Guidelines for competitive assessment for Master of Research (MRes) Scholarships

PURPOSE

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

The Western Sydney University MRes Scholarship Assessment Panel will review applications and recommend scholarship offers based on the likelihood of applicant success in their MRes program.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation will approve all scholarship offers based on the recommendation of the Panel.

HOW APPLICATIONS WILL BE ASSESSED

Applications for MRes scholarships are assessed based on evidence of excellent performance in relevant coursework and professional experience, and alignment of the proposed area of research 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 MRes Scholarship Assessment Panel in accordance with these guidelines.

- Section 1 – Academic Qualifications and Performance
- Section 2 – Research Area Alignment with Supervisory and Research Environment
- Section 3 – Equity Considerations

Scholarship offers are subject to applicants meeting the admission criteria for the MRes program and receiving approval for admission from the relevant School or Institute. ***Applicants who are eligible for entry into a more advanced Higher Degree by Research Program (i.e., a Doctoral program or a Master of Philosophy program) will not be eligible for an MRes 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 assessment process.

MRes SCHOLARSHIP METRIC – APPLICATION RANKING PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA

- Graduate Research Services will assess whether applicants meet the minimum entry requirements for the MRes program based on the evidence provided by the applicant. Schools and Institutes may consider evidence of professional experience as an alternative to the academic requirements for entry. Applicants must accept their offer of admission before they can proceed with a scholarship application.
- The applicant will complete a standardised **applicant CV** providing the factual evidence base for the assessment. The nominated supervisor will complete a **support statement** providing context to the factual evidence presented in the applicant CV. **Both documents must be completed on the templates provided.** The supervisor support statement must be endorsed by the relevant School/Institute MRes Director prior to be included for assessment.
- Graduate Research Services will provide the Scholarship Assessment Panel with these documents as they are received. Each member of the Scholarship Assessment Panel will independently assess each application against the criteria. The assessment will be based entirely on evidence provided in the above two documents.
- Independent assessments by Scholarship Assessment Panel members will be provided to Graduate Research Services, who will calculate assessment scores which will be used to assign each applicant to one of three categories:
    1. Endorse the scholarship offer with no conditions;
    2. Endorse the scholarship offer subject to availability of funding, assessed at program commencement;
    3. Do not endorse the scholarship offer.
- While funding remains available, scholarship offers will be issued to applicants on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Prior to issuing the offer, it will be referred to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation for approval. The decision of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation is final – there is no mechanism to appeal the decision.
- Each of sections 1 and 2 below should be individually assessed by panel members as described in those sections. Section 3 is not assessed but should be used to indicate opportunity and be factored into assessment of sections 1 and 2.

Section 1: Academic Qualifications and Performance (assess as A/B/C)

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 performance indicators:

- Academic performance in previous program(s) relevant to the statement of research intent.
- Academic performance in disciplinary subjects that are relevant to the statement of research intent.
- Any other indicators of applicant quality, such as awards or other commendations.

When assessing qualifications and performance, assessments should consider any items mentioned under *Section 3 – Equity Considerations*.

Qualifications must be conferred or pending conferral (e.g., awaiting graduation).

Assess as:

A. Excellent performance in indicators that are directly relevant to the proposed research intent.
B. Sound performance in indicators that are directly relevant to the proposed research intent.

C. *Performance lacking a compelling element.*

Applicants whose prior qualifications and performance would make them eligible for entry into a more advanced Higher Degree by Research Program (i.e., a Doctoral program or a Master of Philosophy program) will not be eligible for an MRes scholarship.

Section 2: Research Intent Alignment with Supervisory and Research Environment (assess as A/B/C)

This section is assessing the likelihood that the applicant will be able to achieve an outcome that would guarantee opportunity in a doctoral program. Each application is to be assessed against the following criteria:

- The proposed research intent aligns well with research strengths and research concentrations in the identified School/Institute.
- The applicant has demonstrated the capacity to understand and apply concepts that are relevant to the research intent, using evidence of theoretical and/or practical experience during coursework or professional experience.
- The supervision arrangements adequately address the expertise needed for the applicant to conduct a project in the proposed research intent.

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. *A supervisory and research environment that is in excellent alignment with the proposed research intent.*
B. *A supervisory and research environment that is in sound alignment with the proposed research intent.*
C. *A supervisory and research environment that lacks a compelling element.*

Section 3: Equity Considerations (do not assess, but use to inform assessment of sections 1 and 2)

The HDR Director (or nominee) may include a statement (maximum 100-words) informed by the applicant and/or supervisor 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 coursework, for example, due to a disability.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Judgments on international qualifications should be based on the grades attained, the content and structure of the coursework 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.

EVIDENCE AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION – FOR APPLICANTS

Applicants are required to provide the following evidence and/or documentation to support claims made in their application. **This evidence and/or documentation will be assessed by supervisors and HDR Directors (or delegates) when preparing/endorsing the supervisor support statement.**

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 they respond 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 INTENT ALIGNMENT	
Professional 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 alignment of practical experience in the role to the research intent is advantageous.

EVIDENCE AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION – FOR SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTES

Graduate Research Services will assess academic qualifications to ensure that the applicant meets scholarship eligibility requirements, and will forward the standardized applicant CV of those that do to Schools and Institutes. Schools and Institutes will review evidence and supporting documentation against claims made in the standardised applicant CV and the supervisor support statement prior to endorsing the latter and forwarding to the Western Sydney University MRes Scholarship Assessment Panel.

EVIDENCE OF REFEREED OR PEER REVIEWED OUTPUT

Research output will not be assessed as this is an entry-level research training program.