



# OPTiMA

ARC TRAINING CENTRE IN  
OPTIMISATION TECHNOLOGIES  
INTEGRATED METHODOLOGIES  
AND APPLICATIONS

## OPTiMA Student Exchange Program Policy

### 1. Purpose

The OPTiMA Student Exchange Program aims to enhance the research experience of PhD students by facilitating international collaborations. This policy outlines the procedures, eligibility criteria, and expectations for both outgoing and incoming exchange students participating in the program.

### 2. Outgoing Exchange Students Eligibility Criteria:

- Must be a PhD student member of OPTiMA.
- Have successfully completed the first-year PhD milestone.
- Obtain approval from their OPTiMA supervisor.
- Demonstrate that the exchange will benefit their PhD project.
- Contact the proposed supervisor at the host institution to discuss the exchange.
- Review and comply with their home university's travel policies.
- Complete the Expression of Interest (EOI) form.
- Sign the OPTiMA Code of Conduct for Outgoing Exchange Students.

#### Application Process:

1. Review the capabilities of OPTiMA's international partner institutions to identify a suitable host.
2. Discuss the opportunity with both OPTiMA and prospective host supervisors.
3. Submit the EOI form.
4. Await a decision, which may take between three and six weeks. Approval requires written consent from the OPTiMA supervisors.
5. The OPTiMA Executive Committee reviews all funding requests at their monthly meetings.

#### Funding Rules and Travel Arrangements:

OPTiMA will provide **up to \$12,500** to cover reasonable accommodation, travel, and some food expenses. We may agree to fund a lower amount for shorter exchange

durations. Further, OPTIMA reserve the right to only pay for reasonable costs. As a result, the refund may be less than this total.

- All travel must be booked/facilitated by the OPTIMA Manager; self-booked travel will not be reimbursed.
- Students are responsible for verifying visa requirements for their destination before booking travel.
- The final \$250 of reimbursement will not be paid until the student provides a written report of their activities to OPTIMA.

Considerations for funding:

- Is the accommodation near the University where the exchange is taking place? For example, if you attend Warwick University, trips to Leicester or London will be considered personal travel.
- Is public transport available within the city where the exchange is taking place? For example, if you attend Unimore a train to Milan will be considered personal travel.
- Hotels should be comfortable, clean, safe, and private. There are many of these in the medium price bracket. Premium hotels will be queried and may be refused. The per-night price of \$150–200 is considered reasonable.
- Ubers/taxis can be used for airport transfers, but not for daily commutes.
- Hire cars will not be refunded.
- Food costs, including drinks (not including alcohol), will be covered upon the provision of a receipt. The daily allowance is \$50, covering 10 days per four weeks of travel, up to a total of 28 days of the trip. Claims for meals will be reimbursed up to the amounts shown in the table below for each meal.
- Travel Insurance will not be funded, as it is provided free of charge by the university. You will need to apply.

#### **Appendix 1 - maximum amounts claimable against each meal type**

<b>Scenario</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Breakfast	\$34.95
Lunch	\$49.35
Dinner	\$69.20
Only drinks purchased with the meal can be claimed and the cost is inclusive of the rates above	

### 3. Incoming Exchange Students Eligibility Criteria:

- Must be enrolled at one of OPTIMA's partner universities.
- Have successfully completed the first year of their PhD program.
- Obtain permission from their home institution supervisor.
- Demonstrate that the exchange will benefit their PhD research.
- Contact the proposed OPTIMA supervisor to discuss the exchange.
- Sign the OPTIMA Code of Conduct for Visiting Exchange Students.

#### Application Process:

1. Review the list of OPTIMA Chief Investigator capabilities to identify a suitable supervisor.
2. Discuss the opportunity with both home and prospective OPTIMA supervisors.
3. Submit an EOI form via the OPTIMA webpage <https://optima.org.au/student-exchange/>
4. If selected, OPTIMA will provide a letter of support if needed for funding applications at the home institution.

#### Funding and Support:

- OPTIMA will provide in-kind support (desk & supervision).
- OPTIMA do not provide cash support. Students are encouraged to seek funding for travel and accommodation from their home institution.
- OPTIMA do not cover food and personal expenses.

#### 4. Duration of Exchange

Exchanges typically last between six and twelve weeks.

#### 5. Codes of Conduct

- Outgoing students must adhere to the Code of Conduct for Outgoing Exchange Students.
- Incoming students must adhere to the Code of Conduct for Visiting Exchange Students.

Students who do not adhere to the Code of Conduct may be invoiced for the amount paid by OPTIMA towards their exchange expenses.

#### 6. Acknowledging OPTIMA

The OPTIMA logo must be used in any presentations given at the host institution during the exchange. Additionally, OPTIMA must be acknowledged in any outputs, publications, or presentations resulting from the exchange opportunity.

#### 7. Governance

The OPTIMA Education and Training Sub-Committee oversees the Student Exchange Program, ensuring alignment with OPTIMA's strategic objectives and compliance with relevant policies.

#### 8. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

OPTIMA is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion, providing equal opportunities and expectations for all participants in the Student Exchange Program.

#### 9. Review of Activities

Students must submit a review of their exchange activities (500 to 800 words), detailing their experiences and how the exchange benefited their PhD research. Failure to submit this review **will** result in a \$500 deduction from the final reimbursement.

#### 10. Contact Information

For queries regarding the Student Exchange Program, contact [optima.arc@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:optima.arc@unimelb.edu.au).

#### 11. More information

<https://optima.org.au/student-exchange/>

This policy is subject to periodic review to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with OPTIMA's goals.