University of Sydney International Scholarships (USydIS)

Information Sheet and FAQs for USydIS recipients

INTRODUCTION

You MUST ensure you keep your email offer for the scholarship and the conditions of award document so that you are able to refer to these whenever needed. The conditions of award of the scholarship can change each year so you need to keep a record of the conditions that applied at the time you received your offer.

What are the steps I need to take to commence my enrolment and scholarship payments?

This is a quick checklist of the things you need to do to commence your enrolment and scholarship payments. More detail is provided about each of these steps below so you should read all of the information in this document carefully.

1. Open a bank account in Australia.
2. Enrol in your course through the Sydney Student portal.
3. Enter your bank account details under the “my Finance” tab of the Sydney Student portal.
4. Submit a fully completed Scholarships Commencement Form* to the Higher Degree by Research Administration Centre (HDRAC). This form needs to be signed by your Supervisor and Head of Department after you have enrolled in the postgraduate research degree and started your research work.

* Please obtain the form from the HDRAC, located in the Jane Foss Russell Building.

OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT IN AUSTRALIA

Stipend payments are made directly through electronic transfer into a bank account so you will need to open a bank account in Australia. To do this, you can go into any branch of the bank of your choice and fill out an application to open an account. Many Australian banks offer special accounts for students that offer low fees and other benefits so it may be worth looking at the different account options available.

You will be required to provide at least three forms of identification when you open a bank account so you will need to take documents/items such as your passport, existing credit cards, student ID card, birth certificate etc. with you when you go to open your account.

ENROLMENT

How do I enrol in my course?

You should enrol in your course by visiting this website http://sydney.edu.au/current_students/enrolment/index.shtml. You do not need to attend the Admissions Office to commence your enrolment. Once you have completed your enrolment, you will be directed to activate your UniKey and Sydney Mail email account. For further information about your Unikey and Sydney Mail email account you can visit this website http://sydney.edu.au/ict/student/unikey/faq.shtml.
Do I have to re-enrol every year?
Yes, during November you will usually receive a pre-enrolment questionnaire. You should complete the pre-enrolment questionnaire to pre-enrol for the next year. You must maintain a full-time enrolment to maintain your scholarship and stipend payments.

TUITION FEE PAYMENTS

How will my tuition fees be paid?
Your tuition fees will be paid automatically each semester for the duration of your scholarship. You will not need to make tuition fee payments unless you are unable to complete your studies within the required timeline for your scholarship.

STIPEND PAYMENTS

How do I arrange for my stipend payments to commence?
The stipend is paid in arrears through the University payroll system and will be paid directly to your bank account. Payments are made each fortnight (every second week) on Thursday. To initiate your first stipend payment, you must:

- Enter your bank account details under the “my Finance” tab of your Sydney Student portal; and
- Submit a fully completed Scholarships Commencement Form* to the HDRAC. This form needs to be signed by your Supervisor and Head of Department after you have enrolled in the postgraduate research degree and started your research work.

*The Scholarship Commencement form may be obtained from the HDRAC. The completed forms should be returned to the HDRAC according to the instructions on the form. The University has a standard pay calendar and it does not make payments outside its payment schedule.

All postgraduate scholarships, regardless of the duration of the award are subject to renewal on an annual basis. The renewal is made on the recommendation of the Head of Department/School and is dependant upon satisfactory progress. Your stipend payment will cease on 31 December if the appropriate recommendation for renewal is not received by the HDRAC.

How much will I get per fortnight?
The annual stipend amount will be divided into fortnightly payments but the total amount you will receive for the year will actually depend on the date you commence your enrolment. The amount of the first payment may be different to subsequent payments depending on when in the fortnightly pay cycle you commence your studies. If you commence your enrolment after a pay period, your first pay is likely to be smaller or larger than a full fortnight pay depending on where in the cycle you start your stipend.

Can I obtain a payslip for my stipend?
Yes. Payslips are electronic and can be accessed through myHRonline on the University’s intranet website (http://sydney.edu.au/staff/). You will need to login by using your UniKey and password which will be issued to you on enrolment.
What does your stipend ‘will be indexed annually on 1 January mean?  
It means the rate of your stipend will be increased each year, according to the stipend rate set by the Australian government on 1 January.

Is the stipend exempt from income tax?  
Yes, but to gain exemption from payment of income tax on your scholarship stipend, you must maintain full-time enrolment at all times. The related income tax provisions are detailed in the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997, section 51.10 – Education and Training.

Am I entitled to hold another scholarship?  
You may hold another living allowance scholarship or receive another stipend or salary specifically provided by a sponsor to support your research, as long as the benefit of the scholarship or salary is less than 75% of your USydIS stipend rate. The stipend will be terminated if the supplementary scholarship or salary exceeds this limit. Note: the 75% limit does not apply to income from sources unrelated to the course of study.

Am I allowed to undertake additional paid work?  
Yes. Under your student visa and USydIS conditions of award, you are entitled to engage in paid employment up to a maximum of 20 hours per week including evening, weekend and holiday work. If you are employed by the University, your hours of appointment must not exceed 50% of a full-time position.

Part time work must not interfere with your study. Work commitments will not be accepted as grounds for an extension of the USydIS. There is no limit to the amount of income you derive from part time work unrelated to your course of study provided you do not exceed the allowable hours. However, income generated from part time work is not tax-exempt.

OVERSEAS STUDENT HEALTH COVER (OSHC)

Is Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) part of the scholarship benefits?  
No, you are responsible for paying your OSHC.

Do I have to renew my OSHC each year?  
If your OSHC is scheduled through the University at the start of your candidature it will be scheduled for the normal duration of your studies. However, if you extend your studies beyond the standard duration of your course, you may need to extend/renew your OSHC at this time.

If you choose to arrange your own OSHC, you may arrange course length cover at the start of your studies or you may elect to have cover only for the first year of your studies. However, if you initially elect to arrange cover only for your first year of study, you MUST ensure that you renew your cover for subsequent years of study each year. If you do not maintain your OSHC, you will be responsible for the cost of any medical treatment you require.

You are personally responsible for all future renewals of OSHC.
SCHOLARSHIP EXTENSIONS

If I am unable to submit my thesis by the end of my initial scholarship term, can I apply for an extension of my scholarship?

Research doctorate candidates - If you are unable to complete your thesis within the specified time for your scholarship then you may apply for a maximum extension of up to six months only.

You should submit your application for an extension during the final research period of your initial scholarship period. The extension application form can be obtained from the HDRAC. If approved, both your tuition fee and stipend payments will be extended.

Research masters candidates – No, you are not entitled to receive any extension of your USydIS scholarship. If you wish to continue your enrolment at the University, you will need to continue as a full fee paying, self-funded international student.

If I am unable to complete my thesis by the end of my approved extension, may I apply for another extension?

No. If you are unable to complete your thesis by the end of an approved extension period and you wish to continue your enrolment at the University, you will need to continue as a full fee paying, self-funded international student.

LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS

Am I entitled to have recreation leave?

Yes, you are entitled to twenty working days of recreation leave for each twelve months of enrolment. All recreation leave due must be taken before completion or termination of your scholarship. You must obtain your supervisor’s agreement before taking leave.

Am I entitled to sick leave/maternity leave?

Yes, you are entitled to periods of sick leave and maternity leave during your scholarship. Please refer to your conditions of award for specific information about the duration of allowable periods of sick or maternity leave.

To apply for additional sick leave or maternity leave, you must complete a leave application form, which can be obtained from the HDRAC. You must complete the form and submit it, along with the necessary medical documentation, according to the instructions provided on the form.

Can I suspend my scholarship if I require extended leave?

Yes, you can suspend your scholarship for up to 12 months if you require a period of extended leave. Applications for suspension will not normally be approved in the first six months of candidature. To apply to suspend your scholarship, you must complete a suspension application form, which can be obtained from the HDRAC, and submit it according to the instructions provided on the form.

Under student visa regulations, a period of suspension may only be approved on the grounds of illness as evidenced by a doctor’s certificate, or other exceptional compassionate circumstances beyond the
student’s control (e.g. bereavement). Whenever a student suspends his/her studies the University MUST report the suspension to Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) and the student may be obliged to return to their home country for the duration of the suspension. Therefore, if a student wishes to remain in Australia during a period of suspension of studies, they must contact the DIBP office within 28 days of the suspension approval notice to seek approval to remain in Australia during the suspension.

Periods of suspension are cumulative and failure to resume study after suspension will result in the scholarship being terminated. Periods of study towards the degree during suspension of the USydIS will be deducted from the maximum period of the scholarship.

FIELD TRIPS, STUDY AWAY FROM CAMPUS AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Will my scholarship cover field trips, data collection or international conference attendance?
No. Field trips, data collection, conference attendance etc. will need to be self-funded or you will need to apply for financial assistance from other funding sources. Information about financial assistance for research available through the University can be obtained from the Research support web site at http://sydney.edu.au/research_support/funding/apply.shtml.

Are there any funding sources to assist me in meeting expenses related to field trips, data collection or presenting international conferences?
The University has a scheme called Postgraduate Research Support Scheme (PRSS) which provides direct support for currently enrolled postgraduate research students. Under the scheme, funds are allocated to schools or departments and in some cases faculties based on their higher degree research enrolment figures in the previous year. The funds are not allocated directly to the students but are awarded by schools or departments to eligible applicants on a competitive basis. For further information, refer to http://sydney.edu.au/scholarships/research/prss.shtml.

Will my stipend continue to be paid while I undertake research related activities overseas?
You must seek approval to hold your scholarship overseas. Please obtain an application form from the HDRAC at least a month prior to your departure. If approved, you will be required to submit reports at three monthly intervals during the period of overseas study.

Does the University have travel insurance that will cover me during my overseas trip?
The University currently has in place a worldwide travel insurance policy for all postgraduate students. This policy provides cover whilst postgraduates are overseas on authorised university business. This is why it is vital for you to obtain approval for overseas study before you depart. For detailed information, refer to http://sydney.edu.au/audit_risk/insurance/travel/student.shtml.

VISA STATUS

If I become an Australian Permanent Resident, am I entitled to keep my scholarship(s)?
Students who obtain Australian Permanent Residence status during the course of their enrolment at the University of Sydney (or prior to enrolment at the University) MUST notify the University immediately.
when their Australian Permanent visa is issued. In this case, students must bring their passport to the Admissions Office as soon as possible so that the University can adjust their residency status.

Subject to satisfactory progress, USydIS holders may be eligible to transfer to a University of Sydney Postgraduate Award (UPA). This award has similar conditions to the USydIS and provides a living allowance for domestic students enrolled in postgraduate research programs.

Students must advise the HDRAC of any change of visa status, suspension, or relinquishment of their USydIS as soon as it takes effect. Students will be required to repay any stipend payments received by them after the date of effect of their permanent resident status, or suspension, or relinquishment of their USydIS.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS AND USEFUL REFERENCES

Am I entitled to public transport concession?
No, you are not entitled to public transport concession but Transport for NSW has announced it will offer discounted tickets on public transport in the greater Sydney metropolitan area to international students. For more information about ticket collection on campus, please email university.cards@sydney.edu.au or phone 02 9351 2423.

Am I allowed to convert my degree from masters to research doctorate or vice versa?
Yes, your scholarship allows you to convert your degree. The maximum duration of a converted USydIS becomes the normal scholarship duration of the new research degree minus periods of study undertaken towards the related degree prior to the conversion.

What do I have to do to convert my degree from masters to research doctorate or vice versa?
You have to formalise the change of degree with the HDRAC, so that the duration of your scholarship can be amended accordingly. You must ensure that you are enrolled in the correct degree and withdrawn from the degree prior to the conversion. If you do not provide notice of the change, the University may require repayment of any overpaid stipend.

Where can I find information about my course requirements/regulations?
One of the best sources of information about your course requirements and regulations is the Graduate Studies Handbook. This contains information about the University’s structures and general course rules and regulations that apply to university wide awards such as PhD and Master of Philosophy. The online handbook can be accessed at http://sydney.edu.au/handbooks/postgrad_hb/

There is also a specific handbook for each faculty. These handbooks will provide you with a range of useful faculty specific information. Copies of faculty handbooks can be downloaded from the web site (http://sydney.edu.au/handbooks/index.shtml#intstu).