

PhD scholarship opportunity:

Schools + community + policy

Are you interested in doing a PhD? Come study with us! The *Building Connections: Schools As Community Hubs* research project is offering a full-time PhD scholarship based at RMIT University.

Building Connections is investigating how best to plan, design, govern and manage facilities to enable schools to operate successfully as 'more than a school', to encourage the development of thriving, resilient and connected communities.

The University of Melbourne's Learning Environments Applied Research Network (LEaRN) and RMIT University's Centre for Urban Research has been awarded a 3-year Australian Research Council Linkage grant for the project.

The PhD will contribute to the project's research on how government policies impact the establishment and ongoing management of community hub schools. Case studies will be conducted on community hub schools to identify the impact of policies, both in terms of how policies have been documented and enacted. The objectives and outcomes of Australian policies will be compared to international policies to understand world-best practice in the creation of community hub schools. Applications are sought from candidates with a research and/or industry background in urban planning and policy.

The PhD will be hosted within RMIT University's Centre for Urban Research. The candidate will collaborate with other PhD researchers associated with the project, based in Melbourne University's ABP Faculty and MGSE. A collaborative and supportive research environment will help develop the candidate as an effective learning environments researcher within and across these discipline specialisations.

The candidate's main supervisor will be Dr Ian McShane, an expert in urban planning policy related to schools and social infrastructure. The PhD candidate will join a team of leading learning environments researchers including Dr Ben Cleveland (Lead Chief Investigator), Dr Ian McShane, A/Prof Clare Newton and Prof Janet Clinton (Chief Investigators), Dr Sianan Healy (Project Coordinator), and Philippa Chandler (Research Fellow).

The scholarship includes a living stipend of \$30,600 (tax free) per annum.

Expressions of interest will be accepted until Monday 2 December 2019.



Entry requirements

Applicants must meet RMIT University's prerequisites for PhD studies in order to apply for a Building Connections PhD scholarship:

<https://cur.org.au/study-with-us/apply-for-a-phd/>

Applicants must include their **academic transcript including grading scale, IELTS score (if applicable), cover letter, CV and a research proposal of no more than 1 page**. Any queries should be directed to Dr Ian McShane: ian.mcshane@rmit.edu.au (queries only – no applications).

NB: The PhD scholarship is open to domestic and New Zealand-citizen applicants only, and must be undertaken full-time.

About the project

Schools are some of the most underutilised assets in Australia, with most used sparingly outside of school hours, on weekends, or during school holiday periods. But school sites are increasingly seen as valuable assets that should support individuals, families and community groups – especially in rapidly growing areas of Australian cities.

Adopting a unique cross-disciplinary approach, the *Building Connections: Schools as Community Hubs* project is investigating how best to plan, design, govern and manage facilities and infrastructure to enable schools to operate successfully as 'more than a school', encouraging the development of resilient and connected communities.

Project outcomes

The *Building Connections: Schools as Community Hubs Framework* will provide policy guidance to help state governments, non-government school systems, local councils, schools and community stakeholders overcome the current 'obstacle course' that prevents schools from benefitting a broader range of users.

The framework will provide evidence-based process and decision-making guidance to key stakeholders involved in school infrastructure provision and management, with a focus on supporting programs and services that may be offered in addition to formal schooling.

Research environment

The project is administered by the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning (ABP) at The University of Melbourne, and its Chief Investigators are based in ABP, MGSE and RMIT's Centre for Urban Research. The project draws together expertise across architecture, design, education and urban planning, and this multi-disciplinary setting provides a rich intellectual environment for the project.



Three other PhD candidates will be involved in the project, with two based in ABP and one in MGSE. All PhD candidates will be further supported by the Learning Environments Applied Research Network (LEARN) and will be able to study in a friendly, collaborative environment.

Selection criteria

The PhD scholarship is open to applicants from a wide array of backgrounds, including traditional academic streams and those with professional backgrounds connected to the *Building Connections* research aims. However, candidates will need to demonstrate that they have sound research skills.

PhD candidates **must be able to commit to full-time study (37.5 hours per week)** in order to be eligible to receive the living stipend (\$30,600 tax-free per annum), and be available to begin in early 2020. The PhD scholarship is open to domestic and New Zealand-citizen applicants only.

As well as your academic transcript and CV, you will be required to provide a **research proposal**, and specify how your proposal aligns with the objectives of the overall project.

The EOI process will identify applicants with:

- the greatest potential for [successful admission to the PhD program](#) at the Centre for Urban Research;
- capacity to qualify for a [Research Stipend Scholarship](#);
- perceived capacity to contribute to policy research;
- the greatest potential for working within a collaborative research project, including spending significant time with the research team in Melbourne;
- academic potential, in particular methodological skills and capacity to successfully publish peer-reviewed findings from research;
- academic expertise, in particular the capacity to: utilise relevant software; organise and manipulate complex qualitative or quantitative data sets; adhere to research conventions; transfer research findings and knowledge to the wider community; and undertake ethically sound research.

Obligations

In submitting an application, you will be agreeing to the following stipulations. You must:

- Apply for a Research Stipend Scholarship as part of your application, and if successful, accept this award.
- Be prepared to study as a full-time PhD student for the duration of the project. Those enrolled full-time are expected to spend 37.5 hours per week on their research. Those on



scholarship may undertake paid or voluntary work that is not related to their studies, provided the work does not interfere with their studies, noting that work commitments cannot be accepted as grounds for an extension of scholarship.

- Be prepared to work as part of a large research team, towards a common research goal, across multiple sites throughout Australia.
- Be prepared to undertake the PhD as a 'thesis with publication'.
- Be prepared to contribute fully to the rich academic life of the *Building Connections* project. This may include, but may not be limited to, attending team meetings; presentations at regular workshops, symposia and conferences; provision of professional development in schools and other workplaces; preparation of solo and joint peer-reviewed and other publications; and the meeting of all project milestones.

How to apply

Please email your application to building-connections@unimelb.edu.au and include the following:

- Full name
- Email
- Cover letter (*Please outline your background and experience relating to the overall Building Connections project and the discipline of Evaluation.*)
- Research proposal (*This should address the research theme 'evaluating the social and economic benefits of community hubs schools' and be no more than 1 page.*)
- CV
- Academic transcript (*EAL students please include evidence of English language proficiency.*)

