Research Training Program Scholarship Policy

Section 1 - Audience

(1) This policy applies to University of Newcastle ("University") Research Training Program (RTP) scholarship applicants and recipients.

Section 2 - Executive Summary

(2) The University administers the RTP on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, who provides block grant funds to support domestic and international candidates undertaking higher degrees by research (HDR). The University distributes the funds as RTP scholarships.

(3) RTP scholarships may include RTP Fees Offsets, RTP Stipends and RTP Allowances.

Section 3 - Purpose

(4) This policy has been developed in response to the Higher Education Support (Commonwealth Scholarships) Guidelines 2025.

(5) This policy provides a comprehensive referral point for RTP applicants and scholarship recipients.

(6) This policy applies to the University's RTP funded scholarships.

Section 4 - Relaxation Clause

(7) To provide for exceptional circumstances arising in any case, the Director, Graduate Research may relax any provision of this policy provided that the relaxation:

a. does not compromise compliance with external obligations (including but not limited to contractual, legislative or accreditation requirements);
b. does not override a decision made under a formal delegation of authority;
c. does not replace a decision that is subject to a formal delegation of authority; and
d. gives due consideration to the principles of procedural fairness.

Section 5 - RTP Acknowledgement

(8) The Australian Government's contribution must be acknowledged when the recipient of an RTP Scholarship, their supervisor or any other party publishes or produces material, such as books, articles, newsletters or other literary or artistic works which relate to the research project carried out by the recipient of the RTP scholarship. This applies during and after the completion of the program of study. (Please also see Publication and Dissemination of Research

Policy and Thesis Examination Guidelines).

(9) The Commonwealth's contribution must be acknowledged in a prominent place and in an appropriate form. The acknowledgement must include mention of the candidate's support through an "Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship".

Section 6 - Continuing Scholars

(10) All continuing HDR candidates previously in receipt of an Australian Postgraduate Award, International Postgraduate Research Award and/or Research Training Scheme have been notified of the transition to an equivalent RTP Scholarship.

Section 7 - Basic Information

Eligibility

(11) As per the Higher Education Support (Commonwealth Scholarships) Guidelines 2025:

a. To be eligible for a RTP Stipend, RTP Fees Offset or RTP Allowance a candidate must be a domestic candidate or an overseas candidate enrolled in an accredited HDR course of study at an Australian Higher Education Provider.
b. To be eligible for a RTP Fees Offset, a candidate must not be receiving an equivalent award or scholarship from the Commonwealth designed to offset HDR fees.

(12) Special eligibility requirements for the Indigenous Priority Scheme Scholarships, Strategic Engagement Scheme and Academic Pathway Scheme are included in each Scheme's Scholarship Guidelines.

Periods of Support

(13) If a scholarship is awarded to a scholar already undertaking a HDR program, the period of support will be reduced acknowledging the scholar's prior tenure.

RTP Fees Offset

(14) A scholarship may be held for:

a. 1.75 years to support a Masters Degree (Research), with a possible 3 month extension, subject to approval by the Director, Graduate Research; or
b. 3.5 years for a Doctoral Degree (Research), with a maximum of two possible 3 month extensions, each subject to approval by the Director, Graduate Research; or
c. Australian Government Research Training Program Indigenous Priority Scheme Scholarships: a maximum of 4 years for a full-time Doctoral Degree (Research); or
d. Maximum of 1 year for a full-time Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication, with a maximum of two possible 3 month extensions, each subject to approval by the Director, Graduate Research.

RTP Stipend

(15) A full-time scholarship may be held for a maximum of:

a. 1.75 years to support a Masters Degree (Research); or
b. 3.5 years for a full-time Doctoral Degree (Research); or

c. Australian Government Research Training Program Indigenous Priority Scheme Scholarships may be held for 4 years to support a full-time Doctoral Degree (Research).

Scholarship Extensions – RTP Fees Offset

(16) To apply for an extension, a scholar should seek the support of their Principal Supervisor. If supported, the scholar will be invited to apply for an extension to the appropriate delegate.

(17) An extension of scholarship cannot be granted beyond the maximum possible period of support and may only be approved under compassionate or compelling circumstances.

(18) The eligibility for an extension and maximum periods of support are outlined on the Graduate Research website.

Rate

(19) The rate applicable to each scholarship round is available on the Graduate Research website.

RTP Allowances

(20) RTP Allowances may include a one-off relocation allowance for the following eligible scholars:

a. Domestic Stipend scholars – Scholars from within Australia who relocate to within 50 kms of their campus of study will be eligible for a one-off relocation reimbursement of up to $1,500. Claimable expenses upon production of tax invoices/receipts include:
    i. travel to within 50 kms of their campus of study equivalent to the economy or student airfare, for the scholar, spouse and dependents;
    ii. removalist expenses; and
    iii. a pre-determined per kilometre allowance if travelling by car, up to the equivalent economy or student airfare costs.
        - Domestic Scholars cannot claim for accommodation, meal costs, or direct petrol costs.

b. Where a Dual Award Doctoral Degree (DADD) or Jointly Awarded Doctoral Degree (JADD) domestic scholar has not previously claimed a relocation allowance, they may receive a one-off relocation allowance of $1,500 to relocate to the partner institution.

c. International Stipend scholars – The RTP Allowance provides a one-off relocation allowance of $1,500 to international RTP scholars who relocate to within 50 kms of their campus of study from an overseas country to take up their scholarship.

(21) Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) is provided to RTP Stipend international scholars for the duration of their student visa and any approved upgrade to the scholar's program. Where the Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) is extended on the basis of an extension to candidature, the scholar will be liable for any additional OSHC costs. The scholar must advise Graduate Research of the departure date from Australia following thesis submission or award. OSHC will cease at the award of your degree, or if a scholar withdraws or is terminated from their program of study.

(22) All scholars are eligible to apply for direct research cost allowances. Appropriate uses of this funding includes, but is not limited to: conference registration, travel, publication expenses, laptop and software costs, training courses, specific expertise or facilities, internship costs, research training support, data collection and analysis costs, thesis proof-reading and editing, and consumables.

Section 8 - Applications, selection process and offers

Applications

(23) The Application process is available on the Graduate Research website.

Selection

(24) The Selection process applicable to each scholarship round is available in the Research Scholarship Guidelines on the Graduate Research website.

Offers

(25) Successful applicants will receive an offer via email to the email address stipulated on their application form or existing University email account.

Section 9 - Commencement

(26) The scholar must be enrolled in a HDR and commence the scholarship no later than the date specified in the scholarship offer. The offer will be forfeited if this condition is not met, unless deferral has been approved in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research Policy.

Section 10 - Supervision and facilities

(27) The University's Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature applies in relation to HDR supervision and facilities.

Section 11 - Attendance

RTP Stipend – Full time

(28) A scholar must undertake an approved Master Degree (Research) or Doctoral Degree (Research) at the University upon commencement of the scholarship and enrol as a full-time candidate, unless the Director, Graduate Research has approved part-time study.

RTP Stipend – Part time

(29) The Director, Graduate Research may approve a part-time scholarship to a domestic candidate where the applicant is able to demonstrate:

a. carer responsibilities for a pre-school aged child;
b. carer responsibilities for school-aged children as a sole parent with limited access to outside support;
c. carer responsibilities for an invalid or disabled spouse, child or parent; or
d. a medical condition that limits their capacity to undertake full-time study, supported by medical certification.

(30) The Australian Government Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 specifies that international candidates with a Student Visa cannot study on a part-time basis in Australia, and will not be awarded a scholarship on a part-time basis, unless there are compelling or compassionate circumstances as defined in the Higher Degree by

Section 12 - Leave

(31) All types of leave referred to in this section must be discussed with and approved by the relevant supervisor.

(32) An RTP stipend scholar's period of support will be increased by the length of any additional paid sick leave, paid parental leave, paid partner leave, or paid family and domestic violence leave.

RTP Stipend

Annual leave

(33) RTP Stipend scholars are entitled to up to 20 working days paid annual leave each year calculated on a pro-rata basis within the period of the scholarship. This may be accrued over the tenure of the scholarship.

Sick leave

(34) RTP Stipend scholars are entitled to up to 10 working days paid sick leave each year calculated on a pro-rata basis within the period of the scholarship. This may be accrued over the tenure of the scholarship.

(35) Sick leave entitlements may also be used by scholars with family responsibilities, to care for sick children or relatives.

(36) For periods of illness lasting longer than 10 working days and where there is medical certification confirming the illness, scholars may receive up to a total of 60 working days paid sick leave in addition to the normal duration of the scholarship.

(37) Applications for sick leave exceeding the 10 working days' provision must be accompanied by medical certification and submitted to Graduate Research prior to the scholarship expiry date.

Parental leave

(38) RTP Stipend scholars who are primary carers may receive up to 20 weeks paid parental leave for childbirth or adoption occurring within the tenure of the stipend scholarship.

(39) Periods of paid parental leave are in addition to the normal duration of the stipend period.

(40) All applications for parental leave must be submitted to Graduate Research prior to the scholarship expiry date and accompanied by medical/adoption certification and submitted within the tenure of the stipend scholarship.

(41) Paid parental leave is not available within the first 12 months of the scholarship.

(42) Unpaid parental leave may be applied for as Leave of Absence under this policy.

Partner leave

(43) RTP Stipend scholars who are partners may receive up to 10 working days paid partner leave for a childbirth or adoption occurring within the tenure of the stipend scholarship. For the purposes of this clause "partner" means the partner of the primary carer, which includes a spouse or de facto.

(44) Paid partner leave must be taken during the three-week period prior to the expected birth or placement of the child, or up to six months after the actual birth or placement of the child.

(45) Periods of paid partner leave are in addition to the normal duration of the stipend period.

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(46) All applications for partner leave must be submitted to Graduate Research prior to the scholarship expiry date and accompanied by medical/adoption certification and submitted within the tenure of the stipend scholarship.

(47) Paid partner leave is not available within the first 12 months of a scholarship.

Family and Domestic Violence Leave

(48) RTP stipend scholars are entitled to up to 10 working days paid family and domestic violence each year calculated on a pro-rata basis within the period of the scholarship.

Unused leave

(49) Any unused leave will be forfeited when the RTP Stipend scholarship is completed or terminated.

Leave entitlements for part-time scholars

(50) A part-time RTP Stipend scholar is expected to progress at half the rate of a full-time scholar and therefore receives approximately half of the leave entitlements listed above for each year of study.

Transfer of scholarship from another University

(51) RTP stipend scholars transferring from another university may have their leave entitlements deducted by any amount accessed by the scholar at their previous university.

Section 13 - Leave of Absence

(52) Periods of approved leave of absence will not be deducted from the overall scholarship tenure.

RTP Fees Offset

(53) After 12 months' full time equivalent, a scholar may apply to the relevant Head of School or Deputy Head of School for a leave of absence of scholarship for a period of up to 12 months during the tenure of the scholarship.

(54) For Doctoral Degree (Research) scholars:

a. any leave of absence applications exceeding 12 months during the tenure of the scholarship can only be approved by the Director, Graduate Research where the scholar can demonstrate exceptional circumstances beyond the scholar's control. The maximum period of any further extension will be 12 months.

RTP Stipend

(55) After 12 months' full time equivalent, a scholar may apply to the Director, Graduate Research for a leave of absence of scholarship for a period of up to 12 months during the tenure of the scholarship.

(56) The Director, Graduate Research will only approve any further leave of absence where the scholar can demonstrate exceptional circumstances beyond the scholar's control. The maximum period of any further extension will be 12 months.

International scholars

(57) Leave of absence from scholarship may only be approved where the scholar can demonstrate exceptional circumstances beyond the scholar's control. The University is required to report all such cases to the Department of Home Affairs (DOHA).

Section 14 - Employment

RTP Stipend

(58) Scholars must not undertake paid employment of more than 16 hours per week within the hours of 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday, averaged over a 12 month period (52 weeks).

(59) Scholars are not required to undertake paid employment as a condition of the scholarship.

International scholars

(60) A scholar with a student visa may not undertake employment that is inconsistent with the conditions of their visa.

Section 15 - Enrolment Variations

Transfer of program within the University

(61) A scholarship may be transferred to another program of study, subject to the scholar receiving formal approval for entry to that program by the Director, Graduate Research.

(62) If the Director, Graduate Research approves a transfer of program between a Masters Degree (Research) and a Doctoral Degree (Research):

a. RTP Fees Offset:
    i. A Masters Degree (Research) scholar may upgrade to a Doctoral Degree (Research) program during the tenure of the scholarship. The RTP Fees Offset duration then becomes a maximum of 3.5 years full-time equivalent for a full time Doctoral Degree (Research) with a maximum of two possible 3 month extensions, each subject to approval by the Director, Graduate Research, or a mximum of four years full-time equivalent for scholars in receipt of an Australian Government Training Program Indigenous Priority Scheme Scholarship, including any previous tenure.
    ii. A Doctoral Degree (Research) scholar may convert to a Masters Degree (Research) program during the tenure of the scholarship. The maximum RTP Fees Offset duration then becomes 1.75 years full-time equivalent including any previous tenure, with a possible 3 month extension, subject to approval by the Director, Graduate Research.
b. RTP Stipend:
    i. A Masters Degree (Research) scholar may upgrade to a Doctoral Degree (Research) program during the tenure of the scholarship. The stipend and allowances duration then becomes a maximum of 3.5 years full-time equivalent for a full-time Doctoral Degree (Research) or four years full-time equivalent for scholars in receipt of an Australian Government Training Program Indigenous Priority Scheme Scholarship including any previous tenure.
    ii. A Doctoral Degree (Research) scholar may convert to a Masters Degree (Research) program during the tenure of the scholarship. The maximum stipend and allowances duration then becomes 1.75 years full-time equivalent, including any previous tenure.

Variation of study load

(63) The Director, Graduate Research may approve a request to alter a scholar’s study load on application.

(64) Where the variation of study load is approved, the remaining period of scholarship is extended, or reduced on a pro rata basis.

Section 16 - Transfer of Scholarship

(65) Scholars who wish to transfer to another Higher Education Provider (HEP) should contact the HEP to determine if they may be awarded a scholarship at that institution.

(66) Scholars who wish to transfer to the University must provide information from the former HEP on the duration of the HDR tenure already consumed, including approved periods of leave. The Director, Graduate Research will determine whether they may be awarded a scholarship at the University.

Section 17 - Temporary cessation of stipend payments

RTP Stipend

(67) Where a scholar does not comply with clauses 11(b), 26 or 77:

a. Stipend payments will be forfeited; and
b. The periods of study undertaken towards the degree during this time will be deducted from the maximum period of scholarship tenure.

Section 18 - Research Internships

(68) RTP scholars may undertake approved research internships at other organisations for a maximum of 12 months' duration on a full-time equivalent basis (unless a case for exceptional circumstances can be made).

(69) To apply for an internship, RTP scholars must complete the Notification of Internship Form and send it to graduate-research@newcastle.edu.au.

(70) Research internships at other organisations are subject to the approval of the scholar's principal supervisor, the Head of School or Deputy Head of School, and the Director, Graduate Research.

(71) Research internships will not be considered as a reason for an extension of scholarship.

RTP Fee Offset

(72) RTP Fee Offset scholarship scholars will not have their scholarship extended by the duration of the research activity up to the maximum period of RTP support.

RTP Stipend

(73) RTP stipend payments may continue for the duration of research internships if:

a. the scholar already holds an RTP Stipend;
b. the maximum duration of the academic program has not been reached; and
c. the thesis has not been submitted for examination.

(74) Scholars undertaking research internships at other organisations are not eligible to have their RTP Stipend scholarship extended beyond the maximum period of RTP support.

Section 19 - Suspension of scholarship

(75) Suspension of scholarship payments may occur if:

a. Scholars do not enrol in their program of study by the census date for each semester;
b. The Director, Graduate Research finds the scholar has failed to observe any condition of the Higher Degree by Research Policy, the Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature or any additional condition outlined in the scholar's scholarship offer, or;
c. The Director, Graduate Research believes on reasonable grounds that the scholar's study is affected by circumstances that prevent the scholar from pursuing the program.

Section 20 - Termination

International scholars

(76) Scholarship benefits will be terminated if the scholar does not hold a valid student visa. It is the responsibility of international scholars to ensure they hold a valid student visa while in Australia.

RTP Fees Offset

(77) A scholarship will terminate:

a. on the expiry of the period for which the scholarship was granted;
b. upon submission of the thesis or creative component for examination;
c. if the scholar ceases to meet the eligibility criteria specified in this policy,
d. if candidature is terminated for any reason;
e. upon the death or incapacity of the scholar; or
f. if the scholar sends written resignation or withdrawal from enrolment to Graduate Research.

(78) Once a scholarship is terminated, it cannot be re-activated unless re-enrolment is permitted.

RTP Stipend

(79) A scholarship will terminate:

a. on the expiry of the period for which the scholarship was granted;
b. 14 calendar days after the submission of the thesis or where applicable, creative component for examination;
c. if the scholar ceases to meet the eligibility criteria specified in this policy;
d. if the Committee finds the scholar has failed to observe any condition of the Higher Degree by Research Policy, the Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature or any additional condition outlined in the scholar's scholarship offer, in which event any monies paid to the scholar subsequent to that breach shall immediately become repayable to the University;
e. if candidature is terminated for any reason;
f. upon the death or incapacity of the scholar;
g. if the scholar sends written resignation or withdrawal from enrolment to Graduate Research.
h. if the scholar does not resume study at the conclusion of a period of Leave of Absence or does not obtain approval to extend that period of Leave of Absence; or
i. when the scholar ceases to be a full-time scholar and when approval has not been obtained to hold the

scholarship on a part-time basis.

(80) Once a scholarship is terminated, it cannot be re-activated.

Section 21 - Obligations

(81) Scholars accept the award of the scholarship subject to the conditions described in this policy and any additional conditions outlined in the scholar's scholarship offer, and agree to abide by the conditions and any subsequent variations to this policy.

(82) Scholars are required to conform to the rules and policies of the University governing their program.

(83) RTP Stipend scholars commencing a HDR on campus must remain enrolled on campus for the majority of the degree (also refer to Section 11 - Attendance).

(84) International candidates must be compliant with the international student visa requirements as specified by Department of Home Affairs (DOHA).

Section 22 - Appeal

(85) Applicants and scholars may appeal in writing to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) against decisions made by the Director, Graduate Research or the Committee on the grounds of procedural deficiency.

(86) Written appeals can be submitted to Graduate Research within 20 working days of notification of a decision of the Director, Graduate Research. The determination by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) is final.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	4th February 2026
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Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Rohan Walker Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Enquiries Contact	Graduate Research

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Working day" - Any day other than Saturday, Sunday, or a public holiday in Newcastle, on which business may be conducted.

"Applicant" - Where referring to a student, an applicant is an individual seeking entry to a program or course offered by the University or its partner organisation/s. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Award" - When referring to a University qualification, this term means an academic qualification approved by Academic Senate that is conferred when a student has met the relevant program requirements. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Calendar days" - All days in a month including weekends and public holidays.

"Campus" - means any place or premises owned or controlled by the University, but may also specifically refer to a designated operating location such as the Callaghan Campus.

"Candidature" - The period of time between acceptance of offer and termination, withdrawal from, or completion of a higher degree by research program, including periods when a candidate is not enrolled.

"Census date" - The date in each term on which a student / candidate enrolled in a course is deemed to be financially liable for the course.

"Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE)" - Means the document issued through the Australian Government's relevant department and associated systems, by authorised officers of the University that confirms that an international student is eligible to enrol in a course. The CoE is required under Commonwealth Legislation for the student visa.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Candidate" - With regard to Higher Degree by Research it has the same meaning as student. For all other instances it is a person considered for appointment to a position.

"Dual Award Doctoral Degree (DADD)" - Is an arrangement whereby a doctoral degree candidate is jointly supervised by the University and another institution, is enrolled at both institutions, and receives two testamurs, each acknowledging the dual award. Each DADD candidature is governed by an individual Candidate Agreement.

"Jointly Awarded Doctoral Degree (JADD)" - Is an arrangement whereby a doctoral degree candidate is jointly supervised by the University and another institution, is enrolled at both institutions and receives one award bearing the seals of both institutions. Each JADD candidature is governed by an individual Candidate Agreement and a JADD Agreement between the collaborating institutions.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

"Thesis" - A dissertation involving research by a candidate for the award of a Higher Degree by Research (HDR) qualification.

"Delegate" - (noun) refers to a person occupying a position that has been granted or sub-delegated a delegation of authority, or a committee or body that has been granted or sub-delegated a delegation of authority.