

# **Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarships Policy**

## **Section 1 - Purpose and Scope**

(1) The Australian Government's Research Training Program (RTP) (in effect as of 1 January 2017) provides funding to universities to support the research training of both domestic and international higher degree research (HDR) candidates.

(2) This Policy establishes the University's selection principles and conditions for RTP Stipend and Fee Offset Scholarships (domestic and international), in accordance with the Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Research) 2017 (the Guidelines).

### **Scope**

(3) This Policy applies to applicants for and recipients of the RTP Scholarship Stipend and Fee Offset, and staff involved in its management.

(4) There are three types of RTP Scholarships:

- a. Research Training Program Scholarship stipend (RTP Scholarship Stipend domestic/international) — funded by the Australian Government and provides support for the general living costs of HDR students through an annual stipend.
- b. Research Training Program Fee Offset Scholarship (RTP Fee Offset) — funded jointly by the Australian Government and Southern Cross University. The Fee Offset pays for the tuition fees for a HDR award that would normally have been paid for by the student.
- c. Allowances — allowances provided by the University for example thesis allowance and relocation allowances.

## **Section 2 - Definitions**

(5) Removal expenses means the cost of removal services used in order to move the student's personal belongings in order to commence the RTP Scholarship Stipend.

(6) Travel expenses means, in relation to the RTP Scholarship Stipend, the cost of:

- a. air, train or coach travel for the Student and their dependents;
- b. hotel or other accommodation costs; and/or
- c. fuel expenses for the use of a personal car.

## **Section 3 - Research Training Program Scholarship**

# Stipend

## Selection Policy

(7) The University will award RTP Scholarship Stipends in accordance with the Guidelines.

(8) The University will publish the following on its website with the scholarship advertisement:

- a. this and other relevant University policies;
- b. the relevant application form;
- c. the University's selection criteria;
- d. the selection and offer procedures;
- e. a link to the Guidelines ; and
- f. other associated information.

(9) The University will publish the Scholarship Rating Criteria Guidelines on the Graduate School website prior to the opening of a scholarship round. The rating criteria for RTP scholarships stipends may be revised each year in accordance with the University's admission criteria.

## Eligibility Requirements for RTP Scholarship Stipend applicants

(10) To be eligible for an RTP Scholarship Stipend, an applicant must be a domestic or an international student enrolled in an accredited course of study at an Australian Higher Education Provider.

(11) An applicant will not be selected for an RTP Scholarship Stipend unless the University is satisfied that the candidate meets, or will meet before the Scholarship payment is made:

- a. the eligibility criteria for RTP Scholarship Stipends as set out in the Guidelines; and
- b. the admission requirements for the award in which they are applying to enrol.

(12) The University will not consider applications where the documentary evidence provided is insufficient or incomplete.

(13) The Scholarships Sub-Committee will rank applications in order of merit against the University's selection criteria using the Scholarship Rating Criteria Guidelines and provide a recommendation of scholarship allocation to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

(14) The highest ranked applications will be offered RTP Scholarships at the discretion of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research). Where possible, remaining applications deemed meritorious of award by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), will be offered Southern Cross University equivalent scholarships.

(15) The University will not take over the payment of an RTP Scholarship Stipend awarded to a candidate by another University, where the candidate transfers to Southern Cross University. A transferring candidate may apply for an RTP Scholarship stipend at Southern Cross University at the next available opportunity and will be considered alongside all other applicants. A transferring candidate will only be eligible for the balance of the initial RTP Scholarship Stipend awarded by the other University, in accordance with the Guidelines.

(16) RTP Scholarship Stipend recipients will normally be supervised by two University academic staff members according to the Higher Degree Research Register of Supervisors Policy.

(17) All Scholarship recipients must comply with the responsibilities as detailed in Part B of the Higher Degree Research Candidate and Supervision Policy. Prior to enrolment of a candidate, a Supervisor Candidate Agreement form

must be completed by the candidate and supervisory team which details the facilities and supervision arrangements that will be provided.

(18) Candidates who are awarded a RTP Scholarship Stipend, but withdraw from their program of study or are cancelled by the University for failure to maintain satisfactory progress or pay outstanding fees and charges, and later re-enter, will not be able to access their initial scholarship. They must apply again for a RTP Scholarship Stipend and if successful, will be paid only the balance of the initial scholarship.

(19) Candidates who are awarded a RTP Scholarship Stipend and defer or take approved Leave of Absence will have their scholarship held for the period of deferment or leave and may take up the scholarship on their return to study, subject to proof of continuing eligibility and compliance with the Guidelines.

(20) The Dean, Graduate Studies may, at their discretion, approve:

- a. a suspension of a RTP Scholarship Stipend to a maximum of 12 months during the tenure of the award; and
- b. the continuation of an RTP Scholarship Stipend for a candidate who transfers to another HDR program at the University.

(21) The University may terminate an RTP Scholarship Stipend if a candidate:

- a. fails to comply with University policies; or
- b. is identified as making unsatisfactory progress as defined in the relevant policy/Rule.

(22) RTP Scholarship Stipends are normally only provided to full-time candidates. A candidate can apply to receive a scholarship on a part-time basis, or transfer from a full-time to part-time basis, if there are compelling circumstances, such as the need to provide full-time care of children or dependents that are disabled, sick, injured or elderly. Candidates must continue to meet all eligibility requirements, including satisfactory academic progress.

(23) Candidates who are found to have provided misleading or inaccurate information to the University will be immediately re-assessed for their entitlement to the RTP Scholarship Stipend. The University may notify the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training of any suspected offence.

## **Accepting your scholarship**

(24) If successful, the Graduate School will send applicants an offer of scholarship including: an official letter of offer, the Conditions of Award for your scholarship and an Acceptance Form.

(25) Successful applicants should return the Acceptance Form as soon as possible to inform the Graduate School of your intended start date. Requests to defer the Scholarship must be made via e-mail to [hdrschorships@scu.edu.au](mailto:hdrschorships@scu.edu.au) and your proposed supervisors. Requests to defer will normally also require the support of your proposed supervisor and School Director Higher Degree Research Training.

(26) The Dean Graduate Studies will review requests for deferment. If funding for the scholarship is not available at a later time, a deferral may not be possible.

(27) The Southern Cross University RTP Scholarship Stipend rate is the base rate set by the Australian Government, indexed annually.

## **Duration of Scholarship**

(28) The duration of a RTP Scholarship Stipend is three years full time equivalent for a student undertaking Research Doctorate studies, and two years for a student undertaking Research Masters studies. The duration of the scholarship will be reduced by any periods of study undertaken towards the degree prior to the commencement of the

scholarship.

## **Work**

(29) A student may undertake work outside the degree, subject to the approval of their supervisors, School Director, Higher Degrees Research Training and Head of School. International students must ensure any work is compliant with the conditions of their student visa.

(30) A supervisor will not approve a student undertaking work unless they are satisfied that the work will not interfere with the student's study program. Approved work must be documented in all progress reports and regularly monitored.

(31) RTP Scholarship Stipend recipients must not be in receipt of a top up scholarship or other additional scholarship/salary to undertake their research degree which is greater than 75% of the RTP Scholarship Stipend rate.

(32) Students receiving more than 75% of the RTP Scholarship Stipend rate will have their primary scholarship cancelled. Income from sources unrelated to the research degree will not be taken into account.

(33) Work commitments will not be accepted as grounds for an extension to scholarship or an extension to candidature.

(34) A RTP Scholarship Stipend recipient cannot be required to undertake employment at the university as a condition of their candidature or scholarship.

(35) Full-time RTP Scholarship Stipend recipients can undertake paid employment for no more than 8 hours per week or for a total of the equivalent of 8 hours per week over a 12 month period. The hours of work include marking and preparation associated with part-time teaching duties.

## **Satisfactory Progress for Scholarship Holders**

(36) Under the conditions of award of scholarship, all Scholarship holders must maintain satisfactory progress to be eligible to continue receiving their scholarship. Please note that this does not imply you will have no problems with research delays during your program tenure. It is important that your progress is clearly reflected in the 6 monthly progress reports and the in-candidature review forums. Should your progress be found unsatisfactory you will be advised that your award of scholarship will be terminated and the date from which this will apply.

## **Allowances**

### **Relocation Allowance**

(37) The University will provide a one-off Relocation Allowance of up to \$2000 for Removal Expenses and/or Travel Expenses to students who:

- a. are an RTP Scholarship Stipend recipient (domestic or international);
- b. are required to relocate, along with any dependents, in order to study the Higher Degree Research award at Southern Cross University; and
- c. have submitted a completed relocation allowance form with original hardcopy receipts or invoices, within 3 months of commencement.

(38) Only one application for relocation allowance may be submitted per student, therefore claims for student and dependents must be made together.

(39) The relocation allowance does not cover:

- a. the cost of visa application fees for the student or their dependents;
- b. multiple trips (only the cost for one journey can be claimed); or
- c. the retrospective cost of any removal or travel expenses incurred before the student was offered a place to study the Higher Degree Research award at Southern Cross University.

### **Thesis allowance**

(40) No thesis allowance is payable as candidates are not required to submit hard bound copies of their final thesis.

### **Health Cover for international students**

(41) For RTP Scholarship Stipend recipients who are international students, the University will cover the cost of a standard Overseas Student Health Cover policy approved by the Commonwealth Department of Health and which covers the student, their spouse and any dependents.

### **Leave Provisions**

(42) To apply for leave, RTP Scholarship Stipend Recipients must use the Scholarship Candidate Sick and Paid Annual Leave Application form available on the Graduate School website .

#### **Sick Leave**

(43) RTP Scholarship recipients must notify their principal supervisor of any period of illness as soon as possible. In addition, recipients must also notify their Higher Degree Research School Director and the Graduate School, as soon as practicable, and within 14 days, in order to claim sick leave.

(44) RTP Scholarship Stipend recipients must supply an appropriate medical certificate signed by a registered medical practitioner for sick leave longer than 10 working days. If the recipient has an ongoing medical condition or limited ability to study, then this should be clearly stated by the medical practitioner on the certificate.

(45) If necessary, and the illness is ongoing and serious, RTP Scholarship Recipients can apply for a Leave of Absence and/or Suspension of Award (Change of Conditions of Enrolment).

(46) Sick leave may be used for the care of immediate family/dependents who are ill, and where the recipient is the primary care giver. An extension to a scholarship, if allowed, will only apply where periods of medically attested sick leave are greater than 10 working days.

(47) RTP Scholarship Stipend recipients, who are also international students, are eligible to apply for sick leave but any period granted will be deducted from the maximum 6 month extension of award.

#### **Maternity and Parental Leave**

(48) Paid maternity leave is available for up to 12 weeks for RTP Scholarship Stipend Recipients who have completed at least 52 weeks of continuous full-time study (or equivalent part-time study) on the award. Maternity leave entitlements will be calculated on a pro-rata basis for recipients who have transferred from part-time to full-time during the year prior to requesting maternity leave.

(49) Maternity leave applications must be submitted to the Graduate School through the relevant School Director Higher Degree Research Training no later than four weeks before the expected date of commencement of leave. The application must be accompanied by a medical certificate from a medical practitioner stating the expected date of birth of the child or confirmation of the date of official adoption from an adoption agency.

(50) If eligible, partners of people giving birth may be entitled to a maximum of one week parental leave and should provide the same documents as required for maternity leave.

(51) Where an RTP Scholarship Recipient is unable to resume their studies for medical reasons following approved maternity or parental leave, sick or other leave provisions may apply.

### **Recreation Leave**

(52) RTP Scholarship Stipend Recipients are entitled to 20 days per year of Recreation Leave. Recreation Leave will be available in the first year of the Stipend on a pro rata basis.

(53) A maximum of 20 days of Recreation Leave may be accrued. That is, unused leave in one year does not ordinarily carry over and must be taken during the scholarship tenure.

(54) Proposed dates for Recreation Leave should be discussed with your supervisor in the first instance. Recreation Leave requires the approval of the Graduate School.

### **Scholarship Extensions**

(55) Requests for scholarship extensions will only be considered where it is due to delays in the research outside the control of the recipient and where the delay is related to the research rather than being of a personal nature.

(56) The maximum period of a scholarship extension will be six months with requests over three months requiring a strong compelling case.

(57) The Dean, Graduate Studies will consider all requests for scholarship extensions and has the discretion to consider other exceptional circumstances as the basis for a request.

### **Termination of RTP Scholarship Stipend**

(58) An RTP Scholarship Stipend will be terminated in any of the following circumstances:

- a. at the end of the period of tenure provided by the award, or when the candidate lodges a thesis, whichever is earlier;
- b. if the University is satisfied the program of study is not being carried with competence and diligence or in accordance with the offer of award, and no suitable arrangements can be made for continuation of the degree;
- c. when the recipient ceases full time enrolment without indication of a date at which full time enrolment will be resumed, or when approval has not been obtained to hold the RTP Scholarship Stipend on a part-time basis;
- d. if the recipient commences a period of suspension without formal approval;
- e. if the recipient does not resume study at the conclusion of a period of interruption, or does not make arrangements to extend the period of interruption;
- f. if the recipient fails to maintain satisfactory academic progress, as determined by the Dean, Graduate Studies.

### **Grievance and review procedures**

(59) Scholarship recipients may appeal a decision to terminate a scholarship in accordance with the Query and Appeal clauses of the respective award rules .

### **Acknowledgement Requirement**

(60) The Australian Government's contribution towards the RTP Scholarship Stipend must be acknowledged when, at any time during or after completion of the HDR degree, the candidate, his/her supervisor or any other party, publishes or produces scholarly material and/or artistic works which relate to the research project carried out by the candidate.

This acknowledgement must take to the form of a statement included in the published material mentioning the support received through an 'Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship'.

## **Section 4 - RTP Fee Offset Scholarships**

### **Introduction**

(61) The Australian Government's RTP provides funding to universities to support the research training of both domestic and international HDR candidates. The funding provided through the RTP allows universities to provide tuition fee offsets to domestic candidates commencing or enrolled in HDR programs for which RTP support is available, with the requirement that the university fully offsets tuition fees applicable for a candidate within a maximum period of candidature.

(62) The support provided through the RTP Domestic Fee Offset replaces the Australian Government's Research Training Scheme (RTS) and is governed by the Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Research) 2017.

(63) HDR programs for which candidates may be supported by a RTP Domestic Fee Offset Scholarships are determined by the University on the basis of advice from the Schools/Institutes and the Graduate School and cover Masters by Thesis, Professional Doctorate and Doctor of Philosophy awards.

(64) The University awards RTP International Fee Offset Scholarships to international candidates of exceptional research potential commencing or enrolled in HDR programs for which RTP support is available. The fee offset provided will remove the liability of the HDR candidate to pay program tuition fees for the tenure of the scholarship.

(65) The support provided through the RTP International Fee Offset Scholarship replaces the Australian Government's International Postgraduate Research Scholarship (IPRS) scheme and is governed by the Guidelines.

### **Eligibility Requirements for RTP Domestic Fee Offset Scholarship applicants**

(66) To be eligible for a RTP Domestic Fee Offset, a candidate must be:

- a. an Australian or New Zealand citizen, or an Australian permanent resident; and
- b. commencing or enrolled in a HDR award (for which RTP support is available) at the University.

(67) A RTP Domestic Fee Offset Scholarship will not be provided to a candidate who is in receipt of an equivalent award or scholarship from the Australian Government designed to offset HDR tuition fees.

### **Eligibility Requirements for RTP International Fee Offset Scholarship applicants**

(68) To be eligible for a RTP International Fee Offset Scholarship, an applicant must:

- a. not be a domestic student (defined as a student who is: an Australian or New Zealand citizen; or an Australian permanent resident; or holder of an Australian Permanent Humanitarian visa); and
- b. be commencing or enrolled in a HDR award (for which RTP support is available) at the University.

(69) A RTP International Fee Offset Scholarship will not be awarded to a candidate who is in receipt of an equivalent award or scholarship from the Australian Government designed to offset HDR program tuition fees.

### **Notification of Provision of a RTP Domestic Fee Offset**

(70) Domestic applicants who are offered a place in a supported HDR program at Southern Cross University will be provided with a RTP Domestic Fee Offset. The Fee Offset will be supplemented by support from Southern Cross University in order to remove the liability of the applicant to pay tuition fees during the tenure of the RTP Domestic

Fee Offset place.

(71) The offer letter will set out the estimated annual value of the Australian Government's support and the University's support towards the offset of the candidate's tuition fee liability.

### **Conditions of the RTP Fee Offset**

(72) RTP Fee Offset Scholarship recipients will normally be supervised by two University academic staff members according to the Higher Degree Research Register of Supervisors Policy.

(73) All Scholarship recipients must comply with the responsibilities as detailed in Part B of the Higher Degree Research Candidate and Supervision Policy. Prior to enrolment of a candidate, a Supervisor Candidate Agreement form has to be completed by the candidate and supervisory team which details the facilities and supervision arrangements that will be provided.

(74) The maximum period of tenure for a RTP Fee Offset is normally three years (full-time equivalent) for a Doctoral program and up to two years (full-time equivalent) for a Masters (Research) program, calculated from the date of commencement in the HDR program.

(75) Continuation of receipt of the RTP International Fee Offset Scholarship during the tenure of the award is dependent upon evidence of the awardee's satisfactory progress in the HDR program, through the timely completion of candidature milestones and satisfactory progress reports.

(76) The tenure of a RTP International Fee Offset Scholarship will be reduced by any period of study undertaken towards the research project and/or degree prior to the commencement of the award.

(77) A Doctoral candidate making satisfactory progress may apply for an extension to the RTP International/Domestic Fee Offset Scholarship tenure for up to a maximum of six months. An extension will only be approved where the grounds for the extension relate to the study and are beyond the control of the candidate, and could not have been reasonably anticipated at the commencement of the program. A request for an extension must be made at least one month before (but no more than two months before) the expiry date of the scholarship. Awardees enrolled in a Masters (Research) program are not entitled to an extension of award.

(78) The Dean, Graduate Studies has the discretion to consider and approve other exceptional circumstances for requests to Fee Offset Scholarship extension requests.

### **Changes to Candidature**

(79) A request for transfer to Southern Cross University by a domestic HDR candidate in receipt of a RTP Domestic Fee Offset from another university will be considered subject to sufficient RTP funds being available to support the candidate.

(80) Normally, candidates seeking recognition of prior research study will only be approved to transfer from another institution where they have sufficient RTP Domestic Fee Offset tenure remaining to allow a minimum of one year (full-time equivalent) enrolment at the University.

### **Changing enrolment status**

(81) Candidates supported by a RTP Domestic Fee Offset may apply to change their enrolment status between part-time and full-time in accordance with the award rules for the degree they are enrolled in.

(82) RTP International Fee Offset recipients are expected to remain enrolled as full time candidates.

## **Changes to HDR program**

(83) Candidates supported by a RTP Domestic/International Fee Offset may apply to change their candidature from a Doctoral to a Masters (Research) degree program or from a Masters (Research) to a Doctoral degree program in accordance with the Higher Degree Research Candidate Transfer Policy.

(84) Tenure of the RTP Fee Offset will be adjusted and fees fully offset accordingly upon transfer of candidature into the new award.

## **Suspension of candidature**

(85) Candidates supported by a RTP Fee Offset or RTP Scholarship may apply to suspend their candidature in accordance with the award rules for the degree they are enrolled in.

(86) RTP International Fee Offset candidates must ensure that this is done in compliance with student visa requirements.

## **Employment**

(87) Please refer to the Higher Degree Research Scholarships Policy.

## **Termination of the RTP Fee Offset**

(88) An RTP Fee Offset will be terminated in any of the following circumstances

- a. at the end of the period of tenure provided for by award or when the candidate lodges a thesis, whichever is earlier;
- b. on the candidate's withdrawal from the HDR program;
- c. if the candidate ceases to be enrolled and has not requested a period of suspension;
- d. 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;
- e. if the candidate ceases to meet the eligibility criteria, other than during a period in which a suspension of candidature has been approved;
- f. if the HDR candidature is not being carried out with competence and diligence or in accordance with the offer of place in the HDR program, and no suitable alternative arrangements can be made for the continuation of the program.
- g. if the awardee fails to maintain satisfactory progress, as determined by the Dean, Graduate Studies; and
- h. if the University determines that an awardee is guilty of serious academic or student misconduct in accordance with the Rules — Student Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct Rules.

## **Grievance and review procedures**

(89) Scholarship recipients may appeal a decision to terminate a scholarship in accordance with the Query and Appeal clauses of the respective award rules.

## **Acknowledgement Requirement**

(90) The Australian Government's contribution towards the offset of tuition fees must be acknowledged when, at any time during or after completion of the HDR degree, the candidate, his/her supervisor or any other party, publishes or produces scholarly material and/or artistic works which relate to the research project carried out by the candidate. This acknowledgement must take the form of a statement included in the published material mentioning the support received through an 'Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship'.

## Section 5 - Relevant Documents

- (91) [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 7 - Masters by Thesis Awards](#)
- (92) [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 8 - Professional Doctorate Awards](#)
- (93) [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 9 - Doctor of Philosophy \(PhD\) Awards](#)
- (94) [Commonwealth Scholarship Guidelines \(Research\) 2017](#)
- (95) [Department of Education and Training's Research Training Program \(RTP\) webpage](#)
- (96) [Department of Education and Training's Research Training Program — Frequently Asked Questions for Students](#)

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
<b>Effective Date</b>	26th May 2017
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<b>Approval Authority</b>	Academic Board
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<b>Head of Work Unit</b>	Damien Maher Dean, Graduate School
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