

PROJECT-BASED GRADUATE RESEARCH STIPEND SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION GUIDE

Navigating Welfare Demands in Community
Sport: Inclusion, Safeguarding, and
Organisational Practice

Doctor of Philosophy ONLY

Newly commencing Australian residents (all domestic students including Australian citizens, Australian permanent residents, New Zealand citizens and holders of a permanent Australian humanitarian visa)

02/04/2026

Version 1.0

Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge, recognise and respect the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Traditional Owners of University land where our campuses are situated. In Victoria, the Bunurong/Boonwurrung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung of the Kulin Nation; in Sydney, the Gadigal and Guring-gai of the Eora Nation; and in Brisbane, the Turrbal and Yugara people.

As we share our own knowledge practices within the University, we acknowledge that the land on which we meet, learn and grow is a place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We honour the depth of wisdom held by Aboriginal communities and recognise their enduring connection to Country. Sovereignty has never been ceded.

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Key Details

This guide is for applicants interested in a graduate research scholarship commencing in **Research Period 2 2026** at Victoria University.

This scholarship is for the purpose of undertaking a graduate research degree related to the project outlined below and in [Table 1](#).

The Stipend Value and Included Benefits are outlined in [Table 2](#).

The Project

Project Description

We are seeking a PhD candidate interested in advancing understanding of the intersections between diversity, inclusion, safeguarding, and wellbeing within community sport. This project can be shaped around the applicant's background and interests, with potential areas of focus including the experiences of those navigating overlapping welfare and inclusion demands, critical analyses of organisational structures or the ways in which sport organisations balance (or fail to balance) their responsibilities across equity, safety, and wellbeing domains.

The successful candidate will be situated within our broader Safe and Inclusive Sport research group, within the Institute for Health and Sport. Our group's overarching aim is to ensure sporting environments are safe, equitable, inclusive, and respectful. This PhD offers the opportunity to contribute new knowledge at a time when sport systems are being asked to do more than ever in the welfare space and to illuminate how these demands are experienced, managed, and understood on the ground.

Desirable skills and experience

We welcome candidates from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds.

Because issues of inclusion, safeguarding, and wellbeing in community sport sit at the intersection of social, organisational, psychological, and health domains, this project is well-suited to applicants from fields such as sociology, sport management, psychology, social work, public health, education, gender studies, disability studies, and other related areas.

Potential projects may involve ethnographic or field-based work to capture the 'on-the-ground' realities of staff, coaches, officials, and volunteers who are expected to deliver multiple equity, safety and inclusion related mandates simultaneously.

Key questions include: how are inclusion and safeguarding policies being interpreted and enacted in everyday practice? how do organisational cultures shape responses to welfare pressures? or how are individuals making sense of competing expectations?

We are also open to other project ideas related to how any of these types of volunteer roles are enacted in community sport.

Application due date

a. Application Due Date	1 June 2026
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Table 1: Project Outline

Item	Detail
a. Expected Commencement Date	27 July 2026
b. Project Title	Navigating Welfare Demands in Community Sport: Inclusion, Safeguarding, and Organisational Practice
c. Funding Agency	ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher Award
d. Chief Investigator	Dr Mary Woessner
e. Associate Supervisor	Associate Professor Fiona McLachlan
f. Special Conditions	Intellectual Property Assignment Required No Working with Children Check Required Yes Police Check Required No

Table 2: Stipend Value and Included Benefits

Item	Detail
a. Value of stipend per annum	A\$35,707 (2026 rate)
b. Fixed rate or incremented	Incremented
c. Fee offset included	RTP Fee Offset
d. PhD and/or Master Research Degrees available	PhD only
e. Part-Time Available	Yes

Eligibility

Domestic Applicants

To be eligible for this scholarship, domestic applicants must:

- Be Australian residents (all domestic students including Australian citizens, Australian permanent residents, New Zealand citizens and holders of permanent Australian humanitarian visas)
- Meet the minimum academic entry and English language requirements for admission to the degree – see [website](#) for further details
- Not already have completed a research degree at the same or higher Australian Quality Framework (AQF) (or equivalent for overseas institutions)

Conditions and Benefits

Successful applicants will receive a full guide to the conditions and benefits of the Scholarships at the time of offer. The following is a summary of the main benefits and conditions.

Special Conditions

If item (f) in [Table 1](#) includes:

- the response “Yes” to the item “Intellectual Property Assignment Required” then the scholarship holder will be required to assign intellectual property they create while working on this Project (excluding copyright in the thesis) to the University through a formal agreement; or
- the response “Yes” to the item “Working Children Check Required” then the scholarship holder must be willing to obtain Working with Children Check before commencing the Project and Scholarship; or
- the Response “Yes” to the item Police Check Required, then the scholarship holder will be required to secure a Police Check before commencing Project and Scholarship; or

Scholarship Value

Stipend Value

The annual value of the stipend is provided in Item (a) Value of Stipend per Annum in [Table 2](#) and are currently exempt from taxation.

If Item (b) of [Table 2](#) is marked as “Incremented” then stipend payments are indexed annually.

Fee Offset Value

Domestic Applicants

In 2026, the value of this the Fee Offset component of a Scholarship is \$14,000 - \$16,750 per research period depending on the course.

Period of Support

All candidates are expected to complete their study in the timely duration for their degree as per [Table 3](#).

Table 3: Stipend durations for full-time Higher Degrees by Research

	Stipend Duration	Timely Duration
Doctor of Philosophy	3.5 years	4 years

Periods of study already undertaken towards the degree prior to the commencement of the award will be deducted from the normal period of award tenure. Similarly, periods of study undertaken during suspension of the award, or undertaken during the tenure of a previous

Research Training Program Stipend or Australian Postgraduate Award, will be deducted from the maximum period of tenure.

A Scholarship holder may be required to pay tuition fees for any period of enrolment in excess of the timely duration.

Employment

Stipend candidates are expected to normally study and research full-time (minimum of 36.75 hours per week) between the hours of 8.00am – 6.00pm Monday to Friday with Stipend candidates limited to a maximum of eight (8) hours paid employment per week during these hours. Please refer to the [Higher Degree by Research Scholarship Procedure](#).

Employment must not interfere with the candidate's progress.

Commencement

No deferrals of the Scholarship will be considered. All successful applicants are expected to commence study by the Commencement Date advised in the Letter of Offer. The Commencement Date will normally be the Expected Commencement Date in Item (a) of [Table 2 Project Outline](#), however the University reserves the right to change the Commencement Date in the Letter of Offer when offering a scholarship.

If an applicant cannot start by the Commencement Date, the offer of the Scholarship may be withdrawn.

Part-time Scholarships

If Item (e) of [Table 2](#) is marked “Yes” then Funding Agency requirements for the Project mean that the scholarship can be offered for part-time study.

Domestic Applicants

The University may approve a part-time award where an applicant can demonstrate heavy care commitments or a medical condition which precludes full-time study. The award holder must demonstrate one of the following:

- care responsibilities for a pre-school child, or
- care responsibilities for school aged children as a sole parent with limited access to outside support, or
- care responsibilities for an invalid or disabled spouse, child or parent, or
- a medical condition which limits the capacity to undertake full-time study (supported by medical certification).

A part-time award holder is expected to progress at half the rate of a full-time award holder. Award holders approved to study part-time may revert to full-time study at any time.

Stipends for part-time awards are **NOT** tax exempt. A Tax File Number Form is required to be completed together with supporting documentation detailing the care commitment or medical condition.

Scholarship Selection Procedures

Eligibility

All applications are assessed against the Domestic Applicants criteria for the scholarship scheme. Those applications deemed ineligible for a scholarship will not be processed any further and ineligible applicants will be notified of the result.

Ranking against the selection criteria

The Project Supervisor will rank eligible applications based on academic merit, relevant research experience, publications and relevant work experience. They may identify applications which are not for further consideration (NFFC).

The Project Supervisor may contact an applicant directly for more detail regarding their application.

Final Ranking

The Institute Associate Director will determine a final ranking of applications, identifying the preferred application.

Appeals

A request to review a scholarship decision must be lodged in writing dean.gradresearch@vu.edu.au within 10 University business days of the applicant being informed of the decision.

A review of a scholarship decision is available in circumstances where unsuccessful applicants believe there was a breach of process in the handling of their application;

The Dean, Graduate Research will undertake, or arrange a review if there is a conflict of interest, of the decision and a written outcome will be provided within 10 University business days of the date that the request was received by VU. If there are any delays to the timeline for any outcome, the Dean, Graduate Research will advise the applicant the reason for the delay and the date that they may receive an outcome of the review.

Application Submission

Expressions of interest should be submitted to [Dr Mary Woessner](#), with the following documentation attached:

- 500-word research proposal
- Academic transcripts
- Qualification certificates
- **200-word personal statement** – include your reasons for wanting to undertake this research, and your academic path or trajectory
- Up-to-date CV

The successful applicant will be required to submit a formal application through the Victoria University Admissions portal and meet all University requirements for admission and enrolment. Refer to the steps at [Apply For Graduate Research](#)

For more information

Please contact: Mary.Woessner@vu.edu.au