Selection of Candidates for Postgraduate Research Scholarships - Protocol

Overview

The following protocol is intended to assist the Office of Research and the Postgraduate Research Scholarships Selection Panel to assess applications in accordance with the relevant procedures and the Postgraduate Research Scholarships selection criteria and to provide consistency in the selection of candidates for Postgraduate Research Scholarships (PGRS). The protocol is also intended to increase an applicant’s ability to highlight their research strengths and to facilitate submission of the highest quality application.

Application of protocol

This protocol applies to all applications for Postgraduate Research Scholarships at USC.

Eligibility criteria

Applicants who are not accepted for admission to a higher degree by research (HDR) at USC will be deemed ineligible for a postgraduate research scholarship. These applications will not be progressed to assessment stage. Applications which remain incomplete on the published closing time of the scholarship round, will not be progressed to assessment stage.

The following eligibility criteria apply to all postgraduate research scholarships. Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria for the postgraduate research scholarship applied for will not be progressed to assessment stage. To be eligible for selection for a postgraduate research scholarship, applicants must:

- be applying to enrol as a full-time HDR candidate, unless the applicant demonstrates that their caring commitments, medical condition, disability or other circumstance limits their capacity to undertake full-time study; and
- not hold an equivalent HDR qualification to that being applied for.

The following additional eligibility criteria apply to all USC International Research Scholarships:
- a student must be undertaking study in a subject area identified by USC as one of its areas of research concentration
The following additional eligibility criteria apply to Commonwealth funded scholarships (as provided in the Guidelines). Applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria to receive a Commonwealth Scholarship (Research) will be considered for any other Postgraduate Research Scholarships that are available in the current round. Recipients of a Commonwealth Scholarship (Research) must:

- have completed a Bachelor Degree with First Class Honours, or may be assessed as having an equivalent level of attainment*
- be an Australian or New Zealand citizen or an Australian permanent resident, or an international candidate who is also selected through a competitive process as the meritorious recipient of an International Postgraduate Research Scholarship
- not have previously held a Commonwealth-funded postgraduate research scholarship unless it was terminated within six months of the scholarship’s payments commencing
- not be receiving an equivalent scholarship (excluding IPRS), or salary providing a benefit greater than 75 per cent of the APA stipend rate to undertake the HDR.
- To be eligible for an IPRS, a student must be undertaking study in a subject area identified by USC as one of its areas of research concentration.

Individual PGRS may have additional specific eligibility and or selection criteria that will be published on the relevant scholarship advertisement on the University website.

*Equivalent level of attainment

- A completed Australian Bachelor Honours Degree in the First Class OR
- A completed overseas qualification comparable to the educational level of an Australian Bachelor Degree
  - With a duration of normally no less than 4 years AND
  - An overall GPA comparable to at least a 6.0 on a 7 point scale (where pass = 4)
  - Containing a significant and major thesis, dissertation, design project or creative work that has been
    - Examined by at least two examiners OR
    - Has a grade comparable to at least a 6.0 on a 7 point scale (where pass = 4)
- A completed domestic or overseas qualification comparable to the educational level of an Australian Masters Degree containing a minimum research component of 50%. The research component can be comprised of research specific courses and or a thesis. Evidence must be provided to confirm the research component.
- At least one sole or first/primary authored refereed article in a scholarly journal.
  - when not listed as first author, evidence of primary authorship must be provided.
  - in cases of “commercial in confidence” prohibiting publication, evidence must be provided of the quality and quantity of the research undertaken.

### Selection criteria for postgraduate research scholarships

To assess the quality of an application, each application is assessed based on the following selection criteria:

- Undergraduate achievement; and
- Research alignment; and
- Publications; and
- Most recent or relevant degree
Further details are provided below in items 1 to 4. The scoring formula for each criterion is provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection criteria</th>
<th>Maximum points</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research alignment</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refereed publications</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLUS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most recent or relevant degree</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Evidence of all qualifications detailed in the application must be provided.

Assessment is based on information provided within the application and the supporting documents submitted by the applicant. Applicants whose most recent or relevant degree included a research thesis or dissertation must provide an electronic copy of this document together with formal notification from the qualifying university stating the specific allocation of marks to the research component of the degree. If the required supporting documents are not provided by the closing date for the round, the application will not progress to quality assessment.

1. **Undergraduate Degree**

The assessment of Undergraduate Degree is based on the grades as provided on the certified undergraduate academic transcripts supplied. The transcripts must include a Key to the grading system.

Up to 15 points can be awarded for this criterion and will be scored according to the GPA or percentage achieved.

GPA is converted to USC equivalent GPA i.e. 7 point scale. If the GPA is not available, the percentage achieved will be used.

If an Honours year can be clearly identified, this is excluded and assessed as part of Most Recent Degree (see below). Subjects/courses/classes that are not graded shall not be included in the calculations. Overseas qualifications will be assessed by USCI for AQF equivalence.

If more than one undergraduate degree has been completed, the most appropriate undergraduate degree for the proposed research will be assessed. If more than one degree is relevant, the best grade will be used.

Double degrees (i.e., undergraduate degrees completed at the same time) are assessed as one degree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Distinction</td>
<td>85 – 100</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.1 - 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>75 – 84</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.1 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>65 – 74</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1 - 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>50 – 64</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0 - 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Research Alignment

Research alignment is based on the applicant’s alignment to an area of research concentration at USC. The University’s Research Concentrations are available on the website.

Points will be allocated according to the applicant’s:
- supervision panel’s contribution to the research centre/cluster
- proposed research project alignment to the goals of the relevant research centre/cluster.

Applicants are assessed and ranked prior to research alignment score assessment. Meritorious applicants will then be assessed on research alignment.

Grant or USC funded scholarships, where the research topic is defined by the funding provider, will not include assessment of alignment to concentration (applications will automatically be allocated 15 points to neutralise this criterion).

3. Refereed Publications

Applicants must provide evidence in English of publications they have authored or co-authored (e.g., abstract in English, details of publication and a copy of the front page). If sufficient information and evidence of a publication is not provided, the publication will not be considered for assessment.

The types of publications including the scoring weighting can be found in Appendix 1.

A publication must be accepted by the journal for publication prior to the scholarship application closing date. Publications submitted but not yet accepted cannot be considered.

The University will conduct appropriate quality checks on the publications listed by the applicant and determine the ‘relevance’ to the discipline area for which they have applied. If it is determined that they are of no relevance to the discipline area, they may be discounted.

4. Most Recent or Relevant Degree

Most Recent or Relevant Degree involves assessing the Bachelor Honours or other post-graduate qualification (AQF Level 8 or higher) most relevant to the proposed research. The assessment is based on information provided in the application. Applicants whose most recent or relevant degree included a research thesis or dissertation must provide an electronic copy of this document together with formal notification from the qualifying university stating the specific allocation of marks to the research component of the degree. Overseas qualifications will be assessed for AQF equivalence.

Normally, the degree most recently completed (or currently-in-progress) is assessed. However, if this is likely to disadvantage the applicant, an earlier degree may be given precedence. A case can be made to the selection panel for a different degree to be assessed as the most recent degree, e.g. embedded honours programs. If an applicant has more than one recent or relevant degree, the applicant is responsible for indicating which qualification they would like the Panel to assess.
Assessment includes the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most recent or relevant degree</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degree* (&gt;50% research component) (AQF Level 9)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Honours (AQF Level 8)</td>
<td>Honours I - 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior or current timely confirmed (but incomplete) HDR candidacy (Doctoral AQF level 10)</td>
<td>Honours 2A - 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* applicant must provide evidence or formal notification from the qualifying university stating the specific allocation of marks to the research component of the degree and an electronic copy of any relevant research thesis/dissertation from the relevant degree.

In the case of Honours or Masters degree currently-in-progress, the applicant will be scored as a Honours I i.e. 45 points OR completed Masters degree i.e. 50. Conditional scholarship offers may be made and be awarded upon the successful completion of the Masters degree or the final outcome of the Honours grade.

### Scholarship Allocation

Scholarships will be allocated under three categories:
- Recent USC research students (current year)
- International
- All other

Scholarship allocation is a competitive process, based on academic and research merit and area of research as determined by the quality assessment model (see above). The Panel will base its assessment of all applications on the evidence provided that will return the highest score possible for each application (e.g. where the applicant has achieved more than one qualification, the Panel’s assessment will be based on the qualification that returns the highest score). If an application’s assessment exceeds the maximum weighting in any of the criteria, this will be highlighted by the Office of Research for the selection panel’s consideration. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation), through the PGRS Selection Panel, reserves the right to use discretion in the allocation of any scholarships including the number of USC International Research Scholarships funded each year.

The University offers a range of scholarships for HDR candidates. Information about the scholarships offered at USC can be found at: [http://www.usc.edu.au/learn/research-students/hdr-scholarships](http://www.usc.edu.au/learn/research-students/hdr-scholarships)

Scholarships are allocated via scholarship rounds and are awarded based on eligibility and merit. For each scholarship round, an Order of Merit list is produced based on the quality assessment of applicants. In the event of a "tie", the selection panel, under the direction of the Chair, will moderate to determine a meritorious recipient for the scholarship.

Applicants who are unsuccessful for a scholarship in a given round may apply to be considered for a future round. However, a new application must be submitted.

At the recommendation of the faculty of enrolment, candidates who are successful in their application for admission to candidature outside the annual scholarship round may be offered a USC funded Postgraduate Research Scholarship (USCRS or USCIRS). As a condition of the out-of-round scholarship offer, candidates may be required to apply for a Postgraduate Research Scholarship in the next available round.

Current candidates who are not receiving a scholarship may apply and be considered for a scholarship, but must submit a Scholarship Application by the appropriate closing date. Current candidates who are
receiving a University-funded scholarship at APA (or equivalent) base rate (or greater) are not eligible to apply in future USC scholarship rounds.

Offers of scholarship must be accepted within three months from the date of offer and the candidate enrolled in the year for which the offer was made. A deferment may be awarded on a case-by-case basis.

Current international scholarship holders who gain permanent residency must notify the Office of Research immediately and will be transferred to a domestic scholarship without needing to reapply.

**Open and close dates for scholarship application**

USC will undertake three scholarship rounds throughout 2016 for both Domestic and International scholarships which may include:

- Australian Postgraduate Award (APA)
- USC Research Scholarships (USCRS)
- International Postgraduate Research Scholarships (IPRS)
- USC International Research Scholarships (USCIRS)
- Grant funded scholarships (when available)
- Donation funded scholarships (when available)

The closing date for applications is published on the scholarships section of the USC website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Scholarships (when available)</th>
<th>Open</th>
<th>Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| One (minor round)              | • Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA)  
• USC Research Scholarships  
• Grant and donation funded scholarships | 1 February | 29 February |
| Two (minor round)              | • USC Research Scholarships  
• USC International Research Scholarship  
• Grant and donation funded scholarships | 26 April   | 20 May      |
| Three (for scholarships to commence in 2017) | • Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA)  
• International Postgrad Research Scholarship (IPRS)  
• USC Research Scholarships  
• USC International Research Scholarship  
• Grant and donation funded scholarships | 8 August   | 30 September |

**Order of Merit list**

Following the closing date of each major scholarship round, all applications are assessed against the admission, eligibility and selection criteria and according to the quality assessment model. An Order of Merit list comprising all eligible applicants is produced. Applicants are ranked in order of quality assessment from highest to lowest.

The Order of Merit list is ratified by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation). Once an order of merit list has been ratified, changes will only be made in accordance with the Review of Decision and Appeals process (refer to section 17 and 18 of the Selection of Candidates for Postgraduate Research Scholarships Procedures) or when finalising provisional grades (e.g., honours).

The Order of Merit list is confidential and distribution limited at the discretion of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation). **Note.** USCRS and USCIRS scholarships may require the approval of Faculty/School financial support. In such cases, scholarships are allocated to supported applicants in ranked order of merit.
Appendix 1 - Refereed Publications

The total score for relevant refereed publications is initially calculated, based on a maximum score of 20.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication Classification</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A - Books</strong> (2014 HERDC Specifications section 9.3.1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 - Authored Research Book</td>
<td>First author - 15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 - Research Book Editor</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B - Book Chapter</strong> (2014 HERDC Specifications section 9.3.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1 - Book Chapter</td>
<td>First author - 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C - Journal Articles</strong> (2014 HERDC Specifications section 9.3.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 - Refereed article in a scholarly journal</td>
<td>First author - 10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D - Conference Publication</strong> (2014 HERDC Specifications section 9.3.4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1 - Full written paper - refereed</td>
<td>First author - 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E. Other Creative Works</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1 - Authored Research Novel</td>
<td>First author - 15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2 - Exhibition of creative artefacts</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3 - Creative Work i.e. short story, poem, artefact</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4 - Professional Award</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4a - Commendation</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5 - Invited curation of an exhibition</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E6 - Invited catalogue essay</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7 - Review of creative or research work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G. Technical Report</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First author - 5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applicants can refer to Publication categories counted in Research Publication Return as provided in Section 6 of the Department of Education and Training 2015 Higher Education Research Data Collection Specifications

Definitions
In this protocol the following definitions apply:


**GPA** means Grade Point Average. The average grade achieved (on a 7 point scale) across a program of study. The 7 point scale is based on HD = 7, DN = 6, CR = 5, PS = 4.5, FL = 0, WN = 1.5


**Higher Degree by Research (HDR):** HDR refers to a Research Masters or Research Doctorate as described by the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) where a minimum of two thirds of the program is research.


**the Panel** means the Postgraduate Research Scholarship Selection Panel, selected by the Chair, Research Degrees Committee, to assess and rank the Postgraduate Research Scholarship round.

**Postgraduate Research Scholarship** includes:
- Commonwealth Scholarships (Research) including:
  - Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA) and
  - International Postgraduate Research Scholarships (IPRS)
- University funded equivalent scholarships, including:
  - University of the Sunshine Coast Research Scholarship (USCRS) and
  - University of the Sunshine Coast International Research Scholarship (USCIRS)
- Grant funded postgraduate research scholarships
- Donation funded postgraduate research scholarships

**Publication:** means peer reviewed/refereed - in a scholarly journal, scholarly research book or book chapter, or full written conference publication or Other Creative Works

**USCRS:** means University of the Sunshine Coast Research Scholarship, a USC funded scholarship equivalent in value to the Australian Postgraduate Award (APA).

**USCIRS:** means University of the Sunshine Coast International Research Scholarship, a USC funded scholarship equivalent in eligibility criteria and value to the International Postgraduate Research Scholarship (IPRS).

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