Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships

Funding Guidelines

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships scheme is one of the University of Melbourne’s researcher development schemes, launched in 2021, initially to support early career researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The University has continued the scheme in recognition of the ongoing effects of the pandemic era on the careers and opportunities of early career researchers.

Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships are amongst the University’s most prestigious internal research awards. In supporting talented researchers during a pivotal career stage, the scheme contributes to the ambitions of the Advancing Melbourne strategy to place the University of Melbourne at the leading edge of discovery, understanding and impact through research.

Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships are available to University of Melbourne PhD graduates and academic staff currently employed at the University of Melbourne (fixed-term or casual) who may have graduated with a PhD from another university.

2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 The objectives of the 2023 Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships scheme are to:

- Attract and retain talented recent doctoral graduates to the University of Melbourne in areas that are a research priority for the University;
- Recruit researchers who have the potential to build and lead interdisciplinary collaborative research activities inside and across Academic Divisions; and
- Promote research that aligns with institutional research strategies and research priorities in Academic Divisions.

3 FUNDING

3.1 Each Fellowship will be awarded starting at Academic Level A6 in the University Salary Band (currently $95,179 plus oncosts and superannuation as per the terms and conditions of employment for University staff set out in the UoM Enterprise Agreement 2018) with an additional single allocation of $25,000 for project costs over the term of the three-year Fellowship.

3.2 This scheme does not provide visa or relocation expenses.

4 APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

4.1 Applicants for Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships:
a) Must have been awarded\(^1\) their PhD between 1 November 2019 and the full application due date; or

b) Must have been awarded their PhD on or after 1 November 2017 and had a period of significant research career interruption between 1 November 2017 and 23 June 2022.

Applicants should be able to clearly demonstrate that their research career has been significantly constrained or interrupted by circumstances such as chronic illness, child-bearing, child rearing, or other family responsibilities, such as primary responsibility for the sustained care of a dependent family member (who may, for example, be elderly, sick or a person with disabilities), or other relevant exceptional circumstances.

Where the COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the impact of the constraint or interruption this should be raised as a contributing factor. However, noting the general effects of COVID-19 disruptions this will not on its own be taken as sufficient grounds. If there are specific COVID-related circumstances these should be documented.

Applicants who fit this criterion must indicate this in Part B of the Application Form and answer the additional question that appears.

4.2 Applicants must have graduated or have met the requirements to graduate with a PhD from the University of Melbourne; or, where they are current (fixed term or casual) employees of the University of Melbourne, applicants must have graduated or have met the requirements to graduate with a PhD from the University of Melbourne or another university.

4.3 Applicants can commence their Fellowship from 1 January 2023, and no later than 31 March 2023. Where applicants have a current contract with the University of Melbourne, beyond 31 March 2023 starting dates will be negotiated separately.

4.4 An applicant may only ever be awarded one Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship.

4.5 Applicants to this scheme cannot apply for the McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme in the same year.

4.6 Applicants who are successful in being awarded a Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship cannot apply for any other University of Melbourne researcher development schemes while holding the Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship appointment.

4.7 To accept the appointment, successful Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship awardees must rescind any other University of Melbourne researcher development awards or internal grants they may be holding at the time of the fellowship offer.

4.8 Applicants must not have been awarded a competitively funded research fellowship\(^2\) from any institution external to the University of Melbourne since the award of their PhD.

4.9 An Eligibility Exemption Request (EER) may be submitted to obtain an exemption if:

a) The applicant’s PhD was awarded between 1 November 2011 and 31 October 2017 and there are exceptional circumstances; or

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\(^1\) The date of the award is the date of the official notification letter. For applicants attending institutions where no such letter is provided, equivalent evidence that they have graduated or have completed all the required steps to be eligible to graduate with a PhD must be provided on request.

\(^2\) A competitively funded fellowship is understood to include salary costs. Awards that have been titled fellowships, but fund only non-salary costs, are not deemed fellowships as applied to this rule.
b) The applicant has another candidate eligibility issue due to exceptional circumstances.

Applicants whose PhD was awarded before 1 November 2011 will not be eligible to apply for an EER.

If submitting an EER, applicants must make a compelling argument as to why the exemption request should be approved. Submission of an EER does not guarantee an exemption.

An EER will not be accepted if applicants do not provide evidence of PhD by the EER closing date.

Please see Section 6.3 of this document for further information on submitting an EER.

## 5 APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY

5.1 Applicants may submit a maximum of one application to the 2023 scheme.

5.2 All questions must be answered in English or marked ‘not applicable’. No sections of the Application Form are to be left blank. Applicants must adhere strictly to the compliance instructions of the Application Form.

5.3 The application must contain all the information necessary for assessment of the project without the need for explanation or reference to further documentation, including reference to external websites.

5.4 Applicants must not submit any additional material other than that explicitly requested within the Application Form.

## 6 APPLICATION PROCESS

6.1 Applicants should review the administrative contact details and any specific requirements of their proposed host Academic Division under the ‘How to Apply’ section of the scheme website. Any specific requirements for an applicant’s proposed host Academic Division must be adhered to.

6.2 All applicants must establish an academic contact at the University of Melbourne and the academic contact must be listed in Part A2 of the Application Form. Applicants should use the University’s Find an Expert search tool to find academics in their field and liaise with the relevant Academic Division administrative contact on how best to connect with academic staff members.

6.3 All Eligibility Exemption Requests must be submitted using the EER form via SmartyGrants and be received by RIC by 3pm (AEST) Thursday 28 April 2022.

6.4 The link to the EER form will be published on RIC’s scheme webpage.

6.5 Outcomes of EERs will be provided to applicants by Tuesday 31 May 2022. Where an EER has been approved, prospective applicants will be invited to submit a full application by the closing date.

6.6 Applications are to be completed via the University of Melbourne’s SmartyGrants Portal. The link to the application form will be published on the scheme webpage. Applications close at 3pm (AEST) Thursday 23 June 2022.
6.7 The Application Form consists of 6 parts:
- Part A: Administrative Summary
- Part B: Education and Appointment Details
- Part C: Project Description
- Part D: Proposed Budget
- Part E: Curriculum Vitae and Research Outputs
- Part F: Declaration

6.8 Applications submitted will not be checked by RIC for completeness or eligibility prior to final lodgement; this is the responsibility of the applicant. Ineligible or incomplete applications will be excluded and not considered by the Committees.

6.9 Each application must be supported by the relevant host Head of School/Department. The certification is managed at the school/faculty level. Once your prospective host department is aware that you will be applying to the scheme, they can arrange to certify their support separately by your application.

6.10 Applicants submitting an Eligibility Exemption Request (EER) should do so at the same time as they submit their Fellowship application (Part B of the Application Form).

6.11 Applicants must ask two referees to each complete a reference letter as a written testimonial to be submitted in their application. No specific format or template is required for the reference letters. Of these, at least one reference letter must be from a referee who is not the applicant’s PhD supervisor and preferable also not from the University that awarded the applicant’s PhD.

6.12 The referees must submit the written testimonial via email to the address below by no later than 3pm (AEST) Thursday 23 June 2022.
  Email: res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au
  Subject: Confidential Report – SURNAME OF APPLICANT

7 SELECTION CRITERIA

7.1 All applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

a) Proposed Research Project
   This includes its appropriateness to the area in which it would be located; anticipated project outcomes; and how these will make possible strong opportunities for further external funded fellowships or academic employment.
   Note on research that proposes to engage with Indigenous knowledge, people or communities; applicants should take account of the advice provided by the AITSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research and the NHMRC Ethical guidelines for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

b) Track Record
   This includes an evaluation of the research experience and publication record of the applicant relative to opportunity, as well as the relationship between the research proposed and existing research in their discipline.

c) Contribution to research renewal and development in the University
This includes how their proposed research will contribute to strategic research directions and broader collaboration and linkages in the University of Melbourne. See Research at Melbourne and the Advancing Melbourne strategy.

8 EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

8.1 A panel of senior researchers in each Academic Division will review and rank all applications that nominate their Academic Division as the proposed host of the Fellowship. Each application that is supported must include confirmation of co-investment from the Academic Division for Fellowship salary.

8.2 Applications ranked by the Academic Divisions will be reviewed on a competitive basis by a Central Selection Committee comprising senior members of the University research community and chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability). The ranking within Academic Divisions of their candidates is provided as advice to the Central Selection Committee, which considers all applicants nominated by Academic Divisions.

8.3 Application and assessment of applications should align with the University’s Diversity and Inclusion strategy and underpinning principles.

9 TIMETABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24/25 March 2022</td>
<td>Release of Funding Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 April 2022, 3pm</td>
<td>Eligibility Exemption Requests submitted via SmartyGrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 May 2022</td>
<td>RIC to provide outcomes of Eligibility Exemption Requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 June 2022, 3pm</td>
<td>Completed applications to be submitted via SmartyGrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Referees to email completed written testimonials to <a href="mailto:res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au">res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early October 2022</td>
<td>Notification of results to applicants and Academic Divisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2022</td>
<td>Applicants to informally accept Fellowships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October-December 2022</td>
<td>Academic Divisions to issue formal offer letters and employment contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of January 2023</td>
<td>Funds made available to Academic Divisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 March 2023</td>
<td>Latest commencement date for Fellowship (except where individual arrangements are reached)</td>
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10 EMPLOYMENT AND FUNDING CONDITIONS

10.1 Funding Conditions

10.1.1 Fellows will have an appointment of up to three years, with funding provided by Chancellery
This Fellowship is intended as a full-time University of Melbourne research fellowship. Fellows may not hold additional appointments, outside work or receive remuneration that imposes commitments that conflict with the full-time Fellowship. Permission to vary the Fellowship time fraction is only approved where exceptional circumstances apply, and a request for a reduced time fraction is generally not approved to allow the Fellow to take on additional paid work. Candidates may undertake a small amount\(^3\) of teaching and graduate research supervision specifically related to the research on which they are engaged.

It is the intent of the Fellowship scheme that Fellows will actively contribute to collaboration and research building in the University. Fellows cannot spend more than six months of the duration of the Fellowship overseas or away from the University of Melbourne except where extensive fieldwork is required for the purposes of the research and only with the explicit prior approval of their Head of Department. Fellows should refer requests to work on their research away from the University to their Head of Department/School and provide information on this in their annual report.

Melbourne Fellows will be employed by the University of Melbourne and be responsible to their host Academic Division. Once accepted, Fellowships are transferred to the host Academic Division and any further questions relating to funding opportunities or reimbursement need to be taken up with the Academic Division concerned. Any additional requests for reimbursement that do not form part of this scheme should be referred to the host Academic Division.

Melbourne Fellows must be employed 1.0FTE in a Department/School of the University of Melbourne upon commencement of the Fellowship.

Melbourne Fellows cannot be directly employed by an affiliated medical research institute or non-medical affiliated institute and should not plan to work full-time in affiliated institutes while holding the Fellowship.

Continuation of the award into the second and third years is dependent on the Fellow having demonstrated satisfactory progress through annual performance review processes. This will be determined by the Head of Department/School and documented in a final report submitted to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability) via RIC at the conclusion of the Fellowship. Melbourne Fellows are expected to demonstrate how they are building their research and their broader research linkages across the University.

To support their work, Melbourne Fellows are provided access to a suite of specific researcher development workshops, seminars and early career researcher supports offered by the University's Researcher Development Unit.

Melbourne Fellows who apply for and are successful in gaining externally-funded Fellowships prior to the end of the appointment of the Melbourne Fellowship are able to retain any balance of the

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\(^{3}\) A small amount’ is defined by this scheme as no more than 0.10 FTE accruing flexibly over the full duration of the Fellowship. Teaching and research includes contributions to PhDs, giving of lectures and running tutorials.
$25,000 project costs as long as the Fellow remains at the University of Melbourne for the externally-funded Fellowship. The salary component of the Melbourne Fellowship will cease.

10.1.10 The $25,000 project funding is intended to support core project costs that are not otherwise provided by Academic Divisions or the University. For instance, laptops, society membership fees, and open access fees where the University of Melbourne library subscribes to the journal will not be supported by this funding pool.

10.1.11 Any salary or project funds remaining at the cessation and or completion of the Fellowship (aside from that noted in 10.1.9) may be recovered by the relevant contributing unit (i.e. Chancellery Research and Enterprise, or Academic Division).

10.2 Visas and Relocation Expenses

10.2.1 It is the responsibility of Fellows to apply for and satisfy the requirements for the issue of an appropriate entry visa to Australia, and to maintain their eligibility throughout the Melbourne Fellowship period. The offer of a Fellowship does not guarantee that a visa will be granted, and any offer of funding or employment is conditional upon the Fellow gaining an appropriate visa. Any costs associated with obtaining the visa and any relocation expenses are the responsibility of the Fellow, in consultation with their Host Department. Fellows will be able to access HR support for guidance through the visa processes.

10.3 Period of Appointment

10.3.1 Fellows will be appointed for up to three years full-time. Fellows must take up the Fellowship no later than 31 March 2023. The Head of Department or School must approve the commencement date. Where applicants have a current contract beyond 31 March 2023 starting dates will be negotiated separately.

10.4 Leave

In the case of parental leave being taken during the Fellowship, the completion date of the Fellowship will be extended by the length of the parental leave taken. Fellows should advise both their Academic Division and RIC when parental leave is approved. It is the responsibility of the Fellow to liaise with their Head of Department or School and local HR contact to ensure their employment contract is modified accordingly.

Any additional costs associated with a variation of the Fellow’s employment contract are the responsibility of the Academic Division and/or host Department/School.

10.5 Responsibilities and Reporting Requirements

10.5.1 Fellows will report to their Head of Department or School.

10.5.2 Academic Contacts nominated in the application are expected to be a regular point of contact at the University of Melbourne and will be expected to either provide informal mentoring to the successful Fellow throughout the period of their Fellowships, or nominate an appropriate mentor.

10.6 Annual Progress Reports

10.6.1 Fellows are required to submit an annual progress report for the first two years of their Fellowship
(i.e. one report at the end of their first year and one report at the end of their second year). Progress reports will be available on the successful applicant’s SmartyGrants profile and should be submitted one month prior to the annual anniversary of the Fellow’s start date.

10.7 **Final Report and Financial Acquittal Report**

10.7.1 Fellows are required to submit a Final Report within three months of completing their Fellowship. Final reports will be available on the successful applicant’s SmartyGrants profile and will include a financial acquittal. Substantial variations from the budget proposed in the Fellowship application need to be explained.

11 **ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACT**

11.1 All administrative enquiries for the scheme should be directed via email to res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au