

## Guideline: 2026 ECU-Industry Engagement HDR Scholarships Scheme

### PURPOSE

The ECU-Industry Engagement HDR Scholarship Scheme is an industry-focused, applied research training program that provides opportunities for industry (business, professions, community, government) to partner with ECU researchers and Higher Degree by Research candidates (Masters by Research and PhD) to develop innovative research solutions for industry while engaging with the industry sector.

The Scheme provides financial support for industry-focussed research projects that complement and build on ECU's research priorities, foster strategic collaborations with industry, provide research outcomes with impact, and develop future generations of researchers.

Projects must address an industry-relevant topic where the research question is suitable for a Masters by Research or PhD project.

It is expected that industry partners will make a significant contribution through supervision to the research direction and support for the candidate, including financial and in-kind support appropriate to the project. It is also a requirement that the candidate is located within, and/or closely engage with, the organisation.

Applications for the Scheme are via Expressions of Interest (EOI) which may be submitted at any time to [grs@ecu.edu.au](mailto:grs@ecu.edu.au) following approval by the relevant School Scholarship Committee (see process, page 3).

In preparing an EOI it is important to consider:

- How the proposed research closely, and directly, aligns with one or more of ECU's Research Priority Areas.
- How the proposed research aligns with the strengths and experience of the nominated supervisory team.
- That at least one of the nominated supervisors has a strong research supervision track record, including successful completions. The suitability of all other supervisory team members will be assessed relative to opportunity (i.e. at world class or on the trajectory to world class).
- All ECU members of the supervisory panel must be compliant to supervise on the ECU supervisor register.

## Partner Eligibility

To be an eligible partner in this scheme, the business must have an Australian Business Number (ABN). International businesses will be eligible if they have a significant presence in Australia and have an ABN.

### *Partner Contributions<sup>1</sup>*

- The partner is required to contribute a minimum of (full time equivalent):
  - AUD\$25,000 per annum for 2 years (total minimum contribution of \$50,000) for a MbR program;  
or
  - AUD\$25,000 per annum for 3.5 years (total minimum contribution \$87,500) for a PhD program.
- The contribution is not to be regarded as a 'top up' to the stipend above the base stipend rate but is a contribution towards the base stipend rate.
- The remainder of the contribution may also be used for project costs which will vary by project, discipline and stage of the research project. The Principal Supervisor will have oversight of the expenditure on the project costs. Project costs are expenses incurred through the project only and may be used for purposes including but not limited to field work/data collection; collaboration and presentation of results; project-related travel; candidate training and development including attendance at relevant conference/s to present results from the study.
- Industry partners are also expected to contribute to supervision and/or mentoring of the candidate and research project.
- PhD candidates are expected to engage with the industry partner on placement for a minimum of 3 months FTE throughout their candidacy. This expectation is not applicable to MbR candidates.
- The following will not be part of minimum partner contributions:
  - Value of equipment, services, products, facilities and other in-kind contributions
  - Donations/gifts to ECU
  - Grants awarded for other research/projects
  - The minimum partner commitment period = 2 years (MbR) or 3.5 years (PhD).

## ECU Contributions

- ECU, through the relevant School, will fund all candidate tuition fees (approx. \$90,800 over the duration of a two (2) year MbR or \$148,600 for a 3.5-year PhD program).
- 50% of the base stipend rate (currently \$18,750 per annum).
- Where an international candidate is the recipient of an ECU Industry Engagement MbR/PhD scholarship, ECU may cover other relevant fees and costs relating to the candidate commencing their PhD project, such as VISAs, and single overseas health cover, as appropriate. These costs may be up to approximately \$19,000.
- ECU will provide access to world-class research expertise and infrastructure.
- Candidate Eligibility

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<sup>1</sup> This must be new income to the University and is not to be from a currently funded project or an already approved project.

- Candidates must be enrolled in the Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy Integrated or a Masters by Research degree at ECU.
- Candidates may be domestic or international.
- Candidates must be enrolled full-time at ECU. Part-time enrolment (50% FTE only) may be approved for domestic candidates only:
  - if they are engaged in employment activities that are complementary to their research project; and,
  - where such employment activities are assessed as unlikely to impact Mbr/PhD progress; and,
  - where this is stipulated in the agreement with the partner.
- Scholarship/stipend payments will be pro-rata for part-time candidates (i.e. 50%).

### Scholarships

- Scholarships will be awarded to candidates for up to 2 years for a Mbr or 3.5 years for a PhD candidate (or part time equivalent) as per the industry agreement. ECU contributions to scholarships will not be extended beyond 2 years or 3.5 years (or part time equivalent) under any circumstances.
- Variations to candidature, such as withdrawal, intermitting, parental leave etc., will affect the ECU-Industry Engagement Scholarship agreement. These variations must be in accordance with ECU's candidature policies and with the agreement of the industry partner. Whilst variations may extend the time period over which the scholarship is paid it will not extend the cumulative periods of scholarship payments beyond 2 years or 3.5 years (or part time equivalent).
- **Within 12 months of execution of an industry agreement, candidates must commence their Mbr/PhD AND scholarship payments to the candidate must commence; otherwise, scholarships will be withdrawn, and the industry agreement terminated.**

### Concurrent Scholarships Awarded to Chief Investigators

Please note that a Chief/lead Investigator can be awarded a maximum of two (2) ECU Industry Engagement scholarships at any one time. If a Chief/Lead Investigator already has two IE scholarships and is seeking another, they may still submit an Expression of Interest (EOI). In such cases, the application will be subject to negotiation with the Dean of Graduate Research.

Queries to Graduate Research Services at [grs@ecu.edu.au](mailto:grs@ecu.edu.au)

## PROCESS

Step	Description	Action
1	Submit EOI to Associate Dean Research (ADR) or delegate for review by the School Scholarship Committee.	Supervisor
2	Recommendations by the School Scholarship Committee are sent to the GRS. GRS will finalise the EOI approval and email applicant and ADR of the outcome.	ADR to GRS
3	GRS advise the Research Post Award team (RPA) of the EOI outcome.	GRS
4	Finalised the industry engagement agreement and provide Research Scholarships Business Support (RSBS) information for invoicing and collecting the funding from the industry organisation.	RPA RSBS
5	Advise Student Administration – Fees and Scholarships Office to establish new HDR scholarship.	RPA
6	Recruit MbR/PhD candidate.	Supervisor
7	Apply for ECU admission.	Candidate
8	Organise candidate agreement.	RPA
9	Organise scholarship offer.	Student Administration
10a	Commence MbR/PhD: Submit <i>Starting Advice</i> form.	Candidate
10b	Commence MbR/PhD: Submit <i>Authorisation to Commence</i> form.	Candidate and Supervisor