow of the domain experts, improving the quality of their research outcomes, and/or enabling new research capabilities/discovery is expected.

3. Funding Mechanism

3.1 Approved proposals will be funded for up to one year:

Quantum	Duration	Expected Outcome
Up to S\$100,000	Up to 1 year	• A deployable AI agent, embedded in the domain expert's real workflow, with quantified evidence of improved research workflow. • A dataset, benchmark, and/or reproducible pipeline that others can adopt and scale. • The agent shall be built using a standard, shareable agentic harness or framework and shall address a problem that, while domain-specific, can be transferable to similar problems within or beyond the target domain.

3.2 Fund Extension Policy: No extension will be allowed. Any unutilised funds will lapse on the project end date and purchases made after the project end date will not be eligible for funding.

4. Eligibility

- 4.1. To ensure inter-disciplinary collaboration, each team must comprise at least 1 AI Expert PI & 1 Non-AI Domain Expert PI to co-develop the proposal.
- 4.2. As an exception to Clause 4.1, a Non-AI Domain Expert PI may lead a proposal as sole PI, without a separate AI Expert PI, when the Domain Expert PI is able to demonstrate, in the proposal, sufficient capability to design, implement, test, and evaluate the proposed system, including with the assistance of frontier AI systems and coding agents. An AI Expert is strongly recommended as a collaborator in this scenario.

- 4.3. An **AI Expert** is defined as a researcher with demonstrated strong track record in AI research and/or the development and deployment of AI systems. The AI Expert should have the technical expertise to lead the design, adaptation, integration, and rigorous evaluation of the proposed agentic AI system. This AI Expert will co-develop the agentic AI approach with the Domain Expert, including the integration of domain knowledge and the rigorous evaluation of the resulting system.
- 4.4. A **Non-AI Domain Expert** is defined as a researcher with deep expertise and an established research track record in the target domain. The Domain Expert will contribute the domain knowledge, research problems, workflows, datasets, benchmarks, and/or scientific evaluation criteria needed to co-develop and validate the agentic AI system and will actively use the resulting system in their research. Here, the target domain is defined as the Domain Expert PI's own declared area(s) of research interest and expertise, as evidenced by their track record.

5. Selection and Evaluation Criteria

- 5.1 The grant proposals will be assessed by a university-wide evaluation committee based on the criteria specified in Annex A.
- 5.2 The post project completion review is specified in Annex B.

6. Timeline

- 6.1 Below is the timeline for the events related to the grant proposal submission:

Event	Date
Deadline for submission	28 September 2026 (Mon), 12 noon
Notification of Award	11 November 2026 (Wed), 12 noon

7. Submission Requirement

- 7.1 The deadline for submission of the grant proposals is **28 September 2026**. Applicants should submit their completed proposal form to ODPRT through [iRIMS-Sponsored Projects system](#).
- 7.2 The Faculty Administrator should also submit a softcopy of the summary list of applications using the excel template and route the applications, via IRIMS, to dprbox52@nus.edu.sg by **1 October 2026**.

Please enter the following details in iRIMS proposal module:

1. Category: Internal & Externally-funded Co-funded
2. NUS Organiser: ODPRT Managed
3. Funding source(s): National University of Singapore
4. Grantor Type: National University of Singapore
5. Grant Call Title: Agentic AI for Research Discovery Grant
6. Programme Name: 301-Internal-ODPRT

8. Use of the Grant & Post Award

- 8.1 Awarded funds will be provided in a project WBS to be drawn by the PIs. PIs should note that all awarded funds must be utilised in accordance with existing NUS financial guidelines and any grant approval guidelines from ODPRT. The grant will be valid for the period of 1 year.
- 8.2 The team will submit a final Statement of Account of the project WBS at the end of project. Any unutilised funds in the project WBS will be returned & the project WBS will be closed within 2 months.

9. Reminders

- With effect from 1st April 2025, please be informed that all research proposal submissions (both internally-funded & externally-funded) are required to be submitted via iRIMS-Sponsored Projects (iRIMS-SP), Proposal module. You may refer to the guiding slides on Sharepoint. Should you have any queries/issues with regard to iRIMS, please direct your queries to irims_support@groups.nus.edu.sg.
- Please be reminded to budget in High Performance Computing (HPC) resources in the application if this is required for the project. It is recommended to estimate the HPC Compute Budget based on NUS IT rates. This is to ensure that PIs have enough compute budget for commercial cloud service provider resources should their project application be unsuccessful with NSCC Singapore's Call for Projects. Please approach NUS IT nusit-rec-support@nus.edu.sg if the team needs assistance on the HPC resources budget estimation.
- Parallel submission of grant applications are not allowable. Applicants should not submit for consideration either similar versions or parts of a similar grant application to two or more funding schemes at the same time. Grant applications that are submitted to a funding scheme and are pending funding outcome should not be submitted to another funding agency for consideration.

If you have any queries, kindly contact the faculty administrators or ODPRT staff Mr Charlie Chan at dprbox52@nus.edu.sg.

ANNEX A. Selection and Evaluation Criteria

The grant proposals will be assessed using the following criteria. For the proposal, applicants should consider the guiding questions associated with each criterion:

Criterion	Description and Guiding Question
Scientific Quality	Does the proposal address an important research domain and present a rigorous approach of using agentic AI to improve research quality, rigour, and/or acceleration of knowledge discovery?
Novelty of Proposal	Does the project demonstrate a novel and compelling use of agentic AI that enables new research capabilities, improves research practices, and/or advances agentic-AI methodology?
Feasibility	Can the proposed milestones be reasonably achieved through the described workflow and execution plan within the specified one year timeline?
Quality of Integration	Does the proposal effectively integrate domain knowledge and expertise into developing the AI frameworks and methodologies, demonstrating genuine co-development between the AI Expert PI and the Non-AI Domain Expert PI? Where the exception under Clause 4.2 applies, does the proposal instead demonstrate effective, expert-level use of frontier AI systems by the Domain Expert PI in designing and implementing the agentic workflow?
Relevance to Agentic AI	Is there a strong problem-solution fit between the targeted research problem and the proposed agentic AI approach? The project must move beyond simple “plug-and-play” automation, and should demonstrate that the target problem, while domain-specific, can be transferable to related problems or workflows.
Anticipated Benefits	Theme-Specific Deliverables by end of the grant: • The 1-year project requires the demonstration of a fully functional agentic AI system deployed in the domain expert’s research workflow. The project should also produce high-quality domain-specific datasets, benchmarks, and/or reproducible pipelines that can be adopted by other research groups. • Clear demonstration of success (using the established evaluation metrics and/or curated datasets) in improving the research workflow of the domain experts and the quality of their research outcomes; • Establishing a strong “bilingual” collaboration, evidenced by genuine co-development and mutual knowledge transfer between the AI Expert PI(s) and Domain Expert PI(s).

ANNEX B. Post Project Completion Review

To review whether a project has achieved true “AI + X” bilingualism, a presentation will be arranged at the end of project completion with the following requirements:

- The **AI Expert PI** is responsible for articulating how the domain knowledge, curated datasets, and/or proposed evaluation metrics have been exploited by the agentic AI framework/methodology for addressing the challenges within that domain.
- The **Non-AI Domain Expert PI** should be able to explain the key capabilities and limitations of the agentic AI system, how its outputs are evaluated and validated, and how the system accelerates research workflow, research quality and rigour, and/or enables new knowledge discovery capabilities.
- For proposals granted the exception under Clause 4.2, the Domain Expert PI shall be responsible for addressing both sets of presentation requirements set out above.