

PhD Projects Call Cohort 7

2023 GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

1. BACKGROUND

The University of Queensland and the University of Exeter believe that the most complex of global challenges – ranging from food and water security to political instability to healthy living and mental health – require interdisciplinary research that spans institutions, countries and even continents. The two Universities therefore joined together to create the QUEX Institute, through which our talented academic staff can work together to bring their distinct perspectives and expertise to address global challenges.

Building on a platform of active collaboration and academic exchange, we will build capacity and jointly invest in enhancing the opportunities for our researchers to work together.

In support of this vision, and building upon four successful years of PhD studentships, the QUEX Institute is pleased to offer a further call for PhD project proposals.

The 2023 round of the QUEX Institute Call for PhD project proposals is now open for applications, with a closing date of, **Monday, 12 June 2023**.

2. QUEX THEMES

In 2023, projects will be sought from the interdisciplinary themes of the partnership:

- **Healthy Living**
- **Global Environment Futures**
- **Digital Worlds and Disruptive Technologies**
- **Mineral Security and Sustainability**

A short overview of each of the themes is provided below:

Healthy Living

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all is fundamental to building thriving societies. Across rich and poor countries alike, a health crisis has the potential to tip individuals, communities and societies into bankruptcy, poverty and / or civil unrest. In short, healthy people are the foundation of productive economies and happy societies. While progress has been made in the realms of child and maternal health, global life expectancy, and in our understanding of serious diseases such as HIV/AIDs and cancers, concerted effort is still required to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable health coverage for all, regardless of geography, class or wealth.

The Universities of Queensland and Exeter are committed to the UN sustainable development goal of ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all. Both institutions are world leaders in relevant fields of research ranging across dementia, diabetes, health economics, genomics, gerontology, and human movement and nutrition. This Healthy Living theme will allow us to join forces and expertise in order to lead the way in supporting global health and wellbeing through innovative ground-breaking research and translation into policy and practice for impact. In addressing the UN sustainable development goal (3) [Good Health and Well-being](#), this theme will seek to engage a multi-disciplinary range of research areas including, but not limited to, biomedical science; bio-physics and engineering; [health] economics; cultures of health; medicine and nursing; health technologies; psychology, human movement and health policy.

Global Environmental Futures

Exploring new science frontiers, finding solutions to intractable problems, and influencing public policy, are at the heart of the QUEX program on Global Environmental Futures. The Universities of Exeter and Queensland are both world leading in environmental science, delivering research breakthroughs across many environmental challenges such as: climate change, clean energy, marine, coastal and reef science, biodiversity, air and water pollution, antimicrobial resistance, food security and sustainable agriculture.

By combining the strengths of the two Universities there is an opportunity for the QUEX partnership to

deliver impactful research on a range of environmental futures, including the sustainable management of natural resources, understanding weather systems, improving the resilience of climate vulnerable communities, promoting effective environmental governance, and examining the agency of social movements (such as Extinction Rebellion) who are committed to tackling the potentially catastrophic threat of climate breakdown. This theme is closely aligned to a number of [UN sustainable development goals](#), with a particular focus on (2) [Zero Hunger](#); (6) [Clean Water and Sanitation](#); (7) [Affordable and Clean Energy](#); (9) [Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure](#); (11) [Sustainable Cities and Communities](#); (13) [Climate Action](#); (14) [Life below Water](#); and (15) [Life on Land](#).

Digital Worlds and Disruptive Technologies

Digitalisation is transforming who we are, what we do, and how we act. Present and future digital worlds mean that wars can be fought without soldiers, medical procedures can be undertaken without surgeons, travel can occur without the physical movement of people from place to place, societies can be powered without iron, coal and oil, and education can take place with a teacher on one continent and students on another. At the same time, new digital worlds present challenges to older industries and technologies, threats to businesses, governments and societies through cyber-attacks and question the future of work and work places. What will be the next sector to be wholly disrupted, as the media industry has been? Accounting, retail, healthcare, supply chains, transport, even democracy, are being disrupted by new technologies and new behaviours.

This QUEX theme brings together a range of interdisciplinary research areas to explore these twin elements of digital change. On the technology side, both Exeter and UQ have world leading capabilities in Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, Machine Learning, Cyber Security and Virtual Reality. On the behavioural side, both universities have teams across their social sciences and humanities scholars who are looking at the social, cultural and economic elements of this digital transformation. Cross-disciplinary teams will seek to address some of the challenges and opportunities related to digital change.

Mineral Security and Sustainability

Minerals are essential ingredients of the Sustainable Development Goals and mineral security is said to exist when all people have sufficient and affordable access to the minerals necessary for human development.

Minerals provide the bricks and concrete for our shelter, the mineral fertilisers fundamental for agriculture, the copper that enables global communication, the lithium that is fuelling the renewable energy transition, and the gravel and stone that builds bridges and paves rural roads. However, there are major challenges in the supply of minerals and the environmental and social consequences of their extraction, processing and use that demand innovation and practice change.

Further, minerals are currently the only natural resource not featured explicitly in the Sustainable Development Goals, with a potential outcome of this theme greater international recognition and understanding for how minerals can meaningfully contribute to human development whilst supporting and enabling the SDG targets.

The University of Exeter and UQ are both world-leading in environmental science, delivering research breakthroughs across many challenges such as:

- development minerals
- mineral and energy security
- decarbonisation

The mineral security and sustainability theme will address global sustainability challenges in the discovery, supply and use of mineral resources. Research will advance fundamental science as well as global practice change for impact.

3. THE STUDENTSHIPS

The QUEX PhD programme aims to recruit the very best students to work across the University of Exeter and The University of Queensland towards joint degrees.

The programme will cover the full costs for those selected (as outlined below) and will match-fund industry / third-party funding (up to 50%) for up to 2 PhD studentships.

Queensland academics: Research Partnerships Managers (RPMs) will be able to support you in exploring third-party funding if you already have an industry / third-party partner lined up.

Exeter academics: If you're interested in exploring industry / third-party funding, please contact your [Innovation, Impact and Business \(IIB\) business partner](#) for advice and guidance.

	University of Exeter	University of Queensland
Scholarship Duration	3.5 years	3.5 years
Living Stipend	Students will be awarded with an Exeter-funded scholarship equal to UKRI rates (2023-2024: £18,622 per annum tax free).	Students will be awarded a scholarship equal to the RTP Scholarship rate \$32,192 per annum tax free (2023 rate), indexed annually, plus overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC).
Tuition Fees	3.5 years of tuition fees fully covered.	3.5 years tuition fees fully covered.
RTSG / Research & training allowance*	Up to £10,715 over the life of the scholarship, intended for research consumables, workshops, training courses.	Research related costs fully covered. \$3,000 to support development activities such as workshops and short course attendance.
Travel Allowance[#]	£15,000 over the life of the scholarship.	Up to \$15,000 over the full duration of the program

[#]Covers travel between UQ and Exeter

The seventh cohort will begin their programme in **January 2024**.

Of the total number of studentships funded, half the cohort will be homed at the University of Exeter and the other half at The University of Queensland. During the course of the PhD life-span, PhD students will be expected to spend at least **12 months** at the host (other) institution; thereby benefiting from the hands-on expertise, guidance and input of both supervisory teams and associated research groups.

***Managing RTSG / Research & training allowance while students are traveling**

For Exeter homed candidates, the total RTSG allocation will be split over the duration of the time they spend at Exeter. When in Queensland, the UQ supervisor will be expected to provide any necessary research expenditure as reasonably required to support the agreed research and supervision plan for the student. **It will be the responsibility of the UQ supervisor to ensure the student's research costs are met while they are at UQ.**

For Queensland homed candidates, the principal supervisor will manage the costs of the student's research. When UQ students arrive at Exeter, they will be provided with a cost code for their RTSG with a maximum budget of up to £4,285 for the 12 months they are due to spend at Exeter. The students will be able to use this code directly to cover the costs of their research expenditure. **Exeter supervisors will be responsible for monitoring and approving these costs.**

It is important that Exeter and UQ supervisors discuss the costs of the research projects and how they will manage those between the candidate's time at each institution, within the framework outlined above, before submitting a project proposal for consideration.

4. APPLICATION PROCESS

PhD project proposals will be accepted from **sets** of academic staff based across the academic communities of the Universities of Exeter and Queensland. Applicants will need to complete the online PhD project proposal form in partnership with their supervisory counterparts at the partner institution.

The **nominated lead advisor** should submit their joint project proposal via the [online PhD projects proposal form](#) by **Monday, 12 June 2023**.

All applications will be jointly reviewed and assessed by the QUEX Institute Board.

5. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

We are seeking research project proposals from sets of UQ / Exeter academic staff, who can demonstrate a capacity to work collaboratively.

PhD project proposals will be required to consider, demonstrate and evidence the following:

- High quality, strong research capable of attracting the highest calibre of students.
- Research questions that are clearly aligned to one of the QUEX Institute's four themes.
- Projects that could not as effectively be carried out by one partner on its own. Both the project AND the student must clearly benefit from the equal contribution of both Universities.
- Clear consideration of the career development, training needs and wellbeing of the student.

Please note that in this round, high-quality proposals that satisfy all other assessment criteria and are also able to demonstrate third-party match funding (up to a maximum of 50%) will be given priority in the shortlisting and final selection process.

Based upon the experience of the past four years, we expect this to be a **highly competitive call** and so it is important that all criteria are addressed in your proposal to ensure the best chance of success.

6. KEY DATES

Date	Activity
w/c 15 May 2023	Call for proposals launched
12 June 2023	Deadline for submission of proposals
19 June 2023	Institution-level shortlisting of submitted projects
23 June 2023	Final shortlist agreed by QUEX Strategy Board
26 June 2023	Applicants notified of outcome
30 June 2023	PhD project adverts go live
24 July 2023	PhD candidate application deadline
w/c 11 September 2023	PhD candidate interviews
w/c 18 September 2023	Candidates informed of the interview outcome
8 January 2024	Cohort 7 start date.

7. FEEDBACK AND RESUBMISSIONS

Please note that feedback is not usually provided for PhD project proposals. Resubmission to a future round is permissible.