

2026 SOU International Visiting Scholar Program

Is Now Open for Application

Shanghai Open University (SOU) is pleased to announce the 2026 International Visiting Scholar Program, aiming to foster global academic exchange and cooperation in open and distance education. This program invites scholars from universities, research institutions, and related fields worldwide to engage in academic discussions, field visits, and collaborative research, with the goal of enhancing teaching and research quality in the field of open education.

Size

SOU is offering up to 15 fellowships for the 2026 International Visiting Scholar Program. SOU International Visiting Scholar Program is unique in that we use the same 'blended model' as we do in our courses to blend face-to-face tutorials and online distance learning to create global communities of scholarship for our International Visiting Scholars.

Duration of the Program

On-site in Shanghai: 14 days from 15 to 28 October 2026.

Important Dates

Deadline for application: September 4th, 2026

Notification of acceptance: September 11th, 2026

Essential Requirements for Candidates

- Relevant teaching and/or research experience in open & distance learning.
- Possessing a postgraduate degree and holding the position of instructor or above in the home institution.
- Having fluent written and oral English ability (the working language for all official activities is English).
- Being in good health and reasonable fitness to participate in local events.

Desirable Requirements

Besides the above requirements, applicants who have the following experience will be given priority for consideration.

- Experience in educational management, senior leadership positions, or having taken senior leadership roles.
- Experience with existing or previous collaborative research projects with SOU.

Required Materials for Application (Written in English)

- Curriculum Vitae (candidates should have advanced English skills and hold a MA degree or above)
- A research proposal for the fellowship program: it could be a study on SOU practices, a comparative study between SOU and the applicant's home institution, a proposal for future

collaboration, etc. Topics may include but are not restricted to:

(1) Research on Learning City Construction and Lifelong Learning Development

Introduction: Based on multi-stakeholder collaborative governance and digital empowerment, this theme explores the innovative governance mechanisms and policy systems of learning cities, constructs a full-cycle lifelong learning resource supply and support service system for all groups, studies the cultivation path of adults' digital competence in the digital age, and explores the lifelong learning construction model for industrial workers under the integration of industry and education to drive industrial transformation and upgrading.

(2) Research on Program Development and Innovation of Talent Cultivation in Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

Introduction: Guided by the concept of active aging, this theme studies the high-quality development system of elderly education including curriculum system construction, digital empowerment and resource integration; it also explores the collaborative training mechanism of vocational education, continuing education and on-the-job training for pension service talents to adapt to the educational needs of an aging society.

(3) Research on Quality Assurance of Open and Distance Learning and Innovation of Lifelong Learning Evaluation System

Introduction: Focusing on learning outcome recognition, credit accumulation and transfer and credit bank construction, this research constructs a digital whole-process quality assurance mechanism for ODL, innovates standardized lifelong learning evaluation models, and realizes systematic and refined quality management of lifelong education.

(4) Research on AI-Empowered Professional Development of Teachers in Open and Distance Learning

Introduction: Focusing on the integrated application of artificial intelligence and blended teaching, this paper analyzes the improvement mechanism of digital teaching ability for teachers in ODL, and explores innovative and sustainable paths for the professional development of ODL teachers.

(5) Research on Education Internationalization in Open and Distance Learning

Introduction: Centering on cross-border academic exchanges, transnational online education cooperation and cross-regional credit mutual recognition in ODL, this theme sorts out international running-school cases of open education at home and abroad, summarizes mature international cooperation modes, and provides practical references for promoting the international exchange of lifelong education.

(6) Other topics: You can also choose other topics for your research proposal.

We are expecting the proposal to focus on Teaching practices in Open and Distance Learning, Comparative Studies, or Future Collaborations between SOU and your home institutions.

- A professional letter of recommendation from the head of the home institution (President, Rector, Chancellor or Vice Chancellor)
- A recent photo (passport size) of the applicant.
- A scanned photo of the passport (for visa application)

Financial Information

SOU will provide the following for the fellowship:

- Hotel accommodation
- Workspace with Wi-Fi, telephone and the Internet access
- Transportation for the arranged on-site visit within Shanghai

Visiting scholars or their home institutions will be expected to cover:

- A round-trip air ticket between their home country and Shanghai, China
- Living expenses & other related personal expenses in Shanghai

It should be noted that all the financial support comes from governmental program funds.

Required Health Insurance

All fellows are required to show proof of health insurance for the entire length of their stay. This health insurance must meet specified minimum levels of coverage (Please send us the copy via email when you apply or bring it in person when you attend the program). Fellows who bring health insurance from their home country must bring a copy of the complete policy in English. If these conditions are not met, they must purchase health insurance in China.

Fellows' Activities and Responsibilities

- The nominated candidates should keep regular online contact with SOU to inform the visa application process and travel plans. SOU will issue an official invitation letter for visa application; all visa application procedures are the sole responsibility of the selected scholars. **SOU reserves the right to cancel any fellowship offer if full visa and travel plans have not been successfully completed.**
- The fellows will visit and meet with relevant departments and facilities in Shanghai Open University.
- The fellows must conduct their proposed research.
- The fellows are to give a presentation based on their research conducted during their stay at SOU. This presentation will also include an introduction of their own institution.
- The fellows will submit a final report (minimum 3000 words) on the outcome of the research to SOU within 30 days at the conclusion of the program.
- The fellows will also be required to complete a feedback form on the quality of the Visiting Scholar Program.

How to Apply?

You can send the required application documents to the email: tanghf@sou.edu.cn

AND refer to the following link: <https://lowcode-0g58tgicc773fde0-1259223015.tcloudbaseapp.com/app-89xew4p5/production/visitor> to complete the online application.

Contact details:

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Introduction of Shanghai Open University

Shanghai Open University (SOU), sponsored by the Shanghai Municipal Government, approved by China's Ministry of Education and subject to the administration of the Shanghai Education Commission, is a new type of higher education institution. It was formerly known as Shanghai TV University, which was founded in 1960. SOU provides open and distance ICT-supported education to adults at undergraduate and junior college level. SOU has had more than 470,000 graduates since its foundation. Adapting to the needs of Shanghai's economic and social developments, SOU carries out large-scale non-academic education and training programs for about half a million people each year. SOU established several schools with appropriate features for those who have special learning needs. SOU has currently the largest number of college students in Shanghai. It also serves as an important lifelong learning platform in Shanghai. In addition, SOU is the coordinating institution of the UNESCO UNITWIN Network in Open and Distance Learning, and received the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Alkhalifa Prize for the use of ICT in education. SOU was awarded an "Excellence Group Work Award" by the International Council of Open and Distance Education (ICDE) and an "Excellent Support Organization Award" by the African Council of Distance Education (ACDE). SOU strategically cooperates with the Open Universities of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and ACDE. SOU passed ICDE's education quality audit.

In order to promote global cooperation between universities, institutions and interested scholars through academic exchange and to enhance the quality of teaching and research in the field of open and distance learning, SOU has successfully conducted the International Visiting Scholar Program each spring and/or autumn since 2013, with participation by the member universities and institutes of African Council for Distance Education (ACDE), Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU), as well as other universities and institutes that currently provide or are developing open and distance education all over the world.

Further Information

Shanghai Open University website: <http://global.sou.edu.cn/>

SOU's Institute of International Exchange's website: <http://iie.sou.edu.cn>