

PhD Scholarship

Improving mental health outcomes for young Australians with disability

Young people with disability experience much poorer mental health than their nondisabled peers, with long-term personal and societal costs. Institutional barriers and systemic discrimination exclude the 300,000 young Australians with disability from social and economic participation, making it more difficult to establish themselves socially and economically as adults than their peers. This situation underpins life-long mental health disadvantage (e.g., higher rates of depression and anxiety). Action is needed to avert these mental health inequalities at this critical life stage, but evidence regarding when, where and how to best intervene has been elusive.

We are seeking to appoint a highly motivated PhD student whose PhD project will be integrated into a programme of research funded through the National Health and Medical Research Council Synergy scheme titled: *Interventions for better life-time mental health outcomes for young Australians with disability*. The student will join a team of academics from multiple disciplines and young people with disability to identify how mental health outcomes can be improved for young people with disability. This position is suitable for a quantitative researcher with excellent data analysis skills and a strong commitment to equity in health.

PhD Project

The overarching aim of the research programme is to identify policy and practice reforms that provide better opportunities for young people with disability to lead flourishing lives and have good mental health across the life course. The research will advance knowledge of the lives of young Australians with disability across six interconnected life domains: education/training; employment; social relationships; community connectedness; personal safety; living situations; and examine the relationships of these domains with mental health.

The programme of research will be co-designed with young people with disability to ensure the relevance of the research. The knowledge generated from the programme of research will be used to co-design policy and practice interventions with young people with disability and other stakeholders, to build effective and targeted programmes that provide opportunities for young Australians with disability to flourish as adults in an inclusive society.

This PhD scholarship is for a project involving analysis of quantitative data including longitudinal and linked administrative datasets to gain in-depth knowledge of the lives of young Australians with disability and the impact of education, employment, social relationships, living situations, community connectedness, and/or personal safety on mental health across the life course. The student will work closely with young people with disability to ensure the principles of co-design are embedded within the research project. The PhD project will be designed to match the interests of the preferred candidate. The project would suit someone with a strong research background in epidemiology, biostatistics or public health with skills and experience in quantitative research methods and statistics.

The scholarship would commence in December 2022 for 3.5 years and offers a living allowance of \$31,200 per Annum (indexed). People with disability are strongly encouraged to apply.

Disability and Health Unit

The Disability and Health Unit aims to deliver cutting-edge research, policy development and knowledge exchange to improve the health of people with disability.

We aim to improve the health of people with disability through rigorous research and knowledge exchange. In Australia, people with disability are disadvantaged in many areas of their lives and the lack of evidence linking disability, socioeconomic contexts and health, means that there is much to be done to reduce disadvantage for people with disability.

Our unit is one of the few places worldwide where the health of people with disability is researched from a public health perspective. The team excels in data analysis and in issues related to mental health, gender studies, epidemiology, health promotion and policy analysis. Research focuses on social, behavioural, and environmental contexts of health for people with disability and their families and carers in Australia and internationally.

How to Apply

Scholarship applicants must meet the entry requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy – Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, including meeting English language requirement, and demonstrate excellent capacity and potential for research. Further information on entry requirements is available here: <https://study.unimelb.edu.au/find/courses/graduate/doctor-of-philosophy-medicine-dentistry-and-health-sciences/entry-requirements/>

Interested applicants are encouraged to check eligibility prior to applying by contacting Ms Myra Malcolm (Graduate Research Officer, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health: myra.malcolm@unimelb.edu.au).

Selection Criteria

Essential:

We are seeking a candidate with the following skills, qualifications and experience:

1. Meet the entry requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy – Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
2. An Honours or Masters degree in epidemiology, biostatistics, public health, or related discipline.
3. A strong commitment to reducing health inequalities.
4. Well-developed quantitative analysis skills.
5. Ability to use statistical software packages (e.g., Stata, R) for data management and analysis.
6. Ability to work effectively with team members and other students within a diverse working environment.
7. Highly developed oral and written English communication skills.
8. Highly motivated, self-disciplined, and able to work independently, with clear goals that lead to highly quality outcomes.

Desirable:

1. Lived experience of disability.
2. Experience working in the disability sector to advance the rights of people with disability

To submit an expression of interest, please provide the following to Zoe Aitken (zoe.aitken@unimelb.edu.au) by **XX XXX 2022**:

1. A cover letter that outlines areas of interest and sets out why your skills and experience make you a strong candidate for this position (no more than two pages)
2. A letter that addresses each of the selection criteria
3. A curriculum vitae
4. Academic transcripts

Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed.

The successful candidate will need to also go through the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences PhD application process <https://study.unimelb.edu.au/find/courses/graduate/doctor-of-philosophy-medicine-dentistry-and-health-sciences/how-to-apply/>

If you have any other enquiries about this position, please contact Zoe Aitken (zoe.aitken@unimelb.edu.au).

Closing date: XX XXX 2022