

DEBRA Australia - Lisa Brains PhD Scholarship Application Guidelines, Terms and Conditions 2023

1. CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

DEBRA Australia is pleased to call for applications for a PhD scholarship funding for early career researchers interested in undertaking a PhD program on a research project aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of children and adults with Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), in any of DEBRA Australia's priority research areas and at any Australian University or Research Institution. The deadline for application submission is **5pm EDST, 15th November 2023**. DEBRA Australia wishes to provide 50% of the PhD Scholarship per annum (up to maximum of \$20,000) towards a Scholarship Fund for a three-year period (2024-2026). One PhD scholarship will be funded in this inaugural call, and it is planned that decisions on funding applications from this call will be made in December 2023.

Projects may be laboratory based, a clinical study, or a combination. As DEBRA Australia is keen to create a more robust and collaborative EB research environment in Australia, projects which involve Australian or international collaboration are encouraged. University/Research Institution at which the project will be conducted will need to provide written evidence of support to show that 1) co-funding of PhD scholarship is available, 2) direct project research costs are available from primary supervisor for duration of the project, and 3) that student has access to equipment and facilities and team of supervisors required to successfully undertake the proposed study.

Projects are expected to be completed by December 2026 with respective progress and final reports to DEBRA Australia due annually (eg. December 2024, 2025, 2026) from commencement of the project. The Scholarship will be paid in three equal instalments annually on receipt of an invoice from the University/Institution.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to study these guidelines, terms and conditions carefully before preparing their application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to prepare their application with their potential supervisors and University. Only domestic PhD applicants will be considered in this inaugural call.

Our Research Priorities, which are aligned with the priorities of DEBRA International, are:

1. Improving understanding of EB biology to create new concepts for diagnosis and treatment.
2. Developing disease-modifying and curative therapies.
3. Preventing and curing severe disease consequences: chronic wounds, fibrosis, and cancer.
4. Improving clinical care and symptom relief through research.

2. APPLICATION GUIDELINES

2.1 Format & Submission: Applications shall follow DEBRA Australia's application format, using the form available from DEBRA Australia's office (secretary@debra.org.au) or website (www.debra.org.au).

Applications must be prepared using Arial font, size 11, with standard margins of 2.5cm. Applications that do not conform to the guidelines or to instructions in the application form will NOT be accepted.

One electronic copy of the application in PDF format directly converted from the word document should be emailed to secretary@debra.org.au. Signatures are not required on the PDF version, but a scan of the signature page with the applicable signatures should also be provided.

NB: Late applications will NOT be accepted.

2.2 Project size and scope: The application may relate to a novel or existing research project that may be a part of a larger program of work that primary supervisor is undertaking, or a new research project. Applicants must be realistic about the amount of work that can be achieved in the time frame and confirm that the funding for direct research costs and required equipment and facilities are available at University/Research Institution. Applicants are asked to provide details of other funding and infrastructure that will be available to them in order to ensure the project can be completed successfully. Applicants must demonstrate funding from other sources for other aspects of a larger project. Funding will be for a 3-year period (up to \$20K per annum). Requests for funding for longer periods (additional 6 months) may be considered for final year but will depend on DEBRA Australia Board approval.

One application ONLY per University/Research Institution will be considered for a PhD scholarship.

2.3 Project Description: The aims and objectives of the proposal should be clearly stated in the light of existing knowledge of the subject area. Similarly, relevant hypotheses will be judged in relation to the description of other research. The description of the methods should be concise, yet contain sufficient information to enable the reviewers to judge the feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed PhD project in relation to its objectives or hypotheses. Evidence will also be sought to ensure that the applicants will be able to establish the methods for their research. Experimental design will be scrutinised to ensure that it is based on sound statistical principles. Any statistical method used in preparation of the application should be detailed. Statistical methods not commonly used should be supported by references. Key activities and milestones must be outlined in the application form to enable evaluation of the achievement of these milestones at each reporting period.

2.4 Impact on EB: The application must clearly explain how the proposed project fits with DEBRA Australia's research priorities and the potential impact on the health and wellbeing of children and adults with Epidermolysis Bullosa.

2.5 Student: Applicant is required to provide details of academic record, what their interest and contribution to EB is expected to be and their future career aspiration in their CV or application letter attached to the application form. Successful applicant is expected to support DEBRA Australia events and educational activities during the duration of the PhD program.

2.6 Supervisory team: Applicant is required to provide details of the supervisory team, their experience in EB, ability to fund the direct research project costs, and ability to provide required resources and facilities for successful completion of the PhD project in allocated time frame. Primary supervisor is expected to provide details on how this PhD project fits in with other research in their laboratory and long-term research vision. In case the primary supervisor leaves the University institution during the PhD project, the University must continue to support the student to completion of the PhD program. In the supporting letter, the principal investigator is expected to comment on suitability of the applicant to the research project and confirm that the University will fund the remaining balance of the PhD stipend.

2.7 Non eligible expenditure: DEBRA Australia will not fund research consumables, expenses and the purchase of special equipment associated with the project or institutional levies or tuition fees. Travel expenses, including attendance at meetings or conferences cannot be met from the grant and the successful applicant is advised to apply for DEBRA Australia Travel Fellowships.

2.8 Related grants: The Principal Supervisor will be required to provide information regarding current external grants held and applications pending which are relevant to the application as well as information on how direct research costs for the PhD project will be met. If the applicant is successful in obtaining a PhD scholarship from other sources, then DEBRA Australia's funding will be withdrawn and reallocated to another fundable PhD applicant as appropriate.

2.9 Institutional approvals: Applications must include institutional confirmation for co-funding of remainder of the PhD scholarship at time of application. Additionally, PhD project proposals must include the support of the relevant Department Head and evidence of submission to appropriate institutional committees such as Ethics or Biosafety Committees.

2.10 Outstanding reports or funds: If the Applicant or Primary Supervisor have any outstanding reports or funds not expended from a previous DEBRA Australia or International research project grant, these must be finalised prior to making an application for the current funding round. Failure to do so may make the applicant ineligible for future funding.

2.11 Review of Applications: Each application will be subjected to a careful review by the Research Committee which will submit its recommendations to the DEBRA Australia Board. Reports from up to three external referees appointed by the Research Grants Committee will be considered. Applicants may request in writing that a certain individual NOT be contacted as a referee for their application, however the Research Committee will make the final decision regarding this. The Board's decision on the awarding of the PhD Scholarship will be regarded as final and the Board will not enter into discussion with unsuccessful applicants.

The Research Grants Committee and the external reviewers will take into consideration the following in reviewing the applications:

- Academic track record of the Applicant.
- Scientific quality (excellence of the research project).
- Significance and innovation.
- Track record of the supervisory team, relative to the opportunity.
- Timeframe and feasibility of achieving outcomes.

2.12 Agreement between administering institution and DEBRA Australia. A signed and executed agreement between the representative of the administering University/Institution and DEBRA Australia will be required before the start of the PhD project and student enrolment or administration of any funds. Template for such agreement will can be provided by DEBRA Australia upon request.

3. TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR PhD SCHOLARSHIP

3.1 If you receive a PhD Scholarship funding from DEBRA which is, in part or in whole, received by us from another source, which has its own additional reporting requirements, this will be made clear to you at the time of the grant offer. Acceptance of the grant offer means that you agree to meet these requirements too.

3.2 In the extreme cases of contemporaneous research developments negating the meaningful conclusion of the research, or where DEBRA Australia's financial position is such that funding of the PhD Scholarship cannot be continued for the full term, DEBRA Australia reserves the right to discontinue the grant by giving three months' notice of the intention to do so.

3.3 It is DEBRA Australia's policy to publicise as widely as possible its awardees of the PhD Scholarship and their scientific progress achieved through them. It is a condition of accepting financial assistance that applicant agrees to co-operate in such publicity efforts.

3.4 The University or Research Institution at which the PhD project is based is responsible for supervising the Student's Research and the associated project to ensure that it meets the University's academic requirements for the course of study in which the student is enrolled.

3.5 DEBRA Australia must be notified as soon as is reasonably practicable of any potentially patentable discovery or invention arising from work supported in whole or in part by DEBRA Australia funding. DEBRA Australia's written consent must be obtained prior to any disclosure or publication in any form of material or details relating to any such invention or discovery. Information about existing or pending applications related to relevant intellectual property rights must also be provided in the application.

3.6 DEBRA Australia requires the findings of the research it funds in full or in part (including PhD scholarships) to be published promptly, but with due regard to protecting the intellectual property of research outputs. The support of DEBRA Australia must be acknowledged in all publications or other public output arising from the PhD scholarship funded, whether written or oral (e.g. scientific

or popular publications, press releases, conferences, seminars, etc.). DEBRA Australia must be acknowledged explicitly as the sponsor or co-sponsor of the PhD Scholarship, and the DEBRA Australia logo should be included in all scientific or public presentations if possible.

3.7 The results of the research and any intellectual property rights subsisting in the results must not be licensed on an exclusive basis for the treatment, prevention or diagnosis of Epidermolysis Bullosa (the "Field") or assigned in whole or in part to any third party without the prior written consent of DEBRA Australia. The grantee will ensure that all reasonable endeavours are used by the exclusive licensee or assignee to exploit the results and intellectual property rights subsisting in the results in the Field. If all reasonable endeavours are not used, the grantee must terminate or convert the licence to non-exclusive or procure the assignment or license back of the results and intellectual property to the grantee for exploitation in the Field.

3.8 DEBRA Australia is entitled to receive a reasonable proportion of any financial benefit received by the grantee or its affiliates arising from exploitation of the results of the PhD Scholarship supported by DEBRA Australia and any intellectual property rights subsisting in the results. If the financial benefit received exceeds a value of AUD\$50,000, then the grantee shall promptly pay to DEBRA Australia an amount negotiated in good faith by the parties and representing a reasonable proportion of any financial benefit received by the grantee or its affiliates.

3.9 Continuation of PhD Scholarship will depend upon receipt of a satisfactory interim reports every 12 months from the starting date of the first payment. No payment of a PhD scholarship owing will be made until any outstanding report has been received and accepted by DEBRA Australia. Reports will be circulated to the DEBRA Australia Board and may be shared with DEBRA International. The lay summary may be circulated to other DEBRA Australia stakeholders, national EB Support Groups, and used in publicity and placed on the DEBRA Australia website. If there is any reason why this should not occur with an individual report, please inform DEBRA Australia at the time of submission.

3.10 Receipts for expenditure of PhD Scholarship during the period should be provided with the reports. Funds unspent or uncommitted at the termination of the PhD project shall be returned to DEBRA Australia within eight weeks unless the DEBRA Board otherwise approves.

3.11 PhD Scholarship awarded by DEBRA Australia are subject to the standard conditions of the PhD Scholarship at stated institution at the time it is awarded. DEBRA Australia reserves the right to change conditions of the grant from time to time.