

HBKU Special Internal Call

“Designing & Imagining Futures Today”
SIC 2-2026

HBKU Research

Office of the Vice President for Research

Application Guidelines



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1- Program Description

The Special Internal Call (SIC) Program is designed to build research capabilities in priority emerging domains and strengthen institutional initiatives by engaging the expertise of HBKU researchers around targeted areas of strategic importance.

The program provides focused, competitive funding to researchers and faculty with relevant expertise or interest, aligned with strategic priorities and institutional needs.


The goals of the SIC program include:

- Building research capacity in emerging or underdeveloped domains of strategic importance to HBKU
- Enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration across colleges, research institutes, and research centers
- Advancing high-impact research aligned with priority domains and institutional initiatives

The SIC 2-2026 call is focused on “Designing and Imagining Futures Today”, an emerging interdisciplinary research area of growing relevance to the Society and Governance Cluster.

2- Objectives

1. Fund social science research on how global futures are shaped and how societies can influence them ethically.
2. Spearhead research in the following HBKU Flagship Research Areas: *Global Transformations: Future of Governance*, *Islamic Ethics: From Social Cohesion to Global Challenges* and *AI and Applications*. The proposed topic may also support research in other relevant flagship research areas.
3. Stimulate collaboration across HBKU entities, integrating disciplinary perspectives.
4. Support practical, implementation-ready research with policy, societal, and applied impact.
5. Identify emerging civilizational, technological, and institutional challenges in the above-mentioned HBKU Flagship Research Areas, positioning HBKU as a pioneer in social-scientific work on the future of societies, while leveraging Islamic intellectual traditions and Global South perspectives as substantive research foundations to advance HBKU’s distinctive research contribution in these areas.

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3- Program Focus Areas

- This Call (SIC 2-2026) focuses on engaging with the Society & Governance Cluster to advance cross-entity collaboration and research impact in the area of “Designing and Imagining Futures Today”. This theme aligns with the following HBKU Flagship Research Areas: *Global Transformations: Future of Governance*, *Islamic Ethics: From Social Cohesion to Global Challenges* and *AI and Applications*; it also supports research in the Flagship Research Areas of *Sustainable and Resilient Arid Cities* and *Autism: Causes, Diagnosis, and Intervention*.


Focus Areas:

- AI, digital technologies, and the future distribution of technological, economic, and geopolitical power.
- Institutional innovation, governance renewal, and resilient societies, including pathways to sustainability in arid and resource-constrained cities.
- Human agency, ethical economic life, and the future of money, finance, work, and wellbeing.
- Future-making, strategic foresight, and cross-civilizational dialogues on emerging global orders and societal transformation.

Please refer to the appendix for more details on the focus areas and the desired outcomes.

4- Eligibility

- The Lead Principal Investigator (LPI) should be a full-time Academic Ranked Faculty member at HBKU in one of the anchor members of the Society & Governance Cluster: CHSS, CIS, CL, and CPP.
- The team can include Principal Investigators (PIs) who must be full-time Ranked Faculty, Scientists, Engineers at HBKU colleges and Research Institutes
- Deans and Executive Directors are not eligible to participate as research team members.
- Each LPI can submit only one application in this current call, but he/she can participate as a PI in other proposals.
- The count of an individual’s participation in active internal grants as LPI and PI must not exceed 4 roles.

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5- Collaboration

To ensure strong multidisciplinary collaboration and strategic alignment across HBKU, each proposal must include PIs from at least two HBKU entities (colleges and/or research institutes) with clearly defined and significant contributions from each PI.

6- Project Duration

- The duration of the project will last for up to two years. Project activation is marked by the time funds are made available.
- No procurement of any kind is allowed during the last 3 months of the project lifecycle.

7- Budget

- 1- The total budget is up to QAR 200,000 per year.
- 2- The final awarded amount will depend on the VPR's review and approval of the proposal, subject to budget availability.
- 3- Budget movement from project Y1 to Y2 will be restricted based on the carryover and OVPR budget availability.
- 4- The research team must plan budget expenditures carefully and align them with the fiscal year.
- 5- All project funds must be spent within Qatar. Exceptions of up to 10% of the total budget may be permitted for expenditure outside of Qatar, provided they are fully justified and receive prior approval.


6- The budget categories:

I. Personnel:

- Please refer to the daily rates below for the rates of hiring Research Assistants, Research Associates, and Postdocs.

Position	Daily Rate (working days)
Research Assistant	1,117 QAR
Research Associate	1,270 QAR
Postdoc	1,584 QAR

- Graduate Students – For payment rate, please refer to the Graduate Student Employment Under Sponsored Research Grants (on <https://www.hbku.edu.qa/en/research/sro/post-award> under Award Management Procedures and Guidelines).
- All HBKU applicants need to participate with no personnel cost.

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- II. Equipment under 12,000 QAR per item is allowed (capital equipment above 12,000 QAR per item is not allowed).
- III. Materials and consumables (note: stationery is not an eligible cost).
- IV. Professional services: a justification and description of the service are required.
- V. Travel should not exceed 5% of the total awarded budget. Ticket and per diem rates should be as per HBKU policy and rates.
- VI. Miscellaneous (Local HBKU workshops, etc.)

8- Submission

Project teams are required to submit detailed proposals through the Portal using the Proposal Internal Approval form via the following link: <https://iprocess.hbku.edu.qa/workspace.aspx>.

Submission Deadline: 8 September 2026 (11:59pm)

- Each application should include short CVs (1-2 pages) of the research team members.
- All proposals must be reviewed and endorsed by the respective Deans and/or Executive Directors through PIA on iprocess.


Kindly Note:

- The research plan and all supporting documents should be uploaded to the “Supporting Documents” Tab in the Proposal Internal Approval (PIA) form.
- Please start your PIA form before the deadline to allow sufficient time to obtain team and dean/ED approvals.
- Please ensure to add the ED/Dean’s correct personal emails and not department generic ones.
- The detailed project plan should be prepared according to the template provided, with a maximum of 8 pages (excluding Table of Contents, Reference, and Appendix)

For any questions about this call, please send a ticket via Portal Ticketing:
<https://iprocess.hbku.edu.qa/workspace.aspx>

9- Project Review and Approval

- Proposals will be reviewed by a Review Committee selected by the OVPR
- The Review Committee may require additional information or amendments to the research proposal and/or budget.

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- The funding decisions are expected to be made by late September 2026.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- The strength of cross-entity collaboration within HBKU and its alignment with the Society and Governance Cluster.
- Degree to which the proposed research advances one or more HBKU Flagship Research Areas.
- Novelty and relevance of the research proposal.
- Potential impact and outputs.
- The expertise of the research team and the adequacy of the proposed budget to successfully carry out the research project.

10- Post Award Management

- 1- The awarded grant will be supported by HBKU OVPR. Below are the major post-award activities:
 - a. Legal agreements as applicable
 - b. Financial account setup & fund activation
 - c. Activation of the project (project start date will depend on the full execution of items a and b)
 - d. Project management and reporting
 - e. Project closure
- 2- The project team is required to submit a progress report at the end of year 1 and a final report upon project completion, using the approved progress and final report templates.
- 3- The project team is required to meet with the OVPR team every six months to provide a high-level update on project progress and discuss any challenges, risks, or support needed.
- 4- Continuity of funding as per the installment plan is contingent on the VPR's approval of the progress report.

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[Appendix:](#)

Designing and Imagining Futures Today

A Social-Sciences Program on Forecasting and Designing Futures for Good


Description

The *Designing and Imagining Futures Today* call focuses on advancing high-impact interdisciplinary research in the social sciences on how global futures are being shaped, and on the capacity of societies, particularly those in emerging middle powers, the Global South, and the Muslim world, to shape these futures. The topic represents an emerging interdisciplinary research area of growing relevance to the Society and Governance Cluster. In particular, it aligns with HBKU's Flagship Research Areas of *Global Transformations: Future of Governance*, *Islamic Ethics: From Social Cohesion to Global Challenges and Applications*; it also supports research in the Flagship Research Areas of *Sustainable and Resilient Arid Cities* and *Autism: Causes, Diagnosis, and Intervention*.

Futures are the result of active design: through technologies, concentrated economic and epistemic power, ideological frameworks, and institutional architectures. Mainstream paradigms have proven inadequate to the ecological, distributional, technological, and civilizational challenges of the present era. The program asks researchers to go beyond diagnosis and critique. The emphasis is deliberately dual, on forecasting emerging trajectories and on designing futures for good. Proposals are expected to produce research that helps Qatar, the region, and emerging powers imagine and enact chosen futures rather than accept inherited ones, and to generate substantive, practical contributions on how societies shape the conditions under which they live.

The above-discussed focus areas cover, among others, the following issues (alignment with or support to one or more of the HBKU flagship research areas must be clear):

- Platform concentration, AI governance and other digital technology governance-related issues;
- Social implications of Central Bank Digital Currencies, tokenization of real-world assets, agentic AI in financial services, Islamic fintech, and the displacement and restructuring of labor;
- Critical mineral and other chokepoint supply chain-related issues, semiconductor geopolitics, and the new dependencies these create for societies in the Global South, emerging powers and the Gulf countries;
- Examination, sustaining, or intentional redesign of institutions;
- Systematic engagement between Islamic and other civilizational traditions on the ethics of technology, the nature of the human, the meaning of progress, and the design of institutions worthy of the societies they serve;
- Moving beyond-GDP economic indicators, Gross National Happiness-type architectures, and their practical institutionalization, including adaptation to Gulf, Arab, and Muslim-majority contexts.
- Investigation into who controls future-oriented narratives, and in which languages.

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The above-discussed focus areas cover the following the methodological aspects:

- Theoretical and empirical work on the identities of regulators, firms, public agencies, universities, and civic bodies;
- Attention to distributional consequences;
- Positive proposals on how Qatar, the Gulf region and other middle powers can shape, rather than simply navigate, these dynamics.

Desired Outcomes

Projects should aim to produce one or more of the following outcomes:

- Peer-reviewed publications in leading international journals or with major scholarly presses;
- Policy recommendations or development for Qatari, regional, and international stakeholders;
- Measurement instruments, indicators, or methodological tools of broader research utility;
- Public-facing events, workshops, and contributions to public deliberation hosted by HBKU;
- Capacity-building outcomes, including graduate student training and postdoctoral development;
- Solution design, policy prototyping, and implementation pathways, where applicable.