

KU LEUVEN AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE  
(FUNDING TO COMMENCE IN 2024)**PURPOSE OF THE SCHEME**

Following sought after calls in 2020 and 2021, KU Leuven and the University of Melbourne are calling for proposals to establish joint PhD projects. The Graduate Research projects scheme established the [KU Leuven-Melbourne joint PhD program](#), providing opportunities for international research collaboration.

In 2023, KU Leuven and Melbourne are calling for proposals to establish up to ten (10) joint research projects across ten (10) pairs of supervisors. Each of these ten (10) PI pairs will support two (2) joint PhD candidates.

The joint PhD candidates can only be recruited after granting of the projects. They must meet the minimum eligibility requirements to successfully enroll in the relevant PhD course at both Universities. Candidates participating in the PhD program are enrolled at both institutions, perform their research work under joint supervision, and are judged according to the academic standards of both institutions.

The recruited candidates will join the KU Leuven – Melbourne IRTG, gaining:

- Access to expertise, resources and world-class training at Melbourne and KU Leuven, spending at least 12 months of their candidature at each institution;
- Complimentary skills from their respective hosts that will increase the impact of their research; and
- A global perspective via involvement in the KU Leuven - Melbourne research network.

Upon successful completion of the program, each candidate will be eligible to receive a PhD, recognised by two testamurs, one from Melbourne and one from KU Leuven. Both testamurs will state the joint nature of the award and the name of the partner institution.

This call is open to proposals from **all areas of research**.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

The Supervisory team must comprise of *at least* two Principal Investigators (PIs), one from KU Leuven and one from the University of Melbourne. The PIs must have the capacity to serve as primary supervisors for two jointly enrolled PhD candidates.

The University of Melbourne

Melbourne academics must be registered to supervise as per the [Supervisor Eligibility and Registration Policy](#). Primary supervisors should be employed at Melbourne beyond the envisaged submission date of their PhD candidates (2029). If their employment contract does not extend beyond the candidates' submission date, then alternative arrangements must be in place, by either having:

- a) A named co-supervisor employed at Melbourne beyond the envisaged submission date of their PhD candidates (2029); *or*
- b) A letter of support from the respective Head of Department/Head of School detailing the arrangements in place to ensure continuity of supervision.

For more information, including forms for supervisor registration, please consult the [information for supervisors section on the Graduate Research Hub](#).

Honorary employees whose primary academic affiliation is the University of Melbourne are eligible to lead an application as a PI if they are a registered Principal Supervisor at Melbourne, and either:

- a) Their primary employer has entered into a written agreement for this call, using the provided approval form to fund the Melbourne cash component of the collaborative activity; *or*
- b) They participate at their own expense if they are otherwise unaffiliated (for example, they hold an emeritus position).

Melbourne academics must not have outstanding Progress Reports or Final Reports from any other University of Melbourne Researcher Development Scheme.

#### KU Leuven

KU Leuven academics must meet the requirements of the [General regulations and conditions Internal Funds](#). The KU Leuven PI and main applicant will also become the 'promoter' of the doctorate at KU Leuven. KU Leuven co-PI's can become co-promoters of one or both PhD's.

Applications that do not satisfy these criteria will **not be eligible**.

## **FUNDING, DURATION AND RESIDENCE**

Up to a total of ten (10) supervisory team applications will be funded, with each application supporting two (2) joint PhD candidates. One of these two (2) candidates will have Melbourne as their home institution, and the other will have KU Leuven as their home institution. Joint PhD projects should be designed to be completed in 4 years of candidature.

The Home Institution is where the candidate spends most of their research time and is likely to commence and conclude their degree. The Host Institution is where the candidate spends the remainder of their candidature as part of a research stay. The timeline is flexible depending on the needs of the project, but all candidates participating in the program must spend at least 12 months at each University during their candidature.

Under this joint PhD arrangement, the Home Institution will fund 2-3 years and the Host Institution will fund 1-2 years of candidature, up to a maximum of 4 years funding for each candidate.

The individual PhD candidate shall reside in the research team of the funding institution at the time funding is provided by that institution. Both institutions will undertake, for compliance purposes (social security, tax and other legislation), the necessary efforts so that the periods of research at each institution will correspond to the periods of appointment at that institution. Each institution funds up to a maximum of 4 years per project, to be divided over both PhD candidates.

Below is a suggested PhD project timeline. The timeline is flexible depending on the needs of the project, but all candidates participating in the program must spend at least 12 months at each University during their candidature.

**UoM Home Institution**

12 months Melbourne  
 12-18 months KU Leuven (MAX 24 months)  
 12-18 months Melbourne

**KU Leuven Home Institution**

12 months KU Leuven  
 12-18 months Melbourne (MAX 24 months)  
 12-18 months KU Leuven

**Summary of funding for each project:**

University of Melbourne	KU Leuven
Tax-free scholarship (stipend) via a <a href="#">Graduate Research Scholarship</a>	Tax-free scholarship (social security and partial health insurance included)
Tuition fee waiver	Tuition fee waiver
A \$10,000 lump sum* to support Melbourne based candidates and Melbourne PIs for relevant activities, including**: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidate travel</li> <li>• PI travel</li> <li>• Workshop costs or virtual collaboration expenses</li> <li>• Graduate recruitment</li> </ul>	Bench-fee for the KU Leuven PI for relevant activities: € 3720/year
Insurance: Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) Single Membership for international students who require a student visa to study in Australia Travel insurance while on Study Away	Insurance: Third Party Liability Insurance Occupational Accidents Insurance Travel Insurance while on secondment
Relocation allowance to come to Melbourne: \$2000 for candidates moving from States or Territories other than Victoria or \$3000 for candidates moving from outside Australia.	To be drawn from Bench-fee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relocation allowance to come to KU Leuven:</li> <li>- Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC): Single Membership for international students who require a student visa to study in Australia, applicable only when KU Leuven Home candidate is at Melbourne.</li> </ul>
<p><i>*The lump sum provided by Melbourne is pooled and allocated to the Academic Lead of the joint PhD program. The Academic Lead is responsible for distributing the funds to the PIs and Melbourne-based candidates for the uses described.</i></p> <p><i>**Please note that ineligible costs include: directly incurred staff (e.g. Research Assistants), replacement research/teaching costs, directly allocated costs including applicants' time, indirect costs/estates costs, publication costs, equipment, consumable costs, additional scholarships, conference attendance, tuition fees, and honoraria.</i></p>	

**PROJECT STRUCTURE AND PROPOSALS**

Before preparing a proposal, please note the following about the structure of the program's joint PhD

projects:

- Up to 10 proposals, each including projects for two PhD candidates, will be supported. The proposals must be led by at least one PI/Primary Supervisor from each institution.
- Each pair of PIs should submit one proposal outlining two PhD projects. The projects can be on a similar research topic or theme, but the candidates cannot rely on each other's results or completed thesis work to progress in their candidature.
- Joint PhD projects should be designed to be completed in a maximum of 4 years candidature.
- If selected, joint PhD projects will be advertised online from the end of April 2024.
- Joint PhD candidates should commence their candidature by October 2024, although deviating from this timeline is possible with commencement dates up to March 2025.

The application form requests:

- The details of the PIs/research groups involved, including CVs and links to each PIs website.
- An abstract for both PhD projects, which will be used for recruitment if the proposals are successful.
- An overview of the PhD projects, providing:
  - Descriptions and workplans for both projects.
  - A supervision plan, highlighting why the project requires time to be spent at the partner institution and benefits of doing so.
  - A GANTT chart showing the division of time to be spent by each candidate at both institutions.
  - A formal statement that the PIs will make sufficient preparations for the PhD candidate to be able to finalise the doctoral dissertation within a maximum period of 4 years.
  - For proposals involving a PI from Melbourne's Faculty of Arts: You must also provide a statement addressing how the candidate/s will meet the Faculty's PhD coursework requirements in your application. Please refer to the [Faculty's guidelines](#) for additional information. It is recommended to contact the Associate Dean (Graduate Research) for any further guidance.
- A summary of the collaboration value and potential impact, noting:
  - The extent of the planned collaboration between the PIs beyond joint supervision.
  - How the proposal could lead to the development of a larger network of researchers across both institutions.
  - A plan for leveraging future external funding, if applicable.
  - The balance of gender and career stages of involved investigators.
- Completion of an ethics and privacy checklist.
- All Melbourne applicants must attach endorsement from the respective Head of School/Department and Associate Dean (Graduate Research).

It is recommended that applications are written in lay terms for reviewers to better understand the project's potential impact and its anticipated outcomes.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

The proposals will be evaluated based on the below selection criteria and ranked by both Melbourne and the Council for International Collaborative projects (RISP) at KU Leuven. Both rankings will be compared and the common best ranked proposals will be selected after mutual agreement by both institutions. Up to ten of the top-ranking research groups (equal to 20 PhD projects) will be selected.

The following selection criteria apply:

- **Project design and rationale** – What is the scientific merit of the joint PhD project? Does it involve a high level of qualitative research? How clearly presented and justified is the basis for, and design of, the joint PhD project? What are the anticipated benefits of involving joint PhD researchers in the collaboration? What is the benefit of the candidate spending a minimum of 12 months at each institution?

- **Collaborator complementarity** – What is the added value of a new collaboration or building on an existing research relationship? How does the collaboration combine mutual areas of interest and strength? What is the quality and extent of the planned collaboration?
- **Quality of supervision** – How will the PIs work together effectively in jointly supervising their shared PhD candidates? What are the beneficial learning outcomes and experiences for the joint PhD candidates? Have the PIs accounted for any challenges that may arise when supervising a joint PhD candidate?
- **Potential impact** – What is the level of originality and innovation in the research proposal? To what extent does the research proposal plan to address significant challenges and what is the anticipated benefit to local or international communities?
- **Capacity for expanded collaboration** – What is the extent of the planned collaboration between the PIs beyond joint supervision? How well does the proposal plan to leverage external funding? To what extent are future collaborations made possible as a result of the proposed activities? How could this project seed the development of a larger network of researchers?

## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Additional colleagues (including other partners in Australia, Belgium, or internationally) are not eligible to apply as primary supervisors, although they can participate in the co-supervision of joint PhD candidates. However, involvement of shared external partners that benefit the project, for example through translation support or providing internship opportunities, is encouraged.

PIs cannot submit more than one proposal (for two joint PhD candidates) as part of this call but can co-supervise other projects.

Adherence to respective equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies are a core feature of this program to ensure that all participants can do their best work, thrive and succeed. Applicant teams should consider how they can take meaningful steps in their future collaborations to foster an environment that values, supports and respects a diverse range of views, knowledge and experiences.

Applicants should consider EDI as it applies to gender, indigenous peoples, disabilities, career stages and sectors. Applications that do not satisfy these criteria will **not be eligible**.

## REPORTING AND OTHER CONDITIONS

All candidates in the program must submit their thesis for examination within four years of commencement.

### Melbourne

Melbourne recipients will be required to provide regular updates on project progress during the candidature of their joint PhD candidates. These updates will be requested quarterly by the IRTG Academic Lead. Recipients who fail to participate in regular reporting mechanisms for this IRTG may be found ineligible for participation in future Researcher Development Schemes.

### KU Leuven

If the Graduate Researchers have not completed their doctoral defense within four years of commencement, the Graduate Researcher's KU Leuven supervisor must submit a plan to KU Leuven outlining how they intend to support the doctorate's prompt completion.

Where the doctoral defense is completed within four years, it will be sufficient to submit the confirmation of the defense to KU Leuven's DOC (Research Coordination Office) with a reference to the defense date.

KU Leuven's current reporting guidelines can be found at:

<https://www.kuleuven.be/english/research/associatienet/doc/if/IF-information-for-promoters>

## SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

PIs must submit a single, jointly prepared application via the University of Melbourne's SmartyGrants Portal by Friday 9 February 2024 5.00 pm AEDT (Melbourne)/ 7.00 am CEST (Brussels)). Applications should be written in English and for an audience proficient, but not expert, in the field. The Melbourne administration team will transfer all submitted applications as pdf to the KU Leuven research co-ordination office after the deadline. There is no need for KU Leuven PI's to submit an application directly to the KU Leuven administration in parallel.

All Melbourne projects must ensure that the Head of Department/School and Associate Dean (Graduate Research) endorsement is attached to the application using the approval forms provided on the Researcher Development Schemes website. Melbourne applicants who hold an Honorary position must also complete the Honorary declaration form.

If the application involves a PI from Melbourne's Faculty of Arts, the approval forms must be provided in addition to the supporting statement on how the candidates will meet the Faculty's PhD coursework requirement.

The link to the application form is: <https://ricunimelb.smartygrants.com.au/2023MELKU>

### Key Dates

Call opens for proposal applications	Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> November 2023
Deadline for project proposal applications	Friday 9 February 2024
Outcome notifications and projects advertised for recruitment	End of April 2024
Candidates to commence	October 2024 - March 2025

**PIs must successfully recruit two candidates by 31 March 2025. If the PIs do not meet this deadline, the scholarship and mobility funding will be recalled for use in a future call.**

## CONTACT DETAILS

Submission and Melbourne contact details:

**The Researcher Development Schemes team**  
Research, Innovation & Commercialisation (RIC)  
The University of Melbourne  
[res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au)

KU Leuven contact details:

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