Australia France Network of Doctoral Excellence (AUFRANDE)

Guide for Applicants

June 2024 (2nd update)

Executive Summary

This document provides practical information on the application process for the open PhD positions of the AUFRANDE Program. AUFRANDE will recruit 64 researchers following an open, transparent, impartial and equitable recruitment procedure in line with the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

For more information on the program and open positions, please visit the website www.aufrande.eu.

Document history

Issue date	Version	Changes made/reason for this issue
10/02/2023	1	Published for call 1
07/11/2023	2	Updated for call 2
26/06/2024	3	Updated for call 3

Disclaimer

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Co-funded by
the European Union

1. About AUFRANDE

The Australia France Network of Doctoral Excellence (AUFRANDE) is a **highly ambitious interdisciplinary doctoral program** linking France and Australia, with a strong support from the industry. AUFRANDE seeks to recruit excellent doctoral researchers of any nationality, gender and background from around the world for its industry-supported positions with a dual PhD enrolment in both France and Australia.

AUFRANDE offers the recruited researchers an **outstanding experience** with excellent working conditions:

- a **full-time employment** contract in France with attractive salaries including social security benefits
- an unique international **research environment**
- an international mobility with a **residential stay in Australia**
- an innovative **research training** program to deepen and develop core scientific skills in complementary disciplines and sectors
- regular events where researchers **build sustainable community and share experiences**, to lay a strong foundation for long-term impact in future collaborations, careers, and networks.

Further benefits for recruited researchers include:

- Enrolment in a **doctoral program in two entities** in France and Australia, with the chance to be awarded dual doctorates
- Work on **innovative projects** of high commercial and societal value
- Form part of a rich **multidisciplinary network** of researchers and supervisors
- Work closely with **industry leaders**

AUFRANDE is co-funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 101081465.

2. AUFRANDE Recruitment Campaign

2.1 Key dates

Step	What will happen at this step?	Timeframe (indicative)
1 - Online application	Submit your complete application through the online portal.	**Before 27 August 2024 at 11:59 PM CET**
2 - Eligibility check	The AUFRANDE Team and both PhD awarding institutions will check that the application complies with requirements and meets the eligibility criteria.	August-September 2024
3 - Evaluation of eligible applications and first ranking	Eligible applications will be assessed by the Selection Panel against the Evaluation Criteria detailed in section 4 of this guide (we invite you to also refer to AUFRANDE Guide for Evaluators).	September 2024
4 - Interviews	Applicants shortlisted by the Selection Panel will be invited for an interview (by videoconference).	October 2024 - Applicants will be contacted at least 5 days ahead of the interview
5 - Final ranking and allocation of positions	The preferred candidate for each position will receive a conditional offer letter for admission into the Program.	October-November 2024
6 - Onboarding of successful Applicants	Complete the registration process to enrol as a Doctoral Candidate at the 2 host universities and formalise your employment contract at the research host in France.	January 2025

2.2 Open positions and projects

All open positions are published on AUFRANDE website: Open Positions. For each position, there are 3 proposed research projects. Applicants must **choose their preferred project** among the 3.

The list of host organisations in France and Australia is also available on the AUFRANDE website in addition to information about the industry partners, and the profiles of the main supervisors and their research interests.

2.3 Who can apply?

AUFRANDE is open to excellent students and researchers of any age, nationality and gender, early in their career.

Applicants must **fulfil ALL the following minimum eligibility criteria**:

1. **Have not yet been awarded a doctoral degree**. *Note: researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis but have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree are NOT eligible to apply.*

2. **Have not resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in France – including overseas territories – for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the call deadline** (i.e., since August 2021). *Time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention, compulsory national service and/or short stays such as holidays are not taken into account.*

3. Not permanently employed by the chosen Research Host.

4. **Hold a Master's degree meeting the academic criteria for admission to the doctoral programs** at both the French and the Australian enrolling universities.

5. Have a **demonstrable C1 level of English** (spoken and written). *Note: applicants must **provide evidence** that they meet the minimum requirements specified by the degree-awarding institutions, as mentioned in the position description.*

The eligibility and admission requirements of each Research Host (or degree-awarding University associated to their Research Host) are described in Section 4 of the each position description and institutions' websites.

2.4 Restrictive measures

AUFRANDE is a collaborative program and must comply with European, national and local legislations. In this regard, partners may have restrictive measures in place following the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions regimes[1] and the French regulation on *Protection du potentiel scientifique et technique et intelligence économique*[2]. Applicants may be subject to **security checks from the local authorities**. Nationals or residents of countries against which restrictive measures are in place may not be granted the security clearance and, hence, not eligible for AUFRANDE positions.

2.5 Equal opportunity

AUFRANDE adheres to the principles of the European Commission's Strategy on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and promotes genuine equal access opportunities between all applicants throughout the recruitment process. AUFRANDE is fully committed to eliminating discrimination and actively promoting equality of opportunity for staff and students. Researchers at risk[3], from different genders, backgrounds and origin are encouraged to apply. Researchers requiring extra support might be eligible for a Special Needs Allowance.

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[1] UN Security Council sanctions: https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/information
[2] French Ministry of Higher Education and Research: https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/
[3] Researchers, scholars and scientists who are experiencing threats to their life, liberty or research career, or who are forced to flee or have been displaced because of such threats, see Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions webpage: https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/about-msca/guidelines-for-inclusion-of-researchers-at-risk

3. How to apply

To ensure a fair selection, all Applicants must follow the same application process: **only applications that are complete, in English, and submitted through the online platform before the deadline will be considered**. Incomplete applications and documents received by other means (postal mail, email or similar) will be discarded.

3.1 Before applying

- ✓ Confirm that **you meet all eligibility criteria**.
- ✓ Read the positions advertised on AUFRANDE's website and **make your choice**. Applicants may apply for up to 3 positions (selecting 1 project for each, as indicated below).
- ✓ Once you have chosen a position, download and **carefully read the full PDF Position Description**.
- ✓ Each position requires the enrolment in a PhD program at both a French and an Australian university. Make sure **fulfill the entry requirements** at both enrolling universities (Section 4 of the Position Description).
- ✓ For each position, **select your preferred research project** among the 3 options proposed.
- ✓ Prepare all **supporting documents** requested.
- ✓ **Contact your references** to make sure they submit their assessment on SlideRoom by 4 September 2024.

3.2 Your application

Each Applicant may only submit one application. The application must be **fully completed online and in English**, submitted before 27 August 2024 at 11:59 PM CET. The application portal (SlideRoom) is reachable from AUFRANDE website. The portal is user-friendly and intuitive. In case of doubts, you may consult the online user manual or contact AUFRANDE Helpdesk at aufrande.help@rmit.edu.au.

The online application process requires completion of the following steps:

1. **Create your Applicant profile**: after entering your basic personal and contact details, you will receive an automatic email with login details to access the online portal, a unique reference number and further instructions for completing the application.

2. **Choose the position(s) and specific research project** you wish to apply for. Applicants have the opportunity to apply for up to 3 positions (choosing one project per position).

3. **Complete and submit your application**: you may login, modify and save your application as many times as desired until all required fields are complete and all necessary documentation is uploaded. To submit your application, you must accept the data protection statement and certify that **the answers provided are true and complete**. When all fields are filled and as long as the call deadline is not passed, the option to submit will become available. **Once the application is submitted no further modifications are possible**.

Applying to different positions

You may apply to up to 3 different positions in order of preference. For each position, select your preferred project among the 3 options proposed.

Note: if you submit more than one application (with different email addresses), the application will be disregarded.

3.3 Supporting documents and eligibility

Applications require the completion of all fields of the online form, including the declaration that the Applicant meets the eligibility criteria (see the Who can apply), and the upload of supporting documents:

1. **Scanned copy of a valid identification document with your photo (passport or equivalent)**

   Important: the document must be **in Latin characters**. A picture of yourself is not acceptable; a valid photo ID must be a national identification document from a EU country, passport or equivalent, that includes your photo, full legal name, date of birth, nationality and other personal information.

2. **CV (Curriculum Vitae/ Resume)**

   Your CV should clearly **indicate the starting and ending dates** and country of all your education, work and research experiences.

3. **Motivation essay in English**

   Describe your scientific interests and **why you are interested in** the specific position(s) and project(s) you are applying for. If you are applying for more than one position, make sure you refer to each of them.

   Important:
   ➢ Describe why you are a good fit for the position
   ➢ Explain what you would like to achieve with this project
   ➢ Summarize relevant skills, experience knowledge and personal behaviours you have that fit the role

4. **Scanned copy of your official academic transcripts** (and their translation)

   Your transcripts must show the grades attained in exam periods with the dates corresponding to the degrees completed (**both Bachelor's and Master's** – or equivalent). You should explain the scoring system (minimum and maximum grade), indicating the threshold for passing.

   Academic records not written in English should be accompanied by a translation into English (either an official translation or self-translation).

   If you have not yet been awarded your Master's degree, you must upload a provisional degree or document from your institution.

5. **Names and email addresses of at least 2 referees**

   Referees must be **university lecturers or scientists** who are familiar with your academic work and can judge your potential as a doctoral researcher. References will be provided via the online application system. Note that **you are responsible for ensuring that referees submit their assessment** on time.

6. **English Proficiency Certificate or other proof of English proficiency**, if English is not your first language

   Note: If your English proficiency certificate is not yet available, you may attach an evidence of your commitment to present a valid test before the interview (proof that you booked the test). Failure to submit a valid certificate that complies with the minimum criteria may lead to rejection of your application.

7. Optional: **1-page overview of Master / another research project**

All documents must be in English or accompanied by an English translation. We recommend you to submit your documents in non-editable format (PDF preferred).

Applicants who have minor issues with their applications (scans not fully legible, residency status unclear) or where further information is needed to evaluate eligibility, will be contacted by AUFRANDE team and asked to provide further documentation **within 3 working days**.

4. Assessment and selection

AUFRANDE is committed to Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment. You may refer to section 2.1 of this guide and to the Guide for Evaluators available on AUFRANDE website for more information about the assessment of the applications received. At each stage, Applicants will be informed of the outcome by email.

4.1 Evaluation of the applications submitted

Applications successfully passing the eligibility check will be assessed by a dedicated Selection Panel against the Evaluation Criteria detailed below. A first ranking will be produced based on average scores granted by the Selection Panel and up to 6 Applicants per position will be shortlisted for an interview.

Where Applicants have applied to more than one position, the assessments will proceed simultaneously.

Criteria	Score	Weighting (%)
Academic merit: academic transcript, publications, etc.	0–5	30
Research skills and other relevant competences	0–5	25
Research & work experience: 3i dimension, international or industry internships, conferences, etc.	0–5	15
Motivation letter	0–5	10
Recommendation by referees	0–5	10
Public awareness (dissemination and communication activities)	0–5	10
Weighted Average	0–5	100
Scoring guide: 0 – Fail. The application fails in these criteria or cannot be judged due to incomplete information. 1 – Poor. The application has serious weaknesses or is addressed in an inadequate manner. 2 – Fair. The application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses. 3 – Good. The application addresses the criterion well, although improvements are required. 4 – Very Good. The application addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible. 5 – Excellent. The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question.		

4.2 Interview

Interviews of the shortlisted Applicants will be conducted by the members of the Selection Panel who performed the first evaluation via videoconferencing. Each Applicant will be assessed against the Evaluation Criteria detailed below. The interviews will be composed of:

- A 10-min presentation by the Applicant (background and research project). The presentation can be supported by visuals (e.g. PowerPoint – a maximum of 5 slides in total is allowed).
- A 30-min question-and-answer session.
- 5-min for the Applicant's questions to the Selection Panel.

Criteria	Score	Weighting (%)
Scientific and investigative aptitude and motivation	0–5	30
Research Project: conceptual understanding and suitability	0–5	30
Professional skills: planning, problem solving, IT, data management,	0–5	20
Interpersonal skills: communication, teamwork, initiative, English level	0–5	20
Weighted Average	0–5	100

A final ranking for each position will be calculated by combining the interview score (60% weighting) and the first ranking score (40% weighting).

4.3 Successful Applicants

Successful Applicants will receive a **conditional offer** for admission into the AUFRANDE Program. They will sign a 36-month full-time employment contract with their respective Host French Research Institution, in line with the conditions detailed in the position description. They will be enrolled as Doctoral Researchers at both the

French Research Host Institution (or, in some cases, Associated University) and the partner Australian University. A specific **application to the host** institutions' program may be required in some cases (applicants will be informed of each institution's specificities).

A position will be considered filled once the successful Applicant has signed his/her employment contract and is enrolled at the two PhD awarding institutions. If an Applicant fails to meet all enrolment requirements and not admitted by one or other of the PhD awarding institutions, the AUFRANDE offer will be withdrawn.

Note that at admissions phase, successful Applicants must be able to **provide the originals of all academic documents** issued by their home institution(s), or relevant body, duly legalized by apostille, or in their default, legalized by diplomatic means, and along with the corresponding official translation to English or the hosting country official language (if required). AUFRANDE has made all efforts to ensure that the enrolment requirements of participating universities are described in Section 4 of the open position descriptions, but as these requirements are subject to change, Applicants are advised to check these carefully directly on the relevant degree-awarding institutions' websites.

Successful Applicants will be expected to **relocate to their Research Host location** before starting their employment contract. A note providing practical information for successful Applicants is available in Annex.

4.4 Appeal / redress

Unsuccessful Applicants may lodge an appeal within seven days after receiving the notification email if they believe that the results of the eligibility checks are incorrect and/or feel that there has been a shortcoming in the way their application was evaluated at the assessment and/or interview stages.

To appeal, Applicants must clearly describe the reasons why they are requesting a redress:
- If related to the eligibility check (step 1), Applicants should explicitly refer to the eligibility criteria.
- If related to the assessment of eligible applications (step 2) or the interviews (step 3), redress should explicitly refer to the evaluation criteria concerned.

To be considered, a request for redress must:
- Be related to 1 of the 3 stages of the evaluation of their applications (see above), and
- Be completed using the request for redress form (see Annex 6.2), and
- Be submitted by the Applicant no later than 7 days after the email notification is sent, and
- Be sent by email to aufrande.help@rmit.edu.au with the following subject:

  AUFRANDE Program – Redress request – [Applicant Full Name]

An application will be re-assessed only when there is clear evidence of a factual shortcoming in the evaluation. This means, for example, that a problem relating to 1 evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-assessment if the application has failed anyway on other criteria. The scientific evaluation of the Selection Panel will not be called into question. The request for redress will be assessed by AUFRANDE Team and the outcomes will be communicated to the Applicant within seven days after reception, so that the applications of successful appellants may be included in the next stage of selection.

Important: The redress cannot be used as an opportunity to submit documentation that were not submitted in the original application.

5. Data protection

The personal data collected as part of the recruited process (application form, supporting documents and interviews) will be process for the purpose considering their application for the AUFRANDE Program. The legal basis for processing this personal data is performance of a contract. Applicants' personal data will be shared or disclosed with third parties external to RMIT Europe, including external academic and/or industry reviewers who will consider and assess their application, academic and/or administrative personnel of AUFRANDE Research Host institutions, their associated universities (where applicable) and the COFUND programme facilitators who will process data for the purposes of administering and facilitating the program at RMIT Europe. Applicant's personal data will be transferred outside of the EEA, will be kept securely by RMIT Europe and will be retained for a period of five years after the closure of the AUFRANDE Program.

RMIT Europe is the Data Controller of this information and is committed to protecting the rights of individuals in line with Data Protection Legislation. The collection, processing and sharing of personal data and / or special categories of personal data will comply with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 (the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)) and other applicant regulation on personal data.

Applicants are invited to visit RMIT Europe's Privacy Policy webpage for further information in relation to their rights and how RMIT Europe processes their personal data. RMIT Europe's Data Controller can be contacted through email sent to AUFRANDE Helpdesk at aufrande.help@rmit.edu.au and any requests or complaints should be made in writing to the RMIT Europe's Data Controller.

6. Annexes

6.1 Applicant checklist and tips

Applicant Checklist	
Step 1 – Understand AUFRANDE	✓ Explore the AUFRANDE website ✓ **Read thoroughly** this Guide for Applicants and the FAQs ✓ Contact the AUFRANDE Helpdesk (aufrande.help@rmit.edu.au) if you have any queries
Step 2 – Select your research project(s)	✓ Navigate through the open positions (vacancies) ✓ Read thoroughly the full **Position Descriptions** (PDF), identified your preferred position(s) and research project (3 project options proposed for each position) ✓ Find out more about the hosts institutions and the supervisors
Step 3 – Check your eligibility	✓ Study carefully and assess your application against the **eligibility criteria** (see section 2.3 of this guide) ✓ Make sure you fulfil the **admission requirements** at the PhD awarding institutions, in France and Australia (section 4 of the Position Description)
Step 4 – Prepare your application	✓ Allow yourself enough time to well prepare your application and collect **all supporting evidences** ✓ Prepare your CV and motivation essay in English. Make sure the motivation essay adequately reflects the position(s) and specific research project(s) you are applying for. ✓ Gather all the other supporting documents[4] (passport, official academic transcripts from your Bachelor's AND Master's, proof of English proficiency, …) ✓ Ask 2 referees to support your application. Inform them that they must complete a questionnaire in an online application system. Remember that you are responsible for **ensuring that referees submit their references via SlideRoom** before the deadline
Step 5 – Get familiar with the application form	✓ Register and create your profile on SlideRoom ✓ Fill in the Application Form
Step 6 – Evaluate your own application	✓ Read the Guide for Evaluators (available on AUFRANDE website) ✓ **Assess your own application** against the eligibility and evaluation criteria
Step 7 – Submit your application	✓ Once complete, submit your application via SlideRoom before the deadline ✓ Remember that incomplete applications (applications without all mandatory documents) will automatically be rejected
Queries/amendments	Once you have submitted your application, you will not be able to make any changes. In case you would like to withdraw your application, contact AUFRANDE Helpdesk (aufrande.help@rmit.edu.au) no later than 5 days before the deadline.

A FAQ is available on AUFRANDE website: http://aufrande.eu/recruitment/faqs/. In addition, AUFRANDE Help Team provides support through email from Monday to Friday from 10:00 AM CET to 15:00 CET. All queries and questions regarding the application process should be sent to AUFRANDE Helpdesk at least 5 days before the application deadline. Email: aufrande.help@rmit.edu.au.

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[4] Even when not required at application stage, do not wait for collecting the additional documents that you will need for enrolling in a doctoral program at the degree-awarding institutions for your chosen project(s): original academic certificates, certified translation, proof of English level, etc.

6.2 Redress request form

AUFRANDE Program – Redress request form

Position reference	

Personal information	
First Name	
Last Name	

Research project you applied to	
Title of the project	

Stage of evaluation concerned		
☐ Eligibility check	☐ Assessment of application	☐ Interview

Reason for redress request
Describe the grounds of your request which may relate either to: *- the eligibility check: if this is the case, please specify the eligibility criteria your redress request relates to; or* *- the assessment of your application and/or the interview results: if this is the case, please specify the scientific criteria concerned.*

NAME

DATE

SIGNATURE

Australia – France – Network of Doctoral Excellence   aufrande.eu

6.3 Information note for AUFRANDE researchers

Should you be successful in the AUFRANDE selection process, you will:

- be recruited by the French Research Host for the corresponding position under a 36-month full-time employment contract (in compliance with the Host usual practice, the positions may be subjected to probationary period);
- receive a competitive remuneration, as described in the Position Description, including social security coverage;
- be enrolled as a doctoral researcher at both the French Research Host (or the Associated University in some cases) and partner Australian University[i];
- be assisted by your employer in the administrative procedures related to your recruitment and settling in your new host country.

As a AUFRANDE researcher, you will have the obligation to:

- relocate to the location of your Host premises before starting your employment contract (within 3 months of acceptance of the offer letter);
- be working exclusively on your PhD and in the frame of the AUFRANDE project;
- commit to spend 6 to 12 months at the Australian University where you are enrolled, according to the University's requirements and your supervisors' instructions;
- participate to all AUFRANDE activities, including annual training events.

For more information, consult the General information package for MSCA fellows and the Specific guidance for MSCA COFUND fellows Guidelines available at: https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/document-library?

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[i] A specific application to the host institution program might be required (applicants will be informed of each institution's specificities in due time). At admissions phase, successful Applicants must be able to provide the originals of all academic documents duly legalized by apostille, or in their default, legalized by diplomatic means, and along with the corresponding official translation to English or the hosting country official language (if required). Academic certificates must indicate that the diploma obtained provides access to PhD studies in the issuing country. If the degree does not state this information and/or does not carry the date when the degree was completed, then the Applicant will be required to provide an additional academic certificate containing this information when registering for the doctorate.