

Guidelines for competitive assessment for Higher Degree Research (HDR) Scholarships

PURPOSE

These guidelines are used to assist with the assessment of HDR scholarship applications received by the Graduate Research School.

The Western Sydney University HDR Scholarship Assessment Panel will review and endorse scholarship offers based on meeting entrance criteria and recommendations put forward by Schools and Institutes.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) will approve all scholarship offers based on the recommendation of the Western Sydney University HDR Scholarship Assessment Panel.

HOW APPLICATIONS WILL BE ASSESSED

HDR scholarship applications are assessed by ranking applicants based on criteria that are associated with success in an HDR program. Applications for scholarships are assessed based on evidence of sufficient research preparation from coursework, research experience and/or industry experience; strong research outputs relative to opportunity; and alignment of a research proposal with a strong research environment and strong supervisory support. It is expected that only exceptional applicants will be recommended for a scholarship.

Each application will be scored by the Western Sydney University HDR Scholarship Assessment Panel in accordance with these guidelines.

- Section 1 – Qualifications and Performance
- Section 2 – Research Output relative to Opportunity
- Section 3 – Proposal Suitability, Supervision Arrangements and Research Environment
- Section 4 – Equity Considerations

Scholarship offers are subject to applicants meeting the admission criteria for the relevant Higher Research Degree and receiving approval from the relevant School or Institute.

Applicants must provide a letter of recommendation that addresses their suitability for the proposed project from a suitable academic supervisor to be eligible for a scholarship.

Applicants that do not follow the prescribed application process, do not apply or do not provide supporting documentation by the relevant date, provide insufficient evidence to support their application or are unable to meet the requirements described in this document will be excluded from the scholarship ranking process.

HDR SCHOLARSHIP METRIC – APPLICATION RANKING CRITERIA

- The Graduate Research School will assess whether applicants meet the minimum entrance requirements for the relevant Higher Research Degree based on the evidence provided by the applicant.
- The relevant School or Institute will be asked to assess and rank applications against the criteria based on evidence provided by the applicant and statements of support from the supervisory panel addressing the criteria. Schools/institutes will then recommend applications to be considered by the Scholarship Assessment Panel, including their assessment and that of the supervisory panel against each of the criteria.
- The Scholarship Assessment Panel will assess and rank applications received from Schools and Institutes based on the evidence provided by the applicant and the assessment performed by the School/Institute and supervisors. The Panel will make recommendations to the PVC-R&I based on this ranking.
- Each of sections 1-3 below should be individually assessed as described in those sections. Section 4 is not assessed but should be used to indicate opportunity.

Section 1: Qualifications, Experience and Performance (assess as A/B/C/D/E)

At a minimum, applicants are required to have completed an academic qualification at the level of an Undergraduate Bachelors. Applications are then to be assessed based on the following criteria:

- The volume and quality of experience as an independent researcher during their career to-date, as an academic or as a professional, and its relevance to the proposed research.
- The volume and quality of research training that the applicant received in a Master- and/or Bachelor-level degree, and its relevance to the proposed research.
- Academic performance in research training subjects and in disciplinary subjects that are relevant to the proposed research.
- Any other indicators of applicant quality, such as awards or other commendations.

When assessing volume of experience, assessments should consider any items mentioned under *Section 4 – Equity Considerations*.

Qualifications must be conferred or pending conferral (e.g., awaiting graduation). For applicants that already hold a Doctor of Philosophy or equivalent doctorate degree, the research proposal should be in a substantially different research area (i.e., not a continuation of a previously completed project).

Assess as:

- A. Research preparation of the very highest quality and of direct relevance to the proposed research.*
- B. High quality research preparation that is relevant to the proposed research.*
- C. High quality research preparation that is indirectly relevant to the proposed research.*
- D. Sound research preparation but lacking a compelling element.*
- E. Research preparation has significant weaknesses.*

Section 2: Research Output relative to Opportunity (assess as A/B/C/D/E)

The quality and quantity of each applicant's research outputs are to be assessed based on disciplinary expectations and relative to the amount of research experience they have attained. Outputs can include:

- Published research books or monographs, distributed by a recognized commercial press or publisher
- Published book chapters, distributed by a recognized commercial press or publisher
- Refereed journal articles, verified as published in a reputable source

- Refereed conference proceedings, based on the submitted peer review of a paper (not already considered above) and not the submission of an abstract
- Commercial patents, granted for the first time to the applicant
- Exhibited creative works, in a non-university gallery or museum, commercial or public, and not the basis of an assessment item for a previous degree
- Published written or recorded creative works, representing independent new work that has not been the basis of an assessment item for a previous degree

When considering Outputs, higher weighting should be given to outputs for which the applicant was the sole, leading or senior contributor. ***Evidence must be provided for all Outputs.***

When considering Opportunity, assessments should consider the number of months in which the applicants were research active, academically and/or professionally, and adjust expectations accordingly. The assessment should also include any items mentioned under *Section 4 – Equity Considerations*.

Assess as:

- Research output of the very highest quality and of direct relevance to the proposed research, with a very high level of productivity relative to opportunity.*
- High quality research output that is relevant to the proposed research, with a high level of productivity relative to opportunity.*
- High quality and productive research output that is indirectly relevant to the proposed research.*
- Sound research output but lacking a compelling element.*
- Research output is lacking relative to opportunity.*

Section 3: Proposal Suitability, Supervision Arrangements and Research Environment (assess as A/B/C/D/E)

This section is assessing the likelihood that the applicant will be able to successfully complete the degree while receiving the scholarship. Each application is to be assessed against the following criteria:

- The proposed project is achievable over the timeframe of the scholarship.
- The proposed project aligns well with research strengths and research concentrations in the identified School/Institute, including a convincing case from the School/Institute that the project has strategic importance to Western.
- The applicant has demonstrated the capacity to perform the proposed research, or to learn skills that are relevant to the proposed research, including mastery of or practical experience with:
 - Research design,
 - Quantitative or qualitative methods, and/or
 - Project management.
- The proposed research represents a substantial advance on the applicant's previous research training and is not simply an incremental advance on that previous work or on previous work by the proposed supervisor(s).
- The supervision arrangements adequately address the expertise needed for the applicant to perform the proposed research.
- The supervisory team has demonstrated evidence of high-quality, on-time candidature completions.

Although not a requirement, additional consideration will be given to proposals and panels that involve School-Institute collaboration and/or build capacity of emerging Western researchers (e.g., ECRs, staff with limited prior capacity to undertake research) to become supervisors in their own rights.

Assess as:

- A project and environment of the very highest quality, certain to result in an on-time completion and highly impactful research.*
- Highly likely to result in an on-time completion and highly impactful research.*

- C. Highly likely to result in an on-time completion and in an incremental but useful advancement on existing knowledge.*
- D. A sound case for the project and environment but lacking a compelling element in either.*
- E. The project and/or environment has significant weaknesses, leading to concerns that an on-time completion is unlikely.*

Section 4: Equity Considerations (do not assess, but use to inform assessment of sections 1 and 2)

The applicant may include a statement (maximum 250-words) that addresses a case to support equity considerations. This may include, but is not limited to:

- The applicant belongs to an under-represented group, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- The applicant has experienced significant career interruption, for example, as a primary carer with family responsibilities.
- The applicant has experienced significant challenges affecting their research training and output, for example, due to a disability.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. International qualifications with an 'Honours' or 'Class' result will not be automatically considered equivalent to an Australian Bachelor Honours degree. International tertiary education systems may use the terms 'Honours' or 'Class' to refer to results and the term does not always mean the degree includes a research component.
2. The relevant Western Sydney University School or Institute should make a judgment on international qualifications based on the grades attained, the content and structure of the research component, National Office for Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) advice, discipline knowledge and standing of the institution, and the standing of the relevant program in the academic community.
3. For applicants that already hold a Doctor of Philosophy or equivalent doctorate degree, the research proposal should be in a substantially different research area (i.e. not a continuation of previously completed project).

EVIDENCE AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION – FOR APPLICANTS

Applicants are required to provide the following evidence and/or documentation to support claims made in their application.

To ensure equity for all applicants, Western Sydney University will not assess an item or claim in an application if appropriate supporting documentation is not provided. Failure to provide evidence and supporting documentation may reduce the overall score of an applicant and may have a detrimental impact on their scholarship outcome, so applicants are required to ensure that their applications are complete and that the response is in a timely manner to requests to provide documentation.

Documents must be certified according to Western Sydney University requirements:

<https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/future/study/how-to-apply/certifying-documents.html>

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE	
Academic qualifications	Provide certified copies of full academic testamurs for qualifications completed outside of Western Sydney University.
Academic performance	Provide certified copies of full transcripts for qualifications completed outside of Western Sydney University.
RESEARCH OUTPUT AND EXPERIENCE	
Applicants must list their research output and experience, as well as provide evidence and supporting documentation following the instructions in the Research Scholarship Application Form. Evidence and supporting documentation must meet the following requirements.	
Published research books, monographs and book chapters	A full academic reference must be provided: title, author(s), year published, publisher, ISBN or ISSN. An online reference of the document (e.g. Scopus reference, Ulrichsweb reference, Western Sydney University Library reference, DOI, etc.) must be provided.
Refereed conference proceedings	A full academic reference must be provided: title, author(s), year published, publisher, ISBN or ISSN. Evidence of the conference: title, date, venue, location, other supporting information. Online evidence that the conference was refereed (such as refereeing procedures, composition of panel, etc.)
Commercial patents	A copy of the patent abstract, evidence that the patent has been granted, and an identifying code or patent number must be provided. An online reference to the patent (e.g. from the patent authority) must be provided.
Refereed journal articles and papers	A full academic reference must be provided: title, author(s), year published, publisher, ISBN or ISSN. Online evidence that the journal article or paper is refereed (e.g. Scopus reference, Ulrichsweb reference, Western Sydney University Library reference, DOI, etc.) must be provided.
Creative works	A full academic reference must be provided: title, author(s), year published, publisher, ISBN or ISSN. Evidence of the exhibition or distribution method: event title, date, venue, location, curator, other supporting information.
Research experience	A statement of service on the employer's letterhead stating the name of the employer, the period of employment, the title of the position, full-time or part-time workload, and duties and responsibilities. A statement about the level of research experience or training provided by the role is advantageous.

EVIDENCE AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION – FOR SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTES

The Graduate Research School will assess academic qualifications to ensure that the applicant meets minimum entry requirements, and will forward those that do to Schools and Institutes. Schools and Institutes will then assess the applications against the above criteria and provide their ranking and recommendations to the Western Sydney University HDR Scholarship Assessment Panel.

EVIDENCE OF REFEREED OR PEER REVIEWED OUTPUT

Research output will be assessed using the following source:

- Western Sydney University Library: <https://library.westernsydney.edu.au/>

Applicants should check their own output (i.e. journal articles, book chapters, etc.) using reputable sources (e.g. Ulrichsweb, Scopus, etc.) prior to including them in their application, and they should as a minimum include online references to the output in the application form. If reasonable, applicants should include a PDF copy of the output or an acceptance letter from the publisher in their application.

If Western Sydney University cannot verify a claim made in an application using the above source, it may be excluded from the ranking process.