

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Student Consumables Allowance

Guidelines for Staff Supervising Higher Degree by Research students

Please refer to the document outlining *Essential Facilities for Higher Degree by Research Students in conjunction with this information sheet*.

1. Who is this guideline for?

This guideline is for any Curtin staff member who is registered to supervise HDR students and is listed on a Thesis Committee. It discusses changes to the administration of the HDR Student Consumable Allowance and its impact on HDR Supervisors.

2. Has the funding allocation for HDR students changed?

No, the process surrounding the HDR Student Consumable Allowance represents a change to its administration, however the funding structure remains intact. Each full-time student shall receive an allowance to support the cost of research consumables and travel. The current allowance is \$2,000 per year for laboratory based (high cost) research and \$1,400 per year for non-laboratory based (low cost) research. This sum is pro-rated for part-time students.

3. How will the new process work?

In the application for Candidacy, a budget template will be provided and students will be required to present a budget proposal detailing projected expenditure of their consumables allowance over the course of enrolment. This must be completed in consultation with the Supervisor, and the budget endorsed by both the Supervisor and Head of Enrolling Area or appropriate alternate. It is understood that the budget will shift as the student progresses through enrolment.

Once candidacy is approved, the Graduate Research School will authorise Financial Services to grant the student access to their consumable allowance. Students will no longer be required to complete a hardcopy application to claim consumables and fieldwork expenses. It is at this point that the student will be prompted to setup and access their *Concur* account using the HDR: Concur Student Guide. *Concur* is accessible via the website or smartphone app, and is the tool which will facilitate the reimbursement process. The student will photograph their receipts and attach in *Concur*. Reimbursement will be made directly into the student's nominated bank account. Where it is unclear if the expense is compliant to guidelines, Financial Services will consult with the student's supervisor for approval to proceed with reimbursement.

4. What are the benefits of this change?

The new model for the administration of HDR Student Consumables Allowance will remove the need for both the Supervisor and Head of Enrolling Area or appropriate alternate to sign off on multiple consumable claims throughout the year. The accelerated process will result in reimbursement on approved purchases within days of the claim being approved; on proviso that no further clarification is sought. These monies will be paid directly into the student's nominated bank account.

5. Why are there 2 separate processes?

The transition is happening in a staged progression to ensure that all student funding is accurately reflected in the new system. Students achieving candidacy on or after 1st July 2015 will be the first batch of students to come under the new reimbursement process.

Students who have achieved candidacy prior to 1st July 2015 will be transitioned to this process at a later date after funds previously utilised have been confirmed with their respective enrolling areas. As the order of transition is determined, the affected areas will be notified accordingly. In the interim, these students are expected to continue utilising the previous reimbursement process and complete the [Consumables and Fieldwork Expense Application for Higher Degree by Research students](#).

6. How do off-campus students claim reimbursement?

Off-campus students who achieve candidacy on or after 1st July 2015 can utilise *Concur* if they have access to an Australian bank account.

Off-campus students who do not have access to an Australian bank account should claim reimbursement by completing the [Consumables and Fieldwork Expense Application for Higher Degree by Research students](#).

7. How is funding calculated and when is it available?

Consumable funding is only made available to students who have achieved candidacy. Funding is distributed based on the student's time consumed in enrolment and factors in periods of leave.

To exemplify, refer the below table where the student is a full-time (F/T) PhD student engaging in a laboratory based research (high cost) and has access to \$2,000 per annum in Consumables funding. This example assumes the student has achieved candidacy within 6 months of enrolment commencement, and has not taken any leave for the period of enrolment.

Milestones	Funds which will be made available
At point of Candidacy Approval	\$2000
When student reaches 1 EFTSL* (equivalent of 1 year F/T enrolment)	\$2000
When student reaches 2 EFTSL* (equivalent of 2 year F/T enrolment)	\$2000
When student reaches 3 EFTSL* (equivalent of 3 year F/T enrolment)	\$2000

Funds are released monthly. This may not represent the exact date that the student reaches 1 EFTSL, but the closest possible.

3. How does a student deal with a variation to their budget?

The budget proposal provided at the candidacy application stage should be a projection of the usage of the HDR Student Consumables Allowance for the lifecycle of the project. Due to the uncertain nature of projects, it is anticipated that budgets will be revised as the need arises. Students will be required as part of the Annual Progress Report (APR) round held annually in February/March, to provide an updated budget detailing any projected changes in the way the HDR Student Consumables Allowance will be spent.

Should a **major variation** to the budget be necessary prior to the next APR round, students **MUST** consult with their Supervisors and seek approval prior to incurring the associated expenses. Broad discretion will be granted to the Supervisor to ensure that funding from the HDR Student Consumables Allowance is appropriately expended as per the guidelines. In such situations, the student should seek written approval from their supervisors. This record **must** be provided to the Graduate Research School to be stored on file. Financial Services staff will consult with the student's supervisor prior to releasing funding to the student in event of inconsistency.

8. Within this process, what is your role as Supervisor to a HDR student?

- Ensure that students are aware that the administrative changes made will not affect their entitlements regardless of which process they are subject to.
- Ensure that students apply to be reimbursed using the appropriate methods detailed above as per the date of their candidacy approval.
- Ensure that students are familiar with the *HDR Consumables – Reimbursable Items List*.
- Emphasise to students the importance of requesting written permission from their supervisor prior to incurring costs, where the student expects a substantive change in their budget.
- To be the first point of contact should Financial Services need to verify any discrepancies regarding student expenditure.

- f) Advise students, where relevant, of the internal cost associated with supporting them for the duration of enrolment. This cost will vary between laboratory and non-laboratory based students, and has been predetermined in consultation with the School's Business Manager. There is a section "*Internal Cost (School Funded)*" which addresses this within the budget template. It will be deducted from the HDR Consumables Allowance available to the student. If the internal costs exhaust all available funding to the student, the student should be made aware of this. Any surplus funds will then be made available to the student at appropriate milestones. This provides transparency in fund allocation.
- g) Ensure the student is clear that budgetary approval from the enrolling area is a reflection of the suitability of the budget proposed for the planned project, and not a financial undertaking of the enrolling area to resource the research project as stipulated within the budget.

9. What happens if the student does not utilise all the funds they have available for the calendar year?

The HDR Student Consumable Allowance will be "rolled over" from one year to the next. The student will be able to view their available balance using the *Concur* website or smartphone app.

10. Is there a minimum sum before a student can claim a reimbursement?

No, there is not.

11. How soon does the student need to claim a reimbursement?

The student must claim reimbursement within a year of the date that the expenditure was incurred.

12. Are funds still available if the student exceeds their Funded EFTSL Consumed (FEC) date?

Students can only make claims for expenditure incurred up till their FEC date or their submission date (whichever of the two comes first). The only allowable expenses outside this period which are claimable are for expenditure relating to thesis editing or binding. A grace period of 3 months beyond this date is granted for processing of outstanding expenses.

13. What are students reimbursed for?

Please refer to *HDR Consumables – Reimbursable Items List*.