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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANZSGC</th>
<th>Australia and New Zealand Scholarship and Grant Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDSB</td>
<td>Professional Development Standards Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEMC</td>
<td>Scholarship Evaluation and Monitoring Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow</td>
<td>An active, admitted Surgeon with up-to-date membership of RACS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainee</td>
<td>A doctor enrolled in RACS Surgical Education and Training (SET) program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMG</td>
<td>Specialist International Medical Graduates on the pathway to RACS Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>RACS research scholarships support research activities that will inform, educate, facilitate change and improve the quality of surgical care and practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship*</td>
<td>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 are disbursed as a stipend via an administering institution and may include a departmental maintenance portion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-year scholarship</td>
<td>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.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**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.

**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.

**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.

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 (e.g., salary or personal income).

*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 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 women 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 (in some cases)
- publishing and presentation opportunities resulting from the completion of a research project
- the opportunity to 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fellows</td>
<td>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)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgical Education and Training (SET) Trainees</td>
<td>SET Trainees may apply for scholarships. They must advise their training board of their application and provide documentation with their application of their correspondence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET applicants</td>
<td>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 1 August in the year of application. SET Trainees must confirm the support of their Training Board in writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs)</td>
<td>SIMGs may apply for scholarships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-RACS members</td>
<td>May apply for some scholarships, as specified in the eligibility criteria in the respective guidelines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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, curriculum vitae, written references and, when applicable, subsequent interview. All personally identifiable information is redacted from the application prior to the selection process commencing.

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 references, 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 teleconference by the Chair and two other members of the Australia and New Zealand Scholarships and Grants Committee (ANZSGC). 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

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 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 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 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 Development Standards Board (PDSB) for final approval.

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 in early August.

Successful candidates will be advised to sign and return the acceptance form to RACS 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.

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 a worthy applicant. 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

As per the Scholarship Program Leave Policy, recipients are able to apply for leave for unplanned special circumstances that are beyond their control, and that affect the successful completion of the scholarship, such as but not limited to, illness or injury, natural disasters, parental or family needs.

3.6.6 Part-time research

Successful research scholarship recipients may apply to undertake their scholarship in a part-time capacity.

Please refer to the Part-Time Research Scholarships Policy for further details.

3.6.7 Scholarship funding source

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

3.6.8 Payment of the scholarship

Payment of the annual value of the scholarship will be made to an administering institution on behalf of the recipient by 1 March in the year following application.

The scholarship will be paid on receipt of a valid tax invoice provided by the administering institution.

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 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 reapply 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).

RACS may finance up to three years of a higher degree. Recipients who have completed a portion of their higher degree prior to receiving the scholarship may be funded for the remaining duration of their degree, providing it does not exceed three years.

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 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 not hold two RACS scholarships or grants concurrently. However 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 ANZSGC may consider if the RACS scholarship will be reduced by the value of the additional funding.

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 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.

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.

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 refund the award.

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

Recipients may 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.
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” and/or the “Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes”.

3.7.8 Acknowledgements

RACS, the Foundation for Surgery 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.

The Foundation for Surgery logo must be included in all presentations 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

Privacy of Personal Information policy
Scholarship Program Leave Policy
Scholarship Program Part-time Policy
Research scholarship guidelines
Research scholarship procedures

Approver: ANZ Scholarship and Grant Committee
Authoriser: Council