

MARBLE PhD Partnership Programme

Collaborative doctoral research programme

Programme	Participants	Main purpose	Duration
MARBLE PhD Partnership Programme	doctoral candidates, mentors, and co-mentors	long-term cooperation on doctoral research	until completion of the doctorate

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1 Purpose of the Programme

The MARBLE PhD Partnership Programme is intended for doctoral candidates whose research is connected with the research and development areas of the MARBLE Centre of Excellence.

The Programme establishes long-term cooperation between:

- the doctoral candidate;
- the doctoral candidate's mentor;
- the doctoral candidate's home institution;
- the MARBLE co-mentor;
- the MARBLE Centre of Excellence.

The aim of the Programme is to connect doctoral research with MARBLE's expertise, infrastructure, projects, and partner network, and to enable the development of high-quality and applicable research results in maritime robotics, autonomous systems, blue technologies, and the sustainable blue economy.

Participation in the Programme does not constitute employment, a scholarship, a scientific or associate title, or acquisition of Affiliated Researcher status at MARBLE.

2 Duration of Cooperation

Cooperation is usually established for the period until completion of the doctoral research. Cooperation does not need to start at the time of the candidate's enrolment in the PhD study programme.

3 Cooperation Plan

For each doctoral candidate, a cooperation plan is prepared defining:

- the topic and objectives of the doctoral research;



- the area of cooperation with MARBLE;
- the roles of the mentor and the MARBLE co-mentor;
- planned activities;
- time frames for the planned activities (Gantt chart);
- expected results;
- meeting schedule;
- use of MARBLE infrastructure;
- method for monitoring progress;
- rules on publication and use of results;
- confidentiality rules;
- intellectual property and publication rules.

4 Roles of Participants

4.1 Doctoral Candidate

The doctoral candidate carries out the agreed research activities, participates in meetings with the mentor and co-mentor, uses available resources responsibly, and reports on research progress.

4.2 Doctoral Mentor

The mentor retains responsibility for the academic and scientific guidance of the doctoral thesis in accordance with the rules of the home institution.

The mentor participates in defining the cooperation plan and monitors the alignment of activities with the objectives of the doctoral research.

4.3 MARBLE Co-Mentor

The MARBLE co-mentor provides additional expert and research support to the doctoral candidate.

The role may include:

- expert consultations;
- support in developing the methodology;
- connecting the doctoral candidate with MARBLE researchers;
- enabling access to relevant infrastructure;
- involving the doctoral candidate in experiments, field testing, or projects;
- support in preparing publications and project proposals;
- consideration of the practical application and commercialisation of results.



The MARBLE co-mentor may be formally appointed as co-mentor of the doctoral thesis at the home institution.

5 Non-Financial Support from MARBLE

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MARBLE may provide the doctoral candidate with:

- appointment of a MARBLE co-mentor;
- a workspace during the stay;
- access to laboratories, research infrastructure and equipment, research vessels and test sites, as well as software tools, data, and computing resources;
- participation in seminars, workshops, and internal events;
- participation in experiments and field activities;
- connections with other researchers and partners;
- technical and organisational support in planning and carrying out experiments;
- regular expert meetings;
- support in preparing scientific publications;
- support in developing project proposals;
- support in assessing the possibilities for protection and commercialisation of results;
- presentation of the doctoral candidate and the research through MARBLE communication channels.

Access to individual resources depends on availability, safety rules, prior training of the student, and MARBLE's obligations toward third parties.

6 Financial Support from MARBLE

Participation in the Programme does not include an automatic right to a scholarship, fee, salary, tuition fee, or coverage of doctoral-study costs.

Depending on available funds and prior approval, MARBLE may cover the following costs.

6.1 Doctoral Study Tuition

MARBLE may cover part or all of the tuition fee for doctoral study, which represents significant financial relief for students, additional motivation for doctoral candidates to continue a career in science or innovation, and a contribution to



long-term investment in Croatia's research capacity. Separate contract, regulating coverage of the tuition fee, will be signed between the candidate and MARBLE.

6.2 Attendance at the “Breaking the Surface” Workshop

MARBLE may cover the costs of the doctoral candidate's participation at a BtS event if the candidate presents research results achieved within the Programme.

6.3 Participation at Scientific Conferences

MARBLE may fully or partially contribute to covering the doctoral candidate's conference participation costs, increasing the visibility of doctoral research and its results and enabling networking with the Croatian and international scientific community and potential partners. This part of the Programme relates to payment of registration fees, travel costs, and accommodation.

6.4 Publication in Open Access Journals

Publishing papers in Open Access journals often requires significant funds. Through this part of the Programme, MARBLE fully or partially covers publication costs, enabling wider availability of research results, supporting transparency and open science, and helping doctoral candidates and their mentors strengthen academic visibility.

Additional financial support may be approved only by a special decision or agreement.

7 Intellectual Property and Commercialisation

Participation in the Programme does not in itself transfer intellectual property rights to MARBLE or to any other involved party.

Existing knowledge, data, software solutions, documentation, and other rights that existed before the start of cooperation remain the property of the party to which they belonged before inclusion in the Programme.

If research results show potential for:

- patent protection;
- licensing;
- development of a product or service;
- technology transfer;
- establishment of a spin-off or start-up company;
- another form of commercial application,



the doctoral candidate, mentor, home institution, and MARBLE may initiate an assessment of commercial potential.

Ownership, protection, use, and commercialisation rights to results created during the Programme, as well as the method for sharing possible revenues, will be defined by a separate agreement between the home institution and MARBLE before the start of the Programme.

Scientific publications may be temporarily postponed where necessary to protect results or file an intellectual property rights application.

8 Application to the Programme

As a rule, the application is submitted jointly by the doctoral candidate and the candidate's mentor.

The application contains:

- the doctoral candidate's curriculum vitae;
- information about the doctoral study and home institution;
- title and abstract of the doctoral research;
- description of the proposed cooperation;
- expected results;
- proposal for the start and duration of cooperation;
- information about the mentor;
- proposal of a MARBLE co-mentor or required area of expertise;
- information on required infrastructure and equipment;
- method of financing costs;
- description of potential for joint publications;
- confirmation from the mentor supporting the doctoral candidate's inclusion in the Programme;
- consent of the home institution.

9 Application Deadlines

The call for applications is permanently available on MARBLE's website.

10 Selection of Doctoral Candidates

Applications are assessed by a committee of 3 members, according to:

- alignment of the topic with MARBLE's areas of activity;
- scientific and technological quality of the proposal;



- clarity of objectives and expected results;
- potential for long-term cooperation;
- availability of an appropriate MARBLE co-mentor;
- availability of required resources;
- potential for publications, projects, innovations, or commercialisation;
- feasibility of the cooperation plan.

11 Monitoring and Evaluation

The doctoral candidate, mentor, and MARBLE co-mentor meet according to the schedule defined in the cooperation plan.

Progress is formally reviewed at least once every six months.

Once a year, the doctoral candidate submits a short report containing:

- activities carried out;
- results achieved;
- publications and presentations;
- use of MARBLE resources;
- activity plan for the following period.

Once a year, the doctoral candidate gives a presentation on the results of their work.

12 Alumni Network

The doctoral candidate becomes a member of the MARBLE PhD Partnership Alumni Network after successful defence of the doctoral thesis.

Members of the alumni network may:

- participate in selected MARBLE events;
- propose new forms of cooperation;
- become involved in MARBLE research initiatives;
- provide support to new Programme participants;
- remain connected with mentors, co-mentors, and other members of the network.

Membership in the alumni network is voluntary and does not constitute an employment or other contractual relationship with MARBLE.