

**St GEORGE & SUTHERLAND MEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION
MEDICAL AND BIOMEDICAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS**

DESCRIPTION AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

for funding commencing in 2011

Key dates:

Applications open 3rd May 2010

Applications close 5pm, Thursday 5th August, 2010

Late or incomplete applications will not be considered

1. Objectives and Purpose of Foundation Scholarships

The aim of the Foundation Scholarships scheme is to support outstanding medical, nursing, allied health and biomedical graduates early in their career so that they can enhance their research skills, and conduct medical research which is, or may prove to be, of value to Australia and which has a connection with St George & Sutherland Hospitals. It is anticipated that Postgraduate Scholars supported by the Foundation, will develop the capacity for original independent research. It is intended that the Foundation Scholars will attain a higher degree by research (MD, PhD, Masters by Research, or equivalent) in this process.

2. Eligibility – general criteria

Applicants **must** meet all of the following criteria, **at the time of application**:

- Plan to undertake the proposed research at St George and/or Sutherland Hospitals,
- be Australian citizens or permanent residents or New Zealand citizens holding a Special Category Visa. Applicants who have applied for but not yet been granted permanent residency or a Special Category Visa may apply for the award. Evidence of the appropriate status must be provided before the commencement of the award;
- have made prior arrangements with the Head of Department in which they propose to conduct their research;
- provide evidence that they have applied for similar financial support from alternative funding sources (eg NH&MRC Medical or Postgraduate scholarships; Medical Specialty College(s), or Nursing or Allied Health Professional bodies, or from a University scholarship scheme).

Reasons for ineligibility to **apply** include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- applicant is already in receipt of a comparable postgraduate award, equivalent funded scholarship or salary support from alternative sources.

Reasons for ineligibility for **award of a scholarship** include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- applicant receives a comparable postgraduate award, equivalent funded scholarship, or salary support from alternative sources which will provide financial support for the period of that would have been covered by this Foundation Scholarship.

3. Categories of Award

3.2 Medical Postgraduate Research Scholarships

3.2.1 *Description and Objectives*

Medical Postgraduate Research Scholarships are awarded to provide support to medical graduates undertaking a postgraduate degree involving full-time research. Recent graduates as well as those who are undergoing further clinical training are encouraged to apply. Applications will be considered in all relevant health-related disciplines that are affiliated with St George and/or Sutherland Hospital or its Medical Staff.

3.2.2 Eligibility

In addition to the requirements detailed above, those eligible to apply are:

- Australian citizens who are medical graduates currently registered to practice within Australia. Medical graduates can also apply during their intern year; or
- medical graduates from overseas who are currently registered to practice in Australia, who have permanent Australian resident status and are currently residing in Australia. Applicants are to provide certification of medical registration in Australia, as well as evidence of resident status.

3.3 Biomedical Postgraduate Research Scholarships

3.3.1 Description and Objectives

The purpose of the Biomedical Postgraduate Research Scholarships is to support non-medical graduates of outstanding ability to gain full-time biomedical research experience while enrolled for a higher degree. All candidates must enrol for a higher degree requiring full-time research such as MD, PhD, Masters by Research, or equivalent. Applications will be considered in all relevant health-related disciplines including social and behavioural sciences, nursing and allied health disciplines.

3.3.2 Eligibility

In addition to the requirements detailed above, those eligible to apply must meet at least one of the following criteria

- Australian citizens who have already completed a science or health-related honours degree (or equivalent) at the time of submission of the application;
- science honours graduates and unregistered medical graduates from overseas, who have permanent resident status and are currently residing in Australia;
- students enrolled in a graduate medical degree combined with a PhD;
- allied health or nursing professionals with an honours degree or equivalent.

4. Terms and Conditions of Award

4.1 Level of Funding

The Board of the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation, on an annual basis, depending upon its discretionary budget, will determine the number of Foundation Scholarships to be made available and the stipend range for each. The amounts detailed under Stipend (below), provide a guide to the level of funding available. From time to time, the Board of the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation may adjust the stipend awarded to a successful applicant if that applicant has secured significant additional funding from alternative sources, but where such funding is insufficient on its own to provide adequate support for the scholar.

4.2 Duration of Funding

Scholarships are awarded for a period of 12 months in the first instance and may be renewed, pending satisfactory performance at the discretion of the Foundation, for a maximum total duration of three years if initial postgraduate degree enrolment is concurrent with commencement of the scholarship. Successful applicants already enrolled for the postgraduate degree prior to the

commencement of a scholarship will have the maximum period reduced by the equivalent period of study undertaken prior to commencement of the scholarship.

4.3 Stipend

The stipend provided to scholars will be within the ranges outlined:

- Stipend for Biomedical (non MBBS) Scholarships: up to \$20,000 pa;
- Stipend for Nursing and Allied Health Professionals: up to \$25,000 pa;
- Medical Scholarships, (with MBBS): up to \$29,700 pa.

A scholar is not entitled to hold an additional scholarship or similar award that provides an annual supplement greater than 50% of the upper limit of the Foundation's stipend range. The applicant is obliged to notify the Foundation the outcome of his/her applications for alternative external funding prior to the Foundation's formal offer of awards, generally in December of the year of application. The aims of this stipulation are: a) to avoid duplication of funding, thereby maximising the potential number of scholars and projects able to be supported by the Foundation; and b) to ensure maximal benefit to the organization from external funding sources.

4.4 Additional Earnings

Scholarships are intended to provide support for full time research. However, awardees may be entitled to undertake paid, part-time work during the term of their scholarship in line with the conditions of the Foundation and providing that, in the opinion of the supervisor and the Foundation, such work does not interfere with the scholar's full time research commitments.

5. Scholarship Administration

The Foundation will make 4 quarterly payments to its scholars in January, April, July and October of the year in which the stipend is held. The stipend will not cover sick leave, recreation leave, maternity leave, or extraordinary leave of absence. Variation of terms of scholarship, such as extensions or deferment, may be considered by the Board in special circumstances following a joint submission to the Scientific Advisory Committee by the scholar and his/her Department Head. It is intended that the funds will be used within the 12 month stipulated in the award. Except under special circumstances, and only with prior approved by the Scientific Advisory Committee, there is no provision for carry-over of funds beyond the 12 months. Unused funds as of the termination date of the award must be returned to the Foundation.

6. Reporting Requirements

Annual progress reports: - A summary progress report, written in terms understandable to the general public, must be submitted before the 14th February of the following year indicating progress achieved by the scholar. This report will also be used to update the Foundation Board and will be included in the Foundation's annual report as well as other promotional material at the discretion of the Board to assist with fundraising or procurement of industry support for these awards. The scholar's report must include a summary of achievements and include any presentations at scientific meetings, abstracts and publications arising from the work supported by the Foundation. The Foundation reserves the right to suspend payment of further instalments of any current scholarship until the appropriate reports have been received and assessed as satisfactory.

Final report: - This report must include a summary of achievements throughout tenure of the award and include a list of publications. The report must be submitted 14th February of the year following completion of the award.

Recognition of the Award: Appropriate recognition for the assistance of Foundation funding, and any partnering sponsor(s) where applicable, must be included in any publications resulting from work undertaken during the tenure of a scholarship, by stating that the author (or co-author) holds a St George & Sutherland Medical Research Foundation, Postgraduate Scholarship.

7. Process of Application Review

The Foundation is committed to ensuring that all conflicts of interest, where they may exist, are dealt with consistently and transparently. All participants in the peer review process for the Foundation will respect confidentiality in relation to the applications and to the peer review process, and will not disclose any confidential information, including the outcomes of considerations. (Refer Appendix 1: “Guidelines for treatment of conflict of interest”).

Following determination of eligibility criteria, all eligible Applications will be subjected to an internal review process by the Foundations Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), which will rank and prioritise proposals. Where possible or necessary (eg where there is insufficient internal expertise to objectively evaluate an application), applications will be sent for external expert review. The SAC will then submit its findings to the Board of the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation. The final approval on awards and stipends will be made by the Board. All decisions by the Board in the relation to awardees, stipends and any related conditions that is sees fit to implement, will be final.

Contact for additional information or queries related to awards:

St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation website: www.stgeorgemrf.com.au

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APPENDIX 1:

GUIDELINES FOR TREATMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. The SGMRF is committed to fair review of all grant applications ensuring any Conflicts of Interest are dealt with consistently and transparently. The essence of a quality peer review process demands all participants act in good faith, in an open and sensible manner. The ensuing guidelines will assist in the interpretation and implementation of the Foundation's policy. The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) acknowledges that there are many forms of Conflict of Interest. It is an important fundamental of the peer review process that people within the field have access to other grant applications. It is also recognised that most SAC and many of the Foundation Board members are actively engaged in research considered to be of significant importance to St George and/or Sutherland Hospitals. As such it is not reasonable that SAC members nor members of their research group be excluded from submitting applications for funding for consideration by the SAC.

2. When formally accepting the role as a reviewer for one or more applications received by the Foundation, each reviewer (eg SAC member; external reviewer) must first determine that no potential conflict of interest might arise. Where such potential exists, the invited reviewer will notify the Chair of the SAC where indicated on the invitation document, stating reasons for that opinion. If there is no conflict of interest, he/she must sign the invitation document to indicate this and that he/she can abide by the Foundation's policies and guidelines.

3. The following are the principal areas where conflicts may arise:

- Direct involvement in the application as Chief Investigator or Associate/Principle Investigator.
- Direct or potential involvement due to a personal financial interest in the outcome of the granting process ^{a,b}.
- Potential involvement as a scientific ^a, or organisational group colleague^b.
- Perceived involvement due to a family/ personal relationship, either currently or during the past five years ^{a,b}.
- If at any time there has been a verbal or written dispute between an applicant and the individual acting for the Foundation.
- Any other perceived conflicts.

4. All members of the SAC will be provided with the information on all applicants, their departmental and other affiliations, the assigned reviewers and each reviewer's signed conflict of interest declaration for each application. The full SAC will review this information; all conflicts of interest will be recorded and clarification sought where necessary before finalising reviewers for each application. No reviews can commence until the SAC has approved the matching of applicants and reviewers.

a. a scientific colleague is defined as another scientist with whom the collaborator has published papers, held grants or acted in a Higher Degree by Research student/Supervisor relationship with any of the applicants during the past five years.

b. a colleague within an identifiable organisational group from which joint benefit may follow award of the grant, ie. Members of the same research group or hospital department.

5. After discussing any conflicts of interest, the SAC may decide that:
- a) the SAC member with conflicts must not be present during any discussion of the application;
 - b) the SAC member has unique knowledge of the research area of the application and may only be present to answer direct questions relating to scientific issues, and is not to be present, or take any further part in the application review process. Note that questions are to be directed after the conflicts of interest have been identified and prior to discussion of the application; or
 - c) no action is deemed necessary.

Examples of Conflicts of Interest

Some examples of conflicts of interest and appropriate SAC decisions:

Example 1: A SAC is required to review an application where Prof Brown is an applicant. Dr Smith, a member of the SAC, is also a member of Prof Brown's research unit.

SAC Action: Dr Smith is not to be present when Prof Brown's application is being reviewed by the SAC.

Example 2: A departmental colleague of Dr Jones (a member of the SAC) has submitted an application for funding for a research area related to hypogeniology. The SAC is required to review this application.

SAC Action: Dr Jones has exceptional knowledge in this particular field and her exclusion from discussions may result in the application not receiving fair representation. The SAC decision should be that Dr Jones be directed to answer only specific scientific questions related to the application, and not be present for or take part in general discussions, nor score or have input on the final ranking decision.

Example 3: Prof Wilson is the Head of the Department of Interesting Disorders at St George Hospital and is also a member of the SAC. Prof Wilson's Department has submitted an application for the peer review process by the SAC.

SAC Action: If the application from Prof Wilson's Department were successful, Prof Wilson could receive financial gain, and therefore should not be present whilst that particular application is being reviewed.