



# WA Agricultural Research Collaboration

Innovation • Transformation • Growth

## Postgraduate Research Scholarship Program – *Guidelines for Applicants: Round One*

**March 2024**



Department of  
Primary Industries and  
Regional Development



**GROWER  
GROUP  
ALLIANCE**  
Together we grow



Curtin University

**MU** Murdoch  
University



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA

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# 1. Program overview

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## Program outline

The Postgraduate Research Scholarship Program is an initiative of the State Government-backed WA Agricultural Research Collaboration (WAARC), which aims to strengthen research, development and extension capabilities to help future-proof the State's agriculture and food sector.

WAARC brings together the research strengths of the CSIRO, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), Grower Group Alliance (GGA), Curtin University, Murdoch University and The University of Western Australia to build additional research capacity and respond to new challenges within primary industries.

WAARC, with the support of its three university members, is providing top up scholarships for up to 12 eligible PhD students each year.

Each top up scholarship will equate to a maximum of 75% of the Commonwealth full-time base Research Training Program (RTP) stipend rate for a maximum of 3.5 years full time. The top up scholarship in 2024 is valued at \$24,000 per year.

Program participants will complete industry relevant projects, and will join a multi-organisational network of leading WAARC researchers and students. Participants will also be provided professional development and mentoring and can apply to receive operational funding or undertake conference travel. Participants will also have the opportunity to complete a research internship with one of our industry partners.

To receive a scholarship, applicants must demonstrate their research project aligns with one or more of the six WAARC research, development, extension, and adoption programs:

1. Northern Agriculture;
2. Grains Transformation;
3. Climate Resilience;
4. Agricultural Technologies;
5. Aboriginal Science Engagement; and
6. Capacity Building and Extension.

## Program objectives

The objective of the program is to provide skills and career development opportunities for postgraduate research students, and to support research that aligns with the priorities of WAARC and the WA agriculture sector.

## Program providers

The program administrator is the Western Australian Agriculture Authority (through DPIRD); who will establish the program through SmartyGrants and is ultimately responsible for administration of the program's payments, underlying agreements and contracts. WAARC's member organisations are all supporters, sponsors and participants in the program.

Curtin University, Murdoch University and The University of Western Australia are responsible for overseeing the entry, progress and examination of the PhD and conferral of the degree of PhD to successful applicants, as well as providing principal and/or coordinating supervision. Applicants will need to be enrolled and maintain candidature progress in a PhD program at one of these three universities to participate in the program.

WAARC's three non-university members – CSIRO, DPIRD and the GGA will provide program participants with access to leading industry researchers as possible co-supervisors, as well as access to field sites and world-class research facilities.

## 2. Information for applicants

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### Program information and support for applicants

To be eligible for this program, applicants need to complete and submit an application via the DPIRD SmartyGrants platform using the following [link](#). For round 1, applications must be submitted by 16 April 2024 at 5:00pm AWST. Late submissions will not be accepted.

It is important that applicants submit a clear and well-developed application that answers all compliance questions, addresses the criteria, identifies a university based coordinating/principal supervisor, and provides the documentary evidence required.

To enable potential applicants to provide quality applications, The WA Agricultural Research Collaboration (WAARC) provides:

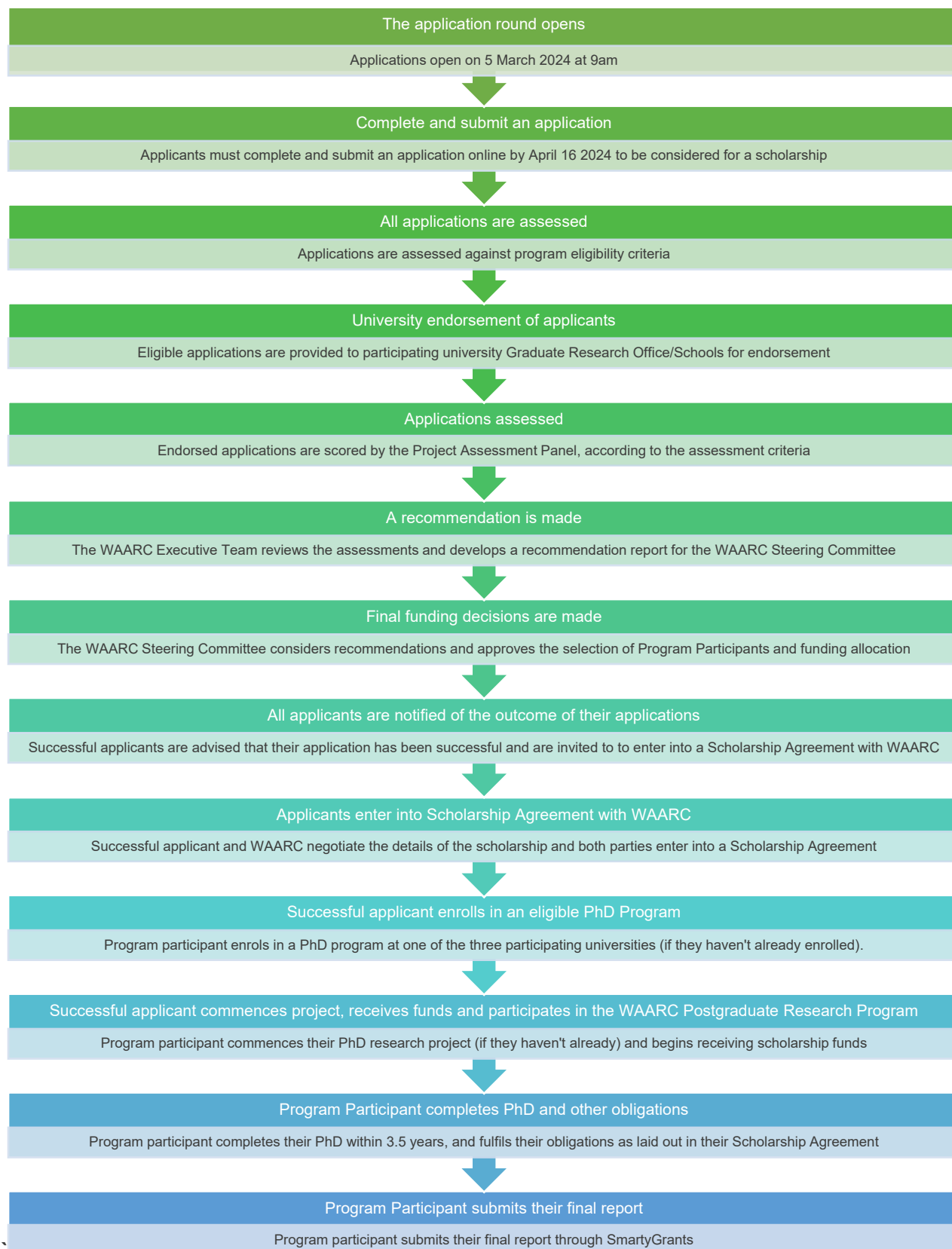
- [information about WAARC](#)
- a contact email for those who require additional information about the program and application process: [info@waagresearch.org.au](mailto:info@waagresearch.org.au)

Applicants who have questions or require support in completing the online application are encouraged to contact WAARC well before the closing date.

### Key dates

Round 1 Dates	Date
Applications Open	11 March 2024
Applications Close	16 April 2024
Notification of application results	14 May 2024 (tbc)

## Program process



## Applicant eligibility criteria

### 1. Residency Status:

- Domestic students are preferred (Australian citizen or hold permanent residency status in Australia); international students will be considered on a case by case basis.

### 2. Course Entry Requirements\*:

- Applicants must possess the required credentials pertinent to their chosen field of study and are required to meet the necessary course entry requirements at their enrolling university, including English language competency.

### 3. Enrolment Requirements:

- Applicants must intend to complete their PhD as a full-time student to participate in the WAARC Postgraduate Scholarship Program.
- Applicants who have not yet commenced or have completed less than one year of full-time study in their PhD (or part-time equivalent) are eligible to apply.
- While not preferred, Program Participants experiencing extenuating circumstances may change their enrolment to part-time during their PhD. This must be done in accordance with the university guidelines and with written approval from WAARC.

### 4. Program Alignment:

- PhD research projects must align with the themes and/or objectives of the WAARC research programs.

#### \*Note:

- Applicants should review their university's PhD Program entry requirements and are encouraged to discuss their eligibility with their university Graduate Research Office/Schools, prior to applying.
- WAARC will seek endorsement of applicants by Graduate Research Office/Schools before progressing applications to the assessment phase.
- A suitable principal/coordinating supervisor must be available and employed at the selected university to supervise the chosen research project.
- All supervisors (principal, coordinating and co-supervisors) must have capacity to supervise students and be qualified in the area of research.
- Applicants must liaise with their proposed supervisors prior to applying for a WAARC scholarship or university PhD Program. We will contact these supervisors as part of the assessment process.
- You do not have to have your supervisors confirmed to apply, but it will be required during the Scholarship Agreement phase.
- If you have a proposed PhD research project that aligns with WAARC programs but are not yet part of the university research ecosystem and require advice, please contact WAARC prior to submitting an application: [info@waagresearch.org.au](mailto:info@waagresearch.org.au)

# Applicant Assessment criteria

## Scientific Merit:

### **1. Originality:**

- The research should propose an innovative approach or hypothesis that represents a novel contribution to the field of study.

### **2. Significance:**

- The necessity of the research work must be evident, addressing critical questions or gaps within the field of study.

### **3. Demand for Research:**

- The selected research topic should represent a current or emerging industry need, within the broader scientific context.

## Research Capability & Capacity:

### **1. Career Development:**

- The applicant should express how they will utilise this opportunity to further their career in agricultural research.

### **2. Professional Experience:**

- Any relevant professional or industry experience that enhances the applicant's research capability and capacity.

## Adoption and Impact:

### **1. Contributory Impact:**

- The expected project contributions should be substantial, aiming to advance the objectives of one or more of the WAARC programs.

### **2. Pathway to Extension and Adoption:**

The applicant must show how the research findings will be potentially extended to the WA agricultural community or other relevant target for adoption.

# Assessment process

An objective assessment process will identify eligible applicants to whom funding can be awarded. WAARC will be seeking to develop a balanced portfolio of PhD projects across industries, regions, and program areas and will consider equity and inclusion.

The assessment will be carried out in the following manner:

1. All applications will be assessed by the Project Assessment Panel and university Graduate Research Office/Schools to ascertain eligibility. Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not progress to assessment.
2. Applications that have progressed through the first stage of assessment will be assessed by the Project Assessment Panel.
3. A Recommendations Report will be developed by the WAARC Executive Team and presented to the WAARC Steering Committee for final approval of Program Participants and funding allocation.



## Notification of application outcomes

Notification of successful applications will take place as soon as practicable, in the form of a Notice of Successful Application, provided by email.

The Notice of Successful Application will also contain an invitation to applicants to begin negotiating the terms of their Scholarship Agreement. To be accepted into the WAARC Postgraduate Research Scholarship Program, the successful applicant must also enter into a Scholarship Agreement with the Western Australian Agriculture Authority (as administrator of WAARC funds) and be accepted by a participating university PhD program.

**Note:** Having a successful scholarship application does not guarantee that applicants will be accepted into their chosen university's PhD program. Applicants will need to apply for course admission through the relevant university's application process to gain acceptance into their chosen PhD course.

## Decision-making

The WAARC Steering Committee will make all final decisions under this program based on the recommendations provided by the WAARC Executive Team. There will not be an appeal process, but applications are welcome to request feedback and resubmit their application in a later funding round.

## Program funding limits and timeframes

### Timelines

Applications will first be assessed for their eligibility. Applicants that fulfil the eligibility criteria and have been endorsed by their selected university's Graduate Research Office/School will progress to the assessment stage. After assessment has been completed, and the WAARC Steering Committee has approved the list of potential Program Participants, successful applicants will progress to the Scholarship Agreement phase.

Applicants are expected to have commenced their degree at one of the three participating universities, within one year of receiving notice that their scholarship application has been progressed to the Scholarship Agreement stage. The Scholarship Agreement will detail when the program participant is expected to commence their degree (if they haven't already commenced). Applicants who defer enrolment may be required to reapply for a WAARC Scholarship. Failure to adhere to the terms of this agreement may result in the withdrawal of the top up scholarship and removal from the program.

### Funding

A WAARC scholarship will equate to a maximum of 75% of the Commonwealth full-time base Research Training Program (RTP) stipend rate for a maximum of 3.5 years full time. The top up scholarship in 2024 is valued at \$24,000 per year. Note: Eligibility for the maximum of 75% will depend on the amount the applicant is receiving under other scholarships; applicants should check existing scholarship conditions before applying for a WAARC scholarship.

Payments will be made to the scholarship participant's host university on an annual basis, and this host university will be responsible for regular stipend payments and for administration of any operating funds.

# Scholarship Agreement arrangements

## Agreement Terms

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Scholarship Agreement with the Western Australian Agriculture Authority (as administrator of WAARC funds) to participate in the program and for scholarship funds to be dispersed by their chosen university. This agreement is separate and in addition to any agreements required between the student and their chosen university.

Some terms of the Scholarship Agreement, including operational funding and commencement date, will be negotiable, and others will be a requirement for participating in the program. The latter includes obligations such as attending the annual WAARC Postgraduate Conference. At this conference, each new program participant will be required to deliver a presentation on their chosen research project. Upon completion, all program participants will also be required to give a presentation outlining the insights and results of their research, and their implications for industry.

Program participants will need to complete an annual report demonstrating satisfactory progress towards the completion of their project to remain a participant in the program. This report is in addition to any reporting required by their host university. Program participants may also be asked to present or represent WAARC at other WAARC or industry events, or to provide a statement or update for communication, reporting or promotion purposes.

## Breach of Agreement Terms

While scholarship recipients are expected to complete their PhD full time, over 3.5 years, WAARC does recognise that there may be extenuating circumstances that result in a recipient having to reduce their course load or take a leave of absence. Recipients that have commenced their PhD and been approved by their university to reduce their course load or take a leave of absence can request a variation to their Scholarship Agreement and will, if approved, receive their top up scholarship on a pro-rata basis.

If the participant withdraws or is removed from their university's PhD program, and is not transferred to another participating university's PhD Program, they will also be removed from the WAARC Postgraduate Research Scholarship Program and will cease receiving a top up scholarship.

Program participants may fail to deliver on aspects of their Scholarship Agreement for a range of reasons. In such circumstances, the WAARC Executive Team may carry out the following interventions:

- Variation of the agreement
- Project audit/s
- Mediation
- Offer/s of skill development training
- Withdrawal of scholarship.

### 3. Glossary of terms

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**Applicant** – the individual who makes the application for funding.

**Application** – a submission made to the WA Agricultural Research Collaboration for a scholarship under the program, via the online platform SmartyGrants.

**AWST** – Australian Western Standard Time.

**Coordinating Supervisor** – a university employee who takes primary responsibility for the academic management of the student's PhD candidature and ensuring that all administrative and reporting requirements of the supervision are met.

**Co-Supervisor** – a person with specific expertise that is useful to the student's research program and will be available as an independent person from whom the student may seek advice during the course of the candidature. They will also serve as backup for the Principal and/or Coordinating Supervisor. This person need not be an employee of a university but may be expected otherwise to hold adjunct, emeritus, or honorary status.

**CSIRO** – The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation

**Decision-Maker** – the WAARC Steering Committee, comprised of senior representatives of each of the WAARC member organisations, who are responsible for making the final funding decision.

**DPIRD** – Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

**GGA** – The Grower Group Alliance

**Key Contact** – the contact person if there are any queries or more information is required about the program.

**Principal Supervisor** – a university employee who provides primary academic leadership in the supervision of a PhD candidate.

**Program** – WA Agricultural Research Collaboration - Postgraduate Research Scholarship Program.

**Program Guidelines and Operational Framework** – this document, which aims to provide clear and concise details of program management processes, administration, and governance.

**Program Manager** – the person responsible for managing the grant program.

**Program Owner** – the person responsible for implementation of the program on behalf of WAARC (the funding provider).

**Program Participant** – a successful applicant that has entered into a Scholarship Agreement with WAARC and has been accepted into the WAARC Postgraduate Research Scholarship Program.

**RTP** - Research Training Program – a Commonwealth program which provides block grants to higher education providers to support both domestic and overseas students undertaking research doctorate and research masters degrees.

**Scholarship Agreement** – a participant's agreement with WAARC that outlines the terms of their scholarship.

**SmartyGrants** – the online grant management software tool used by this program.

**Successful Applicant** – an applicant who has been assessed and has progressed to the Scholarship Agreement phase. Once they have signed their Scholarship Agreement, they become a ‘Program Participant’.

**UWA** – The University of Western Australia

**WAARC** – the WA Agricultural Research Collaboration.

**WAARC Executive Team** – a management team comprised of WAARC Director Kelly Pearce, the WAARC Chief operating Officer, and the appointed Program Leads.

**WAARC Program Leads** – the persons appointed to lead each of WAARC’s six Programs.

## Approval

Version No	Document approved by	Date
0.1	Kelly Pearce	22/01/2024
1.0	Jenny Crisp	01/03/2024



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