



University of Melbourne – University of Bonn Call for joint PhD project proposals 2023

The University of Melbourne and the University of Bonn have supported research collaboration through several initiatives. Through these activities we have recruited over 50 joint PhD candidates and funded several collaborative research projects to date. These initiatives include the [Bonn & Melbourne Research and Graduate School in Immunology](#) (est. 2016), the [Bonn & Melbourne Research and Graduate School in Decision Neuroscience](#) (est. 2020), and the [Bonn-Melbourne Research Excellence Fund](#) (est. 2020).

In 2023, the Universities of Melbourne and Bonn are seeking to expand on these opportunities through a University-wide call for joint PhD projects. Applications are invited, and encouraged, from all faculties and research areas.

Up to six joint PhD projects will be funded across three separate pairs of Principal Investigators (PIs), comprising one PI from Melbourne and one from Bonn. Each of these PI **pairs** will receive funding to support **two** joint PhD candidates, plus additional seed funding to support collaborative activities. Candidates and supervisors will join the established community of the Bonn – Melbourne joint PhD programs, offering opportunities to deepen and enrich their research networks. Additional integration of PhD candidates into the respective research environments at each institution is also expected.

Joint PhD candidates are enrolled at both institutions, perform their research under joint supervision, and are graded according to the academic standards of both institutions. Upon successful completion of the program, each candidate will be eligible to receive a joint PhD, recognised by two testamurs acknowledging the joint nature of the award.

Program structure

Up to **three** proposals will be funded, with each application supporting **two** joint PhD projects. Together, the candidates recruited to these projects will form a 2024 cohort of **six** jointly enrolled candidates. The successful PIs will also receive seed funding to support the growth in collaborative activity.

In each proposal pair, one candidate will have Melbourne as their Home institution, and the other will have Bonn as their Home institution. The **Home** institution is where the candidate will conduct the majority of their research, where they receive their scholarship from, and where they are likely to commence and conclude their candidature.

These projects also have the potential to be organized into clusters, bringing together multiple proposals under a shared research theme. While each dissertation project should be able to stand on its own and not depend on the funding of another project, supervisory teams combining multiple proposals should consider how forming a cluster will lead to the creation and proliferation of a new collaborative research network. Teams intending to cluster their proposals with other applications should indicate this in the application form.

All candidates recruited to the program must meet the minimum eligibility requirements to successfully enroll in the relevant PhD course at both Melbourne and Bonn. 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 months at each institution.** Time spent at Bonn and Melbourne can be determined depending on the needs of the project, so long as the candidate spends at least 12 months at each institution and the project is designed to be completed within three years.

Eligibility criteria

The supervisory team must consist of *at least* two Principal Investigators (PIs), one from Melbourne and one from Bonn. The PIs must have capacity to serve as primary supervisors for two jointly enrolled PhD candidates.

Previous Bonn – Melbourne Research Excellence Fund recipients and applicants are eligible to apply.

Current supervisors of joint PhD candidates funded through the Bonn and Melbourne Research and Graduate School in Immunology; and/or the pilot cohort of the Bonn and Melbourne Research and Graduate School in Decision Neuroscience are *not* eligible to apply.

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, 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.

Bonn academics

Bonn academics must be authorized to act as primary supervisor for PhD candidates according to the relevant regulations of the respective faculties. The primary supervisors should be employed at Bonn 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 Bonn beyond the envisaged submission date of their PhD candidates (2028); *or*
- b) A letter of support from the respective Head of Institute, speaker of excellence cluster, or Bonn International Graduate School detailing the arrangements in place to ensure continuity of supervision.

Additional notes for all applicants

Additional colleagues (including other partners in Australia, Germany, or internationally) are not eligible to apply as PIs, although they can participate in the co-supervision of joint PhD candidates at their own cost. However, involvement of shared external partners that benefit the project, for example through research transfer/translation support or providing internship opportunities, are encouraged.

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**.

Funding

A summary of funding for each project is included table below.

University of Melbourne	University of Bonn
Tax-free scholarship (stipend) for each Melbourne-based candidate. Refer to the Graduate Research Scholarship page for the full details.	Tax-free scholarship (stipend) of 1,500 € per month for each Bonn-based candidate.
Tuition fee remission scholarship or waiver for both Melbourne- and Bonn-based candidates.	There are no tuition fees at Bonn. Melbourne-based candidates receive an additional one-time lump sum of 500 € to cover student service fees at Bonn over the course of their PhD candidacy.
Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) single membership for any Melbourne-based international candidate who requires a student visa to study in Australia, when in Australia, and travel insurance whilst on Study Away.	OSHC for the duration of research in Australia for any Bonn-based candidates will be covered from the lump sum detailed below.

	Health insurance for Bonn-based candidates while in Germany will be paid from the candidate's stipend.
Relocation allowance for all Melbourne-based candidates to commence at Melbourne, up to a maximum of \$3,000.	Relocation allowance for all Bonn-based candidates to commence at Bonn, up to a maximum of 1,500 € will come from the lump sum detailed below.
A \$20,000 lump sum* to support Melbourne-based candidates and UoM PIs for relevant activities, including**: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate travel • PI travel • Workshop costs or virtual collaboration expenses • Graduate recruitment 	A 15,000 € lump sum to support Bonn-based candidates and Bonn PIs for relevant activities, including**: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate travel and OSHC • PI travel • Workshop costs or virtual collaboration expenses • Graduate recruitment

**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.*

***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 recipients will be required to provide regular updates on project progress during the candidature of their joint 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.

Bonn academics

Bonn recipients will be required to provide regular updates on project progress during the candidature of their joint PhD candidates. These updates will be requested annually by the International Office. Recipients who fail to participate in regular reporting mechanisms for this program may be found ineligible for participation in future International Office grant programs.

Evaluation of projects

The proposals will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

- **Project design and rationale:** How clearly presented and justified is the basis for, and design of, the joint PhD projects? 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?

- **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 candidates? How will PhD candidates be integrated into the research environment at each university? 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?
- **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?

Key Dates

Call for joint PhD project proposals opens	5 July 2023
Call for proposals closes	25 September 2023
Outcome notifications and start of recruitment	Mid-November 2023
Recruited joint PhD candidates commence	By October 2024 (Bonn-home candidates) and November 2024 (Melbourne-home candidates)

PIs must successfully recruit two joint candidates by 30 June 2024 (even if the candidates will not commence until later in 2024). If the PIs do not meet this deadline, the scholarships and seed funding will be recalled.

Application and submission

Each pair of PIs should submit one proposal that outlines two joint PhDs projects intended for two joint PhD candidates. These projects can be on a similar research topic or theme, but the candidates cannot rely on each other's results or completed thesis material to progress in their candidature.

One project should be for a Melbourne-home candidate and the other for a Bonn-home candidate. Candidates must spend at least 12 months of their candidature at each institution.

The supervision concept put forward by the PIs should outline the planned integration of PhD candidates into their respective research environments. Bonn-home candidates are expected to be integrated into a Bonn International Graduate School or other structured PhD program at the University of Bonn.

PIs must submit a single, jointly prepared application in English via the University of Melbourne's [SmartyGrants](#) Portal by **7AM CEST / 3PM AEST on 25 September 2023**. Applications should be written in English and for an audience proficient, but not expert, in the field.

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.

For proposals involving a PI from Melbourne's Faculty of Arts only: You must also provide a statement addressing how the Melbourne and Bonn home candidates will meet the Melbourne Faculty of Arts PhD coursework requirements in your application. Please refer to the [Faculty's guidelines for additional information](#).

Elements of Bonn's Faculty of Arts' structured PhD program or other graduate course offerings at Bonn may offer useful options. It is recommended that the Bonn and Melbourne PIs consult with each other, and contact Melbourne's Associate Dean (Graduate Research) if any further guidance is required.

Contacts

Melbourne academics

The Researcher Development Schemes team
Research, Innovation & Commercialisation
The University of Melbourne
res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au

Bonn academics

Dr. Christian Klöckner
Partnerships and International Researchers
International Office
University of Bonn
c.kloeckner@uni-bonn.de