# HDR Scholarship Guidelines
## RTP and ECUHDRS

**ECU**
EDITH COWAN
UNIVERSITY

**HDR Scholarship Guidelines
RTP and ECUHDRS
2026 Mid Round**

The following document provides guidelines to assist in the project-based allocation of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) scholarships awarded through the University's competitive scholarship rounds. The project- based allocation of HDR scholarships is intended to ensure that scholarship allocation to Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates aligns with the research strengths, priorities and objectives of the University. These guidelines have been developed to assist in assessing the merit and ranking, and thus a competitive selection process, in the allocation of project-based HDR scholarships.

## 1.0    Overview

Allocation of project-based HDR scholarships typically involves three separate stages including:

**Stage 1:** School Allocation of Scholarships
**Stage 2:** Supervisor/Project Scholarship Expression of Interest
**Stage 3:** Candidate/Awardee Selection

These stages are outlined in detail below.

It should be noted that within Stage 3 candidates are permitted to propose their own research project. As a result, not all scholarships awarded will require an Expression of Interest provided in Stage 2.

## 2.0    Timeline

The University holds a minimum of two competitive scholarship rounds opening for applications in approximately May and September each calendar year. Proposed dates for the upcoming scholarship round are provided below (dates subject to change):

| Stage | 2026 Main Round – Project based | Responsibility | Dates |
|-------|--------------------------------|----------------|-------|
| 1 | Schools informed of number of Scholarships available | Dean, Graduate Research | |
| 2 | HDR Scholarship Project EOI form opens | Supervisor to complete EOI | 02/02/2026 |
| | HDR Scholarship Project EOI form closes | Supervisor to complete EOI | 01/03/2026 |
| | ADR to endorse EOIs and confirm supervisor compliance | ADRs | 09/03/2026 |
| | EOI submissions/projects reviewed and ranked | University Scholarship Committee | 23/03/2026 – 13/04/2026 |

| Stage | 2026 Main Round – Project based | Responsibility | Dates |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Approved projects advertised and application portal opened | Scholarships office | 04/05/2026 |
| | Approved projects promoted by Supervisors | Supervisor | 04/05/2026 – 31/05/2026 |
| | Applications closed | Candidates apply | 31/05/2026 |
| | Scholarships office collates applications and sends to Schools | Scholarships office | 08/06/2026 |
| | School Scholarship Committee review and rank candidate applications | School Scholarship Committee | 08/06/2026 – 03/07/2026 |
| | School assessment finalised | School Scholarship Committee | 03/07/2026 |
| | Students informed of outcome | Scholarships office | 10/07/2026 |
| | Maximum date to accept offer | Candidate | 24/07/2026 |
| | Maximum date to have commenced scholarship | Candidate | 01/12/2026* |

*If the student doesn't enrol by this date the scholarship will be rescinded.

## 3.0    Procedures

Process and details of each stage are outlined below:

### 3.1      Stage 1: School Allocation of Scholarships

The total number of scholarships available will be distributed to Schools based upon principles agreed at University Executive and include the Schools' proportion of currently enrolled HDR candidates (EFTSL) and HDR completions over the past 2 years.

### 3.2      Stage 2: Supervisor/Project Scholarship Expression of Interest

Potential Principal Supervisors are required to submit an Expression of Interest for the Project-Based Scholarship Scheme.

Expressions of Interest may not be assessed by experts in the applicant's field of expertise and therefore Supervisors need to ensure that the proposal can be understood by a broad audience. The application should contain all the information necessary for an assessment of the project without the need for further information or explanation. Additional documentation must not be submitted, unless specified in the Guidelines or Expression of Interest form. Any EOIs that do not fully comply with the eligibility criteria and the guidelines provided in this document will be deemed ineligible. This includes strict adherence to word limits and submission date. Ineligible EOIs will not be considered by the Assessment Panel. Late applications will not be accepted. Potential Principal Supervisor are permitted to submit a maximum of 3 expression of interests in any one scholarship round.

### 3.2.1 EOI Assessment

The School Scholarship Committee will assess Expression of Interests using a scoring framework. Submitted EOIs will be assessed across three separate areas, including research quality and significance, alignment with Supervisor, research group and university research priorities and experience and capability of the supervision panel. Discretion will be used by the Panel to ensure that the points allocated and ranking of applicants truly reflects the merit of each EOI.

Given uncertainty in the number of applicants for each scholarship (in Stage 3) a greater number of EOIs will be approved/advertised than scholarships available. This is to ensure that all available scholarships are awarded to competitive applicants in Stage 3. Yet, a maximum of 3 EOIs will be approved per scholarship allocated to Schools in Stage 1.

### 3.2.2 Experience and Capability of Supervisory Panel (40%)

Supervision panels must have appropriate expertise and capacity necessary to support the HDR candidate and achieve the project aims. All allocated ECU members of the supervisory panel must be compliant to supervise on the ECU supervisor register. At least one of the nominated supervisors should have a strong research supervision track record, including evidence of successful completions. The principal supervisor must be able to demonstrate their ability to lead the research project. The University is committed to reducing inequality in academia through equal opportunity and professional development. The experience, capability and suitability of the supervision team members will be assessed relative to opportunity. Supervisors should provide details on any career disruptions, potential barriers or other considerations that may have influenced their supervision and research experience.

Considerations will be given to the:
- HDR and research experience (i.e. track record) of nominated supervisors;
- student load and progression of current candidates;
- research and academic success of prior candidates/graduates;
- workload and supervision capacity of proposed supervisors;
- composition of the supervisory team including considerations of equity and the mentorship of Early to Mid-Career Researchers.

### 3.2.3 Alignment with the Supervisor, Research Group and ECU Research Priorities (30%)

Expression of Interest will be assessed to determine alignment with the track record of proposed Supervisors, ECUs research priorities and other strategic considerations supporting research activities across the School. In preparing the EOIs candidates should consider how the proposed research aligns with:
- areas of focus or growth within the School or University;
- the strengths and experience of the nominated supervisory team.

*3.2.4        Research Excellence, Quality and Significance (30%)*

Supervisors should provide a brief overview of the aims, significance and expected outcomes of the proposed research to be undertaken by the HDR candidate. Provide enough background information for the Assessor Panel to understands the research being proposed. Provide details on how the proposed project may align to larger research activities/projects, if relevant. It is important to discuss the potential engagement and impact of the research. This may include broader engagement and impact for the project or specifically for the successful HDR candidate. The overview provided should not be discussion or uncritical compendium or list of current research (papers and funded projects) but a justification for the proposed research project. Present gaps/discrepancies in knowledge and how the proposed research will address these.

## 3.3       Stage 3: HDR Candidate Applications

Successful EOIs in Stage 2 will be advertised to potential HDR applicants. Applicants will be required to select the proposed project when applying to the scholarship application portal. Applicants will be encouraged to discuss the proposed project and supervision with the potential supervisors prior to applying.

*3.3.1        HDR Application Assessment*

HDR candidate scholarship applications will be assessed by the School Scholarship Committee based upon a 100-point scale and across three separate areas, including academic merit, research and professional experience, and supervisor support and endorsement. Discretion should be used by School Scholarship Committees to ensure that the points allocated and ranking of applicants truly reflects the merit of each application.

| Assessment area | Maximum points |
|---|---|
| Academic Merit | 40 |
| Relevant Research and Professional Experience | 30 |
| Alignment with the Proposed Research Project | 30 |

All applicants must meet the admission requirements for entry into an ECU Higher Degree by Research program, including English Language Proficiency, to be awarded a scholarship. Applications for both course admission and the scholarship must be submitted prior to the closing date for scholarship rounds. In cases where course admission applications have been submitted prior to the scholarship closing date but not assessed or approved prior to scholarship ranking, applications will be considered but applicants will only be provided a conditional scholarship offer, if successful.

Applications will undergo a preliminary review within Student Administration to determine eligibility, prior to being scored, ranked and allocation determined within each relevant School HDR Scholarship Committee. The University is committed to reducing inequality and values diversity in the HDR student cohort. The University may make awards to priority groups of students

such as, but not limited to, those who identify as having a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, or low SES applicants. Applications will be assessed relative to opportunity. Applicants should provide details on any career disruptions, potential barriers or other considerations that may have influence on the scoring of their application.

## Academic Merit (40%)

The assessment of academic merit should be based upon the applicants' academic achievements, typically evidenced through completion and success within undergraduate and postgraduate study. Multiple qualifications, awards or other recognition may be considered when assessing academic merit. However, applicants who hold a research doctorate degree (AQF 10) or equivalent may be ineligible for a scholarship and must be assessed at the discretion of the Executive Dean of the relevant School. Considerations when scoring academic merit include the:

- AQF level (or equivalent level of the award);
- Volume of research conducted within the award;
- Weighted Average Mark (WAM), Grade Point Average (GPA) or equivalent evidence of academic standing (if relevant);
- Awards, examiner reports or other evidence of academic standing.

**Table 1.** Examples of scoring for Academic Merit relevant to AQF level.

| Score | AQF 7 | AQF 8 | AQF 9 | AQF 10 | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **0 to 20** | Relevant undergraduate course completion with WAM of 70 or above | | | | Prestigious academic awards or prizes (i.e. School award, Dean's list) |
| **20 to 30** | | Embedded Honours four-year degree (WAM 80 or above)* | Masters by Coursework with significant research component (i.e. six months full time research project) and WAM of 50 to 70 | | |
| **30 to 35** | | Bachelor Honours Degree - 2A (WAM 70 or above)* | Masters by Coursework with significant research component (i.e. project of at least six months full time research) and WAM of 70 or above | First year of integrated PhD with WAM of 70 or above | |
| **35 to 40** | | Bachelor Honours Degree - 1A (WAM 80 or above)* | Masters by Research Degrees with at least two-thirds research | PhD in relevant research area | Enrolled HDR candidate on 'Green' status and completed milestone 3. |

*Overseas qualification with an 'Honours' result will be compared for equivalency to an Australian Honours degree and **may not** equate to the point allocation indicated above.*

# HDR SCHOLARSHIP GUIDELINES
## RTP and ECUHDRS

## Research and Professional Experience (30%)

Applicants' relevant previous professional and research experience will be assessed. Only experience relevant to the proposed HDR course of study will be considered. Evidence of relevant professional and research experience may include prior employment in relevant professional or research roles, work experience, volunteer work or other activities (e.g. professional standing, leadership roles). Considerations must be given to the duration, extent (i.e. part time vs full time) and nature of past roles and research experience.

The assessment of research experience should be based upon the candidate's prior involvement in research and is typically evidenced through their authorship or involvement in relevant research outputs, including:

- **Research Book -** *authored research book published by a recognised national / international commercial publisher with ISBN.*
- **Book Chapter -** *in an authored research book published by a recognised national / international commercial publisher with ISBN, and edited.*
- **Journal Article -** *published in a peer reviewed, scholarly journal, with an ISSN (or ISBN)*
- **Creative Arts Research Output (CARO) -** *see* *ECU Guidelines for Creative Arts Research Outputs*
- **Conference Paper -** *published in full, peer reviewed, and presented at a conference of national or international significance*

Upon application, candidates will be asked to provide up to five of their most significant and relevant research outputs. When allocating scores for research outputs, consideration will be given to the:

- Applicant's contribution to the research output(s)
- Quality of the research output(s)
- Quantity of research output(s)

## Alignment (30%)

If the applicant has applied for an advertised project determined in Stage 2 follow A, and if the applicant has not applied for an advertised project follow B:

A. **Applicant's Alignment with Proposed Research Project**
   The alignment of the applicants experience with the proposed research projects will be assessed. Applicants should provide details on their suitability for the proposed research project. This may include details on the applicant's interest within the particular field and extent to which the proposed research builds on existing experience. Applicants should outline how the proposed research aligns with their research development and employment goals.

B. **Alignment of Proposed Research Project with University Priorities, and Supervisory Capacity and Experience**
   The quality of the proposed research project and alignment with ECU and the School's research priorities, Strategic Plan and supervisory teams will be assessed. This may include alignment with a

ECU Internal Information

University Strategic Research Centre or Institute, a School Research Centre or an emerging research cluster or group that builds on existing research, or include opportunities for research engagement with industry or other partners and/or attract income. Assessment of supervisory teams will include the experience, capacity and quality of the proposed supervision team including track record of nominated supervisors, current load and capacity, equity and mentorship considerations.