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DOBCEL–ACU Ballarat Ph.D. Cohort Expression of Interest Form

## ACU Programme Leads and Principal Supervisors

* Associate Professor Steven Lewis, Associate Director Research. steven.lewis@acu.edu.au
* Associate Professor Jessica Holloway, Deputy Head of School (Ballarat), National SoE. jessica.holloway@acu.edu.au

Thank you for your interest in pursuing the DOBCEL-ACU Ballarat Ph.D. cohort initiative. To officially declare your interest, please complete the form and provide the requested information below.

## Applicant Details

Full Name:

Role/Position:

DOBCEL unit (School/Office):

Work email:

Work phone:

## Research Interests

Proposed research area(s):

How does your idea align explicitly with DOBCEL Strategy 2035?

Relevance to your school and/or the DOBCEL system:

## Motivation and Fit

Why do you wish to undertake a Ph.D.?

How will this benefit your professional role and DOBCEL?

How will you manage the long-term commitment (~6-8 hours/week on average)?

## Commitment

I acknowledge the time requirement and expectations: ☐ Yes ☐ No

I am willing to participate in intensives and cohort activities: ☐ Yes ☐ No

## Additional Information

Please list here all previous university training or qualifications (including any that have been commenced but not completed):

Other professional and/or personal information you wish to include:

## Declaration & Signatures

Applicant’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Line Manager’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**1. Who is eligible to apply?**

This initiative is open to employees of DOBCEL, including teachers, school leaders, system leaders and relevant professional staff. Applicants must remain in their current DOBCEL roles while undertaking the Ph.D.

**2. Do I need to relocate or change my role to do this Ph.D.?**

No. This is designed as a part-time Ph.D. programme that is anchored in your current school or role. You will continue your normal work and location while conducting research connected to your practice.

**3. How long will the Ph.D. take?**

The Ph.D. is normally undertaken part-time over approximately six years (i.e., three-years full time). Adjustments to these timeframes can be discussed with your supervisory team depending on your personal and/or professional circumstances.

**4. How much time will I need to commit each week?**

You should plan for approximately 6-8 hours per week on average, which includes independent study, writing, supervisory meetings and participation in cohort activities. The specific number of hours will vary considerably during the Ph.D., which will include more intensive periods and lulls.

**5. What are the “intensives” mentioned in the presentation?**

Each year, there will be system-wide intensive learning and collaboration sessions co-designed with DOBCEL leadership. These will rotate across DOBCEL regions to reflect geographic diversity and to embed the collective research across the respective schools and communities. These will provide a chance to engage deeply with research methods, theory and professional learning in a supportive cohort environment.

**6. What support will I receive?**

You will have a Principal Supervisor (either Jessica or Steven) and at least one other co-supervisor from ACU, with expertise matched specifically to your topic. You will also join a Ph.D. cohort with peers from across DOBCEL to provide a strong professional and research community. DOBCEL leadership will also be engaged in supporting participants throughout the course of the Ph.D.

**7. Do I need prior research experience?**

No. While some applicants may have an undergraduate/postgraduate degree or other prior research experience, it is ultimately not essential. Research training and support will be provided through the cohort model and via ACU’s research programmes.

**8. What kind of topics can I research?**

Projects should align with **DOBCEL Strategy 2035** and address real challenges and/or opportunities in Catholic education within the Diocese. Possible areas may include pedagogy, leadership, wellbeing, accountability, curriculum or other system priorities.

**9. What will I ultimately produce in the Ph.D.?**

You will ultimately produce a thesis (~80,000-100,000 words) throughout the Ph.D., and this must make a significant, original contribution to knowledge and practice. It will focus on a DOBCEL-relevant issue or research problem and connect your professional context with broader research and policy debates.

**10. What are the benefits for me as a participant?**

You will develop advanced research, writing and analytical skills, strengthen your professional expertise, and build leadership capacity. This is also a long-term investment in your career and professional identity as an education leader, since you will use and develop research-informed knowledge and evidence to guide professional expertise, policy and practice.

**11. What are the benefits for DOBCEL?**

DOBCEL will strengthen its evidence base for decision-making, build system-wide research capacity and help to foster professional networks of educators engaged in innovation and inquiry. This will also provide an evidence-informed vehicle for attaining the strategic goals of DOBCEL Strategy 2035.

**12. What costs are involved?**

Ph.D. (or research Master’s) students who are Australian citizens or permanent residents have **no tuition fees**. This means you will incur no additional FEE-HELP/HECS debt.

**13. How do I secure the support of my Line Manager?**

Your EOI **must** include endorsement from your Line Manager. This ensures that your school is aware of your commitment and can plan for your participation in the programme.

**14. When will the first cohort begin?**

Expressions of Interest are now open, and more details on timelines and commencement dates will be shared through DOBCEL communications. We anticipate commencement of the cohort programme in early 2026.

**15. Who can I contact for more information?**

For questions, you may contact:

* Associate Professor Steven Lewis (ACU) – steven.lewis@acu.edu.au
* Associate Professor Jessica Holloway (ACU) – jessica.holloway@acu.edu.au