Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Policy

Section 1 - Summary

(1) The Policy aims to provide best-practice for offering, awarding and managing Higher Degree by Research Scholarships at Victoria University (VU) for domestic and international applicants/students. This Policy and associated Procedure outline the requirements of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Scholarships (Stipend, Fee Offset and Allowances) which are funded by Victoria University or the Australian Commonwealth Government Research Training Program (RTP).

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Policy applies to Scholarships provided by VU to Higher Degree by Research students, including those scholarships funded through the Commonwealth's Research Training Program.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

Types of Support Available

(3) Victoria University (VU) Sponsored and RTP Higher Degree by Research Scholarships may be made up of one or more of the following:

a. Fee Offset: to assist with tuition fees that would otherwise be payable by the student.
b. Stipend: to assist with living costs.
c. Allowances: to assist with ancillary costs incurred by a HDR Student in undertaking a research degree; including, but not limited to Overseas Student Health Cover, relocation costs, academic or publication costs.

(4) VU may offer scholarship opportunities to targeted groups to give priority to a class of students including but not limited to Indigenous students, low socioeconomic status students, students who identify as having a disability or are neuro-divergent, students who have lived experience of one or more identities and barriers or students undertaking research in a particular discipline or emerging area of research strength, or students undertaking a higher degree by research for the first time.

Eligibility Requirements

(5) Eligibility for a VU Sponsored HDR or RTP Scholarship (Fee Offset) is based on:

a. enrolment in a higher degree by research course of study at VU;
b. being either a domestic or international student;
c. must not be in receipt of an equivalent award or scholarship from the Commonwealth, designed to offset HDR tuition fees.

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(6) To be eligible to hold a VU Sponsored HDR or RTP Scholarship (Stipend), the student must:

a. Be a domestic or international student;
b. Be enrolled in or will be commencing a higher degree by research course of study at VU;
c. not be receiving income from another source to support that student's general living costs while undertaking their course of study if that income is greater than 75 percent of that students VU Sponsored HDR or RTP Stipend rate;
d. not have income unrelated to the student's course of study or income received for the student's course of study but not for the purposes of supporting general living costs taken into account.

Stipend and/or Fee Offset for second degree

(7) Applicants who have completed a research degree and apply for a VU Sponsored HDR or RTP Scholarship (Stipend or Fee-Offset) for a second research degree at the same or lower Australian Quality Framework level (or equivalent for applicants with a qualification from an overseas institution), will normally not be eligible or considered for a Stipend or Fee Offset Scholarship.

Application, Selection and Offers

(8) The application and selection process for VU Sponsored HDR and RTP Scholarships (Stipend, Fee Offset and/or Allowances) will accord with the relevant Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Research) 2017 (Cth) and the fairness requirements in Subdivision 19-D of Part 2-1 of the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth) and is detailed in the Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Procedure.

(9) All VU Sponsored HDR and RTP Scholarship offers will be made in writing and include advice about the types of assistance and support being offered, the conditions and periods of support, and minimum annual stipend rate, if applicable.

(10) If a VU Sponsored HDR or RTP Stipend Scholarship recipient is unable to commence their Scholarship by the commencement date, then they must seek advice regarding a deferment – refer Higher Degrees by Research Admissions Procedure (clause 39 and 40). Stipend Scholarships cannot be deferred for more than one research period.

Periods of Support

(11) Timeframes for support are detailed in Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Procedure.

Stipend and Fee Offset Rates

(12) VU Sponsored HDR and RTP Scholarships (Stipend) full-time rates for the following year will be at a minimum and maximum as those published by the department administering the Higher Education Support Act 2003 on October 1st of the year preceding the rate being applied.

(13) If a Stipend scholarship holder is approved by VU to undertake their higher degree by research on a half-time basis and continue receiving a Stipend, the student's part-time Stipend rate will be 50 per cent of the full-time rate for the relevant year. Part-time stipends will be taxed as per current Australian Tax Office regulations.

(14) Fee Offset Rates for the following year will be published on the Victoria University Research Fees website.

Supervision and Facilities

(15) In accordance with the Higher Degrees by Research Admissions Procedure, admission to a research degree includes consideration of whether adequate supervision, access to equipment, infrastructure and facilities are available.

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(16) VU will provide resources and facilities in line with the agreed requirements of timely completion of their degree and in accordance with Higher Degrees by Research Researcher Development and Support Procedure, Space Allocation and Management Policy and the Space Allocation and Management Procedure.

(17) Academic supervision arrangements and conduct will be managed in accordance with Higher Degree by Research Supervision Policy, Higher Degrees by Research Supervision Procedure and Higher Degrees by Research Supervision - Supervisor Registration and Professional Development Procedure.

Leave of Absence

(18) Leave of Absence initiated by HDR students at VU is considered under Higher Degrees by Research Enrolments Procedure and impacts on any scholarship in the Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Procedure.

Employment Restrictions

(19) VU may limit VU Sponsored HDR and RTP Stipend Scholarship recipients to a maximum of number of hours of paid employment per week.

Suspension Termination

(20) Suspension and Termination of a VU Sponsored HDR or RTP Scholarship will be in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Procedure.

Transfer of Scholarship

(21) VU Sponsored HDR Scholarships are not transferrable to another institution.

(22) There is no transfer of RTP funding between higher education providers.

Confidentiality

(23) All information provided by applicants will be treated as confidential, according to VU's Privacy Policy.

(24) Applications and supporting documentation will be maintained in accordance with VU's Records Management Policy and Records Management Schedules.

Grievance and Review

(25) Applicants for a VU Sponsored HDR or RTP Scholarship are referred to the RTP Higher Degree by Research Grievance Fact Sheet.

(26) A Review of a VU Sponsored HDR or RTP Scholarship decision may be requested by a VU HDR or RTP Scholarship applicant and/student of the University in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Procedure.

(27) All recipients of VU Sponsored HDR and RTP Scholarships are covered by VU's Complaints Policy and the Complaints Procedure (Student and Public).

Section 4 - Procedures

(28) Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Procedure

Section 5 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(29) HESF: Standards 1.3 Orientation and Progression; 2.2 Diversity and Equity; 2.3 Wellbeing and Safety; 2.4 Student Grievances and Complaints; 4.2 Research Training; 6.2 Corporate Monitoring and Accountability; 7.2 Information for Prospective and Current Students; 7.3 Information Management.

(30) National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018: Standard 2 Recruitment of an overseas student, 3 Formalisation of enrolment and written agreements, 8 Overseas Student Visa Requirements; 9 Deferring, suspending or cancelling the overseas students' enrolment.

Section 6 - Definitions

(31) Domestic Student

(32) International Student (Onshore)

(33) Primary Care Giver: a Stipend Scholarship holder who has the principal responsibility of providing care and attending to the physical needs of a child. Only one person can be the Primary Care Giver of a child at one time. The Primary Care Giver must also be the:

a. biological or adoptive parent of the child; or
b. partner of the biological or adoptive parent of the child; or
c. person caring for a child born of a surrogacy arrangement.

(34) Victoria University (VU) Sponsored Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Scholarships (Stipend, Fee Off-Set or Allowance): Stipend, Fee Offset or Allowance Scholarships that are not funded by the RTP but funded in part or in full by any one of VU’s organisational units with or without support from industry, philanthropic organisations or grants.

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"International Student (Onshore)" - A person who has been granted a visa by the Department of Home Affairs which gives them study rights.

"Domestic Student" - A person who is an Australian or New Zealand citizen or holder of an Australian Permanent Resident Visa (including humanitarian visas).

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