

Higher Degree by Research Scholarship Guidelines

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1. Context

This document supports the university's commitment to recruiting and funding higher degree by research candidates in areas of research strength through the provision of living allowance and tuition fee scholarships. The allocation of scholarship is determined on the basis of academic merit, experience, prior learning and other relevant attainments. This strategy aligns with the *NeW Futures Strategic Plan 2016-2025* focus on attracting high calibre research candidates.

This document should be read in conjunction with the relevant scholarship policies.

[Research Training Program Scholarship Policy](#)

[Higher Degree by Research Scholarship Policy](#)

2. Definitions

HDR means Higher Degree by Research Program for example, a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or Master of Philosophy (MPhil).

RTP means Research Training Program scholarship funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education. An RTP scholarship may contain one or more of the following component: a fees offset, a living allowance, establishment allowances.

UNIPRS means University of Newcastle International Postgraduate Research Scholarship. The UNIPRS is a scholarship to cover tuition fees. Candidates who are awarded a UNIPRS must also be awarded a living allowance scholarship including Overseas Student Health Cover and equivalent benefits to a UNRSC. The living allowance scholarship may be in the form of a UNRSC or UNRSE.

UNRSC means University of Newcastle Research Scholarship – Central; a stipend funded by the Research and Innovation Division.

UNRSE means University of Newcastle Research Scholarship – External; a stipend funded by a Research Grant, Business/Industry or Philanthropic funding.

University means the University of Newcastle or UON.

3. Timeline

Scholarship application closing dates, outcome dates and latest commencement dates are as advertised on the [UON Scholarship webpage](#).

4. Eligibility

4.1. The University requires that all applicants satisfy three fundamental assessment criteria;

1. Applicants must meet the [admissions criteria](#) for entry into the HDR program
2. Applicants must meet the [University's English Proficiency Policy](#) at the time of application submission;
3. Applicants must have support from a supervisor who is a member of the UON academic staff.

In limited circumstances a relaxation of these eligibility criteria may be sought by the relevant school and faculty to allow an applicant to be considered for scholarship despite not having satisfied the minimum criteria. Approval of relaxation requests are at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Research.

4.2. Requirements

- 4.2.1. Successful applicants must commence no later than the relevant [Latest Commencement Date](#).
- 4.2.2. Scholarship holders are required to undertake their studies 'on campus', however candidates may study at other locations for periods of less than one semester to undertake activities such as fieldwork. In exceptional circumstances, and on the recommendation of the Head of School, approval may be granted by the Dean of Graduate Research for a scholarship holder to undertake their studies as an 'off campus' candidate for periods longer than one semester.
- 4.2.3. Scholarship holders are required to remain enrolled full time in their research degree unless approval is granted to enrol part time due to specific carer requirements or medical conditions.
- 4.2.4. Scholarship holders must not undertake paid employment of more than eight hours per week, Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

5. Selection Criteria – Processes

The Scholarship Score Components (Section 6) will be applied to all applications that satisfy the following criteria:

5.1. Closing Date and Anticipated Commencement

Applications not received by the relevant [Closing Date](#) will be deemed ineligible for the current round.

Applications that provide an anticipated start date beyond the relevant [Latest Commencement Date](#), will be deemed ineligible and will be recorded as an application for the next scholarship round.

5.2. Triage Process

Applicants must include an [Expression of Interest](#) form signed by a UON academic and enter a Pre-Identified Candidate (PIC) Code in their application to be considered for scholarship. The PIC Code is provided by an applicant's potential supervisor as evidence of engagement and support for the application to be considered. A potential supervisor's support does not guarantee admission will be offered or that a scholarship will be awarded.

Applications received up to two weeks prior to the relevant [Closing Date](#) without an identified supervisor will be made available to faculties who may choose to assist applicants in finding a supervisor prior to the relevant Closing Date.

5.3. English Proficiency

Applicants who have not demonstrated meeting UON English Language Proficiency requirements by the relevant [Closing Date](#) will be deemed ineligible for scholarship.

In exceptional circumstances, the relevant school and faculty can make a case for a relaxation of English Language requirements. These requests will be scrutinised and approval is at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Research.

5.4. Current HDR candidates

Applications from the following co-horts will be considered after all other applications if scholarship funding allows:

- 5.4.1. Any international scholarship applicant who was unsuccessful in a previous round and commenced study, regardless of whether they are a self-funded or sponsored candidate.
- 5.4.2. Doctoral Degree (Research/Professional) candidates enrolled in a research degree who have completed more than two years of candidature (EFTSL) at the round's [Latest Outcome Date](#).
- 5.4.3. Master Degree (Research) candidates who have completed more than one year of candidature (EFTSL) at the round's [Latest Outcome Date](#).

5.5 Indigenous PhD Scholarship applicants must provide evidence of Australian Aboriginality and/or Torres Strait Islander status as detailed in the [Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander – Establishing Status within the University Policy](#).

5.6 Disability Support PhD Scholarship applicants must provide evidence of registration with UON AccessAbility by including:

- a) a copy of their Academic Integration Plan; or
- b) a letter from AccessAbility outlining the impact of their conditions/s on HDR study.

6. Scholarship Score Components

The scoring mechanism for the round is split into two different cohorts separately for domestic and international applicants:

CURRENT (international and domestic)	Max. points
GPA converted to a score	12
Publications	3
Prior Research Experience	2
Prior Research Training	4
Exceptional Academic Merit	1
Strategic Merit	4
Maximum Total Score	26

OTHER (international and domestic)	Max. points
GPA converted to a score	6
Publications	6
Prior Research Experience	2
Prior Research Training	4
Exceptional Academic Merit	1
Strategic Merit	4
Maximum Total Score	23

Scores are scaled to a common metric in order to enable direct comparison between current and other applicants.

A current candidate is one who has completed, or will complete, an undergraduate or honours program within two years of the relevant [Closing Date](#). Applicants who provide evidence to claim disadvantage on the grounds of ill health, pregnancy, carer responsibilities or other legitimate reason will also be ranked as a current honours student to recognise the limited opportunity they have had to gain further experience or qualifications.

All remaining applicants are ranked as 'other'.

6.1. Grade Point Average (GPA) Calculations

The GPA used for scholarship assessment will be based on the applicant's most recent qualification which equates to a minimum Australian Qualifications Framework level 7. UON Graduate Research scales the score with reference to the University's scoring system or the country where the qualification was attained so that each applicant is given a GPA out of 7. Where an applicant's highest qualification does not equate to a minimum of an Australian Qualifications Framework Bachelor degree, the applicant will be awarded a set GPA score of 0 out of 7.

The GPA score is then converted to a score out of 12 (Current cohort) or 6 (Other cohort) as detailed above.

6.2. Publications

Research outputs will contribute towards the scholarship score, up to a maximum of 3 points (Current cohort) or 6 points (Other cohort).

The scoring below refers to when the language of publication is in English. If the language of publication is other than English then half of the points detailed below will be awarded.

Publication Type	Score
Refereed/peer reviewed journal article, book, book chapter, conference proceedings, research exhibition (with written exhibition guide), creative work. Must be published or accepted for publication (in press) with verifiable evidence. Manuscripts under preparation or under review will not be scored.	2 points each
Conference presentation, non-refereed research report. *Current applicants: Maximum number of presentations/reports in this category is 2 (1.0 points). Other applicants: Maximum number of presentations/reports in this category is 4 (2.0 points).	0.5 points each*

6.3. Prior Research Experience

Relevant research work experience acquired outside of prior qualifications will be credited 0.5 points per six month full time equivalent period. The maximum points that can be attained through prior research experience is 2.0.

Examples of such experience might include a research assistant position or research based employment. CVs must include evidence describing their role – for example providing a position description or statement of service and not just job title to enable scoring.

6.4. Prior Research Training

Independent research completed as part of prior qualifications can contribute to scholarship points up to a maximum of 4 points. The cumulative EFTSL is used for scoring purposes. To be eligible, the research training must involve independent research work such as a project, dissertation or thesis (can include group based projects) as detailed on transcripts. Research methods courses or similar do not count toward research training points. Points will not be awarded to qualifications that do not meet the minimum equivalence of an Australian Qualifications Framework Bachelor degree.

Training	Score
0.5 to 1.0 EFTSL	4 points
0.2 to 0.49 EFTSL	2 points

6.5. Exceptional Academic Merit

An additional scholarship point is available where there is verifiable evidence of an applicant having received recognition for academic excellence that is not recognised in any other component of the scoring system such as GPA. Examples of such recognition would include university, national or international recognition for academic activities and patents.

6.6. Strategic Merit

Faculties may award applicants up to 4 points for strategic merit, as determined by individual Faculty goals and targets.

7. Allocation of Scholarships

The number of scholarships available will be subject to Research and Innovation Division budget.

7.1. Ranking Meeting Allocation

The Scholarship Ranking Committee will be chaired by the Dean of Graduate Research. The committee, consisting of the Faculty Assistant Deans Research Training and a representative from the Wollotuka Institute, will provide recommendations to the Chair, who will determine which applicants are awarded RTP and UNRSC scholarships.

The first stage of ranking is based on scholarship scores excluding the strategic merit points. Half of the available RTP and UNRSC scholarships for domestic and for international applicants will be awarded to the top ranked applicants.

The second stage will rank the remaining applicants by Faculty based on the scores including the strategic merit scores. The highest ranked applicants in each faculty will be awarded an RTP or UNRSC scholarship up to the number allocated to that faculty.

Domestic applicants who are deemed unsuccessful for scholarship (stipend), however, have been approved admission into a HDR program may be offered a RTP Fees Offset to cover the cost of tuition fees, where budget allows. Duration of support is as outlined in the [RTP Scholarship Policy](#).

8. Confidentiality

The deliberations and decisions of faculties, committees and/or delegated officers relating to allocation, selection and award of scholarships are confidential.

9. Appeals Procedure

Unsuccessful applicants for research scholarships may lodge an appeal against the outcome. Appeals will only be considered on issues of administrative process, not against academic evaluations of the faculty or any committee in relation to the scoring process.

The appeal must be in writing, include a concise statement of the reasons for the appeal, and be lodged with the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) (DVCR@newcastle.edu.au), within 25 working days of the date of the letter advising the outcome of the application for the scholarship.

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and/or nominee(s) will review the administrative processes taken and will take into account the applicant's reasons for the appeal, the information contained in the original application for a scholarship, and the HDR Scholarship Guidelines.

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) will determine the outcome of the appeal as either:

1. the administrative procedures for scholarship selection were applied correctly, and the application is unsuccessful;
2. the administrative procedures for scholarship selection were not applied correctly, but the variation in the ranking of the application was not sufficient for the applicant to be awarded a scholarship, and the application is unsuccessful; or
3. the administrative procedures for scholarship selection were not applied correctly, and a scholarship will be awarded.

The outcome of the appeal will be determined within 25 working days of the date of receipt of the written appeal.

10. Outside of Round

10.1. University of Newcastle Research Scholarship – External (UNRSE)

At any time of the year, a request can be made to the Dean of Graduate Research for a UNRSE to be awarded, where funding is provided from a research grant, business/industry partner or philanthropic support. The award of a UNIPRS is subject to budget availability, as well as the applicant meeting appropriate academic standards and satisfying the University's English Language Proficiency policy.

10.2. Dual Award and Jointly Awarded Scholarships

At any time of the year, a request can be made to the Dean of Graduate Research for a scholarship to be awarded to a candidate undertaking a Dual Award or Jointly Awarded Doctoral Degree program. This scholarship will provide a stipend for the periods of candidature in Australia, as well as a scholarship to cover UON tuition fees for the duration of the program. The award of these scholarships is subject to budget availability, as well as the applicant meeting appropriate academic standards and satisfying the University's English Language Proficiency policy.

10.3. Transfer of scholarship from other institution

RTP recipients at other institutions who wish to transfer to the University may continue to receive their scholarship if there is sufficient funding at the University to do so. This will be determined by the Dean of Graduate Research external to scholarship rounds. All other scholarship types are not transferrable to or from another university.

10.4 Strategic Scholarships

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) has the discretion to award strategic scholarships in priority research areas.

11. Delegations and Relaxing Provision

If required, the Dean of Graduate Research, or nominee, may act under delegated authority to resolve urgent matters relating to award of scholarships. In exceptional circumstances arising in a particular case, the Dean of Graduate Research may relax any provision of these Guidelines other than those prescribed by the [Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines \(Research\) 2017](#).

Related Documents

[English Proficiency Policy](#)

Positions

Identify the following positions in line with the key below;

Policy Sponsor: Dean of Graduate Research

Policy Owner: Dean of Graduate Research

Policy Contact Position: Manager, Operations