Higher Degree by Research and Research Training Program Scholarship Policy and Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') is committed to providing an environment that enables and supports transformative education through higher degrees by research (HDR) and drives world-class research in areas critical to the sustainable and prosperous development of Northern Australia and the wider region.

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) This procedure outlines the processes for applying for, selecting and administering Research Training Program (RTP) stipend and other Higher Degree by Research scholarships for both university staff and HDR students.

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This procedure applies to all HDR courses, candidates enrolled in HDR courses, and University staff responsible for supporting HDR candidates and courses.

(4) In particular, this procedure applies to all HDR candidates eligible for an RTP stipend and staff responsible for administering RTP stipends.

Section 4 - Policy

(5) RTP stipends are scholarships, granted to selected HDR candidates, that support the living expenses of these individuals. The Higher Education Support Act 2003 and the Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Research) 2017 stipulates the minimum and maximum RTP stipend.

(6) This stipend is not taxable if the candidate is enrolled full time but taxable if the candidate is enrolled part time.

Eligibility

(7) HDR candidates can receive an RTP stipend only if they are enrolled in an HDR course and are eligible to enrol in a PhD at CDU, and were chosen to receive this award during a competitive selection process.

a. In certain exceptional cases, including the First Nations Leadership Scholarships for Master by Research, the Dean of Graduate Studies may designate RTP funding to provide stipends for students enrolled in a Master by Research.

(8) HDR candidates cannot receive an RTP stipend if:

a. they are receiving another scholarship to support their living expenses that is worth more than 75% of the RTP stipend;

b. they have previously received an RTP stipend over a period of more than 3.5 years full time equivalent (FTE);
c. they have exceeded the maximum duration of candidature, excluding approved leave, in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research Policy.

(9) Candidates who have not completed their confirmation of candidature may only receive the RTP stipend if they are enrolled full time.

(10) In exceptional circumstances, the Dean of Graduate Studies may approve requests from candidates in receipt of a stipend to enrol part time and receive half the stipend.

(11) Before approving candidates to enrol part time, the Dean of Graduate Studies must consider whether:

a. the utility or feasibility of this research is likely to diminish over time; and
b. the family or health of the candidate may be harmed by the candidate being unable to study part time.

Duration of Stipends

(12) If candidates have not been enrolled in a HDR course previously, they will be offered a stipend that lasts 3 years FTE if enrolled in a PhD and 2 years FTE if enrolled in a Masters by Research.

(13) PhD candidates may apply for an extension up to 6 months. Applications for extension are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by an extension committee, and candidates must demonstrate their progress and likelihood of completing within the requested extension period.

Fees and Fee Offset for Domestic Candidates

(14) The University will normally award domestic HDR candidates a fee offset until:

a. they exceed the maximum duration of candidature; or
b. the conclusion of a show cause process that determines unsatisfactory progress, including failing to achieve milestones in a timely manner.

(15) Candidates who have exceeded the maximum duration but have been granted extensions to their duration of candidature may request a fee offset extension from the extension committee. Fee offset extensions may be considered if the candidates demonstrate their progress and likelihood of completing within the requested extension period and:

a. compelling or compassionate circumstances have impeded progress; or
b. the candidates are members of a community that has experienced long term and/or systemic disadvantage.

Fee Offset for International Candidates

(16) If international HDR candidates receive an RTP stipend, they will also receive a CDU (non-RTP) fee scholarship to partly or fully offset tuition fees.

(17) Fee offsets will last until:

a. the candidate exceeds the maximum duration of candidature; or
b. the conclusion of a show cause process that determines unsatisfactory progress, including failing to achieve milestones in a timely manner.

Competitive Selection Process

(18) To choose which candidates should receive an RTP stipend, relevant staff at the University must arrange a competitive selection process that complies with the following principles:

a. opportunities to apply for RTP stipends must be advertised as widely as reasonably possible within budgetary constraints;
b. these opportunities should be broadcast prominently on the University website;
c. ranking guidelines for awarding scholarships must be publicly available to applicants when calling for applications;
d. applicants must be ranked fairly; and
e. as fewer RTP stipends are available to international applicants, domestic and international applicants must be ranked separately.

(19) Depending on circumstances, the staff who arrange this process may include members of Research and Innovation and supervisors who are chief investigators on grants in which an RTP stipend was pledged in the budget.

(20) To rank applicants fairly, the relevant staff must employ a defensible, systematic method, such as a formula or weighting system. This method should favour applicants who are likely to complete the course on time and who are likely to fulfill other strategic priorities of the University.

(21) The method should also favour:

a. applicants from communities that have experienced long term and/or systemic disadvantage;
b. research that conforms to an existing or emerging strength of the University; and
c. applicants who have not completed a degree at the same level of higher level before.

(22) A panel of at least three university staff with suitable expertise and unbiased by apparent, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest will be assembled to choose which applicants should be awarded the RTP stipend.

(23) Applicants awarded the RTP stipend should generally be ranked higher than applicants who are not awarded the RTP stipend. All exceptions must be justified in writing and kept as part of the record on these applications.

Communication to Successful Applicants

(24) Approved candidates will receive correspondence that outlines:

a. the amount that candidates will receive each fortnight and the duration of this stipend;
b. procedures around how and when they need to accept or decline the offer;
c. leave entitlements of candidates;
d. supervision, resources, and support to which candidates are entitled;
e. the responsibilities that candidates must fulfill to maintain the stipend;
f. the right of candidates to be employed for up to 20 hours a week for full-time candidates; and
g. any other relevant conditions or benefits.

(25) Unsuccessful candidates will receive correspondence that outlines opportunities that applicants can explore to secure this stipend or other stipends in the future.

(26) Correspondence to successful and unsuccessful applicants for a stipend will refer to how candidates can appeal in accordance with the Complaints Policy - Students.

Payment of Stipends

(27) The University must pay RTP stipends fortnightly to an Australian bank account in the name of the candidate.

(28) The University will suspend these payments if:

a. candidates are granted a leave of absence; or
b. candidates defer their course in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research - Admission and Enrolment Procedure.

(29) Candidates may access sick leave, limited to:

a. 10 days a year if no medical certificate is supplied; and
b. an additional 60 days per three years (pro rated) if a medical certificate is supplied

(30) If there is a change in circumstances that may affect the eligibility of the recipient to receive payments, they must notify Research and Innovation as soon as possible.

Responsibilities of Stipend Recipients

(31) Recipients of RTP stipends must insert a statement in a prominent location to the effect of "This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship doi.org/10.82133/C42F-K220." in all publications including the thesis.

(32) Other individuals who publish material derived from this research project must also acknowledge the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

(33) Stipend recipients must:

a. maintain contact with supervisors and Research and Innovation;
b. maintain suitable progress in line with the Higher Degree by Research - Progression Procedure; and
c. comply with all relevant policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct - Students and the Higher Degree by Research Policy.

Suspension and termination of scholarship

(34) The RTP stipend will be terminated once candidates no longer fulfill the eligibility criteria. Previous enrolment in an HDR course will be counted when determining the duration of a candidate's RTP stipend.

(35) A student's stipend may be suspended and could be terminated if the student:

a. does not maintain contact with their supervisors and the Office of Research and Innovation;
b. fails to respond to written communication from the University within a reasonable time;
c. does not maintain suitable progress;
d. fails to comply with University governance documents;
e. is found to have engaged in misconduct; or
f. fails to follow the advice and guidance of the Principal supervisor or senior research stakeholders including the head of the home faculty, the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Community Connection.

Other Stipends

(36) These policies and procedures should be extended to other stipends the University might supply from time to time, unless the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Community Connection approves otherwise.

(37) In the event of inconsistency between the rules and conditions of other stipends and this policy and procedure, the more stringent rules and conditions usually apply. Individual cases may be referred to the Dean of Graduate Studies to resolve any ambiguities that may arise.

RTP Allowances

(38) Research and Innovation will distribute RTP funding to the Faculties and Menzies School of Health, in accordance with existing agreements and guidelines. The home faculty can use this funding to discharge the ancillary expenses that enrolled HDR candidates incur to complete the course. These ancillary expenses may include the costs of:

a. equipment, consumables, stationery, and software that is not available in the University;
b. courses, conferences, and travel—including occasions in which external students travel to the University; and
c. other expenses, such as editorial services, research participants, and publication costs.

(39) Home faculties should decide how to distribute this funding most effectively. The home faculty should:

a. review, at least once a year, the principles they apply to distribute this RTP allowance;
b. dedicate a guaranteed minimum amount to each candidate, in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research - Minimum Resources Procedure; and
c. use a defensible and systematic method to decide when to fund requests that exceed this minimum.

Transition Arrangements

(40) These policies and procedures apply to all candidates who were awarded scholarships after the date this document was released. The rules and conditions of previous scholarships at the time of their signed acceptance continue to apply to existing scholarship holders. Existing scholarship holders:

a. must be able to maintain their existing rights after these policies and procedures are released; and
b. must be informed of all changes to policies and procedures that could affect the scholarship they receive.

(41) Upon request, the University will supply HDR candidates with information about their RTP stipend if needed to enrol at another university.

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(42) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Employees or the Code of Conduct - Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025 and the Code of Conduct - Students.

(43) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees and Complaints Policy - Students.

(44) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Steve Rogers Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Community Connection +61 8 89466890
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Home faculty" - The Faculty in which a Higher Degree by Research candidate is enrolled. The Menzies School of Health Research is the home faculty for students of Menzies.

"Faculty" - An organisational and academic unit in the University that delivers courses and conducts research.

"University" - Charles Darwin University, a body corporate established under section 4 of the Charles Darwin University Act 2003. The University is comprised of the various faculties, CDU TAFE, organisational units, and formal committees, including the governing University Council and Academic Board.