

<b>Portfolio:</b>	<b>Operations and Partnerships</b>	<b>Ref No.</b>	<b>POL-4932</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Scholarship &amp; Grant Department</b>		
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Research Scholarships</b>		

## 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy governs Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) administered scholarships (including Fellowships) established for the purpose of research that will inform, educate, facilitate change and improve the quality of surgical care and practice.

The policy sets out an equitable and transparent approach to scholarship applications, general selection criteria, conditions and recipient obligations.

Each scholarship is supported by a guideline, accessible to prospective applicants, which outlines information specific to the respective scholarship's purpose, value, duration, conditions and recipient eligibility criteria including pre-vocational qualification, speciality, research location, residency or citizenship status, heritage and personal and/or financial circumstance.

Prospective applicants can, via the RACS [Scholarship and Grant webpages](#), access this policy and all general information relevant to scholarships, along with the scholarship-specific information contained in the guidelines.

Scholarships that are facilitated (but not administered) by RACS are not governed by this policy.

## 2. KEYWORDS AND GLOSSARY

SGC	Scholarship and Grant Committee
PSFSC	Professional Standards and Fellowship Services Committee
SEMC	Scholarship Evaluation and Monitoring Committee
Fellow	An active, admitted Surgeon with up-to-date membership of RACS.
Trainee	A doctor enrolled in RACS Surgical Education and Training (SET) program.
SIMG	Specialist International Medical Graduates on the pathway to RACS Fellowship.
Junior Doctor	A registered doctor who has not yet committed to a specialty. Also, can be called pre-vocational doctor, for example PGY1, PGY2, PGY3, Junior Medical Officer, Resident, Registrar.
Research	RACS research scholarships support research activities that will inform, educate, facilitate change and improve the quality of surgical care and practice.
Scholarship*	A RACS research scholarship is awarded to support the investigation of knowledge through academic study and higher-level learning undertaken at an approved institution. Scholarship funds which are intended only for the scholarship recipient are, in most cases, disbursed as a stipend via an administering institution and may include a departmental maintenance portion.

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Multi-year scholarship	Scholarships that support recipients to undertake between two and three years of research activity providing the recipient meets their reporting obligations. These have also been known as 'continuing' scholarships.
Grant	A RACS grant is awarded to support the exchange of knowledge relating to surgical science, clinical practice or education. Unless otherwise advised, scholarship and grant payments are disbursed by RACS directly to the recipient. Approved grant activity includes (but is not limited to) mentoring programs, travel, conference attendance, professional development, SET fees, specialist training and research projects.
Fellowship	A scholarship or grant for which only RACS Fellows are eligible.
Recipient	The person to whom the scholarship has been awarded.
Stipend	A salary or personal income paid on behalf of RACS by the administering institution to the research scholarship recipient, for the use of the recipient only. The stipend portion of scholarship funds may be used as salary for the scholar, salary for a research assistant for the research project, consumables, conference attendance and other expenses excluding infrastructure.
Departmental Maintenance	Funds paid on behalf of RACS by the administering institution to the research scholarship recipient to cover expenses incurred in carrying out the research project, including but not limited to fees, supervision, laboratory and office space, computing, printing, presentation and meeting attendance costs. It is also to be used if the grant is given specifically for the purchase of equipment.  The use of the departmental maintenance should be agreed to by the recipient's supervisor or head of department. It is not intended for use in the same manner as a stipend (eg salary or personal income).
Scholarship and Grant Reviewer Pool	A pool of RACS Fellows who have been selected and approved by the Scholarship and Grant Committee (SGC) and can replace the Chair or any other member of the SGC to review or sit on the selection panel of any scholarship or grant.

*\*For the purpose of this policy, the term 'scholarship' shall be used as the general description for all RACS research scholarships and Fellowships.*

### 3. BODY OF POLICY

#### 3.1. Background

The Research Scholarship Policy has been developed in line with the 2019 Council-approved recommendation to streamline the governance of RACS administered scholarships.

#### 3.2. RACS Diversity and Inclusion statement of commitment

The Research Scholarship Policy upholds the RACS Diversity and Inclusion Plan, and RACS commitment to setting the standards for valuing diversity and inclusion of gender, ethnicity, indigeneity, sexual orientation and identity, age, disability and religion, for participation in

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surgery and RACS governance and leadership roles. RACS recognises that Trainees, Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs) and Fellows may be under-represented in more than one 'category' of diversity and may have multiple barriers to a successful career in surgery.

As such, all RACS scholarships will:

- Support initiatives designed to increase the participations of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori peoples in the practice of surgery.
- Ensure all grants and scholarships are awarded on merit by de-identifying applications to reduce any potential biases of reviewers.

### 3.3 Benefit of Scholarships

The prestige of being awarded a RACS scholarship is well recognised in the surgical community.

A RACS scholarship offers one or more of the following benefits:

- mentorship and networking opportunities (where available)
- a payment to be administered in partnership with the academic institution as stipulated in the respective guideline
- departmental maintenance (as stipulated in some scholarships)
- publishing and presentation opportunities resulting from the completion of a research project
- the opportunity to provide input into the future of the RACS scholarship program.

Prospective applicants should refer to the [RACS Scholarship and Grant webpages](#) for information on the current value (in Australian dollars) of each opportunity.

### 3.4 Eligibility criteria

Specific eligibility requirements are detailed in the respective scholarship guidelines.

Depending on the scholarship, applications are open to any, or all, of the below:

Fellows	Active Fellows of RACS may apply for scholarships and Fellowships. Some opportunities are limited to younger Fellows only (i.e. less than ten years since attaining Fellowship).
Surgical Education and Training (SET) Trainees	SET Trainees may apply for scholarships unless stipulated otherwise in the scholarship-specific guideline. They must advise their Training Board/Committee of their application and provide evidence with their application of their correspondence.
SET applicants	Junior Doctors may apply for scholarships available to SET Trainees in anticipation of their acceptance into the SET Program unless stipulated otherwise in the scholarship-specific guideline. They must be accepted into the SET Program by mid-December (date as advertised) in the year of application. SET applicants must provide evidence that they have advised their Training Board/Committee of their intention to apply for a RACS scholarship.

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Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs)	SIMGs may apply for scholarships. They will need to demonstrate a commitment to working in a clinical or research role for the two years following the scholarship activity in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand.
Non-RACS members	May apply for some scholarships, as specified in the eligibility criteria in the respective guidelines.

### 3.5 Application and selection process

The objective of this policy is to facilitate an equitable and transparent process that enables selection of the most suitable and deserving candidates.

#### 3.5.1 Application and selection timeline

Research scholarship applications open together with grant applications in March each year and close approximately six weeks later– specific dates are to be promoted in advance via RACS channels. After selection, all applicants are advised by email in August of the outcome of their application.

#### 3.5.2 Application process

Information on what scholarships are available in a given year is accessed via the [RACS Scholarship and Grant webpages](#). All applications are completed via the online program 'RACS Unlock' which is run by the RACS Scholarship and Grant team. Staff are available via email to answer queries and provide support to applicants.

The RACS Unlock platform has a series of forms outlining the required information for each application. A valid application requires all mandatory information to be provided.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring they allow enough time to complete the application by the closing deadline. Only complete applications will be considered. No extensions will be granted.

If an applicant is experiencing difficulty in submitting their application or in completing any aspects of the application form, they must notify the Scholarship and Grant team via email prior to the application closing deadline ([scholarships@surgeons.org](mailto:scholarships@surgeons.org)).

If a notification is received more than 48 hours prior to the closing deadline, and the Scholarships and Grants team is able to resolve the problem more than 48 hours before the closing deadline, the applicant will be required to submit using the online system.

If a technical issue arises within 48 hours of the closing deadline, or the scholarship and grants team is unable to rectify any issue, the applicant will be emailed application forms to complete. These will be due back within 48 hours of the email send time. Any application received after this will not be accepted. Failure to submit an application by the deadline will mean it is ineligible to be reviewed for selection.

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### 3.5.3 Selection process

The recipient is chosen based on their written application and, if applicable, subsequent interview. All personally identifiable information is removed from the application prior to the written selection process commencing.

The selection panel for each scholarship is defined in the corresponding guideline. Where a guideline specifies that a member of the SGC sit on a selection panel, they may be substituted by a suitable member of the Scholarship and Grants Reviewer Pool.

Respective selection panel/s assess applications (electronically) based upon any, or all, of the following as provided in the application: the applicant's academic record, postgraduate training, research experience, publication history, the merit of the research or project, and the reputation of the institution where the research is to be undertaken.

Interviews, when required, are conducted via a Microsoft Teams meeting by the SGC Chair or their nominated representative, and two other members of the SGC or the Scholarship and Grants Reviewer Pool, unless otherwise advised in individual guidelines. Interview assessment may be based upon the applicant's ability to address questions from the panel including, but not limited to, their ability and experience, understanding and explanation of the proposed project's merit, and the potential benefits to the individual, other surgeons and the community.

#### a) *Supervisor reference*

Where stipulated in respective guidelines, proposed supervisors are to provide written references certifying they are willing to accept the role of supervisor of the named research study. This reference is to be provided as part of the application process. If required and not provided, the scholarship application will be invalid and unsuccessful.

#### b) *Overseas institutions*

Preference will be given to applicants who will undertake the research study at an approved institution in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand. However, consideration will be given to applicants who wish to undertake all or a proportion of their research in an overseas institution. In such a case, an applicant is required to submit a strong justification in their application and supply the names of two supervisors, one of whom must be from an approved institution in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand and the other the Head of Department at the intended overseas institution.

### 3.5.4 Due diligence

To finalise selection, candidates are vetted through a due diligence assessment that includes checking registration and if the candidate is, or has been, the subject of sanctions, dismissals, suspensions or complaints.

The due diligence checklist includes:

- checking the mandatory application questions regarding any practice restrictions
- checking the RACS membership database
- checking the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and Medical Council of New Zealand databases
- requesting a check from the RACS Complaints Manager and SET Enquiries Department
- requesting a check from the Executive Directors of Surgical Affairs of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

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### 3.5.5 Approvals

SGC considers the outcomes from all selection panel/s and findings from the due diligence assessment to make final selection recommendations. SGC forwards the list of recommended candidates, along with the due diligence checklist, to the Foundation for Surgery for noting.

## 3.6 Implementation of the Scholarship

### 3.6.1 Notification and acceptance of an offer

All applicants are to be notified by email of the outcome of their application.

Successful candidates will be asked to complete the RACS acceptance form via [Unlock](#) by the due date. In so doing, the recipient acknowledges and agrees to the conditions and recipient obligations stipulated in this policy, on the RACS website and respective guidelines. This form must also be signed by a representative from the recipient's research institution.

Any successful applicant who does not accept their scholarship or grant by the deadline will be contacted by the Scholarship and Grant Admin team notifying them they need to accept the offer or request an extension within 48 hours. Failure to accept the offer (or communicate a reason to request an extension) will result in the offer being rescinded and the reserve applicant being offered the scholarship or grant.

Any request to extend the deadline for acceptance will need to be emailed to the Scholarship and Grants admin team ([scholarships@surgeons.org](mailto:scholarships@surgeons.org)) and will need to be approved by the SGC Chair. Requests should contain sufficient information for the Chair to consider the request. No reconsiderations will be entered into.

### 3.6.2 Scholarship commencement

Unless otherwise negotiated or stipulated in the respective guideline, the commencement date for scholarships is 1 January in the year following application.

Commencement date changes may be granted upon written request if new date is within the funded scholarship year (ie less than 12 months after published starting date). If the scholarship has not commenced within this time, it may be rescinded and any payment made repaid to RACS.

### 3.6.3 Scholarship duration

The duration of the scholarship is 12 months unless stipulated in the respective guideline.

One-year scholarships must be completed within 12 months of the scholarship commencing (i.e. if scholarships commence on 1 January in the year after application, the activity must be completed by 31 December of the same year, unless otherwise negotiated or stipulated).

Multi-year scholarships may be offered for up to three years duration, subject to satisfactory performance and the recipient meeting their annual obligations.

Mid-term extensions or changes to these dates may be approved by the SGC upon completion of the activity amendment form in [Unlock](#) and duly signed as indicated. The Scholarships and Grants team must be notified via email if access to the amendment form in [Unlock](#) is required ([scholarships@surgeons.org](mailto:scholarships@surgeons.org)).

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### 3.6.4 Scholarship frequency

Unless otherwise specified in the respective guideline, one-year scholarships are offered annually, subject to availability of funding and providing there is an applicant that meets the selection standards. Multi-year scholarships are renewable annually for between two and three years, subject to obligations being met (see section 3.6.10 Renewal of multi-year scholarships).

### 3.6.5 Scholarship leave

Scholarship recipients can apply for leave for special circumstances that affect the successful completion of the scholarship, such as, but not limited to, illness or injury, natural disasters, parental or family needs. Request for leave of more than four weeks must be made using the scholarship leave request forms. An institutional approval leave form is also required to be submitted. All forms are available in Unlock. To gain access to the forms the Scholarships and Grants team must be notified via email ([scholarships@surgeons.org](mailto:scholarships@surgeons.org)).

Please refer to the [Scholarship Program Leave Policy](#).

### 3.6.6 Part time research

Scholarships are available to be undertaken in a part-time capacity, unless otherwise stated in the individual guidelines.

Please refer to the [Part-Time Research Scholarships Policy](#) for further details.

### 3.6.7 Scholarship funding source

The funding source for each scholarship is outlined in the scholarship-specific guideline.

### 3.6.8 Payment of the scholarship

Where payment is via an administering institution (as stipulated in the scholarship-specific guideline) a request will be sent to the nominated contact at the administering institution for a tax invoice. Once a valid tax invoice is received, the payment of the annual value of the scholarship will be made to the nominated administering institution on behalf of the recipient by 1 March in the scholarship year.

Should the scholarship be deemed to be payable directly to the recipient, a request will be sent to the recipient for a tax invoice. Once a valid tax invoice is received, the payment of the annual value of the scholarship will be made to the recipient by 1 March in the scholarship year.

If the scholarship is multi-year, these steps will be repeated each subsequent year.

The control of the expenditure will be governed by relevant policies and procedures of the administering institution.

Recipients are advised to refer to a financial or taxation advisor to ascertain the taxability of the scholarship.

### 3.6.9 Reapplication for scholarships

Unsuccessful applicants who continue to meet the eligibility criteria may reapply in subsequent years.

Unless otherwise stated in respective guidelines, previous recipients are eligible to re-apply in subsequent years.

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### 3.6.10 Renewal of multi-year scholarships

As stipulated in the respective guideline and subject to approval by the SGC, multi-year scholarships are renewable annually for between two and three years. Renewal is subject to the recipient meeting their obligations and displaying satisfactory progress, as determined from the midyear scholarship report (see 3.7.3 Reporting).

### 3.6.11 Scholarship termination

RACS may, at its discretion for what is considered a grave cause, withdraw or suspend the tenure of a scholarship. From the date of either of these decisions, the entitlement to funding and other allowances shall cease.

Upon termination, monies already paid and not duly expended shall be refunded to RACS.

## 3.7 Recipient obligations

By accepting the scholarship, the recipient agrees to the following conditions and obligations and will for the duration of the scholarship:

- Continue to be enrolled in the higher degree named in their application (if enrolment in a higher degree is a requirement of the scholarship, as outlined in the respective guideline).
- If applicable, be supervised by the nominated supervisor or advise RACS and seek approval if there is a change of supervisor.
- Undertake the research study/project as approved and seek approval from the SGC prior to any amendments.
- Report on the activity in accordance with the respective reporting requirements.

### 3.7.1 Access to additional funding

Recipients may hold two RACS scholarships or grants concurrently only if both scholarships or grants are each worth less than or equal to \$10,000. Individual members of a research group in receipt of a RACS scholarship or grant may also receive an individual concurrent RACS scholarship.

A recipient may hold non-RACS funding for the same activity at the same time as a RACS scholarship. However, they must notify RACS immediately upon receipt of the non-RACS funding if it was awarded for the same purpose as the RACS funding. The RACS scholarship will be reduced by 50% of the value of the additional funding, unless approved otherwise upon written application to the Chair, SGC. An exception to this is when the RACS scholarship value is less than the general research scholarship amount (currently \$80,000).

If additional funding is received and not reported, the recipient may be required to reimburse the RACS funding.

### 3.7.2 Access to professional income

Recipients, including those who are approved as part-time, may engage in professional work in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand for additional remuneration (recommended up to 20% of each working week) provided it does not interfere with them achieving their research milestones. It is recommended that this work is undertaken with the permission of the recipient's supervisor and employing institution. Clinical sessional work, teaching and consulting are all categories of work for which permission should be sought.

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See the [Part-Time Research Scholarships Policy](#) for further information.

### 3.7.3 Reporting

Unless otherwise stipulated in the respective guideline, recipients of 12-month scholarships are required to provide RACS with a report on their activities and research following completion of their scholarship using the end of year/end-program report form in [Unlock](#). Scholarships conclude in December of the year the funds are received (unless otherwise stated), therefore reports are required in January of the following year.

The recipient's supervisor may, in the same time period, also be requested to report on the progress of the recipient.

Multi-year scholarship recipients are required to provide mid-year reports for all but their final year and an end-of-program report in their final year using the report forms available in [Unlock](#) when requested by the scholarships and grants administrative team. Reports are reviewed by the SGC with copies sent to the relevant stakeholders, including the benefactor or sponsor as appropriate.

The continuation of multi-year scholarships in the following year will be dependent upon recipients displaying satisfactory progress through their mid-year reports. The recipient's supervisor is required to provide a report on the progress of the continuing scholar at this time. The supervisor report form is accessed by the applicant and sent to the supervisor via [Unlock](#). Note: the supervisor will need to create a profile within Unlock.

If reports are not received or are inadequately completed, the recipient will be ineligible for any further financial assistance from RACS and may be required to repay the scholarship.

### 3.7.4 Evaluation survey

Upon request from the Scholarship Evaluation and Monitoring Committee, recipients will be required to complete two Scholarship Evaluation Surveys. The first is due upon completion of the scholarship, with the second due approximately five years later. These surveys are essential for the ongoing improvement of the program.

To assist in the continuous improvement of the scholarship and grant administration process, all applicants may be sent a survey requesting feedback on the program administration by the Scholarships and Grants team. Participation in this survey is voluntary.

### 3.7.5 Publications and patents

Recipients are encouraged to submit the results of their research whenever possible to a peer-reviewed journal such as the *ANZ Journal of Surgery*. RACS must be notified of publication as soon as is practicable after acceptance by the journal.

Upon request and following completion of the scholarship, recipients are obliged to make themselves available to be interviewed for an article in RACS *Surgical News*.

RACS must be notified of the results of all RACS-funded research that is to be commercially developed, and of any patents arising from the scholarship. The College does not seek to claim ownership of legitimate rights or researcher, funded by the College or otherwise. Most research funding by College scholarships/grants will vest intellectual property ownership with the researchers or their academic institution, as appropriate. Recipients of RACS scholarship/grants are, however, required to acknowledge RACS support.

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### 3.7.6 Presenting at an annual meeting

Unless otherwise stated in the guidelines, recipients are required to submit an abstract to present their research at the annual meeting of the Surgical Research Society of Australasia (SRS) (or an agreed equivalent) at least once during the scholarship or within the 12 months following the completion of the scholarship period. They may also be invited and/or required to present their research at an annual meeting (such as the RACS Annual Scientific Congress or the Surgical Research Society of Australasia Annual Meeting), within 12 months after completion of the scholarship period.

Recipients must advise the RACS Scholarship and Grant team via email ([scholarships@surgeons.org](mailto:scholarships@surgeons.org)) of submission of an abstract to the SRS meeting or agreed equivalent and of acceptance of presentation if appropriate.

### 3.7.7 Ethics approval

Where stipulated in the respective guideline, the recipient must provide RACS with documented ethics approval from their institution's ethics committee, as evidence that the project conforms to the general principles set out in the NH&MRC Statement on Human Experimentation, the Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes and/or the Health Research Council of New Zealand HRC Research Ethics.

### 3.7.8 Acknowledgements

RACS, the RACS Foundation for Surgery, the name of the scholarship and the benefactor or sponsor (where appropriate) must be acknowledged in any relevant correspondence, public announcement, advertising, publication, presentation or other material relating to the scholarship.

### 3.7.9 Privacy

Information will be collected, stored and disclosed in accordance with the RACS Privacy of Personal Information Policy.

## 3.8 Access

Information contained within this policy is to be available to RACS staff, Committees, recipients and applicants on the RACS website. Also available to institutions upon request.

## 3.9 Administering Committee

SGC administers RACS scholarships, fellowships and grants.

## 4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

POL: Privacy of Personal Information policy

POL: Scholarship Program Leave Policy

POL: Scholarship Program Part-time Policy

GDL: Research Scholarship Guidelines

PRC: Research Scholarship Procedures

FRM: Scholarship Program Amendment Form

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**POLICY**

ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

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**Approver:** Scholarship and Grant Committee

**Authoriser:** Council

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