

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

2024 Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships

Frequently Asked Questions



ADMINISTRATION

1. When will the Fellowships be awarded?

For the 2024 Program, successful applicants will be notified by late September-early October 2023. Fellows can commence their fellowship from 1 January 2024, and no later than 31 March 2024. Where applicants have a current contract with the University of Melbourne that extends beyond 31 March 2024, the Fellowship starting date will be negotiated separately and ordinarily must commence by 30 June 2024.

2. How many Fellowships will be awarded?

Up to ten Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships will be awarded for 2024 commencement.

3. What is the success rate for Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships?

The Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships Program is highly competitive, with up to 10 fellowships awarded each year. The success rate varies depending on the number of applications submitted in a given year.

4. When will I hear back from the EOI process? Will I hear back before the full application deadline?

That is the decision of the faculty. Please contact your faculty.

5. Where do I find information about the academic research priorities?

You should discuss this with your mentor or sponsor or with the research staff in your Faculty/School (the general contact) and they will be able to guide you on that. Some Faculties/Schools will have statements about their research priorities on their webpage. Once you know the priority areas you need to show how your research supports these areas. For example, if there are experts that connect to your area of research and/or how your research contributes to the pursuit of these research areas or priorities. Take advice from your faculty contacts on how to frame academic research priorities in your application.

ELIGIBILITY

7. PhD date of award

Option 1	Between 1 November 2020 and 23 June 2023	Eligible
Option 2	Between 1 November 2018 and 31 October 2020, and had a period of significant research career interruption between 1 November 2018 and 26 June 2023	Eligible to apply, must complete Part B3 of the full application form.
Option 3	Between 1 November 2012 and 31 October 2018 and there are exceptional extenuating circumstances.	Not currently eligible. May complete EER to determine eligibility prior to completing the full application.

8. Are international applicants eligible to apply?

Yes, we can accept international applications where the applicant meets all the required eligibility criteria. A relevant visa will need to be obtained (and maintained) if the applicant is successful. Note that this scheme does not provide visa or relocation expenses.

9. I do not yet have my PhD, can I apply?

If by the full application due date, you meet all the required eligibility criteria and you have completed all the required steps to be eligible to graduate with a PhD, then you are eligible to apply. For the purposes of this scheme, submission of a thesis for examination is not enough to be considered eligible. The University of Melbourne cannot support Eligibility Exemption Requests (EER) for applicants who will not be able to provide PhD evidence by the application closing date.

10. Does my PhD need to have been conferred or do I only require a letter identifying that I have met all the requirements to be awarded a PhD?

You will only need a letter identifying that you have met all the requirements to have been awarded your PhD.

11. Can I take up the Fellowship at a UoM affiliated non-medical research institute or MDHS Medical Research Institute (MRI) ¹?

Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellows must be employed 1.0 FTE by a Department or School of the University of Melbourne upon commencement of the fellowship. It is expected that all research awards applied for by the fellow during the tenure of the fellowship are submitted, accepted, and administered through the employing University of Melbourne Department or School.

12. Currently I have a 2-year contract. Will this affect the application? Can I ask for only two years of Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship funding?

No, you cannot request a variation of the terms of the fellowship prior to award. The offer is for a three-year fellowship. However, once awarded, variations to the fellowship terms can be considered where there is a justification for doing so (e.g., illness, caring responsibilities, or other interruptions to research). Variations must be approved by Chancellery Research and Enterprise.

[These FAQs were updated in October 2023 to remove reference to negotiating a possible fourth year on the fellowship with fractional teaching, as this option is no longer available].

13. I have already applied for the McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme. Am I eligible to apply?

Applicants may not make concurrent applications to both the McKenzie and Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowships.

14. I am currently on a level B position or higher. Can I request a higher salary band?

The funding provided by DVCR for this fellowship will start at Level A6. You may negotiate with your Faculty/Department to top up this salary in addition to their required co-contribution.

¹ These include the affiliated institutes of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, including the Florey Department of Neuroscience and Mental Health, Medical Bionics Department, The Sir Peter MacCallum Department of Oncology and the Department of Medical Biology (WEHI).

15. I currently have caring responsibilities. If successful, can I commence the fellowship at less than 1.0FTE?

If awarded, you may request to vary the FTE of the fellowship which is subject to approval by Chancellery Research and Enterprise and the agreement of your Head of Department/School.

16. Are there any tools available to help calculate the duration of a career interruption or career interruptions?

An EER calculator is available to help calculate the total interruption days and can be found under the 'Supporting documents' on the scheme webpage.

17. Regarding eligibility criteria B3, is a career interruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as loss of access to labs, facilities, and fields sites, considered to be a genuine disruption?

Yes, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are legitimate factors in making a case for career interruptions - for example, if your publications, other outputs, field work and/or experimental work have been delayed due to COVID-19 it is important to note these. You need to be able to document the impact from March 2020 until present. Be clear on the nature and the extent of the interruption.

18. Will eligibility exemptions be assessed after faculty rankings are determined by the central panel?

The timing of eligibility exemption assessment depends on the type of exemption requested. Requests submitted under option 2 at FAQ7 – for which an exemption must be sought by completing part B3 of the full application form – will be assessed *after* faculty rankings are determined by the central panel. Requests submitted under option 3 at FAQ7 – for which an exemption must be sought by submitting a standalone Eligibility Exemption Request (EER) form to RIC via SmartyGrants – will be assessed *before* faculty rankings are determined by the central panel.

APPLICATION

19. Are there word and page limits to the application?

Yes, there are word and/or page limits for different parts of the application. Where applicable, specific page and/or word limits are stated at the beginning of each part. Please bear in mind that two selection panels will review the applications and it is best if applications are written in a clear and concise manner.

20. Question C2 – field of research codes. Are these specific to the submitted research proposal or to me as a researcher?

The field of research codes identified at question C2 must be specific to the project described in the submitted research proposal.

21. In section C4, is the limit of 830 words for the entire project proposal or for each heading?

The contents of the "Project Proposal" text field, including the prescribed headings, should be no more than 830 words. The "References list" text field is excluded from this limit.

22. What is the role of the Academic Contact?

The Academic Contact nominated in an application is expected to be the applicant's regular point of contact at The University of Melbourne, and to either provide informal mentoring to the successful fellow throughout the duration of their fellowship or nominate an appropriate mentor.

23. Do I need a written testimonial from a referee? Are we required to submit references?

Yes, two referee reports are required as per the guidelines.

24. Will there be an interview stage after the written applications, or will decisions be made only on the written application?

No, the central committee will not interview applicants. The case for funding needs to be made entirely through the written application. In doing so it is important to communicate your work in way that is readily comprehensible to an interdisciplinary and non-specialist audience.

25. If I came from abroad and my research collaborations are concentrated in that place of origin, with less extension collaborative networks in Australia, will that disadvantage my application?

No, this will not disadvantage your application. It is important to demonstrate your ability to build collaborations, regardless of where you were situated when a collaboration was established, and to identify how a Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship will help enhance your existing collaborative networks.

BUDGET AND SALARY

26. Do I need to address how the Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship salary is funded in my application?

No. Faculties know how a Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship is funded as per the guidelines. Two thirds of a level A salary over three years (A.6-A.8) and the full project costs are paid by Chancellery Research and Enterprise; the relevant Faculty pays the balance of the salary costs.

27. Do I need to account for Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship salary in the budget section (D1) of the application or only the \$25k for project costs?

You do not need to account for the Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship salary in the budget section of the application. You only need to account for items that will be purchased from the \$25k available for project costs.

28. If the \$25K is not sufficient to facilitate experiments over the 3-year duration of the fellowship, do I need to guarantee where the rest of the required money will be sourced from? Or should I tailor my experiments to cost only \$25K for three years?

If this applies to you, we recommend that you discuss with your faculty or project sponsor.

POST-AWARD

29. Can I transfer my Fellowship funds to another University?

No, the Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship it is an internal grant. If you accept a position outside of the University of Melbourne, your Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship will end, and any remaining funds will be returned.

30. Can I use any funds left over from my Fellowship once the three years are completed?

Any unspent funds normally need to be returned, however Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellows who apply for and are successful in gaining externally funded fellowships prior to the end of the appointment of the Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship are able to retain the \$25,000 for project costs for the full three years.

31. Can I teach or do research supervision while on the default 3-year fellowship appointment?

Fellows who are commencing their fellowship in 2024 will be on a *research-only* appointment and will not be able to teach while on the fellowship. Some limited supervision of research students may be undertaken while on the fellowship if the research is related to the fellow's research. Any administrative work undertaken by the fellow should be closely connected with the research - for example, grant applications. If you are offered a Melbourne

Postdoctoral Fellowship, you can talk to your faculty research office and/or Head of School/Department about your prospective career pathway in view of the updated conditions of the research fellowship.

[These FAQs were updated in October 2023 to remove reference to negotiating a possible fourth year with fractional teaching, as this option is no longer available].

MISCELLANEOUS

32. Can a project partially rely on the outcomes of other projects I am engaged in (e.g., the outcomes of experimental study from another project)?

Yes. Your Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship project can build on or extend previous work, but in this case, you need to clearly explain how the Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship project is in fact a new project and is not simply seeking a continuation of funding for an existing project.

33. Is there scope for promotion within the fellowship? Or is it set at level A for the full three years?

While the fellowship funded by DVCR strategic funds is two-thirds of A.6-A.8 salary per year, Faculties may opt to hire candidates at a higher level and/or promote the candidate during the course of the fellowship. Any amount beyond two-thirds of A.6 (Y1), A.7 (Y2) and A.8 (Y3/4) must be covered by the host Faculty. We recommend you discuss this with your fellowship Academic Contact, the faculty research office, and/or your prospective Head of Department/School.

34. Does the application need to be submitted in Themis?

No.

35. Will my collaborators be contacted as part of the selection process?

No, unless you have named a collaborator as a referee.

36. What does relative to opportunity mean?

The University's definition of relative to opportunity is found at: https://unimelb.service-now.com/hr?id=kb_article&sys_id=cfad89aedb4070109b78be37f49619bd

37. General Advice: Questions to do with HR matters should be directed to your faculty research office for advice.