**COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT RTP SCHOLARSHIPS**

**by Simon Moss**

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| **Introduction** |

Many of our research candidates, especially PhD candidates who study full time, receive a scholarship called an RTP stipend, worth about $27 500 a year. This document clarifies the rules around these scholarships. The information in the following flowchart will help you appreciate some of the rules and regulations around this scheme

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| The government distributes a grant to each university called the **Research Training Program** or RTP. The amount that CDU receives depends on   * the number of CDU candidates who have completed a PhD or Masters by Research recently * the amount of money that CDU has earned in research grants |  | Universities must use this money to support the PhD and Masters by Research program. The university can use this RTP to pay   * **RTP stipends**—in which some candidates receive about $27 500 a year to support their living expenses * **RTP fees offset**—that pays the tuition fees of most candidates * **RTP allowances**—that pays some of the expenses of candidates, such as resources, relocation, or conferences |
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| If candidates complete their thesis, the university will receive more RTP funding in the future. Consequently, universities implement a range of initiatives to help candidates complete their thesis. |  | However   * PhD candidates are entitled to this RTP support only during the first three full-time years of their candidature, although they may receive a six-month extension * Masters by Research candidates are entitled to this RTP support only during the first two full-time years of their candidature; they are not eligible for extensions |

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| **Eligibility** |

**RTP stipend**

This section clarifies who is eligible to receive RTP support, especially the RTP stipend of about $27 500 a year. Generally

* CDU utilizes a formula to decide which candidates are eligible to receive the RTP stipend
* In general, domestic candidates who have achieved H1 equivalence will typically receive this stipend at CDU.
* Domestic candidates who have achieved H2A equivalence might receive this stipend
* International candidates who have achieved H1 equivalence often, but not always, receive this stipend
* Masters by Research candidates are also eligible to receive this RTP stipend
* Generally, the RTP stipend is granted only to full-time candidates—unless the circumstances are exceptional
* For full time candidates, the RTP stipend is not taxable. For part time candidates, the RTP stipend is taxable at this time.

**RTP fee offset**

In contrast to the RTP stipend, at CDU, most CDU research candidates will be granted the RTP fee offset—and thus do not need to pay the tuition fees. That is,

* In general, PhD candidates do not need to pay fees during the first four years full time.
* During their fifth year, they may apply for a fee waiver as well
* Masters by Research candidates do not need to pay fees during their first two years full time.
* During the next six months, these candidates might also apply for a fee waiver
* After this time, candidates will need to pay tuition fees.

**RTP allowance**

Like the RTP fee offset, most CDU research candidates will be granted some RTP allowance to pay some research expenses.

* For full time candidates, this allowance can last up to four full years for PhD candidates and up to two years full time for Masters by Research candidates

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| Question | Answer |
| Domestic versus international |  |
| What is the definition of a domestic candidate in Australia? | Someone who is either a citizen or permanent resident of Australia |
| Why is the RTP stipend harder to attain for international candidates than for domestic candidates? | The government permits only 10% of RTP funding to be dedicated to international candidates. |
| Other sources of income |  |
| Am I still eligible to receive an RTP stipend if I also earn an income | Yes—but you can work only 15 hours a week. In addition, you cannot be receiving another scholarship to support your research unless this grant is worth less than 75% of this stipend or about $20 700 |
| Who cannot apply? |  |
| If my application to receive an RTP stipend is rejected, can I reapply in the future | Yes. Sometimes, candidates are rejected one year but awarded an RTP stipend in future years. For example, if candidates publish a paper, they might be deemed as H2A equivalent rather than H2B equivalent and thus more likely to receive a stipend. |
| If I completed a Masters by Research or PhD before, am I still eligible to receive a RTP stipend in the future | Yes |
| If I received an RTP stipend before, am I still eligible to receive a RTP stipend in the future | Yes. If you are beginning an entirely new project, you may still be eligible for up to four years full time of RTP support. If you are continuing a previous project, you would need to subtract the number of years you had received this assistance from the four years. |
| When are RTP stipends granted to part-time candidates? | Only in exceptional circumstance—such as whenever a health issue or important family responsibility prevents the candidates from studying full-time  In these circumstances, the candidate receives half the usual RTP stipend. |
| Can I receive RTP support if I am granted leave of absence? | No, you cannot receive RTP support during a leave of absence. |
| Entitlements |  |
| Can I receive money to relocate to Darwin | Only if you have been awarded an RTP stipend. If so, domestic candidates receive $2000 and international candidates receive $2500 |

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| **Application for RTP support** |

The procedure to apply for RTP support is straightforward. Specifically

* When you apply for a Phd or Masters by Research course, on the forms, you will be asked whether you would like to apply for an RTP stipend as well.
* In the letter in which you are accepted into the course, the RTP offset will usually be granted
* Once you enroll, contact the HDR administrator of your college to apply for funds from the RTP allowance.

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| **Duration and extensions** |

RTP support is limited in duration. Specifically

* PhD candidates can receive RTP support—including the stipend, fee offset, and allowances—during the first three years of candidature if full time or during the first six years of candidature if part time.
* However, if the university offers an extension, PhD candidates could receive RTP support for another six months if full time and one year if part time.
* To seek an extension, visit the relevant webpage to access the necessary extension form
* Masters by Research candidates can receive RTP support during the first two years of candidature if full time or during the first four years of candidature if part time. No extension is permitted

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| Question | Answer |
| Unusual circumstances |  |
| If I did not receive an RTP stipend in my first year or longer, can I receive RTP support even after four years of full time candidature? | No, you can receive RTP support only during the first four years of full time candidature, even if you receive all the extensions permitted. |
| If I receive another scholarship—such as an Endeavour scholarship— can I receive an RTP stipend even after four years of full time candidature? | No—not if you have been enrolled in the PhD for four years full time or eight years part time. |

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| **Changes in my life** |

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| Question | Answer |
| If I shift to another university, will I retain my RTP support? | Only if the other university agrees to continue this RTP support. So, in practice, the answer is sometimes but not always |
| If I am a domestic candidate, do I continue to receive RTP support while overseas? | Yes. However, you cannot usually study overseas for more than a year |
| If I am an international candidate, do I continue to receive RTP support while overseas? | Generally. However, you cannot usually study overseas for more than a year. International candidates must generally study at their designated campus in Australia. |

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| **Other responsibilities** |

If you receive RTP support, you need to fulfill several obligations. For example

* For all research publications, you should acknowledge this support in the acknowledgment section. You should write “This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship”.
* Full time candidates should dedicate five days a week to their studies—besides 20 weeks recreation leave and 10 days of sick leave a year. Sick leave can be extended, provided the candidate can organize a medical certificate.
* After female candidates have received the RTP stipend for 12 months, they are eligible for up to 60 days of maternity leave for biological and adopted children. Partners of these candidates may also be entitled to some parenting leave.