



Graduate Research and RTP Scholarships Policy

Schedule B – Ranking and Selection Process for Graduate Research Scholarships at La Trobe University

Section 1 – Background and Purpose

- 1) This Schedule outlines the process and criteria to be used to rank and select applicants for the following graduate research stipend scholarships at La Trobe University:
 - a. School-allocated;
 - b. Master's Pathway;
 - c. Centrally-allocated;
 - d. Equity; and
 - e. Top-Up scholarships.

Section 2 - Scope

- 2) This Schedule applies to international and domestic applications for school-allocated, Master's Pathway, centrally-allocated (including specific projects), equity and top-up graduate research stipend and fee-offset scholarships including but not limited to:
 - a. Research Training Program (RTP) scholarships; and
 - b. La Trobe University scholarships.

Section 3 – Scoring, Ranking and Selection Process for Stipend Scholarships

General principles for allocation

- 3) Only applicants who are eligible for entry into, or are currently enrolled in, a graduate research degree will be considered for a stipend scholarship.
- 4) Scholarships are awarded based on merit (the scholarship assessment score), La Trobe University's and school's strategic priorities, and, where relevant, equity considerations.
- 5) There are normally two rounds a year for school-allocated doctoral and Master's by Research scholarships, as well as Master's Pathway scholarships (mid-year and end-of-year), but this may be varied by the Board of Graduate Research. The Board may allocate a set number of scholarships to each school, based on the school's research performance and the overall scholarship budget, for award in a specified round.

- 6) Centrally-allocated scholarships — including those allocated centrally as commitments to new academic appointments, partnerships, or competitive grants — do not form part of a school's allocation and are normally advertised as a project scholarship on an ad hoc basis.
- 7) The award of RTP Stipend Scholarships will be prioritised to applications from domestic candidates.
- 8) For Master's by Research scholarships, the Board of Graduate Research will prioritise applications from full-time candidates, enrolled to undertake their research at a La Trobe University campus and who have attained the equivalent of a first-class (80 or above) honours thesis mark at an Australian university or recognised overseas university.
- 9) For Master's Pathway scholarships, the Board of Graduate Research will prioritise applications from full-time La Trobe University students, enrolled to undertake their research at a La Trobe University campus who have attained an Honours equivalence score of 80 or above.
- 10) For doctoral research scholarships, the Board of Graduate Research will prioritise applications from full-time candidates, enrolled to undertake their research at a La Trobe University campus and who have attained a Master's by Research degree, or equivalent, assessed at a La Trobe University Master's by Research thesis standard of 75 or above.

Scoring of Scholarship Applications

- 11) All eligible applications are initially assessed and scored by the relevant school, coordinated by the School Director of Graduate Research (or nominee), using the relevant scholarship assessment form provided by the Graduate Research School.
- 12) Applications are scored based on the applicant's performance in the research component of their qualifying degree and any other relevant achievements.
- 13) For Master's by Research scholarship applications, the research component is given a score equivalent to a La Trobe University honours degree thesis mark, determined from:
 - a. the thesis mark for Australian Honours degrees or Australian Master's by Coursework degrees with a minor thesis component (or equivalent); or
 - b. an independent assessment of the research component for any other qualifications.
- 14) For Master's Pathway applications, the research component is given a score equivalent to a La Trobe University honours degree thesis mark, determined from:
 - a. the provisional honours thesis mark for applicants enrolled in an eligible La Trobe University honours degree; or
 - b. the weighted average mark (WAM) in the coursework Master's degree for applicants enrolled in an eligible La Trobe University coursework Master's degree.
- 15) For doctoral scholarship applications, the research component is given a score equivalent to a La Trobe University Master's by Research thesis mark, determined from:
 - a. the thesis mark for Australian graded Master's by Research degrees;
 - b. the thesis mark for Australian honours degrees and Australian Master's by Coursework degrees with a minor thesis, converted to a Master's equivalence score using the [*Graduate Research and RTP Scholarships - Schedule C- Master's by Research Equivalence for a Minor Thesis Grade*](#); or
 - c. an independent assessment of the research component for any other qualifications as described in the **Assessing alternate research components for equivalence** section below.

- 16) Except for Master's Pathway scholarships, schools may award additional marks to the final scholarship assessment score based on other relevant achievements such as:
- a. publications;
 - b. grants;
 - c. awards and prizes;
 - d. exhibitions;
 - e. work experience;
 - f. quality of proposal; or
 - g. the relevance of the applicant's qualifications and experience to the research topic for advertised project scholarships.
- 17) Any additional marks must be applied fairly and consistently within the school and be appropriately justified in the scholarship assessment form.

Assessing alternative research components for equivalence

- 18) Where the research component being assessed for scholarship is not from an Australian honours degree, coursework Master's degree or graded research Master's degree, the Graduate Research Coordinator (or nominee) will normally nominate one or more appropriately qualified assessors to assess the written research component(s) using the Research Assessment Form (RAF) provided by the Graduate Research School. This may include:
- a. ungraded theses;
 - b. theses from international institutions;
 - c. other written research components; and/or
 - d. peer reviewed publications where the applicant is the first author.
- 19) Where an applicant has a graded research component from an overseas institution, and the school has a sound understanding of that institution's grading schema and its equivalence to La Trobe University's, the School Director of Graduate Research (SDGR) may determine an equivalent grade without having the thesis assessed. In such cases, the SDGR must record the equivalent grade and provide a justification in the RAF.
- 20) An assessor may be a La Trobe University or external academic who is qualified to assess the applicant's research, does not have a conflict of interest with the applicant, and is independent of the proposed research project or supervision team. The Graduate Research Coordinator may complete the assessment themselves, provided they do not have a conflict of interest.

Ranking and Allocation of School-allocated and Masters Pathway Scholarships

- 21) The School Director of Graduate Research (or nominee) reviews and approves the explanatory narrative and score for each eligible stipend applicant.
- 22) Schools then place all approved applicants into a ranked list based on the scholarship assessment score and the strategic priorities of La Trobe University and/or school. Schools may determine their own approach to conducting the ranking process, provided any school-specific strategic considerations are clearly justified and applied consistently to all applications within the school.

- 23) Schools are expected to rank Master's by Research, Master's Pathways, and doctoral applicants as distinct cohorts.
- 24) The Chair of the Board of Graduate Research reviews the ranked school lists and makes a recommendation to the Board of Graduate Research regarding the allocation of scholarships, taking into account the number of available scholarships, the school's ranked order and any other strategic considerations, which must be justified to the Board.
- 25) The Board of Graduate Research makes the final determination on the allocation of scholarships.
- 26) Once the Board has ratified the recommendations, the Graduate Research School issues formal scholarship offers to successful applicants
- 27) Schools indicate their preferred order of scholarship offers on the ranked list. This order may differ from the academic ranking to reflect strategic priorities at the La Trobe University or school level. Any school-specific strategic considerations must be clearly justified and applied consistently to all applications within the school.
- 28) The Chair of the Board of Graduate Research reviews the ranked school lists and makes a recommendation to the Board of Graduate Research regarding the allocation of scholarships, taking into account the number of available scholarships, the school's preferred order of offer and any other strategic considerations, which must be justified to the Board.
- 29) The Board of Graduate Research makes the final determination on the allocation of scholarships.
- 30) Once the Board has ratified the recommendations, the Graduate Research School issues formal scholarship offers to successful applicants

Ranking and Award of Centrally-Allocated Scholarships

- 31) Centrally-allocated scholarship applications are ranked separately, normally by project.
- 32) The School Director of Graduate Research (or nominee) reviews and approves the explanatory narrative and score for each eligible stipend applicant.
- 33) Where there is more than one eligible applicant, schools then place all approved applicants into a ranked list based on the scholarship assessment score.
- 34) The Chair of the Board of Graduate Research reviews and ratifies the ranked list for each centrally-allocated scholarship.
- 35) Once the Chair of the Board has ratified the recommendations, the Graduate Research School issues formal scholarship offers to successful applicants

Scholarship Applications on Equity Grounds

- 36) Scholarship applications made on equity grounds may include applicants who are an Australian or New Zealand citizen or Australian permanent resident who:
 - a. are an Indigenous applicant; and/or
 - b. live with disability; and/or
 - c. are women working in a non-traditional area (WINTA); and/or
 - d. come from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds; and/or
 - e. come from low socio-economic status; and/or

- f. come from Regional/Rural/Remote backgrounds and who reside in Regional/Rural/Remote locations in Australia where access to education may be limited; and/or
 - g. have experienced other circumstances that they believe to be grounds for equity consideration.
- 37) In this context 'equity grounds' refers to experiences of disadvantage or systemic barriers to education. Disadvantage may take many forms, may be intersectional, and may be linked to experiences of marginalisation or discrimination, including on the basis of ethnicity, disability, wealth, rurality, gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or adverse life-course experiences. Applicants seeking equity consideration are invited to define their experience of disadvantage in their own terms.
- 38) Applicants must include a 500-word statement with their application outlining the barriers that have prevented them from undertaking prior study that meets the standard scholarship application requirements. The Board of Graduate Research acknowledges that applicants may identify with multiple equity categories and experience multiple, overlapping barriers to education.
- 39) Applicants for equity consideration on the basis of low socio-economic status must provide suitable supporting evidence (e.g. a copy of their most recent tax return, or a Centrelink statement of income, or the payslips for the last three months of employment for each member of their household, or a statutory declaration).
- 40) Equity documentation is submitted directly to the Board of Graduate and will be treated confidentially by the Board.
- 41) Scholarships considered on equity grounds do not form part of a school's allocation of scholarships.
- 42) Applications on equity grounds will be considered by an advisory panel of the Board of Graduate which will include the Chair or Deputy Chair and two other academic members of the Board of Graduate Research when reviewing school ranking lists. The Panel composition will, wherever possible, include diverse representation including a commitment to gender balance and any Board members who have equity, diversity and inclusion expertise and/or lived experience.
- 43) The advisory panel will assess each application on a case-by-case basis on the information provided in the application. The panel may also review other information relevant to the applicant, including information provided by their supervisor(s) and/or other school representatives.
- 44) The advisory panel will make a recommendation to the Board of the Graduate Research who make the final decision in the allocation of a scholarship on equity grounds.
- 45) The advisory panel will be supported by the secretary of the Board of Graduate Research.

Section 4 – Selection Process for Top-Up Scholarships

- 46) Applicants may also be considered for a top-up scholarship, which may provide additional stipend support, allowances, and/or extended funding duration in conjunction with a standard RTP or LTGRS Stipend scholarship.

Dennis McDermott Graduate Research Scholarship

- 47) Applications for the Dennis McDermott Graduate Research Scholarship can be made prior to enrolment or at any time during candidature.
- 48) The Dennis McDermott Graduate Research Scholarship may be awarded by the Board of Graduate Research to the top-ranked applicant(s) of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin to undertake a doctoral research or Master's by Research degree at La Trobe University, regardless of discipline of study, who have been awarded a standard RTP Stipend scholarship.
- 49) The Board may choose not to award a Dennis McDermott Graduate Research Scholarship in any given year.

La Trobe University Flexible Research Scholarship (LTFLEX)

- 50) Applications for the LTFLEX Scholarship can be made prior to enrolment or at any time during candidature.
- 51) Eligibility criteria for the LTFLEX Scholarship are provided in the [Schedule A – Terms and Conditions of Graduate Research Scholarships at La Trobe University](#).
- 52) The Chair of the Board of Graduate Research will conduct an initial screen of applications to check they have been awarded an eligible stipend scholarship and provide required supporting documentation.
- 53) The Chair of the Board of Graduate Research will then convene an advisory panel with two or more senior academic staff who are experienced in disability research and practice, and/or who have lived experience of disability, to assess applications against the eligibility criteria.
- 54) LTFLEX advisory panel members will be appointed by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research on the basis of an expression of interest for a minimum term of three years.
- 55) A staff member of the Graduate Research School will act as secretary to provide administrative support to the advisory panel.
- 56) Applicants may request that their application and supporting documentation be de-identified for the purpose of discussion by the advisory panel if there is a perceived conflict of interest or for privacy reasons. The secretary will de-identify the application and supporting documents before distribution to the Advisory Panel. Applications cannot be de-identified from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research who must sight all original application documents.
- 57) The advisory panel will provide the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research with a recommendation for each LTFLEX application considered. Where the panel recommends that an offer be made, the recommendation may include advice on the specific provisions to be included in the offer.
- 58) The Chair of the Board of Graduate Research will then allocate LTFLEX scholarships based on the advisory panel's recommendations.

David Myers Research Scholarship

- 59) The David Myers Research Scholarship may be awarded to outstanding individuals, regardless of discipline of study or nationality, who are enrolling for the first time in a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at La Trobe University and have been awarded a standard RTP or LTGRS Stipend scholarship.

- 60) A panel of academic leaders from the Board of Graduate Research will be convened to review the best ranked PhD candidates from each school and make a recommendation to the Board.
- 61) The panel will consist of the Chair, or Deputy Chair, and two academic members of the Board.
- 62) The Board may choose not to award a David Myers Research Scholarship in any given year.

Section 5 – Selection Process for Fee-Offset Scholarships

- 63) RTP Fees Offset scholarships are made available to all domestic candidates who receive an offer of candidature to undertake graduate research at La Trobe University.
- 64) RTP Fees Offset scholarships are made available to some international candidates who receive an offer of candidature and an RTP Stipend Scholarship to undertake graduate research at La Trobe University.
- 65) La Trobe University Full-Fee Research Scholarships are made available to all other international candidates who receive an award of a stipend scholarship and will normally only be awarded concurrently with a stipend scholarship or external scholarship equivalent to a La Trobe stipend scholarship. Sponsored candidates whose sponsorship includes the cost of course fees are not eligible for this provision.