

2022 STUDENT RECRUITMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HONOURS AND MASTERS (COURSEWORK)

Honours is a 1 year undergraduate degree, typically commencing in February until November. This is a fee-paying course, not supported by scholarships. Some Departments have a mid-year intake.

Masters (Coursework) is a 2 year degree, involving a part-time project. This is a fee-paying course, not supported by scholarships.

What are the assessments for honours students?

Students usually undertake 25% of Honours through coursework, typically 2 subjects designed to introduce you to research skills that you will develop more during your project. 75% of the assessment is based on the project –a final thesis and a thesis defence/presentation.

What is the minimum WAM required for Honours at the Peter Mac? What criteria are applications assessed with?

Whilst a minimum WAM of 65% is required by The University of Melbourne for Honours, many Peter Mac supervisors recruit students with WAMs in the high 70s and 80s. Supervisors will ask to see your transcript and will be particularly interested to see your final year grades and the grades of subjects most relevant to their areas of research. In selecting an Honours student, supervisors will also be interested to learn more about you, your passion for research and further study.

I graduate my course in May next year, when should I apply for Honours with Peter Mac?

Some Departments offer a mid year intake for Honours (eg Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology). In most cases, students will work on the research project in the first 6mo and undertake the coursework component in the first half of the following year. Many Peter Mac supervisors are willing to take on students who commence the research project mid year, just let supervisors know that you are interested in pursuing this option.

I am a current biomed undergrad finishing up in Oct. I am a bit confused between the Honours and postgrad pathways available. Which ones would I be eligible for?

If you have a WAM of >65% you are eligible to apply for Honours and Masters Coursework degrees, assuming you have a major relevant to the discipline stream that you wish to enter.

What kind of departments would be looked for in Honours/Masters students?

Have a look on the university site. At Melbourne, our students usually apply through the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. Supervisors will be able to tell you what department they have listed their projects with. Sometimes we contact the university to add projects to the Honours/Masters project database if a supervisor had not previously submitted a project. This can be done when necessary.

Most of our Peter Mac Honours and Masters Coursework students are enrolled through the Department of Clinical Pathology OR the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. We contact other departments when students with different backgrounds are interested in projects with our supervisors (eg Health Sciences, Biosciences, etc).

Can you do research if you have a Masters?

If you have completed a Masters, you are eligible to apply for work as a Research Assistant. Your experience in your Masters project and extra coursework knowledge will be a help.

If you want to do a PhD after a masters, the marks for your Masters degree will be considered when assessing university eligibility. If you completed a 2 year Masters, they will look at both years of the Masters; if it is a one-year masters, that will be considered to be equal to an Honours degree, and they will consider your Masters year and the final year of your undergraduate degree when assessing your eligibility.

Do students who complete their Masters generally go on to complete their PhD within the same lab or team?

If a student does well in their Masters by Coursework degree, they may be eligible to apply for entry in to the PhD (whether that be in the same lab or another lab). If your Masters Coursework degree is a 2 year degree, UoM will use your Masters marks (not your undergraduate marks) when assessing your application for candidature and scholarships. If your undergraduate and/or Honours marks are not high enough for PhD candidature, undertaking a Masters is a good way to wipe the slate clean and work towards a higher mark. If you score >80 in Masters you will be eligible for PhD candidature, marks in the high 80s are typically required for scholarships.

What is the judging/selection process for the Nicole Lundie Honours Award?

This Peter Mac award is made in memory of Nicole Lundie who was a Summer and Honours student at Peter Mac before she passed away during the 1st year of her PhD.

This Prize is awarded annually to the most outstanding Honours student who has completed their research project at Peter Mac in the preceding year (from any university). Eligible applicants are invited to submit an application.

Applicants submit an application form that includes a reference and an evaluation of their research development from the Supervisors. Applicants are assessed on their development as researchers throughout their Honours year, their initiative and commitment to research, their passion for science and their academic excellence. It is not just about marks – it is the whole package! The selection committee attends a special Peter Mac Honours talks session where ALL our Honours students present summaries of their projects. This gives the committee an opportunity to gain a feeling for how engaged the students were with their project, and to ask questions that help them understand the student's passion for and ability to communicate their work.

A special Lundie Prize presentation event is held each year (early December) where the awardee(s) present a summary of their project to the audience that includes members of the Lundie family and the Geelong Breakfast Lions Club who support this award.

In a normal year, applications are due in early November, after all formal university assessment requirements are completed. Due to the impact of COVID restrictions on project progress, the 2020 selection process we will be delayed until early 2021 due to the delayed completion date for some students.

How can I best approach doing a MD and Honours?

It is not possible to do Honours and undertake a MD at the same time as both are full time degrees. Nearly all medical degrees are now postgraduate – and it is not possible to simultaneously undertake an undergraduate and a postgraduate degree.

Many students undertake Honours before entering a postgraduate medical degree. Most medical degrees (undergraduate or postgraduate) include a research component during the degree.

Given the prerequisites for each research project, would a Bachelor of Health Sciences suffice as a prerequisite course compared to a degree in biomedical sciences?

Students can apply for Honours or Masters Coursework degrees from any type of Bachelor degree, as long as that degree is relevant to their research interest. Most students have completed a degree that is science related, with many different names for the programs across different universities, including (but not limited to): Science, Biomedical Science, Biotechnology, Health Sciences, Psychology etc.

Supervisors and the university look at the academic grades and the specific subjects undertaken as part of your undergraduate degree to decide if you will be prepared for the project and any related coursework.

PHD AND MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (MPhil)

Both the PhD and the MPhil have the same entry requirements at the University.

The PhD is 3.0-4.0 years, and the MPhil takes 1.5-2.0 years.

Both degrees require an academic level of H1 (or equivalent - related to experience and previous research output) for eligibility for both candidature and scholarships.

All PhD and MPhil students are required to be supported by a scholarship that will pay your living expenses throughout your degree. This is particularly important for International students, as you will then be awarded a fee-waiver scholarship by the university to match your living-allowance scholarship.

All postgraduate research students should apply for a university scholarship. If you have any other sources of funding (eg from your government, a philanthropic organisation etc) you can also apply for other scholarships.

If your graduation for your honours year has been delayed due to coronavirus, how will that affect your application for 2021 PHD candidature? Especially if your program won't finish until early 2021?

All universities are aware of the impact of the coronavirus restrictions on Honours in 2020. The Universities will wait for Honours results to be finalised when considering scholarship rounds.

It is important to apply for the PhD in Round 1 on 31 October. You are applying to commence your PhD at any time in 2021 (typically between 1 February and 31 October).

For PhD, what should I do to get an admission at Peter Mac

Read our information online, and the information below in *Finding a Project*.

The first step is to find a project and supervisor at Peter Mac.

You then apply to a university for candidature and a scholarship. Your future supervisor must support you in that application.

You will need to look at the university websites to find out the specific requirements for the university, however they will all have similar expectations:

- H1 equivalence for entry into a PhD
- Need to be competitive for a university scholarship
- Support of a supervisor for a project

Check the University website for the scholarship application dates. All universities have the same date for local student applications: 31 October. Some universities have a different date for International applications.

'Local' students are Australian or New Zealand citizens or with Permanent Residence (PR) in Australia.

The majority of Peter Mac PhD students enrol through the Sir Peter MacCallum Department of Oncology at the University of Melbourne. The closing date for Round 1 scholarship applications at the University of Melbourne for both local and international students is 31 October, to commence a project at any time in the following year.

What is the process/how difficult is it to get funding to do a Masters as an international student?

Students wishing to undertake a Masters of Philosophy/Master of Research (different name, same sort of program) can apply for scholarships via the same mechanism as students undertaking a PhD (See above). Round 1 applications are due on 31st October each year. Scholarships are very competitive.

There are few (if any) scholarships/funding options to support Masters Coursework students – this is a fee-paying course.

How feasible is it for a person from industry to get into a PhD position in Peter Mac? What are the criteria based on which you will be assessed?

It is possible for a person working in industry to commence a PhD. In assessing whether you are eligible for candidature and scholarships, UoM will look at your transcript, but additional marks may also be added if you have published a manuscript, are listed on a patent, and/or if you have professional/research experience relevant to the PhD. You can always send us your CV and transcript and we can do a quick estimation of the likelihood of gaining entry to the PhD.

For a Unimelb undergrad who is currently a Monash postgrad student, shall I apply via Monash's portal with only my current grades considered? Will the fact that I am a recent Unimelb graduate help me?

We probably need to know more detail about your current situation and what postgrad course you are undertaking to assist us in answering this. If you wish to undertake a PhD, and you are completing a 2y Masters, UoM will only look at your Masters marks (not your undergrad) when assessing you for candidature. You could apply through either university. Keep in mind that not all Peter Mac supervisors have appointments through Monash University, if you choose a project where the supervisor does not have a Monash appointment, we may need to bring in a Monash co-supervisor. We can assist with this and liaise with Monash.

For international applicants, what about visa restrictions that might affect start dates? Does that in anyway affect the selection of an applicant?

Peter Mac has had great success obtaining Border Exemptions for international students that have PhD scholarships to enter Australia to commence their PhD. This does not affect selection of the applicant. University scholarships provide some relocation costs and 'Welcome to Melbourne Grants' are also available for further support <https://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/coronavirus> under travel, visas and insurance -> Is there travel support available.

My questions is about differences in grading schemes between universities when considering study. At my current university, we don't get a 7/H unless the overall grade is 86% whereas at UniMelb this grade is achieved at 80%. How does Peter Mac adjust for different grading schemes between universities?

The University of Melbourne (not Peter Mac) makes the adjustments for differences in grading systems between universities when they assess each application and calculate a scholarship score for each student. The adjustments take into account the minimum score for H1 and the course pass marks.

Is the university eligibility for a PhD 1/3 of Year 3 bachelor score +2/3 of honours score? Total together above 80?

Scholarship scoring is complex, and takes in to account the ranking of the university attended, and things like publications, patents, research experience. If you did your undergraduate and Hons at UoM, your score would be 1/3 penultimate year (3rd year bachelor) and 2/3 Honours. You could receive bonus marks if you have publications, patents, research experience etc.

Is a first author publication mandatory for students wanting to undertake a PhD at Peter Mac?

No it is not. Students that do have publications can receive bonus mark/s when being assessed for PhD candidature/scholarships at UoM, but it is not essential if you have high enough grades.

How is WAMnesty influencing Honours and PhD applications?

In response to the COVID pandemic, a revised method for calculating WAM has been introduced <https://students.unimelb.edu.au/your-course/manage-your-course/exams-assessments-and-results/results-and-academic-statements/wam> . The University will take this in to account when assessing your eligibility for candidature and scholarships.

FINDING A PROJECT

All contact details for the supervisors are listed with the project description in our project booklets. You may also look at the Peter Mac website to view the research group pages for the supervisors.

You cannot apply for a PhD or MPhil without a letter of support from your supervisor, so the first step is to find a project.

Contact supervisors, providing your CV and your academic record. Make sure you personalise the email contact – mentioning their names, their project etc. [If you send the same email to everyone, without personalising it, the supervisors are less likely to respond.] Tell them about your background, your interest in their project and ask to discuss it with them.

If we haven't had any experience in cancer research but really like some of the projects available, can we still talk to potential supervisors and apply or are there some basic requirements?

Supervisors know that students are coming to be trainee researchers, so they don't assume students have experience in cancer research. They will be interested in your understanding of science, what you have studied so far, your willingness to learn and interest in their work. Before you meet them, try to read about their research – even if it is only 1 of their papers. This will show your interest in the research.

What's the procedure for enrolling through universities other than the Melbourne University?

To enrol through universities other than Melbourne University you need to liaise with the Course Coordinators at those universities and enquire whether they will allow you to undertake your project at Peter Mac. Once confirmed we can liaise with the University to support you through your degree. We have students at Peter Mac who are enrolled through Monash University, Deakin University, Swinburne University, RMIT, ACU, international universities and more.

Can we be from another university and enrol with the UoM for projects at Peter Mac?

Yes you can, you just need to satisfy the UoM entry requirements for the degree. Alternatively, you may be able to enrol with your current university, if they allow you to undertake the project at Peter Mac.

Some projects are PhD, masters and others are for honours - what is the difference?

It is important to remember that all projects are designed to help you learn about research – technically and intellectually. Whatever the level, you will be taught how to do the research, supported throughout the degree.

For Honours or Masters Coursework: it is not assumed you have much practical or research knowledge, and you will be gradually taught the skills you need to complete your project

For postgraduate degrees (PhD, MPhil) you will start with some knowledge based on your previous courses, but you will still be given training in basic or advanced research skills as you progress.

When you commence the project, your supervisors will design the research activities, but you will always be encouraged to think for yourself about your project, and make suggestions based on your reading about the research literature and developing knowledge. If you are a PhD student – you will gradually take over the ownership of the project and eventually lead the research direction, with the support of your supervisors.

The project length and complexity will increase with the degree. Honours projects will have a more focussed aim, due to the shorter timeframe. A part-time Masters (Coursework) project may be the same as an Honours project due to similar timing but spread across 2 years.

The MPhil or PhD project will be more complex. The MPhil project will look at novel things, but can be more contained within 2 years part-time. The longer PhD project will take some aspects of the project to innovative, riskier levels, aiming to lead to novel findings.

If the target student of a project are honours or PhD students, is it possible for them to accept Masters students?

Some supervisors have indicated they are looking for a masters, honours or PhD student – but they often change their mind. If they like a student and think they will work well on the project they can expand or reduce the project to meet the course requirements/timing.

Is there anyone we can talk to briefly who can assist us with which areas of cancer research we can apply for based on our previous research?

The best way is to think about which areas of cancer research you should apply for is to think about the research skills you have previously developed, and what skills you would like to develop in the future. It is your research skills and scientific knowledge that you can adapt across to different topics. You must decide which topics you have an interest in.

If you are doing a shorter degree, you can cope with doing a project that is not your passion, as long as you learn about research while you do it.

If you are doing a PhD, you need a project you are excited about, as you need enthusiasm for the project that will carry you through the highs and lows of the research over the 3 – 4 years.

Is there any PhD project which utilizes the histopathology skills of the PhD student?

Many of the PhD projects undertaken by students at Peter Mac utilize histopathology skills. Peter Mac has a Centre for Advanced Histology and Microscopy that underpins a multitude of cancer research projects at Peter Mac and houses four core platforms; histology, optical microscopy, electron microscopy and image analysis. Some students are based in our Molecular Pathology department for projects that are even more closely related to histopathology methods.

Talk to supervisors about what methods will be used in the project. Some supervisors are able adapt a project to incorporate specialist skills that a student has previously developed – if relevant to the overall project directions.

Should you do your PhD in the same lab where you did your honours? Or is it more beneficial to change the laboratory, so that you could have the possibility to learn new techniques and skills?

This really is up to the individual. The key thing is really to ensure that you are working in a lab that is a good fit in terms of the research project, supervision and lab environment. Many students will remain in the same lab, working in a similar research area. They can then use the skills/techniques they have learnt during Honours and have a head start, to hit the ground running in their PhD. At the same time, it can be valuable to change labs to learn new skills. Once completing the PhD, students are encouraged to postdoc in a different lab to learn new skills and broaden their research experience.

I was wondering which of the Australian universities are considered equivalent to Melbourne University? How would be the process if I want to apply for one of these universities?

The University of Melbourne is one of the top 8 universities in Australia - referred to as the Group of 8 (<https://go8.edu.au/>). The University of Melbourne is ranked 2nd in Australia. In Melbourne, there is also Monash University that is ranked 6th.

You will need to look at the university websites to find out the specific requirements for the university, however they will all have similar expectations:

- H1 equivalence for entry into a PhD
- Need to be competitive for a university scholarship
- Support of a supervisor for a project

COMPREHENSIVE CANCER PhD PROGRAM

Can I participate in the VCCC PhD program opportunities if I study cancer but don't qualify for the VCCC PhD Program?

Whilst only PhD students undertaking their PhD studies in VCCC partner organisations can officially join the CCPhD Program, we do open up a lot of our events to anyone interested to participate (eg Topics in Cancer Seminar Series, Methods in Cancer Seminar Series, Chat with a Nobel laureate, Grand Debate). We promote these events through the VCCC, you can sign up to their communications at this link <https://vcccalliance.org.au/contact/subscription/>

SCHOLARSHIPS

Are scholarships available? How do we apply for them, when do we find out if we have received them?

University scholarships are highly competitive. Although PhD candidature requires H1 minimum (score of 80 minimum), scholarship scores are usually mid-high 80s.

Scholarship scores are mainly based on marks from your academic transcript. Any non-course related research experience (> 1 year) or publications are also taken into account.

Scholarships are offered in rounds. It is important to try to submit an application in Round 1 as the largest number of scholarships are awarded in that round. Applicants usually hear of success or not by early January, but notification of success can roll out over a longer if processing of results is later. If you are not successful in that round, your application will again be considered in the next round – you do not have to reapply for round 2.

Peter Mac also has a competitive scholarship “the Peter Mac Foundation Postgraduate Award”. This is open to local students and any international students who have previously completed a degree in Australia (eg undergraduate, Honours or Masters degree). Full details of this award and the application process are available on our website.

When do the round 2 and onwards PhD scholarship applications close? Honours thesis at unimelb are due around October 25 and that leaves barely any time to make a pivotal decision like undertaking a PhD.

Round 2 applications close 31 January 2022, round 3 close 13 May 2022. Some students elect to work as a research assistant for the year following their Honours, then apply for a PhD. It is important to ensure you are happy with the lab and supervisor you elect to apply with.

For students finishing their honours or Masters next year in June/July, when is the due date to apply for a PhD scholarship? Is it 31st October, 2021, or is it some date next year?

If you complete Honours in June 2022, you would be looking to apply by 31 October 2022 to commence in 2023. The final round of University scholarship applications for 2022 are due 13 May 2022.

Nobody gives me a chance because I am not competitive for a scholarship. I come from a developing country, and I have RA experience as well as multitude of publications. What do you think I should do?

In addition to applying for University scholarships, students from developing countries are eligible to apply for a different scholarship program run by the Australian Government. The following website provides full details of the Australia Award Scholarships and the participating countries. Note that the closing date for applications is 30 June for a PhD to commence in the following year.

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/australia-awards/Pages/australia-awards-scholarships>

Is it possible to apply for scholarships and a PhD with an international undergraduate degree?

Yes it is. The scoring of international scholarships is complex and takes into account the ranking of the international undergraduate university. Contact our team and we can estimate the likelihood that you will be competitive in your application.

As a student from a different university to unimelb (ACU) would I stand a better chance for acceptance by enrolling through unimelb instead or will it not matter where I enrol?

Most universities have similar scholarship scoring rubrics but there can be small differences. Many supervisors at Peter Mac do not have affiliations with universities other than unimelb, in these cases, a co-supervisor with an appointment at the selected university may need to be brought in to the supervisory team. Please make contact to discuss your specific circumstances.

Does Peter Mac have connections or opportunities with Oxford University?

Researchers at Peter Mac collaborate with a large number of universities. A number of our students participate in joint PhD Programs. Upon completion their joint PhD will be recognised by two testamurs- one from each partner university. We currently have students participating in joint PhD programs with Bonn University (Germany), University of Toronto (Canada) and University of Manchester (UK).

<https://research.unimelb.edu.au/graduate-research/your-research-options/international-joint-phd-opportunities>

APPLYING FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANT JOBS

If you are a graduate of a masters or honours degree, you can apply for research assistant roles at Peter Mac (or any other institute) through their career/recruitment page, where positions are advertised. Positions are also usually advertised on Seek or a similar career website.

Are there opportunities for med students (who have done biomedical honours) to become research assistants? How should we seek out these opportunities?

See the answer above – all research assistant positions are advertised through our recruitment pages.

Most medical degrees include a research placement component. For example Peter Mac hosts students undertaking the University of Melbourne Medical Doctorate Research Project which is a formal requirement of the medical degree.

For those who are current medical students, are there any ways to get involved in a research as an assistant (i.e. not as honours/PhD students)?

Current medical students can participate in the MDRP program and complete a research project in their 3rd and 4th year of the Doctor of Medicine <https://medicine.unimelb.edu.au/study/current-student->

[resources/md-students-resources/md-researchproject](#) . Some medical students apply for part time research assistant positions and are successful in their applications.

GAINING EXPERIENCE THROUGH PLACEMENTS AND INTERNSHIPS

Does PeterMac offer summer internship programs?

Yes- we offer a paid 6 week summer scholarship program for undergraduate students who are currently enrolled in an undergraduate degree in Science, Applied Science, Biomedical Science, medicine or similar tertiary course. Students should have a minimum of 3 years undergraduate study completed by the end of the year of application. Students can undertake research projects in areas as diverse as cancer immunology, cellular biology, cancer genomics, genetics and bioinformatics. Students receive a tax-free payment of \$250 per week (5 working days). The program is a great way for students to get involved in real-life biomedical research, and to get inspired about cancer research at postgraduate level and beyond.

Applications for summer 2020-2021 have now closed.

Is voluntary training available for students who are graduating at the end of this year? Personally, I feel like my WAM has pulled me back but I hope to gain more experience in lab at PeterMac.

Whilst our 'work experience' program is only open to secondary school students, research placements or internships (unpaid) are available for university students when it is a formal course requirement. If you are graduating at the end of this year, our summer internship program would have been a good opportunity (applications now closed).

If you are still studying, look at your subject options to see if there are any placement or research-related subjects you can participate in. Once you have the details you can contact research groups at Peter Mac (see details in our project booklet) to see whether they are open to taking on placement students.

PETER MAC STUDENT RESPONSES

Do you find flexibility in working hours around the lab and your ability to work early or late?

Yes - while expectations may vary from supervisor to supervisor, in my lab students/staff generally set their own schedules and work the hours they need to get their work done. For example, I prefer to start a little later and work later, while others prefer coming in very early in the morning.

NOTE: This flexibility is common across all research groups, with flexibility in research time and hours worked out with guidance from supervisors. Remember these are full-time and demanding degrees, and allow little time to commit to paid work outside of the research degree.

What is one thing you learnt whilst doing honours that you didn't learn in undergrad?

One thing I learnt is that things often don't work! Learning how to troubleshoot problems and optimise techniques is a big part of science and makes it all the more rewarding when things finally do work. I learnt that it's important to take things in your stride and not get too disheartened when things don't go the way you expect them to.

I'd love to know what major everyone took, and if you tried to pick a major that related to an area of research that you wanted to go in to?

Student 1- I essentially chose to major in the department of biochemistry and molecular biology (BCMB) in my third year of university because I loved the 2nd year lab subject BCMB20005 Techniques in Molecular Science. Hence, I went on to do BCMB30010 Advanced Techniques in Molecular Science and later BIOM30003 Biomedical Science Research Project in my third year. For my Honours year, I did not choose my area of research based on my major. Instead, I chose a project based on interest, supervisor and lab dynamics. However, I undertook my Honours year under the BCMB department instead of the Pathology Department when given a choice. This was because I appreciated how organised the BCMB department was as datelines were always outlined at the beginning of the semester, what was expected was clear and support was provided. From experience, I can say that the coursework implemented during Honours under the BCMB department was helpful in aiding me succeed during the year.

Student 2- I personally have a MSc degree in organic chemistry, but I then decided to get into molecular biology. My take on this would be trying to pick a major you will enjoy, there is always time and many chances to experience different things throughout your academic and/or professional career.

What made you decide to pursue a PhD and what advice would you give someone who is considering either doing a PhD or going into the work field? *I am a recent Honours grad

Student 1- It took me a few years after completing my MSc to start my PhD; this is because I wanted to explore what biomedical research had to offer before committing to a PhD program. I think that PhD gives you a set of soft skills (organization, planning, time management, etc.) that are extremely useful in any type of career path afterwards. Additionally, a PhD title is recognized and well valued globally, opening a range of professional opportunities. For me, the decision was fairly easy, as I have always loved daily lab-research.

Student 2- After Honours, I worked as a research assistant which was a fulfilling role where I learnt new skills and focussed on helping others in the lab with their experiments. However, with time, I found that I was wanting to drive my own research and make my own contributions to the field, which was I decided to pursue a PhD. This next step in my career progression seemed natural, and I am hoping that the PhD would open new doors and opportunities for me in the future.

Deciding on whether to do a PhD or going into the work field would depends on what your goals are. If you are unsure about choosing science or academia as a career, perhaps working as a research assistant for a bit would help you solidify your decision. Working after Honours would also be great for boosting your resume, finances as well as getting a few more publications. However, doing a PhD is an investment on yourself, and you will reap the rewards in terms of career growth and self development.

How did you choose to study at Peter Mac?

Initially, I was drawn in by the facilities that Peter Mac has when attending one of the tours during open day. Later when I joined the summer studentship program, I grew to love the work culture at Peter Mac and the environment that I was in. Furthermore, I absolutely enjoyed the research that I was doing with my lab, which solidified my decision to do my Honours there. In addition, Peter Mac is at the heart of the biomedical precinct which facilitates collaborative work. Lastly, Peter Mac is unique whereby it is a comprehensive centre for both cancer patients and research which puts the importance of our research into perspective.

How many papers do you get to publish as a PhD student at Peter Mac? And, typically, how many should you publish?

Student 1- There is not a fixed number of papers you HAVE to publish. That depends mainly on your research: some projects result in a number of small papers, others in fewer bigger ones. You can publish research papers, as well as reviews. My take on this would be: the focus should be the quality over the quantity.

Student 2- It depends on the research that you're working on and the lab that you're with. Some labs might prioritise publishing papers more than others. Besides publishing your own work, you would also be included in papers that you've contributed to eg. helping a lab member with their experiments. Most PhD students also aim to push out a literature review during their candidature. As for numbers, I do not think there is a set number of papers to aim for. Of course the more the better but quality also trumps quantity, so impact factor of papers also matter.

How did you decide on an honours project coming out of undergrad?

I made to sure attend open days of institutes to review my options, then go through brochures of available projects from institutes that were of interest. From there I narrowed down labs or projects that I liked and could see myself pursue and e-mail prospective supervisors. Do not be afraid to reach out to a few supervisors as not all of them are taking in Honours students. Then, we scheduled a meeting to discuss the project, the techniques involved and the support that will be provided. If your primary supervisor who is the lab head is busy, ask if you will be getting secondary supervision from someone else in the lab eg. another PhD student or post-doc that will be showing you the ropes in the lab. Besides that, prospective students will usually get a chance to meet other members of the lab prior to starting as this is important to get a feel for the lab dynamic and fit. If this isn't possible, request for their contact details to reach out. In summary, I chose a project based on interest, support and lab fit.