

2025 Bonn-Melbourne Research Excellence Fund Guidelines for Applicants

Purpose

The Bonn-Melbourne Research Excellence Fund fosters the development of high-quality research activities that include Early Career Researchers (ECRs) in a significant role. Applications from all schools and disciplines are encouraged. These should propose innovative and sustainable activities, built around collaborative research, linking researchers from the University of Bonn (Bonn) and the University of Melbourne (Melbourne). The research projects may take place in any country as long as they are undertaken collaboratively. The expectation is that these initial activities will lead to long-term collaborations, institutional and research relations, and when applicable, generate publications, exhibitions, and/or external funding for ongoing collaboration.

In 2025, up to three applications will be funded (each with two Principal Investigators: one from Bonn and one from Melbourne). Each application will receive up to 10,000 € or \$16,000 AUD from their respective institution. These funds must be used for research (broadly defined) and follow the budget guidelines below. Proposals may include targeted research support such as joint workshops, researcher exchanges, and the formation or development of a collaborative network. Applications with a smaller budget seeking funding for an exploratory workshop in either Bonn and Melbourne are also encouraged.

Applications that encompass broad collaborations across schools, disciplines, and units and/or seek to develop new joint PhD opportunities in the future are encouraged. Activities developing digital research links between both institutions are also welcome.

Mutual external collaborators (including researchers from other universities internationally, or those working in non-academic contexts such as industry or government) cannot lead any application. However, collaboration with mutual external collaborators is encouraged where the benefit of their involvement is clearly justified in the proposal.

Application Eligibility

All proposals must include ECRs in a significant role. For the purposes of the fund, an ECR is within 10 years of the conferral date of their PhD, excluding periods of career interruptions.

University of Bonn

Principal investigators from the University of Bonn must be research staff who have completed a doctorate and be able to show proof of their employment at least until the end of the collaborative research project. Past recipients may apply for funding no sooner than two years from the end date of their previous Bonn-Melbourne Research Excellence Fund project. Bonn PIs must not have outstanding Progress or Final Reports from any other International Office excellence funding schemes.

University of Melbourne

Melbourne PIs must hold an appointment at the University of Melbourne that meets the following requirements at the time of application and for the duration of the award:

- Academic Level A6 or higher; and
- 0.5 FTE or higher.

Honorary employees whose primary academic affiliation is the University of Melbourne are eligible to lead an application if:

- Their primary employer has entered into an agreement with the University to support the Australian component of the collaborative activity, using the provided approval form on the call website; or
- They agree to participate in their own expense if they are otherwise unaffiliated. For example, they hold an emeritus position.

Additional information:

- All applications must be endorsed by the PI's Head of Department/School
- Melbourne PIs must not have outstanding Progress Reports or Final Reports from any other University of Melbourne Researcher Development Scheme.
- Funding received through the scheme may be used to support mobility costs for collaborating academic staff, and graduate researchers enrolled at Melbourne, to meet the objectives of the project. Academic staff must meet the same eligibility requirements as the PIs, as outlined above.

Proposals should be for new or emerging research collaborations that have not yet received third-party funding.

Further questions about eligibility should be directed to the respective institution.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Adherence to respective equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies are an important 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, nationalities, disabilities, and career stages.

Funding available

Grants should be spent within the period indicated in the project submission or, at a maximum, within 12 months of receipt of funding. The maximum amount that applicants can apply for one project is 32,000 AUD / 20,000 € (up to 10,000 € from the University of Bonn and up to \$16,000 AUD from the University of Melbourne). Applications with a smaller budget are also encouraged. The maximum allowable expenses for airfares, accommodation and meals/per diems should correspond to the guidelines of the University of Bonn (i.e., [Travel Expenses Act of the State of Northrhine-Westphalia](#); for researchers invited to Bonn, see recommended rates on Bonn's [program website](#)) and the University of Melbourne. Any activities not addressed below are subject to the rules and regulations of the University of Bonn and the University of Melbourne.

Eligible costs	Ineligible costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• travel expenses (e.g., airfare, train, etc.)• accommodation• per diems for faculty or full-time enrolled students/graduate researchers• costs towards hosting a seminar, conference, workshop, or exhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• salaries or salary supplementation• scholarships for PhD candidates• publication costs• course/tuition fees• honoraria• conference attendance• equipment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no more than 20% of the total award towards the research costs of the joint project, including: consumables, shipping of samples between institutions, and costs to access both physical and online resources not already available to the researchers for University of Bonn only: student assistance by full-time enrolled students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> indirect costs/estates costs
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Duration and Funding Limits

Projects should be planned to start on 1 January 2025, with the funding period ending on 31 December 2025. Funds unspent by the end of the funding period will be transferred back to either Bonn or Melbourne so that unspent balances can be reallocated.

Call Timeline

Call opens	1 July 2024
Application deadline	9 September 2024 at 7 am [CEST] / 3pm [AEST]
Outcomes released ¹	November 2024
Projects commence	1 January 2025

Application Submission

One joint application should be submitted via [SmartyGrants](#) by 7 AM (CEST) / 3 PM (AEST) on 9 September 2024. Applications should be written in English and for an audience proficient, but not expert, in the field.

After the joint application has been submitted via [SmartyGrants](#) the Melbourne PI will need to complete a Themis Grants Submission for Head of Department/School approval. The scheme title in Themis is “Bonn-Melbourne Research Excellence Fund” ([Themis Workbench submission](#)).

Each proposal must include:

- The details of the Bonn and UoM PIs, including a short CV.
- Project title and layperson’s abstract of the proposed activity (up to 250 words)
- Names of other Melbourne and Bonn researchers involved, including a short CV.
- A description of the proposed activity (including objectives, background, methods, expected outputs, plans for future collaboration/funding, schedule/timeline).
- Adherence to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies.
- Budget and budget justification.
- Description of other funds secured or applied for overlapping projects.

Please indicate if internal or external funding for this project has been received in the past and if so, provide the name and date of the award.

Applicants should start preparing their applications well ahead of the closing date to provide time for review and endorsement from the University of Melbourne PI’s respective Head of Department/School.

¹ Successful applicants will receive a joint letter of award offer. The offer of award must be accepted in writing, by signing and returning an Acceptance of Award letter by the due date to the International Office at University of Bonn; and by completing and returning a Research Grant Acceptance Form to Research, Innovation and Commercialisation at the University of Melbourne.

Complete applications must be received by the deadline of 9 September 2024 (7AM CEST / 3PM AEST). No extensions will be granted.

Assessment Criteria

- **Academic quality:** What is the academic merit of the proposed work? How will the project contribute to novel thinking and creative outcomes? If applicable, how does the proposal incorporate interdisciplinarity?
- **Project design and rationale:** How clearly presented and justified is the basis for, and design of, the project? How do the proposed activities assist with establishing new and growing emerging research collaborations? What are the anticipated benefits of involving ECRs and/or graduate researchers? Will the project use appropriate research methods to achieve its intended outcomes?
- **Collaborator complementarity:** What is the added value of the new or emerging collaboration? How do the proposed activities combine mutual areas of interest and strength?
- **Potential impact:** What desired outcomes do the planned activities set out to achieve? For example, publications, grant proposals, clinical interventions, technological innovations, exhibitions, performance, enhanced networks and/or research-based seminars, conferences or workshops? What are the anticipated benefits of the activities to local or international communities?
- **Capacity for future collaboration/funding:** What is the potential for this project to foster ongoing collaboration, and through what mechanism(s)? How well does the proposed collaboration plan to access external funding?

A multi-disciplinary selection committee will assess, comment on and score each application, based on the criteria above. Applicants must outline the aims, methods and expected outcomes of the project and should ensure that they address all criteria.

Payment

Awardees will be responsible for managing project funds and for facilitating the sharing of funds with team members where required. Upon submitting complete award agreement documents, successful applicants will receive the funds within one month.

Change of Investigator

If circumstances change – for example, the principal investigator or a team member leaves the project – awardees must provide notification to Research, Innovation and Commercialisation at the University of Melbourne and the International Office at University of Bonn. All changes must be approved in writing.

Extensions

Under exceptional circumstances, no-cost extensions will be approved for a maximum period of 6 months. Applicants seeking an extension must submit a written request at least one month before the end of the grant, along with a revised budget and timeline of activities to Research, Innovation and Commercialisation at the University of Melbourne and the International Office at University of Bonn for approval prior to expiry of the grant.

Publications

Any publications (e.g., abstracts, articles) or dissemination (e.g., public presentations) arising from activities supported by this Grant should acknowledge financial assistance received from the Bonn-Melbourne Research Excellence Fund. Copies of publications or presentations or notification of presentations should be submitted to

the International Office at the University of Bonn and Research, Innovation and Commercialisation at the University of Melbourne. The name for the said acknowledgment is “Bonn-Melbourne Research Excellence Fund provided by the University of Melbourne and the University of Bonn.”

Forfeiture of grants

Grants not spent by the due date will be transferred back either to the University of Melbourne or the University of Bonn as applicable so that unspent balances can be re-allocated.

Financial and Reporting Obligations

Recipients will be required to submit a final report to each institution within one month of completion of the project. The report should include an outline of the outcomes of the project, an indication of the project’s sustainability, a summary of lessons learned in undertaking the project and a detailed accounting of funds as required by University policy. University of Bonn recipients who fail to submit a final report will not be permitted to submit future applications for internal funding programs.

Further information and contacts

University of Bonn

Dr. Christian Klöckner

Partnerships and International Researchers, International Office

E: c.kloeckner@uni-bonn.de

University of Melbourne

Researcher Development Schemes

Research, Innovation & Commercialisation

E: res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au