



## University of Melbourne – A\*STAR Call for collaborative PhD project proposals 2024

The University of Melbourne and the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A\*STAR) Singapore are seeking to build on the foundation of existing research collaborations by developing an institution-wide program to support joint supervision of PhD candidates. Cross-institutional supervisory teams are invited to apply for funding to support collaborative PhD projects through this joint call for proposals. Applications are open to researchers across all disciplines.

Funding for up to 4 PhD projects will be allocated to supervisory teams comprising of at least one Principal Investigator (PI) from Melbourne and one from A\*STAR Singapore. Each of these teams will receive funding to recruit high-quality PhD candidates to this unique opportunity, plus additional seed funding to support and expand collaborative activity.

The recruited PhD candidates in each cohort will, together with their supervisors, deepen and enrich the research network between Melbourne and A\*STAR Singapore. These candidates will perform their research under active joint supervision by PIs at both institutions throughout the full duration of their candidature. Over the course of their PhD, they will spend 12 to 24 months at each institution and be jointly affiliated to both institutions.

### Eligibility criteria

The supervisory team must consist of *at least* two Principal Investigators (PIs), one from Melbourne and one from A\*STAR Singapore. The PIs must have capacity to serve as co-primary supervisors for the PhD candidates throughout their full candidature.

#### Melbourne academics

Melbourne academics must be registered to supervise as per [the Supervisor Eligibility and Registration Policy](#). The primary supervisors should be employed at Melbourne beyond the envisaged submission date of their PhD candidates (2028). If their employment contract does not extend beyond the submission date, then alternative arrangements must be in place, by either having:

- a) A named co-supervisor at Melbourne beyond the envisaged submission date of their PhD candidates (2028); *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 the forms for supervisor registration, please consult [the information for supervisors section on the Graduate Research Hub](#).

Honorary employees whose primary academic affiliation is with 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 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).

### A\*STAR academics

A list of eligible A\*STAR supervisors seeking collaborations may be found at the [ARAP webpage](#) under the “Research Areas” section. Eligible supervisors who are not currently on the list may also participate.

A\*STAR supervisors should meet all the eligibility criteria below:

- a) Have a primary appointment with A\*STAR for at least 1 year;
- b) Have a lab with sufficient space and resources to accommodate the student at an A\*STAR Research Institute;
- c) Demonstrate capability and experience in leading research projects with good outputs and desirable outcome;
- d) Demonstrate ability to provide guidance and mentorship to PhD students (prior experience in guiding students and early career researchers preferred); and
- e) Possess adequate experience in research outputs (e.g. publications and patents) and competitive grants.

Researchers who do not meet one or more of the criteria may be considered as co-supervisors.

### Additional notes for all applicants

Additional colleagues not from Melbourne or A\*STAR (including other partners in Australia, Singapore, or internationally) are not eligible to apply as PIs, although they can participate in the co-supervision of PhD candidates.

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 including as it applies to gender, indigenous peoples, nationality, disabilities, and career stages.

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

### Program structure

Up to 4 PhD project proposals will be funded. The candidates subsequently recruited by the successful supervisory teams will together form the first cohort of the Melbourne-A\*STAR Research Attachment Program. The successful PIs will also receive seed funding to support the growth in collaborative activity.

**All candidates recruited to the program must meet the minimum eligibility requirements to successfully enrol in the relevant PhD course at Melbourne and meet approval requirements at A\*STAR.**

Candidates should aim to submit their thesis within three years of commencement – with the possibility of two six-month extensions, upon application, to a maximum of four years. The candidates must also spend **at least 12 (and ideally 18) months at each institution**. Time spent at A\*STAR and

Melbourne can be determined depending on the needs of the project, however it is preferable for candidates to spend a similar amount of time (~18 months) at each institution. Each PhD project must be co-designed to be completed within three years.

## Funding

An overall summary of the funding provided per proposal is included below.

<b>University of Melbourne</b>	<b>A*STAR (Support is up to a maximum of 2 years)</b>
Tax-free scholarship (stipend) for each candidate while in Melbourne. Refer to the <a href="#">Graduate Research Scholarship page</a> for the full details.	Monthly stipend of S\$3,200 Monthly housing subsidy of S\$300 (Applicable for students staying off-campus)
Tuition fee remission scholarship or waiver for all candidates.	No tuition fees are required at A*STAR.
Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) single membership for any international candidates who require a student visa to study in Australia, when in Australia, and travel insurance whilst on Study Away.	Medical insurance
Relocation allowance for all candidates, when first moving to Melbourne, up to a maximum of \$3,000 for international candidates.	One-time settling-in allowance of S\$1,000, airfare grant of S\$1,500, IT allowance of S\$800, as well as visa application financial and administrative assistance, to support relocation to Singapore. (Students who have not completed at least one year of ARAP attachment would be required to pay back the One-time settling-in allowance of S\$1,000).
A \$5,000 lump sum* to support candidates and Melbourne PIs for relevant activities, including**: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional candidate travel</li> <li>• PI travel</li> <li>• Workshop costs or virtual collaboration expenses</li> <li>• Candidate recruitment</li> </ul>	Conference allowance of up to S\$5,000 for one local and one overseas conference for each candidate.  Mobility support for supervisors may be provided by A*STAR institutes.

*\*The lump sum provided by Melbourne is pooled and allocated to the Academic Lead of the program. The Academic Lead is responsible for distributing the funds to the PIs and candidates for the uses described.*

*\*\*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, scholarships, conference attendance, tuition fees, and honoraria.*

## Reporting and other conditions

### Melbourne academics

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

### A\*STAR academics

Candidates and their supervisors are required to complete a progress report and submit it in the 9th month and 21st month (if applicable) of their attachment to A\*STAR Graduate Academy.

## Application and submission

Before preparing a proposal, please note the following about the structure of the program:

- Each supervisory team should submit details of the project proposal, including an estimated project timeline, noting candidates must spend at least 12 months at each institution.
- Melbourne and A\*STAR encourage projects to be designed in a way that candidates spend roughly equal time at each institution.
- The PhD projects should be designed to be completed within three years, with a maximum duration of four years (one additional year available upon extension request).

The proposal must be submitted via SmartyGrants, including the following parts:

1. Information about the A\*STAR and Melbourne PIs, including a short CV
2. Nomination of co-supervisors (if applicable)
3. A summary of the proposed project, including:
  - a. A 250-word abstract, to be used for candidate recruitment if the proposal is successful. This abstract will be published online to advertise the project to prospective PhD candidates, so it should be written in lay terms.
  - b. A project timeline, outlining the proposed periods of research at A\*STAR and Melbourne.
4. Responses to the selection criteria below:
  - a. Project design and rationale
  - b. Potential impact
  - c. Collaborator complementarity
  - d. Supervision concept
  - e. Capacity for expanded collaboration
5. Endorsement for the Melbourne applicant from their Head of School/Department and Faculty Associate Dean (Graduate Research).
6. Endorsement for the A\*STAR applicant from their Research Institute Director.

The A\*STAR supervisor should ensure that the proposed project would have the necessary funding support and endorsement from the Research Institute's Executive Director.

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

A single, jointly prepared application must be submitted in English via SmartyGrants by **Friday, April 19 2024 on 3pm AEST**.

## Evaluation

The proposals will be ranked in order of meeting the selection criteria. Melbourne and A\*STAR Singapore will select up to 4 project proposals for funding, which supervisory teams will then recruit candidates to.

The following selection criteria apply:

- **Project design and rationale** – How clearly presented and justified is the basis for, and design of, the jointly supervised PhD project? What are the anticipated benefits of involving a PhD researcher in the collaboration? What is the benefit of the candidate spending a minimum of 12 months at each institution?
- **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?
- **Collaborator complementarity** – What is the evidence of an existing research relationship, or added value of a new collaboration? How does the collaboration combine mutual areas of interest and strength?
- **Quality of supervision** – How will the PIs work together effectively when jointly supervising their PhD candidate? How will the PhD candidate be integrated into the research environment at each institution? What are the beneficial learning outcomes and experiences for the PhD candidate? Have the PIs accounted for any challenges that may arise when jointly supervising a PhD candidate?
- **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?

Successful recipients will be formally notified of the award and informed of funding conditions.

## Key dates

Call for PhD project proposals opens	Wednesday, March 6, 2024
Call for proposals closes	Friday, April 19, 2024 (3pm AEST)
Outcome notifications and start of recruitment	End of May 2024
Pre-screening of selected candidates	End of October 2024

PIs must successfully recruit candidates by the end of October 2024 (even if the candidates will not commence until 2025). If the PIs do not meet this deadline, the scholarships and seed funding will be recalled.

Applications will close on **Friday, April 19 2024 at 3pm AEST**. PIs must submit one, jointly prepared proposal in English via SmartyGrants.

## Contacts

### University of Melbourne

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

### A\*STAR

Mr Kenny Soh  
Kenny\_Soh@hq.a-star.edu.sg