



The University of Sydney

Postgraduate Research Support Scheme (PRSS) 2009 Administrative Guidelines for Staff

(This document is also available on <http://www.usyd.edu.au/ro/training/prss.shtml>)

The Postgraduate Research Support Scheme (PRSS) was introduced by the University in 2001. For 2009, \$1.2 million will be made available to provide direct support for postgraduate research students. Under the PRSS, funds are allocated to Schools or Departments (in some cases Faculties) based on their higher degree research student load (PhD, professional doctorates and masters by research). The load figure will be the average of Semesters one and two enrolments (RTS load + international students) as at the relevant HECS census dates of the previous year.

The funds are to be administered and awarded by Schools or Departments to eligible applicants **on a competitive basis** according to the general guidelines below.

Funding in 2009

In 2009, the total amount available for allocation to Schools and Departments is \$1.259 million. This includes the \$1.2 million budgeted for the PRSS in 2009 as well as funds which were unspent in the 2008 round.

The allocated funds has been transferred at the end of March to a common project code **30006** linked to the relevant Responsibility Centres.

Eligibility criteria – Applicants

Currently enrolled **PhD students** (including international students), full-time or part-time, are eligible to apply for funds under the PRSS provided their candidature does not exceed eight full-time semesters (or part-time equivalent) at the closing date for applications. Although eligible PhD students may apply in any PRSS application round, only **three successful applications during their candidature (eight full-time semesters, or part-time equivalent) are permitted.**

Currently enrolled **Masters by research students** (including international students), full-time or part-time, are eligible to apply for funds under the PRSS provided their candidature does not exceed four full-time semesters (or part-time equivalent) at the closing date for applications. Although a Masters student may apply during any PRSS application round, **only one successful application during candidature (four full-time semesters, or part-time equivalent) is permitted.** That is, a Masters by research student can only be awarded funds once under the PRSS. If a Masters by research student upgrades the candidature to a PhD, the total number of successful PRSS applications permitted will be three (including any successful application as a Masters student).

Each eligible student can lodge only one application in any PRSS round. A student cannot lodge a second application for the remainder of expenditure incurred under a previous successful application. For example, a student has claimed \$1,000 towards the purchase of a computer awarded under a successful PRSS application, he/she cannot apply again for another \$1,000 for the same computer already purchased using PRSS funds.

Eligibility criteria – Expenditure

Eligible students may apply for a minimum amount of \$200 and a maximum amount of \$1,200 (**but can be up to \$3,000 for presentations at conferences held in countries in Europe, Africa, North and South America, or up to \$2,000 for presentations at conferences held in other overseas countries**), inclusive of GST where applicable, in each application round under the following categories:

- Conference expenses – for the purpose of presenting a paper or poster of which the student is the author and in connection with his/her research. Students who attend a conference without presenting, or presenting a paper or poster of which the student is not the author, are not eligible to apply under this category.
- Expenses in connection with the use of specialist services, or a visit to use specialist facilities or to learn specialist technique/s directly related to the students' research. The Head of School or Department must demonstrate that the use of such services, facilities or infrastructure could not reasonably have been anticipated at the beginning of the students' candidature or was beyond those normally provided by the School or Department.
- Field expenses - provided the PRSS funds are not used to defray the infrastructure costs normally provided by the School or Department.
- Purchase of specialist books, periodicals, software that are essential to the students' research, but are not normally available or difficult to obtain in the School or Department or the University's Library.
- Purchase of computers or other equipment that are essential to the students' research and are above and beyond the normal infrastructure provided by the School or Department.
- Thesis production expenses to a maximum amount of \$600 for a PhD thesis or \$300 for a Masters thesis. Only students who do not hold a scholarship which provides such expenses and who will submit their theses in the current semester or calendar year can apply under this category.

The expenditure/proposed expenditure must have been incurred or will be incurred during this calendar year.

Direct research costs will not be supported. Thus, expenditure related to the purchase of consumables (such as chemicals, stationery, questionnaires and disks) normally provided by a School or Department, or photocopying will not be supported under the PRSS.

Criteria for award of funds

Selection committees will consider (1) quality of the applicant and track record relative to opportunity and stage of candidature, (2) demonstrated need for funding, and (3) priorities, if any, placed on the expenditure categories by the School or Department, as evidenced by the following:

- Satisfactory progress towards timely completion of the degree: 8 semesters FTE for PhD or 4 semesters FTE for Masters. Applications for funding will not be considered if the period of candidature has exceeded these timeframes.
- Justification for the need and proposed use of funds, including a brief statement outlining the benefits to the applicant's candidature.
- Statement of support by the applicant's supervisor/s.
- Any achievement related to the applicant's research such as publications (in press or submitted), conferences presentations, internal reports etc. A track record of achievement

relative to opportunity and stage of candidature provides some indication of satisfactory progress during the candidature, however it is not a pre-requisite for a successful PRSS application.

- If applicable, certification by the Head of School or Department that the use of specialist services, facilities or infrastructure could not have been anticipated at the beginning of the students' candidature and is above and beyond those normally provided by the School or Department.

The amount awarded to each successful applicant in each PRSS application round must not exceed \$1,200, or up to \$3,000 to support presentations at conferences held in countries in Europe, Africa, North and South America, or up to \$2,000 to support presentations at conferences held in other overseas countries.

Application round/s

Individual Schools or Departments (in some cases Faculties) must hold at least one application round every year and are strongly encouraged to hold two application rounds to ensure a timely access of the available funds by eligible students. **The PRSS application round must be advertised widely within the Department/School/Faculty and all postgraduate research students and their supervisors are informed well in advance of the closing dates for applications.**

An *Information for Students* and a proforma *Application Form* are available on the Research Office website: <http://www.usyd.edu.au/ro/training/prss.shtml>.

Payment to successful applicants

Schools or Departments must inform and remind successful applicants to lodge their claims for items that have been approved as soon as expenditures are committed. **The last date to lodge a claim is 15 January 2010** to enable Schools or Departments to process all PRSS claims by the end of January 2010. Any expenses charged to the University Corporate Card and all travel advances to students must also be acquitted by 15 January 2010.

The PRSS funds are to be paid from the project code 30006 linked to the School or Department in one of the following ways:

1. Reimbursement to the student by cheque on presentation of original receipts.
2. By cheque payable to the supplier on presentation of original invoices, purchase orders, quotations, order forms, conference registration forms - receipts from the suppliers for the value of the cheque/s received must be submitted by the student on completion of the purchase.
3. By cheque as travel advance to the student for travel in or outside Australia in specific circumstances – Schools or Departments must refer to the University's Travel Procedure and ensure that original receipts for related expenses are submitted by the student within 7 days of completion of the travel.

If a successful applicant has not spent the full amount awarded by the end of 2009, he/she should be advised to lodge a partial claim by the due date for the expenditure already incurred as **there are no provisions to carry forward any unused funds or to lodge late claims.** The Accounts Payable section will not process any *Request for Cheque* from the PRSS accounts after the January 2010 close-off. Any funds that are not awarded or claimed by the successful applicants by 15 January 2010 must be returned for re-allocation centrally in 2010.

Processing of PRSS claims

If a Faculty/School is using its own funds to support similar research student activities, please separate the PRSS amount that the students have been awarded from that of the Faculty funded amount and charge only the PRSS amount to the 30006 account.

- GST – payments made under PRSS should not reflect the GST as a claimable component. The University is not eligible to claim the input tax credits for expenses incurred by students and under PRSS, the end user of the goods and services is the student. Ownership of the goods purchased by the students using PRSS funds also belong to the students. Hence, **the GST status of F (free) must be entered on *Request for Cheque***.
- Do not use the classification 7302 (Research Student Allowance) when processing claims. The relevant classification/s must be used to identify each item of expenditure (e.g. 7306 for Student domestic travel, 7307 for Student Overseas travel and 7315 for Student Equipment) as shown on the supporting receipts, invoices, etc and entered on *Request for Cheque*.
- An **analysis code**, being the student number of the claimant, is mandatory and must be entered on *Request for Cheque* and journals.

Acquittal of PRSS funds

Each Faculty or School or Department that receives an allocation is required to submit a report on how the 2009 PRSS funds are utilized to the Research Office by **18 February 2010**. Any over-spending must be covered by funds from the School or Department.

The proforma report to be submitted is available on the Research Office website: <http://www.usyd.edu.au/ro/training/prss.shtml>. The report is a reconciliation of the allocation received and payments processed between March 2009 and January 2010, and must include the relevant details from the Hyperion Finance Query SUGLQ104 (General Ledger Journal Line Details) showing **actual amounts paid**. Other information to be included are **names of the students** who claimed such payments, their **supervisor's name**, the **expenditure category** as outlined above, total number of applications received, amount applied for, total number of successful applications, amount awarded, and the amount of **any unused funds**.

After the reports are checked and the accounts reconciled, the Research Office will transfer out any unused funds from the project code 30006 linked to the Schools or Departments during March 2010 for re-allocation. If a Faculty or School or Department fails to acquit the 2009 funds, its 2010 allocation will be withheld.

Questions concerning the PRSS Guidelines

Please contact Carmen Ng at the Research Office.