

The Strategic Research Fund (SRF) may award a PhD scholarship to research teams who are awarded project grants through the ARC, NHMRC and MRFF.¹

National Category 1 grant schemes, specifically the NHMRC, MRFF and ARC, are highly competitive. Success in these schemes reflects research and a research team of the highest quality and is to be celebrated. For this reason, success in ARC DECRA's, ARC Discovery Projects, ARC Linkage Projects, NHMRC Investigator Grants, NHMRC Ideas Grants and MRFF grants may be recognised by the University by being awarded a PhD scholarship. Strong preference will be given to grants that are to be administered through ECU, but grants led by other universities which are still associated with significant research income to ECU will be considered.

One (1) PhD scholarship may be awarded to research teams who are successful in the schemes listed above, under the following conditions:

- ECU must be the Administering Institution. Grants administered by other institutions will be considered only under exceptional circumstances and where there is significant financial return to ECU which meets the minimum ROI.
- A cash into ECU ROI² of at least 3:1³.
- If the ROI is less than 3:1, the Director, Research Services and Dean, Graduate Research, will determine if a scholarship is to be awarded^{4,5}.
- An ECU researcher, who is a named investigator on the grant, must be the Principal Supervisor of the HDR candidate awarded the scholarship and is required to meet ECU guidelines as a compliant HDR Principal Supervisor. The research team must negotiate, agree and nominate who will be the Principal Supervisor before the stipend will be awarded.
- The scholarship must be taken up by a candidate within the first 6 months of the project opening⁶ or it may be forfeited.
- The scholarship is awarded to a program of research. Multiple successful grants that fund the program of research will not be awarded multiple scholarships.

¹ The grant needs to be in the best interests of ECU and items to be taken into consideration will include, for example, appropriate supervision, the grant topic being a research priority, sufficient financial return to ECU.

² ROI = Return on investment. The amount of grant funding awarded to (and remains at ECU) is 3x the cash contribution ECU contributes to the grant.

³ In 2023 a 3.5 year PhD scholarship is valued at \$115,500, therefore it is expected that the income to ECU would be at least \$346,500. Scholarship stipends change annually so the stipend amount for the year of submission should be used for calculation purposes.

⁴ There may be times when the amount of funding awarded is less than what was requested, sometimes significantly so. In those cases, the Director, Research Services and Dean Graduate Research, will determine if a scholarship is to be awarded.

⁵ ARC and NHMRC Fellowships may not provide the required ROI of at least 3:1. However, given the prestigious nature of these Fellowships, a PhD scholarship will be awarded.

⁶ The purpose of this starting timeframe is to endeavour to have the candidate's completion date align as closely as possible with the duration of the grant. Exceptions may be made but only under exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Director, Research Services and Dean, Graduate Research.

Before a scholarship is awarded, other important factors will also be considered. This includes current supervisory load, any research integrity matters linked to the proposed Supervisor, history of timely HDR completions, direct match of expertise/skillset to the HDR research area; the number of other SRF-funded HDR scholarships already awarded to the proposed Supervisor (currently capped at three per Supervisor).

On those occasions when a research project is funded to significant levels, more than one PhD scholarship may be awarded. This will be determined by the Director, Research Services and Dean, Graduate Research.

These scholarships can be used to support a Masters by Research Degree candidate instead of a Doctoral candidate (but only one scholarship per grant).

Occasionally ECU researchers may be part of a national collaborative project which is led by another organisation, for example, an **ARC Centre of Excellence** or **NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence**. In these instances, consideration **may** be given to providing a scholarship, depending on the quantum of funding coming to ECU⁷.

Successful grants in prestigious Category 1 schemes other than the ARC, NHMRC and MRFF schemes listed above may also be awarded a PhD scholarship if they meet the above criteria but will be required to submit a standard SRF business case prior to submitting their application.

With this program of recognising researcher excellence in place, researchers will no longer be required to submit a business case to the SRF for approval to include a PhD scholarship in their ARC, NHMRC or MRFF application. If a grant is successful, it will be reviewed by Research Services to ensure the above conditions are met before a PhD scholarship is awarded to the research team.

It should be noted that if scholarships are awarded to international students⁸, tuition fee sponsorship, visa costs and health insurance will be the responsibility of the relevant School.

Any queries can be directed to Professor Margaret Jones, Director, Research Services.

April 2023

⁷ Minimum ROI 3:1.

⁸ Pursuant to any conditions or restrictions by the funding agency.