

Guidelines for the 2026–27 Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Stipend Scheme

Developing the skills and capacity of the next generation of researchers in Australian higher education equity is a priority of the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES). This includes engaging, collaborating with, and funding research students to undertake projects on equity issues in Australian higher education.

The **ACSES 2026–27 Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Stipend Scheme** provides supplementary funding to HDR students enrolled in Australian universities ([Table A](#) and [Table B](#) providers) to undertake research projects relating to Australian higher education student equity that are projected to lead to the publication of journal articles.

The stipend is intended to encourage both the creation of new research, as well as its translation to practice, evaluation, and policy in Australian higher education.

This funding round of the Scheme will provide funding support for up to **four (4)** projects.

Funding and support

Funding of \$10,000 per successful application is available. Each application should scope out a research project to be undertaken by the student that will lead to a manuscript suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal in the field of higher education.

The stipend can be used at the successful candidates' discretion, including to fund research costs, journal publication fees, or a living allowance. Funded HDR candidates will have the opportunity to present the outcomes of their research projects at an ACSES event.

Key outputs

- The research project will culminate in the completion of a manuscript suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal in the field of higher education. Published output(s) from the research project should acknowledge funding from ACSES.
- Presentation of key research findings at an ACSES event.

Eligibility

To be eligible for funding, students must be enrolled in either of the following degrees at an Australian Table A or B Provider institution:

- A Master by research degree, or equivalent (AQF level 9)

- A Doctor of Philosophy, or equivalent (AQF level 10)

Students from all disciplines are eligible to apply, but the research project must be on a topic relating to Australian higher education equity.

Research priorities

Research projects must have an emphasis on **one or more** of the following higher education equity groups.

Equity groups

- Students from low socio-economic status (low SES) backgrounds
- First Nations Australian (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) students
- Students from regional or remote Australia
- Students with disability
- People who experience cumulative disadvantage that results in barriers to higher education (please specify in your research plan)

Projects can take the form of original research or a systematic review of the literature, addressing a relevant topic in higher education equity, including the priority areas below.

Priority topics for original research

- Cost-of-living and related implications for university students
- Determinants of academic success at university
- Student success beyond graduation
- Harmonisation of the vocational education and training (VET) and university sectors
- Pathways into university, such as enabling programs
- Definition and measurement of student engagement
- Generative AI and implications for equity in higher education

Selection criteria

Applications will be funded based on:

- The quality of the research plan, including but not limited to the following:
 - Importance of the research topic for Australian higher education equity
 - Demonstrated incorporation of extant literature at a preliminary stage
 - Clear and measurable implications for student or graduate outcomes
 - Potential for policy impact
- Demonstrated academic achievement, relative to opportunity
- Feasibility of the research timeline
- Applicants from an equity background are particularly encouraged to apply

ACSES contracts

The acceptance and funding of a project will be subject to the timely and successful negotiation and execution of the funding agreement with the student's institution. ACSES may accept the whole or part of a proposal offered, with the final project to be defined in negotiation with the successful applicant.

Application

All applications should be completed using the *2026–27 Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Stipend Scheme Application Pack* (which is available on the [ACSES website](#)). Applicants are required to include the following information and attachments from the Application Pack:

- Application details via the **Application Form**
- A **Research Plan**, including:
 - Topic and research aims (one A4 page limit)
 - Data (one A4 page limit)
 - Methodological approach, including outcome measures (one A4 page limit)
 - Timeline, including proposed start and end dates
- **Signatures** from the applicant's principal/primary HDR supervisor and the head of the organisational unit (department, school, or faculty) that constitutes their enrolling area
- **Supporting Documentation**, including a current one-page CV, a letter of support from the applicant's principal/primary HDR supervisor, and proof of HDR enrolment

Application Pack: The *Application Pack* and this document (*Guidelines*) are on the [ACSES website](#).

Submission

Applications are due before 4pm (AWST) on **Wednesday, 15 April 2026**.

Please submit this application to: aces@curtin.edu.au (**Subject:** ACSES HDR Stipend Application – Applicant Name).