

2026 PhD top-up scholarships

Information for Applicants

This document contains important information for applicants for the Australian General Practice Research Foundation's PhD top-up scholarships. Applicants should read all the information included in this document, including the Scholarship Application Terms & Conditions at the end of this document, in conjunction with the application form. By submitting an application, applicants agree to these terms and conditions.

INTRODUCTION

The Australian General Practice Research Foundation (the 'Foundation') is the philanthropic arm of the RACGP, supporting research that improves general practice and patient outcomes across Australia.

Since 2024, the Foundation has offered PhD top-up scholarships to support outstanding general practitioners and general practitioners in training undertaking doctoral research directly relevant to general practice.

We are pleased to offer **two scholarships** in 2026.

These scholarships aim to reduce financial barriers to PhD study, strengthen research capacity in general practice, and develop the next generation of GP researchers and future leaders, ultimately supporting the sustainability of the profession.

SCHOLARSHIP INCLUSIONS

Each top-up scholarship provides:

- **\$25,000 per annum** (FTE) in stipend support
- **\$5,000 per annum** (FTE) bursary to support professional development and research translation activities, such as conference attendance, workshops, training, or initiatives that help translate research findings into practice.

PhD study may be undertaken full-time or part-time according to university protocols, with funding available for **up to 3.5 years full-time**, or on a pro-rata basis, **up to seven years part-time**. The duration of the top-up scholarship will be adjusted to reflect any period of PhD enrolment completed prior to 31 March 2026.

Beyond financial support, scholarship recipients may also benefit from networking opportunities, peer cohort experiences and, where possible, relevant industry placements within the RACGP.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Applications open	1 September 2025
Applications close	31 October 2025 (5pm AEDT)
Outcomes notified	December 2025
Funding agreements executed	January-February 2026
Commencement	by 31 March 2026

Shortlisted applicants may be invited to attend an interview as part of the selection process.



ELIGIBILITY

All criteria must be met for applications to be eligible.

Applicant

1. The applicant must be a general practitioner who has attained FRACGP or FACRRM, or a GP in training, or have been accepted into the GP training program commencing in 2026.
2. The applicant must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident.
3. The applicant must have applied for or received a primary scholarship or other salary support from their university.
4. The applicant must undertake a research project that is directly relevant to general practice and RACGP priorities and [strategic objectives](#). The primary context of the research must be based in or on general practice. Medical education research must be situated in general practice.
5. The applicant must have commenced their PhD study between 1 January 2025 and 31 March 2026.
6. Applicants must undertake the PhD at an Australian university.

Supervision

7. An academic general practitioner at an Australian university must be actively involved in supervision of the PhD candidate.

Host university

8. The host university (the enrolling university at which the PhD candidate will undertake the research project) must hold an employment contract and/or affiliation agreement with the applicant's academic supervisor.
9. The host university must be willing to enter into a formal agreement with the RACGP under the terms and conditions of the provided template contract, and comply with the requirements of the scholarship.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria. The assessment rubric is available at Appendix 1.

Suitability of the applicant (40%)

- Academic record and relevant research experience
- Articulated capacity and motivation to contribute to academic general practice post completion of PhD
- Demonstrated intent to significantly contribute to future general practice research

Strength of the research project (30%)

- Quality and feasibility of the proposed research
- Demonstrated relevance of the research to general practice and at least one RACGP priority area
- Potential for outcomes that can be translated into general practice

Strength of the supervision (30%)

- Contribution of an academic GP to project supervision
- Experience and suitability of intended supervisors
- Capacity of the host university to provide appropriate infrastructure and resources to support the research



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I need to have already received a primary scholarship?

Receipt of this scholarship will be contingent upon the applicant receiving a primary scholarship or other salary support from their university. If the outcome of a primary scholarship application is not known at the time of application or awarding, the top-up scholarship may be awarded subject to successful outcome of the primary scholarship application. Evidence that the applicant has applied for or secured additional funding must be provided in the statement from the primary supervisor.

What is meant by “other salary support”?

The top-up scholarships are not intended to be the only source of income for the PhD candidate. Other salary support means any contribution towards your salary by the university. For example, a department may agree to support a lecturer to use the research component of their academic role for their PhD part-time. A letter of support from the Department outlining how they intend to support the applicant must be provided in the statement from the primary supervisor.

I already have a top-up scholarship. Can I still apply?

Yes. We recognise that undertaking a PhD requires a significant reduction in salary and thus will allow more than one top-up to be held.

I have already started my PhD. Can I still apply? Will this affect the amount awarded?

If you commenced your PhD study on or after 1 January 2025, you may apply. The duration of a full-time or part-time top-up scholarship will be adjusted to reflect any period of PhD enrolment completed prior to 31 March 2026

When do I need to start my PhD?

Enrolment must commence no later than 31 March 2026. Applicants must be enrolled in a PhD prior to commencement of payments.

What if I do not have a supervisor who is a GP?

It is an essential requirement that at least one supervisor is a GP, and that they play an active role in supervising your project. This supports our objective to build capacity in general practice research by building supervisory capacity. In addition, issues relevant to general practice cannot be researched without a GP investigator who plays an active role in the project. Applications that do not meet this requirement will not be considered. The GP supervisor does not have to be the primary supervisor, however details of how the GP supervisor will be involved must be provided.

Does my GP supervisor have to be based in a department of general practice?

The GP supervisor does not have to be based in a department of general practice. They may, for example, be based in an institute or other department. They must, however be an academic GP with suitable university affiliation.

What are the RACGP priority areas that the project must align with?

The research project must align to at least one RACGP priority area. The priorities are set out in the [RACGP 2025-2029 RACGP Strategic Plan](#).

Will a project in medical education research be considered?

The primary context of the research must be based in or on general practice. Medical education research that is situated in general practice is acceptable.

Do I need to have a track record in research?

No. While relevant research experience is part of the selection criteria, we understand that not everyone has had the opportunity to undertake research. If you have any relevant medals, prizes, awards, or publications relevant to general practice settings, please include them in your CV. However, these will be considered relative to opportunity and in the context of other factors such as your motivation to contribute to academic general practice post PhD, and intent to significantly contribute to future general practice research.

I am a GP in training. Is there anything additional that I should consider?

If you are currently in, or about to enter, the training program, we recommend that you discuss your PhD plans with your Regional Director of Training. The RACGP [Policy Position Statement on Higher Degree Research during General Practice Training](#) outlines how the RACGP can support registrars to complete a PhD alongside general practice training and the principles that will be enforced.

HOW TO APPLY

Before you start

Prior to commencing their application, applicants should read the scholarship details, eligibility, selection criteria, and terms and conditions as outlined in this handbook. Applications must be submitted using the online application form available on the [Foundation website](#) under “Apply for Funding”.

Navigating the online application form

On every screen (page of the form) you will find a Form Navigation contents box, this links directly to every page of the application. Click the link to jump directly to the page you want. You can also click 'next page' or 'previous page' on the top or bottom of each page to move forward or backward through the application.

Saving your draft application

If you wish to leave a partially completed application, press 'save' and log out. When you log back in and click on the 'My Submissions' link at the top of the screen, you will find a list of any applications you have started or submitted. You can reopen your draft application and start where you left off. You can also download any application, whether draft or completed, as a PDF. Click on the 'Download' button located at the bottom of the last page of the application form.

Submitting your application

You will find a Review and Submit button at the bottom of the Navigation Panel. You need to review your application before you can submit it. Once you have reviewed your application you can submit it by clicking on 'Submit' at the top of the screen or on the navigation panel. You will not be able to submit your application until all the compulsory questions are completed. Once you have submitted your application, no further editing or uploading of support materials is possible. When you submit your application, you will receive an automated confirmation email with a copy of your submitted application attached. This will be sent to the email you used to register. If you do not receive a confirmation of submission email, then you should presume that your submission has NOT been submitted.

Attachments and support documents

You will need to upload/submit attachments to support your application. This is very simple but requires you to have the documents saved on your computer, or on a storage device. You need to allow enough time for each file to upload before trying to attach another file. Files can be up to 25MB each; however, we do recommend trying to keep files to a maximum of 5MB – the larger the file, the longer the upload time.

Technical assistance

If you need more help using the form, download the [Help Guide for Applicants](#) or check the [Applicant Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ's\)](#). Links to these are also provided on the online form.

Submission of applications

Prior to submitting the application, ensure all questions have been answered. Applications close on Friday 31 October 2025 at 5.00 pm Australian Eastern Daylight Savings Time (AEDT). Applications submitted after the closing date will not be accepted.

ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

After submitting your application, RACGP staff will review it to ensure compliance with eligibility criteria and scholarship conditions. To avoid disqualification, ensure that all criteria are met and all required documentation is included before submitting. The Foundation reserves the right to exclude any application that is incomplete or fails to meet the specified eligibility criteria and scholarship conditions.

Once applications close, the Foundation Awards Panel will evaluate each submission against the specified criteria before convening to deliberate and recommend candidates for funding. The Panel's recommendations will then be reviewed by the Australian General Practice Research Foundation Committee, which will make the final funding decisions. All decisions of the Committee are final, with no mechanism for appeal.

Given the relatively small general practice research community, conflicts of interest may arise during the assessment process. The Panel has a well-established process for declaring and managing such conflicts. All Panel members must declare conflicts of interest before accessing any confidential information, including full scholarship applications and supporting documentation. Panel members with a real or perceived conflict of interest will not assess or discuss the affected applications.

SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Notification and offer

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email by the end of December 2025. Successful applicants will receive a formal letter of offer and will be required to provide provisional acceptance, pending execution of the Scholarship Agreement.

Scholarship agreement

Awarding of the scholarship will be subject to the successful grant recipient's administering organisation (the host university) entering into a formal Scholarship Agreement with the RACGP on standard RACGP terms. The agreement will include reporting requirements, payment schedule and required wording for acknowledgement of funding.

Payment of scholarship

The RACGP will make payments from the Foundation to the host university on an annual basis of both the stipend and bursary components of the scholarship. The host university must pay the full scholarship value directly to the recipient. Payments will be made within the terms and conditions specified in the agreement. The host university will be responsible for the proper administration and expenditure of the funds and for ensuring that required reports are provided on time.

The PhD top-up scholarship will be awarded for one year in the first instance and will be renewed annually (for a maximum of 3.5 years, full-time equivalent) subject to the recipient performing satisfactorily in their research, remaining enrolled in the PhD degree, and meeting reporting requirements. In addition, the university, supervisors and scholarship recipient must remain compliant with all eligibility criteria.

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

Reporting

Scholarship recipients are required to complete and submit annual reports on their research progress and a final report on the outcomes of their PhD research. The reporting requirements and due dates will be set out in the Scholarship Agreement.

Presentation of certificate

Scholarship recipients may be invited to attend an event hosted by the Australian General Practice Research Foundation and/or the RACGP faculty where the scholarship recipient resides to receive a certificate of their scholarship.

Acknowledgement of support

Scholarship recipients must acknowledge the support of the Australian General Practice Research Foundation in the PhD dissertation and in all publications, presentations, summary findings, websites, newsletters and media announcements relating to the research. The required wording, as provided in the Scholarship Agreement, must be used. The Foundation's logo must be utilised where appropriate and will be provided upon request.

Publicity

Scholarship recipients will be required to support publicity of the Foundation's PhD top-up scholarships program such as by participating in media articles, media releases and public announcements related to the program.

Program evaluation

The Foundation's PhD top-up scholarships program will be evaluated against the program's purpose and objectives. RACGP staff will perform this evaluation in collaboration with the host university, supervisors, and the PhD candidate. This may include face-to-face meetings for which all parties will be required to make themselves available. Feedback received will be used to inform future programs.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact foundation@racgp.org.au if you have any queries.

Scholarship Application Terms & Conditions

1. These terms and conditions apply to all applications for the Australian General Practice Research Foundation's PhD top-up scholarships, whether incomplete or otherwise. Applicants agree to these terms and conditions by logging on to the SmartyGrants portal.
2. In these Terms, the following words have these meanings:
 - i. "Applicant" means the parties listed on an application for a Scholarship.
 - ii. "Scholarship Agreement" means the formal agreement signed by the RACGP and the scholarship recipient's host university.
 - iii. "Scholarship" means the funding provided by the RACGP, through the Australian General Practice Research Foundation, to support PhD research, including stipend and bursary support.
 - iv. "Scholarship Recipient" means the individual completing the PhD that will receive the funds.
 - v. "Foundation" means the Australian General Practice Research Foundation, the philanthropic arm and internal fund of the RACGP.
 - vi. "Foundation Committee" means the Australian General Practice Research Foundation Committee, established as a subcommittee of the RACGP Board to oversee the Foundation on its behalf.
 - vii. "Foundation Awards Panel" means the panel convened by the Foundation to assess applications for Foundation funding.
 - viii. "Offer Date" means the date of the letter which notifies the Scholarship Recipient of the successful outcome of their application.
 - ix. "RACGP", "us" or "our" is a reference to The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Ltd, including its philanthropic arm, the Australian General Practice Research Foundation.
 - x. "Terms" means these Scholarship Application Terms & Conditions.
 - xi. "Uncommitted Funds" means any scholarship funds awarded that have not been legally committed for spending and that are not payable by the Scholarship Recipient to the RACGP as a current liability.
 - xii. "You", "your", "they" or "their" is a reference to the Applicant.
3. The RACGP is committed to protecting your privacy. By applying for a Scholarship, Applicants consent to RACGP's collection of the information provided in their application(s) to be used for the purposes of:
 - i. Assessing their application and, if successful, publicising their name(s), institution, and project title;
 - ii. Logging in to the SmartyGrants application platform;
 - iii. Reporting on the outcomes and impact of their research to RACGP teams and members, Foundation donors, and governmental third parties
 - iv. Administering Foundation scholarships, awards and programs; and
 - v. Promoting the project, the scholarship program, and/or the activities and impact of the Australian General Practice Research Foundation through RACGP communications channels.

If you do not complete the application in full, your application for a Scholarship will be excluded from assessment. You may access the information RACGP collects from you, or make a complaint about breaches of the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), by contacting the Privacy Officer (privacy@racgp.org.au). Further details about our collection, use, storage and disclosure of your personal information are available in our Privacy Policy at www.racgp.org.au/privacy-policy. If you no longer consent to the use of your personal information, please contact us on 1800 198 586 or by email at privacy@racgp.org.au
4. These Terms are governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Victoria, Australia.
5. There will be no legally binding agreement between the RACGP and any Applicant in relation to a Scholarship unless and until a formal Scholarship Agreement is signed by the RACGP and the Scholarship Recipient.
6. The RACGP accepts no liability for any costs incurred by an Applicant in relation to a Scholarship application.
7. The Scholarship process is overseen by the Foundation on behalf of the RACGP.
8. The Foundation Awards Panel is responsible for the independent, objective evaluation and review of Scholarship applications, and for making funding recommendations to the Foundation Committee.
9. The Foundation Committee is responsible for making final funding decisions based on the recommendations of the Foundation Awards Panel. All decisions are final and no correspondence will be entered into. Decisions made in relation to Scholarships are not subject to reconsideration, review, or appeal.
10. The Foundation Awards Panel may ask Applicants to clarify in writing information contained in their application to enable assessment.
11. The Foundation Awards Panel may remove an application from consideration during the selection process if it is considered uncompetitive, incomplete, incorrect, or ineligible.
12. Unsuccessful Scholarship Applicants will be advised in writing; however, detailed feedback will not be provided.
13. The Foundation Committee, at its sole discretion, may decide not to award Scholarships if the Foundation Awards Panel determines that no applications meet the required standard.
14. Scholarship Recipients must be enrolled at an Australian university that has an ABN and ACN.
15. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by RACGP, Scholarship Recipients will be required to provide reports to the RACGP as detailed in the Scholarship Agreement and outlined in this handbook.