

# Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Policy - Australian Government Research Training Program Funded Scholarships

## Section 1 - Purpose

(1) On behalf of the Commonwealth Government, and in accordance with the [Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines \(Research\) 2017](#), Charles Sturt University (the University) is a provider of Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarships.

(2) This document outlines the policy relating to scholarships funded under the Australian Government Research Training Program (AGRTP), as they apply at Charles Sturt University, particularly clarifying the University's position where discretion is afforded in the legislation. In the event of an inconsistency between this document and the prevailing legislation, the legislation takes precedence.

(3) AGRTP funded Scholarships are awarded to candidates of exceptional research potential undertaking a Higher Degree by Research (Masters by Research degree, Doctor of Philosophy or Research Professional Doctorate).

## Section 2 - Glossary

(4) Higher Degree by Research (HDR) - means programs containing a research component which is 66 per cent or more of the whole program. They include the Doctoral Degrees (Doctor of Philosophy, Research Professional Doctorates) and Masters by Research.

(5) Doctoral degree – qualifies individuals who apply a substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge in one or more fields of investigation or Scholarship. Candidates for the award of a Doctoral degree must demonstrate through presentation of the work in a thesis advanced theoretical and methodological knowledge and that the research makes an original and significant contribution to knowledge or understanding.

(6) Master by Research – means a program that qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research and scholarship and as a pathway for further learning. Masters by Research outputs must demonstrate a distinct contribution to knowledge of the subject. A Master by Research candidate is required to undertake research on an approved topic, the results of which should result in a distinct contribution to knowledge of the subject. Candidates for the award of a Master by Research degree must demonstrate through presentation of the work in a thesis an appropriate theoretical and methodological knowledge.

## Section 3 - Policy

### Scholarship Types

(7) The University utilises Research Training Program funding to provide the following Higher Degree Research (HDR) Scholarships:

- a. Australian Government Research Training Program (AGRTP) Scholarship;
- b. Australian Government Research Training Program Indigenous (AGRTP-Indigenous) Scholarship;
- c. Australian Government Research Training Program Part-Time (AGRTP-Part-Time) Scholarship; and
- d. Australian Government Research Training Program International (AGRTP-International) Scholarship.

(8) The University may also offer AGRTP Scholarships to applicants whose research area is relevant to the key research objectives of one of the University Research Centres. These Scholarships offer the same entitlements and conditions as an AGRTP Scholarship but may be advertised externally as University Research Centre Scholarships.

(9) Scholarships may be comprised of one or more of the following components:

- a. stipend (or living allowance);
- b. tuition fee exempt place;
- c. operating funding for research costs (sometimes referred to as a resource or maintenance allowance); and
- d. relocation allowance.

## Eligibility Criteria

(10) To be eligible for the HDR Scholarships listed above, applicants must be enrolled in a Higher Degree by Research course; or applying for the same at the University. To take up an offer of Scholarship, the applicant must have had their enrolment into the proposed Higher Degree by Research (HDR) program accepted by the University. Recipients must remain enrolled to receive the Scholarship entitlements.

(11) Candidates must not be receiving an equivalent award or Scholarship from the Commonwealth designed to offset HDR fees.

(12) Applicants for the AGRTP, AGRTP-Indigenous and AGRTP-Part-Time Scholarships must be Australian or New Zealand citizens or Australian permanent residents. Applicants for the AGRTP-International Scholarship must be overseas students under the definition in the [Higher Education Support Act 2003](#).

(13) The AGRTP Scholarships are awarded as a result of a competitive process. The criteria and assessment are set out in the [Scholarship Application Guide](#) online.

## Working outside the HDR program

(14) Recipients of the AGRTP, AGRTP-Indigenous and AGRTP-International Scholarships must not be receiving an equivalent award, Scholarship or salary providing a benefit greater than 75 per cent of the AGRTP stipend rate to undertake the HDR (income earned from sources unrelated to the course of study is not subject to this 75 per cent requirement).

(15) Recipients of the AGRTP full-time Scholarship, AGRTP-Indigenous and AGRTP-International may, with the approval of the Supervisory Team and the Head of School, undertake up to a total of 50 hours paid employment per month, in an area unrelated to their research program, provided that such employment does not interfere with the progress of the study program. Employment means paid work undertaken within the University as well as paid work undertaken external to the University. Any paid employment beyond the above mentioned figure must have approval from the Director, Research. Contravention of this condition regarding paid employment will result in the Scholarship being cancelled. (The University cannot require a candidate to undertake employment within the University).

(16) The University may elect to prioritise a specific group of students when advertising RTP-funded Scholarships, consistent with the [Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines \(Research\) 2017 - Section 1.6.20.5](#).

## Enrolment Status

(17) Recipients of the AG RTP and AG RTP International Scholarships will normally be required to enrol on a full time basis. Recipients of the AG RTP Part-Time Scholarships will normally be required to enrol on a part time basis.

## Scholarship Benefits

(18) Candidates in receipt of a Scholarship may be entitled to one or more of the following:

- a. tuition and other fees:
  - i. candidates are responsible for miscellaneous charges but may be exempt from tuition fees;
- b. operating funding:
  - i. the University may allocate an allowance per session of enrolment to assist with the reimbursement of costs associated with the candidate's research; and
  - ii. where an allowance is allocated, unless otherwise specified, it is paid at the following rates:
    - candidates undertaking research in high-cost fields of education (as defined in the [Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines \(Research\) 2017 - Section 1.7](#)) receive funds at the high-cost rate outlined in CSU's Operating Fund Guidelines.
    - candidates undertaking research in low-cost fields of education (as defined in the [Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines \(Research\) 2017 - Section 1.7](#)) receive funds at the low-cost rate outlined in CSU's Operating Fund Guidelines.
  - iii. operating funds cannot be used to pay the tuition fee costs of candidates who have exceeded their tuition fee exemption.
- c. relocation allowance:
  - i. a candidate who relocates to a campus of the University to take up the Scholarship may receive a relocation allowance for the following:
    - economy airfare from the place of residence to campus of study for themselves, spouse (x1) and dependents (x2) and removal expenses to a maximum rate to be determined by the University.

(19) Candidates in receipt of an AG RTP, AG RTP-Indigenous or AG RTP-International Scholarship may be entitled to receive a stipend:

- a. the full-time stipend annual rate will be set within the base and maximum stipend rates set as advised by the Commonwealth and are published annually online; or
- b. if a part-time candidature is approved for AG RTP, AG RTP-Indigenous or AG RTP-International recipients, the stipend is payable at a reduced rate and without the benefit of the tax free status.

Note: Applicable stipend rates are outlined on the [CSU Higher Degree by Research Scholarships web page](#).

(20) Candidates in receipt of an AG RTP-International may be entitled to Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC).

## Leave Entitlements

(21) The expectation HDR candidates is that they will be actively studying in their program for 48 weeks of the year.

(22) All Scholarship recipients are entitled to:

- a. annual leave:
  - i. 20 working days per year. This may be accrued but unused leave will be forfeited when the Scholarship is terminated, i.e. leave cannot be taken at the end of tenure to extend the Scholarship.
- b. personal leave:

- i. 10 working days per year. This may be accrued but unused leave will be forfeited when the Scholarship ceases. Absences of three days or greater must be supported by a medical certificate. This may be used to cover leave for candidates with family caring responsibilities. This personal leave does not extend the tenure of the Scholarship. Students are required to apply for this leave to access the entitlement.

(23) AG RTP, AG RTP-Indigenous and AG RTP-International recipients are also entitled to:

a. additional personal leave:

- i. candidates are entitled to receive additional paid Personal leave of up to a total of 12 weeks during the duration of the Scholarship for periods lasting longer than 10 days for which a medical certificate has been provided. This may be used to cover leave for candidates with family caring responsibilities. Where additional personal leave is accessed the tenure of the Scholarship will be extended by an equivalent period. Additional personal leave can only be accessed once existing personal leave entitlements have been exhausted.

b. maternity leave:

- i. candidates who have completed 12 months of their Scholarship are entitled to a maximum of 12 weeks paid maternity leave during the duration of the Scholarship. Paid leave may also be approved if the candidate is adopting a child. Where paid maternity leave is accessed the tenure of the Scholarship will be extended by an equivalent period.

c. parental leave:

- i. candidates who have completed 12 months of their Scholarship may be entitled to 10 days paid parental leave if:
  - they are adopting a child; or
  - they are the partner of the woman giving birth.
- ii. this leave does not extend the tenure of the Scholarship.

d. special leave:

- i. special leave may be approved as paid leave up to a maximum of five days in any calendar year for situations that are not covered by other forms of leave. This leave does not accrue.
- ii. with prior approval, special leave is available to Scholarship holders to cover the following family related circumstances:
  - life threatening illness, serious injury or death of Family or Household member;
  - blood donation;
  - cultural or Religious Obligation;
  - natural Disaster/Emergency Service Volunteer;
  - attendance at compulsory interviews prior to adoption of a child; or
  - situations of domestic violence (if the 10 days personal leave entitlement has been exhausted).
- iii. special leave does not extend the tenure of the Scholarship.

(24) Candidates who take sessional leave of absence from their candidature may seek to have their Scholarship suspended during this period – see Suspensions section.

## **Leave of Absence**

(25) All Scholarship recipients must abide by the [Higher Degree by Research Policy](#) with respect to leave of absence.

(26) All leave of absences must be notified to the Research Office for recording purposes.

(27) Scholarship holders must notify the Research Office at least three weeks prior to resuming study following a

period of leave of absence.

(28) Scholarship holders who suspend their studies without approval required in the Higher [Higher Degree by Research Policy](#) will be required to repay any Scholarship payments to which they were not entitled.

## **Scholarship Duration**

(29) The duration of an AG RTP Scholarship, AG RTP-Indigenous, and AG RTP-International Scholarship (taken on a full-time basis) is three years for a candidate undertaking Research Doctorate studies and two years for a candidate undertaking Research Masters studies subject to satisfactory progress.

(30) The duration of an AG RTP-Part-Time Scholarship and AG RTP-Indigenous Scholarship taken on a part-time basis, is six years for Research Doctorate studies and four years for Research Masters studies.

(31) All Scholarships will be reduced by any periods of HDR study undertaken:

- a. towards the degree prior to the commencement of the Scholarship; or
- b. towards the degree during suspension of the Scholarship (unless the study was undertaken as part of an Commonwealth Government financially supported international postgraduate research Scholarship or Scholarship).

(32) The duration of an AG RTP, AG RTP-Indigenous and AG RTP-International Scholarship will only be increased by any periods of approved paid maternity leave and/or additional sick leave.

(33) The University may also approve an extension to the duration of all a Scholarship for a Research Doctorate candidate of up to six months provided the candidate is making satisfactory progress and the grounds for the extension relate to the study and are beyond the control of the candidate. The University cannot extend the duration of a Scholarship for a Research Masters candidate.

(34) HDR candidates who have exceeded their Scholarship entitlement may be permitted to continue on a fee-paying basis for the remaining period of their HDR candidature. Enrolment must be maintained until a thesis is submitted for examination, unless a candidate withdraws or has their candidature terminated.

(35) A candidate who commences their scholarship in session 3 (session 90) will not have this initial session counted towards their tuition fee exemption entitlement.

## **Commencement of Scholarship**

(36) The Offer of Scholarship will be withdrawn if not accepted by the date specified in the Offer of Scholarship letter.

(37) Scholarships recipients must commence their studies and take up their scholarship within 11 months of the Offer of Scholarship being accepted.

## **Termination of Scholarship**

(38) A Scholarship will be terminated:

- a. if the candidate ceases to meet the eligibility criteria specified above, other than during a period in which the Scholarship has been suspended or during a period of leave.
- b. when the candidate ceases to be:
  - i. a full-time student and approval has not been obtained from the Director, Research to hold the Scholarship on a part-time basis (AG RTP Scholarship, AG RTP-Indigenous and AG RTP-International Scholarship recipients); or

- ii. a part-time student and approval has not been obtained from the Director, Research to hold the Scholarship on a full-time basis (AGRTP-Indigenous and AGRTP-Part-Time Scholarship recipients).
- c. when the candidate completes the course of study, unless completing a Research Masters degree and converting to a Research Doctorate degree, in accordance with the conversion clause below.
- d. when the candidate submits their thesis for examination.
- e. if Charles Sturt University determines that:
  - i. the course of study is not being carried out with competence and diligence in accordance with the offer of the Scholarship; or
  - ii. the candidate has failed to maintain satisfactory academic progress; or
  - iii. the candidate has committed serious misconduct, including, but not limited to the provision of false or misleading information in their Scholarship application or subsequently.
- f. if the candidate does not resume study at the conclusion of a period of suspension, or does not make arrangements to extend that period of suspension.

(39) If a Scholarship is terminated, it cannot be re-activated unless the termination occurred in error.

## **Variations to the Scholarship**

### **AGRTP or AGRTP-International Scholarships - Variation to Part-Time Basis**

(40) The Director, Research may approve an AGRTP Scholarship or AGRTP-International Scholarship recipient continuing their scholarship on a part-time basis in exceptional circumstances. In such cases, the recipient will receive the stipend on a part-time basis.

(41) Exceptional and unexpected circumstances are, for example, a significant medical condition, disability, or significant caring commitments of a dependent with a medical condition or disability, or other circumstances which limit the student's capacity to undertake full-time study. Supporting documentation must be provided to demonstrate the circumstances.

(42) A candidate who has an AGRTP Scholarship or AGRTP-International Scholarship and has moved to part-time may revert to full-time study with the approval of the Director, Research.

### **AGRTP-Indigenous - Variation in Study Load**

(43) The Director, Research may approve an AGRTP-Indigenous Scholarship recipient varying their scholarship to be on a part-time basis, or to be on a full-time basis.

### **AGRTP-Part-Time Scholarship - Variation to Full-Time Basis**

(44) The Director, Research may approve the candidate to transfer to full-time study without a stipend.

### **Variation to Field of Education**

(45) Changes to the research topic which constitute a change in the field of education require approval in accordance with the [Higher Degree by Research Policy](#).

### **Research Overseas**

(46) To be eligible to conduct research overseas while in receipt of any AGRTP Scholarship, the following conditions must be met and approved by the Director, Research:

- a. the Principal Supervisor and the Sub Dean (Graduate Studies) certify that it is necessary for a candidate to conduct their research or fieldwork overseas in order to complete the research program;

- b. adequate supervision of the HDR candidate must be maintained;
- c. the candidate shall give a written undertaking to return to Australia immediately following the completion of the overseas research or fieldwork, to complete the HDR;
- d. the Scholarship holder will not normally be allowed to undertake approved study overseas in the first six months of Scholarship tenure. Candidature undertaken prior to accepting the Scholarship will be taken into account in determining the earliest date on which the candidate may depart; and
- e. the candidate shall maintain their current enrolment mode (full-time/part-time) at Charles Sturt University whilst conducting their research or fieldwork overseas.

(47) The candidate may apply for permission to allow the Scholarship to be tenable overseas for up to 18 months in exceptional circumstances.

### **Research at other Organisations**

(48) The University may approve a candidate to conduct research at organisations outside the higher education system. An application should be made well in advance to the Research Committee through the relevant Head of School and the Faculty Sub Dean (Graduate Studies) who is required to certify that the proposed arrangement will afford adequate support, supervision, training and research freedom for the candidate.

### **Suspensions**

(49) Candidates may apply to the Research Office for a suspension of their Scholarship entitlements.

(50) Suspension may be granted for AG RTP, AG RTP-Indigenous and AG RTP-International Scholarship recipients:

- a. to enable the candidate to pursue a period of paid employment in excess of the allowable 50 hours per month; or
- b. in conjunction with a period of leave of absence from candidature, excluding annual or personal leave.

(51) Suspension may be granted for AG RTP-Part-Time Scholarship recipients in conjunction with a period of leave of absence from candidature, excluding annual or sick leave.

(52) During an approved suspension the candidate will not be entitled to any benefits from the Scholarship. Failure to resume studies after a period of suspension will result in the Scholarship being terminated.

(53) If study has continued during the period of suspension, the period of study will be deducted from the maximum tenure of the Scholarship.

### **Transfer to another Higher Education Provider**

(54) Candidates who transfer to another provider will have their Scholarship terminated at Charles Sturt University. Candidates may continue to receive their Scholarship only if their new provider agrees to Scholarship continuation and subject to the new provider having sufficient AG RTP grant funding available.

### **Transfer from another Higher Education Provider**

(55) Candidates holding a current AG RTP-funded Scholarship from another institution can be considered for transfer to Charles Sturt University and take up one of the Scholarships offered by the University.

(56) Applications for transfer will be considered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Engagement), who will make a determination based on:

- a. whether Charles Sturt University has sufficient AG RTP funding available;

- b. the qualifications of the candidate and the status of their candidature; and
- c. advice from the relevant Faculty Sub Dean (Graduate Studies) and/or Research Centre Director on the suitability of the candidate for transfer.

(57) Where candidates are approved for transfer, the University will require information from the previous institution on the Scholarship benefits the candidate has received and the duration of the award already consumed.

### **Conversion of Degrees**

(58) Candidates may convert from a Research Masters degree to a Research Doctorate degree or from a Research Doctorate degree to a Research Masters degree, and continue to receive their Scholarship.

(59) A candidate in a Research Masters degree may continue to receive their Scholarship for a Research Doctorate degree provided there is no interval of non-enrolment between their enrolment in the Research Masters and the commencement of the Research Doctorate degree, or that such an interval is covered by suspension of the Scholarship.

(60) The maximum duration of a converted Scholarship becomes that for the new research degree minus periods of previous candidature towards the related degree prior to the conversion.

### **Other Information**

#### **Continuing Research Training Scheme, Australian Postgraduate Award and International Postgraduate Research Scholarship candidates**

(61) All continuing former Research Training Scheme Scholarship (RTS) and Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) domestic Scholarship holders will receive stipend, fee support and operating funding for a period necessary to provide at least equivalent support to that which the candidate would have received under the RTS and APA based Scholarships on course of study commencement dates (not the commencement of the RTP Scholarship).

(62) All continuing former International Postgraduate Research Scholarship (IPRS) and Charles Sturt University International Tuition Payment Scholarship (ITP) recipients will receive stipend, fee support and operating funding for a period necessary to provide at least equivalent support to that which the candidate would have received under IPRS and ITP Scholarships based on course of study commencement dates (not the commencement of the RTP Scholarship).

### **Provision of False or Misleading Information**

(63) Charles Sturt University advises candidates that giving false or misleading information is a serious offence. Candidates are required to provide full and complete information and may risk cancellation or reduction of their Scholarship at any time during their candidature if they do not do so.

(64) If Charles Sturt University knows or has reason to believe that a candidate in receipt of an Scholarship has provided false or misleading information to the University in relation to the Scholarship, during or after the application process or at any time during candidature, the University is required to immediately:

- a. re-assess the candidate's entitlement to the Scholarship; and
- b. notify the relevant Commonwealth Government department of the suspected offence and provide a copy of the student's application and any other relevant information requested by that department.

### **Supervision, Facilities and Support**

(65) All HDR candidates will be provided with supervision in accordance with the [Higher Degree by Research Policy](#).



(66) Consistent with the University [Admissions Procedure](#), the particular resources and facilities to be provided to a candidate shall be discussed and agreed with the candidate at the time of admission to the program and confirmed when the research proposal is approved. Recipients of RTP-funded Scholarships will also receive the benefits outlined in the Scholarship Benefits section above.

### **Candidate Obligations**

(67) Candidates shall diligently and to the best of their ability apply themselves to the successful completion of their degree.

(68) Candidates shall have regular and frequent consultations with their supervisory team that can be initiated by either the candidate or the supervisors as per the [Higher Degree by Research Candidates Policy - Academic Communication](#).

(69) Wherever relevant the candidate must seek and abide by appropriate regulatory approvals, including but not limited to those applying to Ethics, Biosafety and Quarantine concerns. These approvals may be granted by the University, any relevant Australian governmental regulatory authorities, any host organisation and governmental regulatory authority of a country or countries in which research is being undertaken. In addition candidates must seek information and abide by the Codes, Policies, Guidelines and rulings of any of these authorities.

(70) Candidates must participate fully in the six-monthly Progress Report process administered by the Research Office.

(71) Candidates are to abide by all academic and administrative policies of Charles Sturt University.

### **Acknowledgement of AG RTP Scholarship**

(72) Recipients of AG RTP Scholarships, their supervisors and any other party who publishes or produces materials such as books, articles, theses, newsletters or other literary or artistic works which relate to the research project carried out by the recipient of the AG RTP Scholarship are expected to acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution.

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

### **Right of Appeal**

(74) Candidates shall have the right to appeal against decisions made in relation to the tenure of the Scholarship and should refer to the [Higher Degree by Research Complaints Procedure](#). It is recommended that candidates consult with their Supervisor, Head of School or Faculty Sub Dean (Graduate Studies) in the first instance.

### **Amendments**

(75) The University reserves the right to amend this Policy and the conditions of award of AG RTP Scholarships. Candidates will be notified of any changes to their conditions of award.

## **Section 4 - Procedures**

(76) A preliminary assessment and ranking of applications is undertaken in accordance with the [Scholarship Application Guide](#). Advice from these assessment processes is integrated and provided to the Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Committee.

(77) The recommendations of the Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Committee are then submitted to Presiding Officer of the Research Committee for endorsement/approval.

(78) Applicants will normally be notified of outcomes within two months of the application closing date.

## **Section 5 - Guidelines**

(79) Nil.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
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