

Portfolio:	Education Development and Delivery	Ref No.	POL-4932
Department:	Scholarship & Grant Department		
Title:	Research Scholarships		

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.

This policy is for RACS internal use. Prospective applicants can, via the RACS [Scholarship and Grant webpages](#), access 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

ANZSGC	Australia and New Zealand 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.
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 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
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 Grants Reviewer Panel	A panel of RACS Fellows who have been selected and approved by the ANZSGC, and can replace The Chair or any other member of the ANZSGC 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 surgery and RACS governance and leadership roles. RACS recognises that Trainees, Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs) and Fellows may be under-represented in

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more than one 'category' of diversity and may have multiple barriers to a successful career in surgery.

As such, all RACS scholarships will:

- Actively focus on removing any barriers to the participation of underrepresented genders and increasing their representation.
- Ensure a cohesive and comprehensive response that considers the overlap of diversity qualities.
- Continue current initiatives designed to increase the participation of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori peoples in the practice of surgery.

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 grants)
- 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. They must advise their training board 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. 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 of their intention to apply for a RACS scholarship.

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Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs)	SIMGs may apply for scholarships.
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 in March and close in April each year – specific dates are to be promoted in advance via RACS channels. After selection, all applicants are advised by email of the outcome of their application by early August in the year of application.

3.5.2 Application process

All applications are administered by the RACS Scholarship and Grant Department, with the Scholarship team available via email and phone to answer queries and provide support to applicants.

Applications are open via RACS [Scholarship and Grant webpages](#). Online resources such as *General Information* and *Frequently Asked Questions*, are to be reviewed for relevance each year and, when necessary, redeveloped.

3.5.3 Selection process

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

Applicants who are undertaking a higher degree must include a timeline of their degree with their application.

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, written recommendations, the merit of the research or project, and the reputation of the institution where the research is to be undertaken.

The selection panel for each scholarship is defined in the corresponding guideline. Where a guideline specifies that a member of the Australia and New Zealand Scholarship and Grant Committee (ANZSGC) sit on a selection panel, this may be substituted for a suitable member of the Scholarship and Grants Reviewer Panel.

Interviews, when required, are conducted via teleconference by the Chair or their nominated representative, and two other members of the ANZSGC 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

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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*

As 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. Written approval is also required from 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.

3.5.5 Approvals

ANZSGC considers the outcomes from all selection panel/s and findings from the due diligence assessment to make final selection recommendations. ANZSGC forwards the list of recommended candidates, along with the due diligence checklist, to the Professional Standards and Fellowship Services Committee (PSFSC) for noting.

3.6 Implementation of the Scholarship

3.6.1 Notification and acceptance of an offer

All applicants will be notified of the outcome by email via Unlock by early August.

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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 on the RACS website and respective guidelines. This form must also be signed by the recipient's Head of Department.

In the case of the recipient being a project team, the Chief Investigator must complete the acceptance documentation.

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.

3.6.3 Scholarship duration

The duration of the scholarship is 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. Please see the RACS website and respective guidelines for these opportunities.

Mid-term extensions or changes to these dates may be approved by the ANZSGC upon completion of the amendment form, duly signed as indicated.

Commencement date changes may be granted an extension of 12 months. If the scholarship has not commenced within this time, scholarship may be rescinded and any payment made repaid to RACS.

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 for more information).

3.6.5 Scholarship leave

Scholarship recipients are able to 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.

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.

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3.6.7 Scholarship funding source

Scholarships are funded from the income revenue derived from the corpus under the Foundation of Surgery, direct sponsorships or RACS operational budget.

3.6.8 Payment of the scholarship

Where payment is via an administering institution (as stipulated in the individual 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 or grant will be made to the nominated administering institution on behalf of the recipient by 1 March in the scholarship year, and in any subsequent years if a multi-year scholarship.

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 or grant 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. General information about income tax in relation to scholarships is available on the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page of the [RACS website](#)

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.

3.6.10 Renewal of multi-year scholarships

As stipulated in the respective guideline and subject to approval by the ANZSGC, 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.

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3.7 Conditions and 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 ANZSGC 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 worth less than \$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, ANZSGC.

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 up to 20% of each working week. 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.

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

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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. Scholarships conclude in December of the year the funds are received (unless stated), therefore reports are required in the prescribed format 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 both a mid- and end-of-year report. The continuation of multi-year scholarships in the following year will be dependent upon recipients displaying satisfactory progress through their mid-year reports. Reports are reviewed by the ANZSGC with copies sent to the relevant stakeholders, including the benefactor or sponsor as appropriate.

The recipient's supervisor is required to provide a report on the progress of the continuing scholar at this time.

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.

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 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.

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 (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.

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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 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.

If invited, recipients are obliged to speak at Foundation for Surgery events.

3.7.9 Privacy

Refer to RACS Privacy of Personal Information policy for information on how RACS may collect, store and disclose personal information.

3.8 Access

This policy is for RACS staff and committee use only. Information contained within this policy is to be available to applicants on the RACS website.

3.9 Administering Committee

ANZSGC 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

Approver ANZ Scholarship and Grant Committee

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