



# **POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS FUNDING POLICY**

**for funding commencing in 2010**

Call for Applications OPEN: 4 May 2009  
Applications CLOSE: 31 July 2009

Prepared by the  
National Health and Medical Research Council  
(April 2009)

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## 1. PURPOSE

This document is intended to assist researchers who are considering applying in 2009 for a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Scholarship to commence in January 2010. It provides advice on access and eligibility criteria, categories of award, appeal mechanisms and administration of grants.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is Australia's leading expert body promoting the development and maintenance of public and individual health standards. It is established under the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*, which is available on the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/role/index.htm>

The Act establishes four statutory obligations for NHMRC:

- To raise the standard of individual and public health throughout Australia;
- To foster the development of consistent health standards between the States and Territories;
- To foster medical research and training and public health research and training throughout Australia; and
- To foster consideration of ethical issues relating to health.

In aiming to achieve the best possible health for all Australians NHMRC adheres to and promotes the following values:

**Excellence:** Ensuring research excellence through peer review and expert advice, performance monitoring and reporting.

**Engagement:** Encouraging national and international participation, partnerships, consultation, collaboration, and communication.

**Relevance and responsiveness:** Ensuring that the organisation is prepared and able to respond appropriately to both immediate and longer term challenges and issues in health.

**Leadership:** Promoting the benefits of health and medical research, the use of evidence in advice, the highest possible ethical standards, and espousing equity, inclusiveness and mutual respect.

**Accountability:** Implementing high standards of professional behaviour and performance, and fair, open management in accordance with relevant legislation and Commonwealth policy and guidelines.

In addition NHMRC is committed to developing career paths for Indigenous Australians in health research across all its "People Support" programs (Training Post-Doctoral Fellowships, Career Development Awards, Research and Practitioner Fellowships and Scholarships). The assessment process will be overseen by a panel experienced in Indigenous health research. In addition to standard assessment of research output, contributions to policy development, clinical/public health leadership and/or service delivery, community activities and linkages, and representation on key committees will be recognised as legitimate contributions to track record.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

The aim of the scholarships scheme is to support outstanding Australian health and medical graduates early in their career so that they can be trained to conduct research that is internationally competitive and develop a capacity for original independent research. This is usually achieved by NHMRC funding its scholars to attain a PhD by full-time research.

NHMRC recognises the importance of bioinformatics as an emerging health and medical research field and encourages applications that will use mathematics, statistics and information technology to extract useful information from large and complex biological datasets.

In addition NHMRC is committed to developing career paths for Indigenous Australians in health research across all its “People Support” programs (Post-Doctoral Fellowships, Career Development Awards, Research and Practitioner Fellowships and Scholarships). The assessment process will be overseen by a panel experienced in Indigenous health research. In addition to standard assessment of research output, contributions to policy development, clinical/public health leadership and/or service delivery, community activities and linkages, and representation on key committees will be recognised as legitimate contributions to track record.

### 4. DESCRIPTION

*Section 6, Categories of Award*, provides descriptions of the respective categories of each scholarship as well as any requirements specific to each scholarship. Applicants must refer to the relevant category outlined in *Section 6*.

### 5. ELIGIBILITY

Applications must be certified and submitted by a NHMRC registered Administering Institution. Intending applicants and institutions should refer to the NHMRC Administering Institutions Policy which can be found at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/policy/admininst.htm>

Applicants must meet the following criteria, as well as any additional criteria specific to the scholarship type, as outlined in *Section 6, Categories of Award*. To be eligible to apply, applicants should:

- be an Australian citizen or permanent resident or New Zealand citizen holding a Special Category Visa. Applicants who have applied for but not yet been granted permanent residency or a Special Category Visa may apply for the award. Evidence of the appropriate status must be provided before the start of the award; and
- have made prior arrangements with the Head of Department or Institution in which they propose to study. The administering institution nominated must be an NHMRC registered Administering Institution within Australia;

Reasons for ineligibility to apply include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- applicants in the final year of an honours degree; and
- applicants already in receipt of an Australian Postgraduate Award or equivalent Australian Government funded scholarship.

## 5.1 Number of Scholarships and Applications

Applicants may apply for only one NHMRC Postgraduate Research Scholarship per application round. However, an applicant for a NHMRC Scholarship in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research is permitted to also apply for any other NHMRC Postgraduate Research Scholarship.

## 6. CATEGORIES OF AWARD

Categories of award are listed below. These scholarships will all be held within Australia. Applicants for any of these awards may also apply for Partnership Awards (see *Section 7*).

### 6.1 Training Scholarship for Indigenous Australian Health Research

#### 6.1.1 Objectives

Training Scholarships for Indigenous Australian Health Research are awarded to provide support for research training or training leading to research areas of particular relevance to Indigenous Australians.

#### 6.1.2 Description

The successful applicants must enrol for a certificate, diploma, undergraduate degree or postgraduate degree (such as PhD or masters) at a fully accredited institution, which will enable the applicant to pursue research relevant to indigenous health.

#### 6.1.3 Eligibility

In addition to the requirements detailed in *Section 5, Eligibility*, in awarding these scholarships, attention will be paid to previous qualifications and experience. Particular weight will be given to prior knowledge and experience of indigenous culture and health.

### 6.2 Medical and Dental Postgraduate Research Scholarships

#### 6.2.1 Objectives

Medical and Dental Postgraduate Research Scholarships are awarded to provide support to medical or dental graduates undertaking a postgraduate degree involving full-time research.

#### 6.2.2 Description

Medical and Dental Postgraduate Research Scholarships are designed to encourage research training for medical and dental graduates. In this context, particularly recent graduates as well as those who are undergoing further clinical training are encouraged to apply. These two sub-categories of application will be differentiated in the selection process. Applications will be considered in all relevant health-related disciplines including social and behavioural sciences.

#### 6.2.3 Eligibility

In addition to the requirements detailed in *Section 5, Eligibility*, those eligible to apply are:

- Australian citizens who are medical or dental graduates currently registered to practice within Australia. Medical graduates can also apply during their intern year; and Dental Postgraduate Research Scholarships may be awarded prior to graduation, provided that evidence of high

quality work is shown; or

- medical or dental graduates from overseas who are currently registered to practice in Australia, who have permanent Australian resident status and are currently residing in Australia. Applicants are to provide certification of medical/dental registration in Australia, as well as evidence of resident status.

Each year, subject to the availability of funds, the highest ranked applicant from the combined Medical and Dental Postgraduate Research Scholarship applications will be awarded the Gustav Nossal Research Scholarship. Sir Gustav Joseph V. Nossal was Director of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research and Professor of Medical Biology at the University of Melbourne and is distinguished for contributions to the fields of antibody formation and immunological tolerance. The Gustav Nossal Research Scholarship will be awarded under similar conditions to the basic Medical and Dental Postgraduate Research Scholarship except that the scholar will receive an additional stipend and travel allowance.

## 6.3 Biomedical Postgraduate Research Scholarships

### 6.3.1 Objectives

The purpose of the Biomedical Postgraduate Research Scholarships is to encourage honours graduates of outstanding ability to gain full-time biomedical research experience while enrolled for a higher degree.

### 6.3.2 Description

All candidates must enrol for a higher degree requiring full-time research. Applications will be considered in all relevant health-related disciplines including social and behavioural sciences.

Applicants enrolled in a graduate medical degree combined with a PhD course will be considered separately and may be funded for a maximum of 2 years full-time then one more year full-time or 2 years part-time.

### 6.3.3 Eligibility

In addition to the requirements detailed in *Section 5, Eligibility*, those eligible to apply must meet at least one of the following criteria

- Australian citizens who have already completed a science or health-related honours degree (or equivalent) at the time of submission of the application;
- science honours graduates and unregistered medical or dental graduates from overseas, who have permanent resident status and are currently residing in Australia;
- students enrolled in a graduate medical degree combined with a PhD; and
- allied health professionals with an honours degree or equivalent.

Each year, one Biomedical Postgraduate Research Scholarship application will be selected for the John Shaw Scholarship Award. Sponsored by Merck Sharp and Dohme (Australia), the scholarship is named in memory of Professor John Shaw, a well known academic and clinical pharmacologist with an outstanding record in clinical pharmacology practice, teaching and research.

Additionally, the highest ranked applicant from Biomedical Postgraduate Research Scholarship applications will be awarded the Dora Lush Research Scholarship. This award is named after the late Miss Dora Lush, a brilliant young bacteriologist who died in 1943 from scrub typhus caught accidentally in the course of her work on this disease.

## 6.4 Public Health Postgraduate Research Scholarships

### 6.4.1 Objectives

The purpose of Public Health Postgraduate Research Scholarships is to encourage graduates to obtain formal training in public health research.

### 6.4.2 Description

All candidates must enrol for a higher degree requiring full-time research.

Applications will be considered in all relevant health-related disciplines including social and behavioural sciences.

### 6.4.3 Eligibility

In addition to the requirements detailed in *Section 5, Eligibility*, those eligible to apply are:

- Australian citizens who have already completed a degree, in an area applicable to public health research, at the time of submission of the application; or
- graduates in areas applicable to public health who are from overseas, have permanent resident status and are currently residing in Australia.

## 6.5 Primary Health Care Postgraduate Research Scholarships

### 6.5.1 Objectives

The purpose of Primary Health Care Postgraduate Research Scholarships is to encourage graduates to obtain formal training in primary health care research, with an emphasis on rural communities.

### 6.5.2 Description

These Scholarships will be held within Australia. All candidates must enrol for a higher degree requiring full-time research. Applications will be considered in all relevant health-related disciplines including general practice, social and behavioural sciences and health economics.

Primary Health Care Postgraduate Research Scholarships are primarily intended to contribute to the development and strengthening of the primary health care research and evaluation workforce.

### 6.5.3 Eligibility

In addition to the requirements detailed in *Section 5 Eligibility*, those eligible to apply must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Australian citizens who are medical or dental graduates currently registered to practice within Australia;
- Australian citizens who have already completed a health related degree (or equivalent) at the time of submission of the application;
- medical or dental graduates from overseas who are currently registered to practice in Australia, who have permanent resident status and are currently residing in Australia. Applicants are to provide certification of continuing medical/dental registration in Australia as well as evidence of resident status; and
- health related graduates from overseas who have permanent resident status and are currently residing in Australia.

## 6.6 The Pharmacy Practice Scholarship

### 6.6.1 Objectives

The purpose of The Pharmacy Practice Scholarships is to encourage graduates to obtain formal training in the area of pharmacy practice research.

### 6.6.2 Description

These Scholarships are being offered in the area of pharmacy practice research, in partnership with NHMRC. The Scholarships will be Australian-based. The successful applicant will have a commitment to, and a track record in, pharmacy or related health services research.

Applicants interested in this co-funded scholarship should select one standard NHMRC Scholarship type, as well as ticking the box for the co-funded Scholarship.

### 6.6.3 Eligibility

In addition to the requirements detailed in *Section 5. Eligibility*, those eligible to apply must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Australian citizens who are medical or dental graduates currently registered to practice within Australia;
- Australian citizens who have already completed a health related degree (or equivalent) at the time of submission of the application;
- medical or dental graduates from overseas who are currently registered to practice in Australia, who have permanent resident status and are currently residing in Australia. Applicants are to provide certification of continuing medical/dental registration in Australia as well as evidence of resident status; and
- health related graduates from overseas who have permanent resident status and are currently residing in Australia.

## 7. PARTNERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS

These awards are offered through funding partnerships agreed between NHMRC and each partner organisation. They offer additional opportunities to researchers whose work is particularly relevant to the concerns and research interests of the partner organisations.

The partnership awards are offered alongside other scholarships. They are not alternative awards. They have the same financial value as the other scholarships.

An application for partnership funding will not affect the evaluation of an application for other scholarships. Applicants who are interested in a partnership award should apply for that award and for the relevant scholarship on the same application form. Applications for more than one partnership award are acceptable and encouraged if the proposed research will be of interest to more than one of the partner organisations. The funding partners welcome opportunities to collaborate in supporting mutually beneficial research.

The partnership awards are administered by NHMRC. Applications are assessed and evaluated in the same way as the applications for all the other scholarships. The partnership applications are also reviewed by the partner organisations.

A number of partnership arrangements are in place. Information on partners' research interests and priorities may be found at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/fellows/apply/granttype/scholars/index.htm>

## **8. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF AWARD**

### **8.1 Level of Funding**

Grant Review Panels (GRPs) will determine budgets and make recommendations. The Minister will determine the number of grants funded and the level of funding allocated to a grant.

### **8.2 Duration of Funding**

Scholarships are awarded for a maximum period of three years, if initial postgraduate degree enrolment is concurrent with commencement of the scholarship.

Successful applicants already enrolled for the postgraduate degree prior to the commencement of a scholarship will have the maximum period reduced by the equivalent period of study undertaken prior to commencement of the scholarship.

### **8.3 Stipend**

The stipend will be paid as outlined below:

- the standard rate for Biomedical and Public Health (non MBBS) Scholarships and Training Scholarships for Indigenous Health Research is \$20,427 pa;
- the Biomedical and Public Health priority stipend (Allied Health Professionals) is \$26,359 pa;
- NHMRC Medical/Dental Scholarships, Public Health (with MBBS), Training Scholarships for Indigenous Health (with MBBS) and Commonwealth AIDS Research Grants (CARG), HIV/AIDS research (with MBBS) is \$30,378 pa.
- the Gustav Nossal stipend is \$34,039 pa.
- the John Shaw Scholarship stipend is \$31,865 pa.

With the exception of Travelling Awards, a scholar is not entitled to hold an additional scholarship or fellowship award that provides greater than 50% of the NHMRC stipend.

### **8.4 Allowances**

Allowances are payable for scholarships as listed below:

- An allowance of \$2,250 pa, automatically included in the payment schedule, is provided to assist with the purchase of consumables and travel to relevant/associated conferences and may be used flexibly between these items of expenditure
- Gustav Nossal Scholars receive an additional \$2,435 for travel.
- John Shaw Scholars receive \$5,309 pa for consumables and travel which replaces the basic allowance of \$2,250.
- Thesis allowance is payable on claim to a scholar as a contribution towards costs associated

with the presentation of a thesis. The maximum amount NHMRC will pay is \$860 for a PhD and \$430 for a Masters.

- Relocation allowance for travel within Australia up to a maximum rate equal to the economy class airfare at student or other concession rate, if applicable, may be paid to the scholarship holder for travel undertaken to the town/city of the institution at which the scholarship has been granted, if the scholar has normally resided in another town or city. A travelling allowance within Australia for dependants at concession rate may also be payable. The total allowance payable for the scholar and dependents will not exceed \$1,385.
- An establishment allowance of \$100 is payable, on application, to assist with the cost of setting up residence where a scholar has moved to another town or city. The allowance is \$200 where the scholar has a dependent partner and/or dependent children.

Funds may be carried over to the following year, provided the scholarship is to continue in that year.

## 8.5 Bridging Support

Should a scholar submit their thesis before 31 December of the year their scholarship is due to end AND they have applied for a NHMRC Postdoctoral Fellowship, they may apply for bridging support. Bridging support will be granted to successful postdoctoral Fellowship applicants for a maximum of six months. If the scholar is unsuccessful in their Fellowship application OR the scholar undertakes employment, their bridging support payments will cease from the date the application advice is sent to NHMRC.

## 8.6 Cross-scheme Funding

NHMRC may liaise with other funding agencies to discuss any overlap between applications in order to avoid duplication of Funding.

## 8.7 Additional Earnings

Scholarships are provided for full time study. However, scholars may be entitled to undertake paid work during the term of their scholarship in line with the conditions of their Administering Institution, providing that it does not interfere with the scholar's full time study commitments.

NHMRC has increased the restriction on top-up funding for Postgraduate Scholarships to bring NHMRC into line with the 75% allowed by the Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA).

This increase of top-up funding applies to all current NHMRC Postgraduate Scholarship holders from 1 January 2009 and will only apply from that date forward. There will be no provision for retrospective or backdated top-up funding for current Scholarship holders.

## 9. INCOMPLETE OR MISLEADING INFORMATION

Once submitted to NHMRC, the application will be considered final and no changes will be permitted. The application is the prime source of information available for assessment. As such it must contain all the information necessary for assessment of the project without the need for further written or oral explanation,

or reference to additional documentation, including the World Wide Web. All details in the application, particularly concerning any successful grants, must be current at the time of application.

Under s 136.1 of the Commonwealth Criminal Code, it is an offence to provide false or misleading information to a Commonwealth body in an application for a benefit, punishable by up to 12 months imprisonment. In addition, if an application contains information that is false or misleading, it may be excluded from any further consideration for funding. The Commonwealth Government is committed to protecting its revenue, expenditure and property from any attempt, either by members of the public, contractors, sub-contractors, agents, intermediaries or its own employees to gain financial or other benefits by deceit.

If NHMRC believes that omissions or inclusion of misleading information are intentional, it will refer the matter for appropriate legal action. Examples of false or misleading information in an application include, but are not restricted to:

- providing fictitious track records; or
- falsifying claims in publications records (such as describing a paper as accepted for publication when it has only been submitted).

## 10. OBJECTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

### 10.1 Objections

Applicants may contact NHMRC seeking clarification on the outcome of their application for funding, or to state an objection to any part of the process. The objection must be lodged in writing through the Administering Institution's Research Office and be received within four weeks of the date on the letter notifying the outcome of the application.

The objection should be directed to the Complaints Officer at:

Complaints Officer  
National Health and Medical Research Council  
GPO Box 1421  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Or by email to: [complaints@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:complaints@nhmrc.gov.au)

NHMRC will provide a written response to all objections.

Complaints can only be considered against administrative process and not the merits of a particular decision. The Grounds of Complaint are listed at section 58 of the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*.

The National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992 (NHMRC Act) provides for the Commissioner not to investigate a complaint where the complainant has not initially approached the CEO for resolution.

If an applicant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may lodge a formal complaint with NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints, as detailed in Part 8 of the NHMRC Act.

The NHMRC Act may be found at:

[http://www.comlaw.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/ActCompilation1.nsf/0/23029FDD3FCC3FD7CA25719C008331D3/\\$file/NatHeaMedResCou1992WD02.pdf](http://www.comlaw.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/ActCompilation1.nsf/0/23029FDD3FCC3FD7CA25719C008331D3/$file/NatHeaMedResCou1992WD02.pdf)

Complaints to the Commissioner should be addressed to:

Dr Kerry Breen  
NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints  
GPO Box 1421  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Or by email to: [complaints@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:complaints@nhmrc.gov.au)

The complaint must be in writing, be signed by the complainant, describe the action complained about and specify the nature of and grounds for the complaint.

Complaints can only be considered against administrative process and not the merits of a particular decision. The grounds of Complaint are detailed at section 58 of the NHMRC Act and are listed below.

- a) that the action involved a breach of the rules of natural justice;
- b) that the action was induced or affected by fraud;
- c) that there was no evidence or other material to justify the action;
- d) that an irrelevant consideration was taken into account in relation to the action;
- e) that a relevant consideration was not taken into account in relation to the action;
- f) that in the course of the action a discretionary power was exercised for a purpose other than the purpose for which the power is conferred;
- g) that the action involved the exercise of a discretionary power in bad faith;
- h) that, in the course of the action, a personal discretionary power was exercised at the direction of another person;
- i) that the action involved the exercise of a discretionary power in accordance with a rule or policy without regard to the merits of the particular case; or
- j) that the action involved any other exercise of a power in a way that constitutes abuse of the power.

## **11. SCHOLARSHIP ADMINISTRATION**

Scholarships are administered by the Administering Institution through which the applicant has applied and to which NHMRC shall forward stipend payments and allowances. The scholar should, in the first instance, direct all queries to their institutions Research Officer, who will then liaise with the relevant NHMRC project officer.

### **11.1 Deed of Agreement**

Applicants should familiarise themselves with the NHMRC Deed of Agreement, available on the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/funded/manage/policy/deeds.htm>

Administering Institutions should note that the NHMRC Deed of Agreement and post-award management cover the following matters.

#### *11.1.1 Reporting Requirements*

Annual financial reports: - In accordance with the NHMRC Deed of Agreement an annual financial statement must be submitted to NHMRC for each year of funding. A final financial statement is to be submitted within six months of completion of the award.

Annual progress reports: - A summary progress report must be submitted in November each year indicating that satisfactory progress has been achieved by the scholar.

Final report: - This report must include a summary of achievements and include a list of publications. The report must be submitted within six months after completion of the award.

NHMRC reserves the right to suspend payment of further instalments of any current scholarship until the appropriate reports have been received and assessed as satisfactory.

#### *11.1.2 Varying the Terms of a Scholarship*

**Requests to vary, in any way, the terms of a scholarship must be forwarded in writing by the Administering Institution's Research or Scholarships Office, or equivalent, to NHMRC.**

If a scholar intends on making a change of supervisor or project, they must make a request in writing to the Researchers Administration Section, Program Management Branch (RASPMB). If the proposed change is made without approval from the RASPMB, scholarship funding will cease.

Applications from scholars for part-time candidature will be considered under exceptional circumstances and a maximum of 12 months at 50% part-time will be granted in those cases. Scholars will have the duration of the scholarship extended to compensate for the part-time status. Scholars may seek to amend their part-time percentage, but this requires the approval of NHMRC.

Recreation leave – Scholars shall be entitled to recreation leave in accordance with the conditions applying at the institution. All leave shall be prior to the termination of the scholarship.

Sick and Maternity leave – Scholars shall be entitled to sick leave in accordance with the conditions applying at the institution. NHMRC will provide up to 12 weeks maternity leave at the level of the stipend.

#### *11.1.3 Recognition of NHMRC Support*

Appropriate recognition for the assistance of NHMRC funding should be included in publications resulting from work undertaken during the tenure of a scholarship, by stating that the author (or co-author) holds an NHMRC Scholarship, and quoting the scholarship type and application I.D number.

## **11.2 Financial Management - Payments**

Scholarships operate on a calendar year basis and are paid quarterly in advance. Any claims for reimbursement will be paid as they fall due after receipt of appropriate documentation.