Portfolio:	**Operations & Partnerships**	**Ref. No.**	**POL-4914**
Department:	**Scholarship & Grant Department**		
Title:	**Learning and Development Grants**		

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy governs Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) administered Fellowships and grants established to support learning and development, including travel opportunities. These opportunities aim to benefit the surgical community and improve the quality of surgical practice.

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

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

Prospective applicants can, via the RACS Scholarships and Grant webpages, access this policy and all general information relating to grants, along with the grant-specific information contained in the guidelines.

Fellowships and grants 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 the RACS Surgical Education and Training (SET) program.
SIMG	Specialist International Medical Graduate 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.
Grant*	A RACS grant is awarded to support the exchange of knowledge relating to surgical science, clinical practice or education. 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 small research projects.
Scholarship	A RACS research scholarship is awarded to support the investigation of knowledge through academic study and higher-level learning. The activity is to be undertaken at an approved institution. Scholarship funds are disbursed as a stipend via an administering institution and may include a departmental maintenance portion.
Fellowship	A scholarship or grant for which only RACS Fellows are eligible.

Recipient	The person to whom the scholarship has been awarded.
Scholarship and Grants 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 certain scholarship and grants.

**For the purpose of this policy, the term 'grant' shall be used as the general description for all RACS Learning and Development Fellowships and grants.*

3. BODY OF POLICY

3.1. Background

The Learning and Development Fellowship and Grant 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 Learning and Development Fellowship and Grant 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 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 grants will:

- Support initiatives designed to increase the participation 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 Grants

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

A RACS grant offers funding to support one or more of the following benefits:

- conference/scientific meeting attendance
- presentation opportunities
- mentorship, leadership and networking opportunities
- training and experience
- professional development
- small research projects.

Being an applicant of a RACS Fellowship or grant also provides the opportunity to input into the future of the RACS Scholarships and Grants Program through a compulsory survey.

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 grant guidelines.

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

Fellows	Active Fellows of RACS may apply for grants 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 grants.
SET applicants	Junior doctors may apply for grants available to SET Trainees in anticipation of their acceptance into the SET Program. They must be accepted into the SET Program by mid-December (date as advertised) in the year of application.
Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs)	SIMGs on the pathway to RACS Fellowship and who can demonstrate a commitment to working in a clinical or research role for the two years following the scholarship/grant activity in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand may apply for grants.
Non-RACS members	May apply for some grants, 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 candidate.

3.5.1 Application and selection timeline

Grant applications open together with Research 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 grants can be applied for in a given year is accessed via the RACS Scholarships and Grants website. 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 Scholarships and Grant team prior to the application closing deadline.

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 must be returned 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.

3.5.3 Selection process

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

The selection panel for each grant is defined in the corresponding guideline. Where a guideline specifies that a member of the SGC sit on a selection panel, this may be substituted for a member of the Scholarships and Grants Reviewer Pool.

Respective selection panel/s assess applications (electronically) based upon any, or all, of the following as provided in the application: abilities and experience of the candidate, proposed activity and use of the funds, the merit of the activity and the extent to which it will benefit surgical or clinical skills, the individual, other surgeons and/or the relevant community.

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.

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 Committee for noting.

3.6. Implementation of the Grant

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 in respective guidelines.

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) 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 Grant commencement and duration

Unless otherwise negotiated or stipulated in the respective guideline the activity for which funding is being sought must commence after the grant application closing date but prior to the end of the grant year (December 31st). See respective guidelines for details regarding any duration stipulations.

3.6.3 Grant amendment or extension

An amendment or extension (maximum of 12 months) to the grant activity may be requested using the grant activity amendment form in Unlock. The Scholarships and Grant team must be notified via email that you request access to the amendment or extension request form (scholarships@surgeons.org). With extensions, the activity must be completed by 31 December of the year following the grant year if approved. If the recipient does not meet these requirements the grant will have to be repaid. Approval of amendments to the grant activity is at the discretion of the Chair of the SGC

The Chair of the SGC will request refund of grants that are not completed in the time frame approved.

3.6.4 Grant frequency

Not all grants outlined on the RACS Scholarship and Grants webpages are available every year. The annual offering varies depending on their funding, purpose and whether they are offered over one or multiple years.

3.6.5 Grant leave

Grant recipients can apply for leave for special circumstances that affect the successful completion of the grant, such as but not limited to, illness or injury, natural disasters, parental or family needs. As for amendments or extensions to grant activity, request for leave must be made using the grant activity amendment form in Unlock. To gain access this form the Scholarships and Grants team must be notified via email (scholarships@surgeons.org).

Please refer to the Scholarship Program Leave Policy.

3.6.6 Grant funding source

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

3.6.7 Payment of the grant

The Scholarship and Grants team will issue all recipients with an invoice request in January of the grant year. Following receipt of a valid tax invoice funding will be paid to the recipient in one instalment before 1 March in the grant year.

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

3.6.8 Reapplication for grants

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

Unless otherwise stated in the respective guideline, previous recipients are eligible to reapply for the same grant in subsequent years.

3.6.9 Grant termination

RACS may, at its discretion for what is considered a grave cause, withdraw or suspend the tenure of a grant. 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. Conditions and recipient obligations

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

- Undertake the activity as outlined in their application and approved by RACS.
- Undertake the activity within the eligible time period (see section 3.6.2 of this policy)
- Request an amendment to the activity or leave from RACS (via the amendment form in Unlock), or repay grant funds to RACS, should circumstances prohibit them from fulfilling the approved travel plans or activity (see section 3.6.3 of this policy)
- Report on activity in accordance with the respective reporting requirements (see section 3.7.2 of this policy)

3.7.1 Access to additional funding

Recipients may hold two RACS grants or scholarships concurrently if both grants or scholarships are each worth less than or equal to $10,000. They may hold a RACS grant in conjunction with non-RACS funding but must notify RACS immediately upon receipt of the non-RACS funding if it was awarded for the same purpose as the RACS funding.

3.7.2 Reporting

The recipient must provide a report on their grant activity using the report form in Unlock. Grants conclude in December of the year the funds are received (unless otherwise negotiated or stipulated in the grant guidelines); therefore, recipients will be emailed requesting submission of their report by January 31st of the following year.

Multi-year grant recipients are required to provide a yearly report on their progress and how they will spend the funding in the following year, as well as an overall final report at the end of their grant.

Reports are reviewed by the SGC or the Scholarships and Grants team, with copies sent to the relevant stakeholders, including the benefactor or sponsor, as appropriate.

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

3.7.3 Evaluation surveys

Upon request from the Scholarship Evaluation and Monitoring Committee, recipients are 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 evaluating the impact of the program.

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

3.7.4 Publications and patents

RACS must be notified of any publications arising from the grant opportunity as soon as practicable after acceptance by a journal.

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

RACS must be notified of the results of any research resulting from the grant that is to be commercially developed, and of any patents arising from the grant.

3.7.5 Presenting at an annual meeting

Recipients may be invited to present their findings at an annual meeting (such as the RACS Annual Scientific Congress), at their own expense, within 12 months after completion of the grant.

3.7.6 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 the 'Health Research Council of New Zealand HRC Research Ethics Guidelines'.

3.7.7 Acknowledgements

RACS, the Foundation for Surgery, the name of the grant 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 grant.

3.7.7 Privacy

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

4. INDIGENOUS GRANT PROGRAM

4.1 Background

The Indigenous Grant Program was established by the Indigenous Health Committee to increase the participation of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori doctors and medical students in a surgical career by providing education, training and/or research opportunities for pre-vocational recipients as well as for established RACS Fellows and SET Trainees.

RACS and the Indigenous Health Committee are committed to prioritising Indigenous Health, building the surgical workforce and increasing services to better meet the health needs of Māori, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We are also focused on collaborating effectively with our partners and supporting the communities we serve.

Where possible, and unless otherwise stated in the conditions, grants are offered in equal numbers to Māori, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

The following conditions and eligibility are in addition to all the conditions and eligibility in this policy and are specific to the Indigenous Grant Program.

4.2 Indigenous program grants

Grants that are available at the time of writing of this document are below. More grants or scholarships may have been developed since this time. Further details can be found on their individual guidelines

- Johnson and Johnson MedTech Scholarship – Māori
- Johnson and Johnson MedTech Scholarship – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Career Enhancement Grant – Medical students
- Career Enhancement Grant – Junior doctors
- Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) Award
- Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) Peer Support Award
- Davison Family Grant
- Williams Family Grant
- Ngarra Grant

4.3 Applicant eligibility

Māori applicants must provide confirmation of eligibility for membership to Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa | The Māori Medical Practitioners Association (Te ORA)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander must provide confirmation of eligibility for membership to the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA)

Note that membership is not required, only eligibility to be a member

4.4 Selection panel

Unless otherwise specified in the specific guideline, the selection panel must include the Chair (or nominee) of the Indigenous Health Committee (IHC) and include at least three of any of the following (or their nominees) as is most relevant to the grant/scholarship:

- Members of the IHC
- Chair, Committee of Surgical Education
- Training Chair, Prevocational and Skills Education Committee
- Chair, Fellowships Services Committee
- Censor-in-Chief

- President, Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA)
- President, Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa | The Māori Medical Practitioners Association (Te ORA)

4.5 Recipient obligations specific to the Indigenous Program

Besides any specific obligations mentioned in individual guidelines, recipients are encouraged to submit an abstract, and if successful, to present their findings and/or learnings at the annual meeting of the Surgical Research Society of Australasia and elsewhere.

4.6 Partner committee

Indigenous Health Committee

5. ACCESS

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

6. ADMINISTERING COMMITTEE

SGC administers RACS scholarships, fellowships and grants.

7. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

POL: Privacy of Personal Information Policy

POL: Scholarship Program Leave Policy

PRC: Learning and Development Travel Grants and Fellowships procedures

FRM: Grant Program Amendment Form

GDL: Learning & Development Grant Guidelines

Approver: Scholarship and Grant Committee

Authoriser: Council