

The University of Manchester and The University of Melbourne
Call for jointly awarded/dual PhD Projects to commence in 2027/28

Deadline: Friday 9 October 2026 5.00pm AEDT (Melbourne)/ 7.00am BST (Manchester)

Purpose of the scheme

The University of Melbourne (Melbourne) and the University of Manchester (Manchester) support research collaboration and the development of globally engaged researchers through [The Cookson Scholars](#). Established in 2019, annual calls for joint PhD project proposals have provided funding for many supervisory teams to recruit talented candidates across the humanities and sciences. Jointly awarded/dual PhD¹ programs provide candidates with access to complementary facilities, expertise and field environments; a global perspective and an international fluency that will enable future developments in their field and provide a pool of talented employees for global academia and industry.

Melbourne and Manchester are calling for project proposals to establish **pairs** of jointly awarded/dual PhD research projects. Each successful team of collaborating Principal Investigators (PIs) will receive funding for **two** jointly awarded/dual PhD candidates, one based in Manchester, and one based in Melbourne. Funding for each candidate will include tuition fees, a full living stipend allowance, research training support, health insurance and travel allowance.

Project proposals are open to all research areas at Melbourne and the following faculties at Manchester: Science and Engineering, and Humanities. At Manchester, please note the Faculty of Science and Engineering particularly encourages applications in *AI, Health, Sustainability, Quantum and Digital, Advanced Materials and Discovery Science, and Engineering*, and the Faculty of Humanities particularly encourages applications in *Sustainable Futures Creativity (including Creative Health and Creative Economy) Digital and AI, Inequalities, Adaptive Societies (including resilient neighbourhoods)*.

Proposals that involve Early Career Researchers (ECRs)² as either Principal Investigators or co-investigators are strongly encouraged.

In 2026, up to **four** teams of PIs will be funded for proposals that include two joint/dual PhD projects. The PhD candidates, that are subsequently recruited to the eight successful projects, will become Cookson Scholars and together with their supervisors join an established network of researchers.

The Jointly Awarded/Dual PhD scholarship program

Graduate Researchers (GRs)/Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) participating in the jointly awarded/dual PhD program will be enrolled/registered at both institutions from the start of their program. The research work will be performed under joint supervision, with at least one principal supervisor appointed from each of the two institutions and will be

¹ The University of Melbourne refers to this program as 'jointly awarded' and the University of Manchester refers to this program as 'dual-award'.

² An ECR is defined at both Manchester and Melbourne as a researcher within 10 years of their PhD conferral, excluding periods of career interruptions.

judged according to the academic standards at both institutions. At the end of the successful completion of the program, each GR/PGR will be eligible to receive a PhD, recognised by two testamurs, one from Melbourne and one from Manchester, stating the joint nature of the award and name of the partner institution.

The periods spent abroad by the GR/PGR candidate will be decided by supervisors from both sides, with a minimum of 12 months to be spent at each institution. All candidates must meet the eligibility requirements at both Melbourne and Manchester to successfully enroll at both universities as part of the jointly awarded/dual PhD program.

Eligibility criteria

This call for project proposals is open to applications from supervisory teams of at least two Principal Investigators (PIs), one from Manchester and one from Melbourne. The PIs must have the capacity to supervise two PhD candidates. Each PI must meet the supervisor eligibility criteria set by their own institution and each PI is responsible for checking their own eligibility to apply.

The University of Manchester

The Supervisory team must meet Manchester's criteria as set out in the [University's Policy on Supervision for Postgraduate Research Degrees](#).

The University of Melbourne

Melbourne academics must be registered to supervise as per the [Graduate Research Training Policy \(MPF1321\)](#). Principal supervisors should be employed at Melbourne beyond the envisaged submission date of their PhD candidates (2032). 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 (2032);
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 (\$10,000AUD); *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 or ICRA Scheme.

Additional notes for all applicants

Previous recipients may not reapply to the scheme for a period of two years after the round in which they were initially awarded [recipients from cohort 6 2024 (also named 2025/2026 call for proposals) and cohort 7 2025 (also named 2026/2027 call for proposals)] but may participate in projects as a co-investigator.

External collaborators (including academic researchers in Australia, the UK, other countries, or regions; or those working in non-academic contexts such as industry or government) that are not affiliated with Melbourne or Manchester are not eligible to apply as PIs, 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.

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 from PIs who do not satisfy these criteria will **not be eligible**.

Funding available

Up to a total of eight (8) PhD scholarships will be awarded, with each successful supervisory pair receiving scholarships for two (2) candidates each. One of these candidates will have Melbourne as their Home institution, and the other will have Manchester 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.

As part of the 2027/2028 call for proposals, Melbourne will fund up to 4 PhD scholarships and Manchester will fund up to 4 PhD scholarships. The scholarship duration is 42 months (3.5 years).

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

University of Melbourne	University of Manchester
Tax-free scholarship (stipend) for each Melbourne Home jointly awarded/dual PhD candidate. See the Graduate Research Scholarship page for full details.	Manchester stipend for Manchester Home jointly awarded/dual PhD candidate (equivalent to UKRI standard)
Tuition-fee waivers for both jointly awarded/dual PhD candidates.	Tuition-fee waivers for both jointly awarded/dual PhD candidates.
Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) Single Membership for any Melbourne Home international candidate who requires a student visa to study in Australia, when in Australia, and travel insurance while on Study Away.	Health Insurance in Australia while on Study Away for any Manchester Home candidate.
A \$10,000 AUD lump sum* to support Melbourne Home candidates and Melbourne PIs for relevant activities** including: • Mobility support for the Melbourne-based candidate • PI travel • Workshop costs or virtual collaboration expenses • Graduate recruitment	Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) - up to £5,000 per year, plus one return airfare to Melbourne over the duration of the program, to support Manchester Home candidates and Manchester PIs.

**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 the funds 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, additional scholarships, conference attendance, tuition fees, and honoraria. Melbourne and Manchester reserve the right to determine the eligibility of expenses.***

Project proposal guidelines

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

- Up to four proposals, each including projects for two PhD candidates, will be supported. Projects must be led by one principal supervisor from each institution and each PI must meet the eligibility criteria of their home institution (refer to pages 1-3 of these guidelines).
- Each pair of PIs should submit two projects, one for a Melbourne Home candidate and one for a Manchester Home candidate. The projects can be on a similar research topic or theme, but there should not be any interdependence between these two projects. The candidates should not need to rely on each other's results or completed thesis work to progress in their candidature.
- Projects should be designed for a duration of 42 months (3.5 years), with at least 12 months of the project to be spent at each institution. Projects that do not plan for the GR/PGR to spend at least 12 months at Manchester **and** Melbourne will **not** be eligible to receive funding.
- If the application involves a Principal Investigator from the Faculty of Arts at Melbourne, the proposed project must first obtain [Faculty pre-approval](#) prior to submission to the University. As part of this process, the required approval documentation must include details of how the candidate will meet the [Faculty of Arts PhD coursework requirements](#).

Project proposals are open to all research areas at Melbourne and the following faculties at Manchester: Science and Engineering, and Humanities. At Manchester, please note the Faculty of Science and Engineering particularly encourages applications in *AI, Health, Sustainability, Quantum and Digital, Advanced Materials and Discovery Science, and Engineering*, and the Faculty of Humanities particularly encourages applications in *Sustainable Futures Creativity (including Creative Health and Creative Economy) Digital and AI, Inequalities, Adaptive Societies (including resilient neighbourhoods)*.

The online application form requests:

- The details of the PIs/research groups involved, including CVs and links to each PIs website.
- An abstract for the PhD projects, which will be used for recruitment if the proposals are successful
- An overview of the Melbourne Home and Manchester Home PhD projects, providing:
- Outline of the projects, including subject area strengths
- A supervision plan, highlighting why each project requires time to be spent at the partner institution and benefits of doing so
- GANTT charts showing the division of time to be spent by the candidates at both institutions
- 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.
- Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) priorities
- Research Project Activity Type
- Fields of Research (FoR) codes and Socio-Economic Objective (SEO) codes
- Completion of an ethics acknowledgement
- The projects and applicant's suitability must align with the relevant foreign engagement regulatory frameworks. For more details, including access to the self-assessment decision tool, FAQs and the link to request an assessment from the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI), Melbourne PIs please refer to the [International safeguards and research security](#) and [Export Controls](#) pages

- At Manchester overseas candidates may also be required to undergo an ATAS clearance. Manchester PIs please refer to the [ATAS requirements](#) page
- All Melbourne applicants must attach an endorsement from the respective Head of School/Department and Associate Dean (Graduate Research) [ADGR sign off is not required for MDHS and FEIT applicants].

Reporting and other conditions

Melbourne recipients will be required to provide regular updates on project progress during the candidature of their candidates. These updates will be requested annually by the International Collaborative Research Academy (ICRA) Academic Lead. Recipients who fail to participate in regular reporting mechanisms for this ICRA may be found ineligible for participation in future Researcher Development or ICRA Schemes.

Evaluation of projects

The proposals will be reviewed according to the following selection criteria:

- **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 at Melbourne and Manchester?
- **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?
- **Quality of supervision** – How will the PIs work together effectively in jointly supervising their shared PhD candidates? How will PhD candidates be integrated into the research environment at each university? What are the beneficial learning outcomes and experiences planned 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 the project seed the development of a larger network of researchers?

Key Dates

Call opens for proposal applications	Monday 20 July 2026
Deadline for project proposal applications	Friday 9 October 2026 5.00 pm AEDT (Melbourne)/ 7.00 am BST (Manchester)
Announcement of successful proposals	End of November 2026
Joint interviews and preferred candidates recruitment deadlines	31 May 2027 (Manchester Home candidates) 31 December 2027 (Melbourne Home candidates)
GR/PGR start date*	October 2027 (Manchester Home candidates) No later than March 2028 (Melbourne Home candidates)**

* Pairs of candidates do not need to start at the same time. However, individual candidates must start on the same date at both institutions.

** At Melbourne, Faculty of Arts candidates start in March 2028 (Semester 1) to complete mandatory Melbourne coursework.

PIs must successfully recruit **both candidates** by 31 December 2027. If the PIs do not meet this deadline, the scholarships and mobility funding allocated to their projects will be recalled for use in a future call.

The Cookson Scholars jointly award/dual PhD program will advertise the selected projects as agreed to by both institutions. Successful projects will be published on the Melbourne and Manchester websites during application rounds so that prospective candidates can apply for their project of interest.

Application process

PIs must submit a single, jointly prepared application via **the University of Melbourne's [SmartyGrants Portal](#)** by **Friday 9 October 2026** 5.00pm AEDT (Melbourne)/ 7.00am BST (Manchester). 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](#) [ADGR sign off is not required for MDHS and FEIT applicants]. Melbourne applicants who hold an Honorary position must also complete the Honorary declaration form.

If the application involves a Principal Investigator from the Faculty of Arts at Melbourne, the proposed project must first obtain [Faculty pre-approval](#) prior to submission to the University. As part of this process, the required approval documentation must include details of how the candidate will meet the [Faculty of Arts PhD coursework requirements](#).

The link to the application form is: <https://ricunimelb.smartygrants.com.au/Man-Melb-PhD-2026>

Contacts

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