The Academy

Program Guidelines - Overview

The full program guidelines can be downloaded from within the application form; please read them in full once you start your application.

Delivered by

Sydney Biomedical Accelerator

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

NSW GOVERNMENT Sydney Local Health District

PROTO AXIOM

1. Overview of The Academy

The Academy is a life sciences program that develops research-led founders while advancing their ventures toward investment readiness. Delivered by the Sydney Biomedical Accelerator (SBA) in partnership with Proto Axiom, it is designed for researchers with promising, potentially investable assets who are motivated to lead their own commercial pathway.

Selected researchers (Academy Fellows) are embedded within Proto Axiom's venture environment for hands-on founder development, while advancing their own venture through an investor-guided de-risking program. Because an active investor is involved throughout, not only at the end, Fellows build founder capability and venture investability in parallel.

Each project typically has two roles. The project lead (typically the principal investigator) is responsible for the research asset, submits the application and supports the Fellow throughout. The Academy Fellow (typically at postdoctoral level or equivalent) is nominated by the project lead to drive the venture across both tracks. In some cases, such as student-led projects, one person may hold both roles.

Key information:

- **Sponsor:** Delivered by the Sydney Biomedical Accelerator (SBA) and Proto Axiom.
- **Duration:** 12 months.
- **Cohort size:** Up to three projects (inaugural).
- **Funding:** $100,000 per project.
- **Time commitment:** ~1 day per week immersion, plus de-risking activities undertaken as part of the Fellow's substantive role.
- **Who it's for:** Deep-tech life sciences projects (therapeutics, devices, diagnostics or adjacent) from the University's and/or SLHD's research base with a nominated Academy Fellow typically at postdoctoral level or equivalent.
- **Selection:** Investment-grade criteria, jointly assessed by the University's Research Venture Investment team and Proto Axiom.
- **Key dates:** Applications open Nov 12, 2026. Applications close Jan 22, 2027.
- **Outcome:** A de-risked venture and an investor-ready founder, positioned for investment consideration from the University Pre-seed Fund and Proto Axiom.

2. Who is Proto Axiom

Proto Axiom is a Sydney-based deep tech life sciences venture builder and investor that works with researchers and institutions to translate early-stage science into investable companies. As both investor and builder, it combines investment discipline with hands-on company creation and has a sustained track record of working alongside SBA, the University of Sydney and SLHD.

3. What the Academy funds

The Academy funds the commercial de-risking of an existing research asset. It is not a research grant and will not fund a new research direction. It suits projects already moving toward a commercial outcome, sharpening and accelerating a pathway that is underway.

4. Eligibility

Projects must be:

- deep tech life sciences assets (therapeutics, devices, diagnostics, or adjacent technologies with life sciences applications); and
- IP drawn from the University's or SLHD's research base.

Suitable projects have demonstrated progress towards commercial development, from late-stage research with a translational hypothesis through to early-clinical programs. Projects that have raised external dilutive funding generally sit beyond the program's stage.

Academy Fellows are nominated by the project lead as the main driver of the venture. Fellows are typically at postdoctoral level or equivalent, affiliated with the University and/or SLHD, and hold an appointment covering most of the program period. Student-led projects may apply with the student as both project lead and Fellow, with their supervisor's endorsement.

If you are unsure whether your project qualifies, contact the Program Lead or attend an information session.

5. How The Academy works

The Academy runs over 12 months as two concurrent tracks (**Figure 1**).

- **VENTURE TRACK: De-risking towards investability**
  Fellows advance their venture against a de-risking agenda they propose at application and refine with the Venture Committee. This typically includes a high-impact "killer experiment", regulatory and clinical strategy, and commercial validation.

- **IMMERSION TRACK: Founder development within Proto Axiom**
  Fellows spend approximately one day per week inside Proto Axiom's venture and investor environment. Rather than following a set curriculum, Fellows learn by participating, which may include sitting in on due diligence, observing portfolio company meetings and supporting portfolio companies day to day.

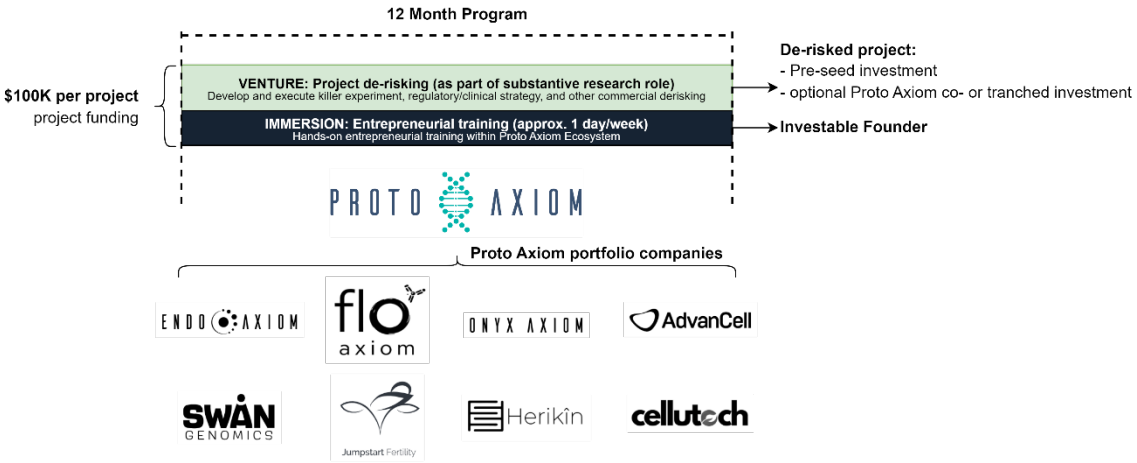


Figure 1. Academy Fellows will participate in a 12-month dual-track program, simultaneously de-risking their venture and undergoing founder training through immersion in the Proto Axiom ecosystem.

6. Funding & support

Each project receives $100,000 over 12 months for the direct costs of its agreed de-risking agenda. Limited salary support may be available on a matched basis. Fellows are guided throughout by the Venture Committee and, where relevant, can access Proto Axiom's senior advisory expertise across pharmaceutical R&D, clinical development, regulatory affairs and reimbursement.

7. Application process

Applying is a joint decision between the project lead and the nominated Fellow. Before applying, please inform your Head of School or department (or delegate) and the relevant commercialisation office of your intention to apply. You don't need their formal endorsement to apply; we'll work with shortlisted applicants to secure it before any award. Applications are made online followed by an interview if shortlisted.

This document is a summary. Full program guidelines, including eligible costs and detailed selection criteria, are available within the application form.

8. Selection process & criteria

Projects are assessed against the standards an external investor would apply:

- quality and defensibility of the underlying science and IP;
- scale of the opportunity and pathway to market;
- readiness, commitment and motivation of the nominated Fellow to lead the venture as a founder.

Prior commercialisation experience (e.g. PERIscope, Biodesign, CSIRO ON, a Proof of Concept grant) is not required, though it helps applicants thrive from day one.

9. Program outcomes

Fellows finish with a de-risked venture and uplifted first-hand entrepreneurial experience, with the venture positioned for investment consideration by the University Pre-seed Venture Fund and optional co-investment by Proto Axiom.

Investment is one measure of success, not the only one. A well-designed killer experiment that returns a clear result, positive or negative, is a valuable outcome because it resolves a critical uncertainty.

10. What participation does not require

If selected to participate in the program, there is:

- no equity in exchange for participation – the funding is non dilutive.
- no change to IP ownership; existing arrangements apply unchanged.
- no commitment to form a spinout.
- no obligation to any investor. Investment decisions rest independently with the University Pre-seed Venture Fund and Proto Axiom, each under its own criteria