

UTS HDR scholarship assessment criteria

23 Jun 2026

Guiding Principles:

Scholarships will be awarded through a clear, transparent and reproducible merit-based process. Merit may be demonstrated through different forms of evidence, including academic, professional, practice-based and creative achievement. Equivalent levels of achievement should be recognised across different pathways and disciplines.

The aim is to support applicants who have demonstrated strong achievement, are ready to commence their degree, and are well placed to complete it successfully. The framework must also allow scholarships to be directed, where needed, towards identified strategic and priority areas.

Particular weight should be given to research experience and achievement within the previous 10 years. Assessment should draw on recognised quality indicators, including those that are widely accepted across the sector as well as discipline-specific indicators where relevant.

The scoring framework is not intended for applicants to achieve a perfect score, and there is no minimum score threshold. Applicants should demonstrate strength in either education and work experience or outputs and achievements. Some applicants will perform strongly in both categories, but a high score in one alone may still indicate strong merit, particularly given the emphasis on the most recent 10 years. Applicants who receive a score of 1 in both categories are unlikely to be admissible to a PhD, and thus should not be in the scholarship round.

The first two assessment categories must be defined and applied consistently across the whole university. The latter three categories may be faculty-specific, provided they remain consistent with the university's overall scholarship principles and are determined and recorded in writing before each scholarship round. The rubrics below articulate the university's expectations, while allowing scope for faculty or school-level clarification to reflect disciplinary nuance. Any variation must be justified and approved through the Scholarship Central Ranking Meeting.

The full scoring for each application must be clearly documented. All scores and decisions must be supported by evidence provided in the application and documented clearly enough to enable review and moderation.

Scoring Breakdown

Education and work experience of applicant (30%)

Outputs and achievements (30%)

Alignment with faculty research strategy (15%)

Quality of research proposal (15%)

Adjustment factors (10%)

SCHOLARSHIP SCORING RUBRICS

Education and work experience of applicant (30%)

This criterion reflects the quality and extent of the applicant's preparation for research training within the past 10 years. This preparation may have come from previous education or from paid or unpaid professional experience. In both education and professional experience, consideration should be given to the relevance of the experience to the proposed research.

Educational experience

Elements to consider include:

- Prior education and degrees awarded
- Other relevant education and training, qualifications and skills

There are a variety of ways to translate international equivalence of degrees and marks (e.g. overall mark, GPA, WAM). If you are not using a commonly accepted equivalence measure, please justify how you have calculated equivalence.

The quality of the educational institution should be taken into consideration and justified. Example of potential quality indicators may include but are not limited to:

- Within the top 200 on a recognised international ranking list (e.g. QS, THE, ARWU)
- Within the top 20 for discipline on a recognised international ranking list
- The best institution in the country on a recognised international ranking list

Professional experience

For professional experience, "Research-intensive" means acting in a role or capacity that specifically undertook research. "Research-relevant" means acting in a role or capacity that required and demonstrated these skills:

- Review, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge to identify and provide solutions to complex problems with intellectual independence
- Demonstrate a broad understanding of a body of knowledge and theoretical concepts with advanced understanding in some areas
- Exercise critical thinking and judgement in developing new understanding
- Design and use research in a project
- Present a clear and coherent exposition of knowledge and ideas to a variety of audiences

Common examples include but are not limited to:

- Evidence of leadership in organisations or communities
- Consultancy work / acting in expert capacity
- Dissemination of knowledge
- Contributions to professional organisations / practice / service
- Relevant creative practice

The rubric includes exemplars. Where you consider a candidate to have a combination of experiences or particularly strong preparation that merits higher assessment, please offer a justification for your ranking.

5	Either / any: • MRes / MPhil from a top-200 global university or a top-20 global program by discipline • 3 years research-intensive professional experience
4	Either / any: • Bachelors (Honours 1) or the equivalent from a top-200 global university or a top-20 global program by discipline • MRes / MPhil from institution outside the top 200 globally • 2 years research-intensive professional experience • 3 years research-relevant professional experience
3	Either / any: • Bachelors (Honours 2.1) or the equivalent from a top-200 global university or a top-20 global program by discipline • Coursework Masters with at least 1 year research component from a top-200 global university or a top-20 global program by discipline • Bachelor (Honours 1) or the equivalent from institution outside the top 200 globally • 1 year research-intensive professional experience • 2 years research-relevant professional experience
2	Either / any: • Bachelors (Honours 2.1) or the equivalent from institution outside the top 200 globally • Coursework Masters with at least 1 year research component from institution outside the top 200 globally • 1 year research-relevant professional experience
1	Both: • All formal education undertaken more than 10 years ago, AND • No research-relevant experience within past 10 years

Outputs and achievements (30%)

This criterion reflects the quality and demonstrated potential of the applicant's previous research or research-relevant outputs within the past 10 years. These may include peer-reviewed publications and outputs (e.g. journal articles, book chapters, monographs, academic textbooks, conference papers), recognised non-traditional research outputs, or other professional or creative outputs that are research-relevant.

Outputs, achievements, and authorship conventions should be considered as is appropriate for the discipline and should be linked to quality indicators. Please justify the quality indicator you have chosen. Examples of quality indicators include but are not limited to:

- Publication in journals ranked on a recognised international list appropriate to discipline
- Contribution to book published by high-reputation presses
- Creative output in an internationally or nationally prestigious venue
- Industry paper or report for a national or peak professional body

Awards, accolades, and acknowledgements of peer recognition may be taken into consideration where they are research-relevant. "Research-relevant" means either directly thematically related to the research the applicant is proposing to undertake or demonstrating the skills necessary to undertake research.

The rubric includes exemplars. Where you consider a candidate to have a combination of outputs and achievements that merit higher assessment, please offer a justification for your ranking. Consideration may be given to how potential has been demonstrated relative to opportunity and career stage.

5	The prospective candidate has been the <u>first author or equivalent on multiple</u> research-relevant outputs in publications, organisations, or venues with national or international recognition. e.g. • First author or equivalent on multiple peer-reviewed articles published in ranked journals • First author or equivalent on multiple peer-reviewed book chapters • Creative lead on multiple recognised NTROs • First author or equivalent on multiple industry papers / reports for national or peak professional bodies • Creative lead on multiple research-relevant creative outputs
4	The prospective candidate has been the <u>first author or equivalent</u> on a research-relevant output in a publication, organisation, or venue with national or international recognition. e.g. • First author or equivalent on a peer-reviewed article published in a ranked journal • First author or equivalent on a peer-reviewed book chapter • Creative lead on a recognised NTRO • First author or equivalent on an industry paper / report for national or peak professional bodies • Creative lead on a research-relevant creative output
3	The prospective candidate has <u>contributed to multiple</u> research-relevant outputs. e.g. • Non-first author on multiple peer-reviewed articles published in ranked journals • Non-first author on multiple peer-reviewed book chapters • Creative contributions to multiple recognised NTROs • Non-first author on multiple industry papers / reports • Creative contributions to multiple research-relevant creative outputs
2	The prospective candidate has <u>contributed to</u> a research-relevant output. e.g. • Non-first author on a peer-reviewed article published in a ranked journal • Non-first author on a peer-reviewed book chapter • Creative contribution to a recognised NTRO • Non-first author on an industry paper / report • Creative contributions to a research-relevant creative output
1	The prospective candidate has not contributed to any peer-reviewed or research-relevant outputs, nor do they have equivalent achievements or recognitions of professional / creative contribution.

Alignment with faculty research strategy (15%)

This criterion reflects the extent to which the proposed research aligns with the faculty's research strategy. Each faculty should define their own rubric to include elements that are of strategic value to their specific context. Elements that could be considered for weighting include but are not limited to:

- Potential to enhance research capacity in priority topic areas
- Potential to contribute to research engagement, impact, or translation priorities
- Potential to enable strategically valuable collaboration (e.g. cross-disciplinary supervision; international countries or institutions identified as priorities; co-supervision opportunities with strategic partner organisations)
- Potential to develop supervisory capacity within the faculty (e.g. by prioritising ECRs or other relevant cohorts)
- Potential to expand the diversity of the HDR cohort, and/or retain top talent from UTS honours
- Likelihood of flourishing within faculty research culture and environment (e.g. by prioritising projects that will have strong intellectual community or receive additional supervisor support)

5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

Quality of research proposal (15%)

This criterion reflects the clarity, quality, and feasibility of the proposed research as outlined in the applicant's research proposal. Each faculty should define their own rubric to include discipline-appropriate elements that demonstrate understanding of the proposed research question, intellectual capacity to undertake it, and a well-grounded approach to the project. Elements that could be considered for weighting include but are not limited to:

- Clear identification of research topic, research question, and fields of inquiry
- Originality, significance and/or scope of research topic
- Demonstration of engagement with relevant and contemporary scholarly literature
- Identification of appropriate methodological techniques and/or research design
- Clarity and accuracy of written expression

5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

Adjustment factors (10%)

This criterion reflects any additional factors which may have impeded the applicant's opportunity to demonstrate their full potential, would add additional value to their participation in the faculty's research community, or are otherwise considered by the faculty to be relevant in supporting a diverse and well-balanced HDR cohort. Each faculty should define their own rubric to include elements that are important to their specific context. Elements that could be considered for weighting include but are not limited to:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- Gender
- Low SES
- Career interruptions
- Overall diversity of cohort background (e.g. citizenship in priority country / region)
- UTS alumni

5	
4	
3	
2	
1	