



# **Westpac Future Leaders Scholarship**

## **2026 Funding Guidelines**

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## 1. Introduction to the Westpac Scholars Trust

*100 Scholarships a year, forever.*

We're committed to transforming the future of Australia by investing in a new generation of leaders with the passion and drive to bring big ideas to life.

Valued at over \$4M a year, we invest in 100 remarkable individuals with a genuine desire to reach their full potential and create a more sustainable, innovative, inclusive or globally connected Australia.

Scholarships are offered across five programs: Asian Exchange, Young Technologists, Social Change, Future Leaders and Research Fellowships. Beyond funding, our programs also offer leadership development opportunities, global experiences and access to a lifelong community (the W100).

Westpac Scholars are individuals who share a bold vision for Australia's future. They lead change, reimagine challenges and create innovations yet to be imagined - united by a commitment to contribute to something greater than themselves.

## 2. The Westpac Future Leaders Scholarship

### 2.1 Overview

*Supporting postgraduate students with the big ideas to shape Australia's future.*

The Westpac Future Leaders Scholarship supports Australia's emerging leaders through postgraduate education and research at one of Australia's leading universities, combined with a bespoke nine-month Leadership Development Program. Scholars also gain a global perspective, with opportunities for international experiences of up to six months.

Scholarship recipients will come from diverse backgrounds, united by their potential to make a meaningful contribution to Australia's future in one of our four focus areas:

<b>Sustainable Futures</b> Responding and adapting to climate change is one of the world's most urgent challenges. We want to accelerate innovative solutions to reduce Australia's environmental impact and build a more sustainable future.	<b>Australia in Asia-Pacific</b> The Asia Pacific is a dynamic and complex region deeply intertwined with Australia's future. We want to strengthen people to people connections and foster ideas beyond borders.
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<p><b>An Inclusive Country</b></p> <p>Our nation holds enough space for all Australians to be included. We want to back changemakers building resilient communities and overcoming social injustice.</p>	<p><b>Thriving Tech Sector</b></p> <p>Technology is intertwined with our future, and today's bold ideas will transform lives tomorrow. We want to back the next generation of innovators creating solutions to benefit all Australians.</p>
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Up to 17 scholarships, valued at up to \$120,000 each over two to three years, will be awarded in 2026 to support postgraduate coursework or research. Scholars must commence study with one of our nine university partners (see section 2.3).

Scholars will join the Westpac Scholars Network (W100) - a community of leaders, innovators and changemakers. Driven by scholars and supported by the Trust, the W100 offers ongoing opportunities for connection, leadership and collaboration across all five scholarship programs.

## 2.2 Scholarship Program

The scholarship program is valued at up to \$120,000 and includes:

- **Support For Your Study or Research**

The scholarship supports university course fees (for coursework applicants) and assists with living expenses for your study or research period so you can focus on your learning. Scholarship funding may also be used for domestic travel to attend conferences or undertake other fieldwork within Australia.

- **Leadership Development Program**

The nine-month Leadership Development Program supports you build on your strengths and develop leadership capabilities and networks to succeed in your field and beyond. It begins with a five-day immersive residential workshop in Sydney (15-19 February 2026) and with various online sessions and a second in-person residential (August 2026 TBC).

The program provides exposure to global thought leaders and explores topics aligned with the Trust's focus areas. Designed in collaboration with leading experts and Australian universities, it equips you to refine your vision, lead with presence and impact, and inspire others. Participation in the program is a compulsory component of holding a Westpac Future Leaders Scholarship.

- **International Experience**

Leadership requires the ability to see the world from diverse perspectives. This scholarship supports international experiences of up to six months to enrich your education, leadership development and research. Whether through research collaborations, short courses, conferences, internships or volunteering, these global experiences will help you build valuable networks, enhance your studies, and strengthen future career pathways.

- **Westpac 100 Scholars Network – W100**

Money can help launch a vision, but it takes a network to sustain it. Every Westpac Future Leaders Scholar joins the Westpac 100 Scholars Network (W100) - a growing community of over 930 scholars, expanding by 100 each year across five scholarship programs. The W100 connects bold thinkers and changemakers committed to shaping a better future for all Australians.

- **2026 Westpac Scholars Summit – Late March**

All 100 Westpac Scholars from our five scholarship programs will come together in Sydney in late March 2026 to participate in tailored workshops, hear from business and academic luminaries, and form connections with fellow scholars. It is compulsory to attend the Summit.

For more information on the funding inclusions, please see section [8. Scholarship Budget Guidelines](#).

## **2.3 Participating Universities**

The Westpac Future Leaders Scholarship program is offered at the following universities:

- Australian National University
- Monash University
- Adelaide University
- The University of Melbourne
- The University of Queensland
- The University of Sydney
- University of New South Wales
- University of Western Australia
- University of Tasmania

## **2.4 Funding Priorities**

Successful applicants will need to be able to demonstrate how their proposed study plan will contribute to the future growth and prosperity of Australia in at least one of the following priority areas:

- An Inclusive Country
- Australia in Asia-Pacific
- Sustainable Futures
- Thriving Tech Sector

## **2.5 Funding Period**

Funding is available to commence in 2026 for the following maximum periods (inclusive of an international experience of up to 6 months):

- Masters by Coursework – program must be completed within 2 years.
- Masters by Research – program must be completed within 3 years.
- PhD – program must be completed within 4 years.

### 3. Eligibility Criteria

- You must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident.
- You must have completed your first undergraduate degree from 2020 onwards or will complete your degree by 31 December 2025.
- Are on track to achieve, an average result of H1 or H2A or equivalent – approx. 75 WAM.
- You have chosen to undertake a full-time Masters by Coursework or Research, or a PhD at one of the nine Partner universities for the Westpac Future Leaders Scholarship.
- For PhD and Masters by Research applicants only, a Letter of Support is required from your university from your supervisor, Dean of the Faculty or Head of School or equivalent.
- For PhD and Masters by Research applicants only, you'll need to demonstrate how the university is well positioned to support your research project and their research excellence in the field (questions in application form address this).
- You must commence postgraduate study in 2026 (by 30 June). Current students are not eligible to apply.
- For Masters by Coursework applicants only, you must not have already completed a graduate certificate or diploma in the same area of study where you will receive credit.
- You may have completed another Masters by Coursework program in a different area of study.
- Medical and Juris Doctor programs or equivalent are excluded from the Future Leaders Scholarship.
- Your proposed program of study must contribute to the future of Australia in one of the Trust's priority funding areas.
- Your proposed program of study must include international opportunities which will develop your leadership skills and global networks, such as study tours for the purpose of research, attending a short course or conference, an internship or volunteering.
- Masters by Coursework programs must be completed within 2 years, including the global experience.
- You must supply two letters of reference, one academic reference and one personal reference.
- Should your application progress to the final stage, you must attend the National Assessment Centre in person in Sydney on 3-4 December (domestic travel paid for by Westpac Scholars Trust).
- If successful, you must attend the Leadership Development Program Sydney Residential, 15-19 February 2026, and the Westpac Scholars' Summit (late March 2026), both held in Sydney, plus a final residential likely to be held in August or September 2026; and
- If successful, you are not permitted to hold additional scholarships, with the exception of the Research Training Program Scholarship (RTP) or equivalent or an equity-based scholarship.

#### 4. Selection Criteria

Selection is based on academic achievement, leadership potential, a clear vision for the future and alignment with one or more of the Trust's priority areas. Successful candidates will demonstrate:

- Academic excellence and community contributions to date.
- Ability to articulate how their proposed program of study has the potential to contribute to the future growth and prosperity of Australia in one of the Trust's priority funding areas.
- A desire to be part of and contribute to the Westpac 100 Scholars Network.
- Strong leadership potential and alignment with the attributes of a Westpac Future Leaders Scholar (see Appendix A); and
- A strong connection to Australia and a demonstrated commitment to shaping its future.

#### 5. Selection Process

The selection process is a comprehensive approach that draws on a range of assessment tools and the expertise of selection panels within the Westpac Scholars Trust, participating universities and a National Selection Panel. This may be subject to change.

##### **Stage 1: First round shortlisting – Westpac Scholars Trust shortlisting**

Westpac Scholars Trust to assess all applications for eligibility and quality.

##### **Stage 2: University shortlisting**

Each university's selection panel will assess applications and select a total of 34 finalists nationally (typically 4 per university partner).

##### **Stage 3: Online Korn Ferry Evaluation & Submit Video**

Finalists will be invited to complete an online self-assessment with Korn Ferry to help evaluate their alignment with the Westpac Future Leaders Scholarship. They will also be asked to record a short online video (a brief will be provided). These elements, along with the written application, CV, references and university nomination form, will be provided to the National Selection Panel.

##### **Stage 4: National Assessment Centre – 3-4 December**

34 finalists will be invited to attend the National Assessment Centre in Sydney to be interviewed by a National Selection Panel. The National Selection Panel will comprise 10 senior industry, academic and research representatives, who will select up to 17 Westpac Future Leaders Scholars for 2026. Applicants will attend on either 3 or 4 of December 2025.

The Westpac Scholars Trust will notify all finalists of the National Selection Panel outcome by mid-December 2025.

## 6. Key Dates

1 July 2025	Applications open.
6 August 1 – 2pm AEST	Online information webinar.
27 August 2025	Applications close 5:00pm AEST.
1 – 5 September 2025	Westpac Scholars Trust shortlisting.
8 September – 13 October 2025	University shortlisting.
16 October 2025	Shortlisted applicants invited to attend the Assessment Centre. Unsuccessful applicants notified of outcome.
20 October 2025	Applicants progressing to National Assessment Centre invited to complete Korn Ferry Assessment and online video.
3 – 4 December 2025	National Assessment Centre, Sydney. All shortlisted applicants will be required to attend an interview in Sydney. The Westpac Scholars Trust will nominate which date candidates will attend and advise of date allocated when finalists are selected. Domestic travel and accommodation costs will be covered by the Westpac Scholars Trust. Attendance in person is compulsory.
Mid–December 2025	Notification of Scholarship recipients and unsuccessful applicants.
15 – 19 February 2026	Westpac Scholars Leadership Development Program (Session 1 in Sydney).
Late-March 2026	Westpac Scholars' Summit in Sydney.
August 2026 (TBC)	Westpac Scholars Leadership Development Program (Session 2 - over 4 days).

## 7. Application Form

All applications must be submitted through Westpac Scholars Trust's online application system. A link will be [here](#) when applications launch on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025.

Supporting documentation required as part of the online application:

- Your CV of no more than two pages.
- Certified copy of all university academic transcripts.
- Letter of Support from your university (for PhD and Masters by Research applicants only) from your supervisor, the Dean of the Faculty or Head of School or equivalent using the template located on the Westpac Scholars Trust website (templates will be available via the Westpac Scholars Trust website when applications open on 1 July 2025).



- Two references are required using the reference templates which are located on the Westpac Scholars Trust website:
  - The first is an **Academic Reference** and needs to be completed by a person who is familiar with your academic record and understands the importance of your study program.
  - The second is a **Personal Reference** and needs to be completed by a person who can demonstrate that you have the attributes of a Westpac Scholar. This can be a previous work colleague or manager, however, should not be a family member or a person who currently or previously reported directly to you. At the time of the application, you must have known this person for a minimum of two years.

You may be required to present proof of citizenship or permanent residency at any time during the selection process.

## 8. Scholarship Budget Guidelines

The Westpac Future Leaders Scholarship will provide funding of up to \$120,000 to support study, research, global experience and access to the bespoke Leadership Development Program. The value of your proposed program of study or research may be less than \$120,000 and will depend on the type of course or research program.

You are required to prepare a draft scholarship budget as part of your application. If your application is successful, the university where you will be taking up your study or research will work with you to finalise your budget.

Although most costs are covered by the Westpac Future Leaders Scholarship, the scholarship specifically excludes the following:

- Bench fees or the costs of scientific equipment or similar academic resources. The Trust expects such core costs to be covered by the university; and
- Costs not directly related to studies (e.g. gym membership, professional association fees, fees for patent applications, costs of dependents, mobile phones).

The scholarship budget may include the following components (excluding GST):

Item	Description	Requirement
Leadership Development Program	This is a mandatory component of the scholarship (refer to section 2.2 Scholarship Program). Costs include course fee, travel and accommodation for the residential components.	\$12,000, year 1 only.
University course fees	University course fees vary for different types of courses. You should see the participating university website for fee information.	University fees must be no more than 80% of your total scholarship budget.

Personal stipend	Annual living allowance equal to the Research Training Program (RTP) for a maximum of 2 years Refer to <a href="#">Department of Education website</a> .	Masters by Coursework applicants only.
RTP top-up	Annual living allowance to supplement your RTP. Refer to <a href="#">Department of Education website</a> .	Masters by Research and PhD applicants only  Valued at 75% of the RTP. Note this is a top-up to the RTP received.  E.g. 75% of \$33,511 = \$25,133 (in addition to the RTP received).
Conference and short course fees	Fees related to attending and/or presenting at conferences and short courses that support your proposed field of study or research. Excluding travel and accommodation costs.	Convert to AUD at rate prevailing at date of application.
Equipment and consumables	Laptop, printer, specialist software for data capture and analysis, textbooks etc. based on prices at time of application.	
Travel	Travel costs reasonably associated with your proposed research and international experience e.g. economy airfares, travel, accommodation, visa costs, childcare, insurance, etc.	Must be no more than \$50,000 of your total scholarship budget.
Publication and dissemination costs	Costs reasonably associated with disseminating project outputs.	Must be no more than 2% of your total scholarship budget.
Childcare	Childcare costs reasonably associated with completing studies.	

## Appendix A - Westpac Future Leaders Scholar Attributes

We are looking for people who possess the following attributes. This is a comprehensive list, and successful candidates may not have all of these. Applicants will be assessed on the demonstration of these attributes throughout the selection process.

Attribute	Definition
<b>Collaborative Team Player</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive, readily shares skills and information with others.</li> <li>• Identifies opportunities to work with others, and leverages different skills, for common goals.</li> <li>• Helps others to achieve.</li> </ul>
<b>Comfortable with Complexity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can identify issues quickly and has the ability to draw linkages and root causes introducing new ways of looking at problems.</li> <li>• In determining the way forward, thinks laterally and considers different perspectives in developing the approach and the solution and tolerates a degree of risk.</li> </ul>
<b>Connected Communicator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can clearly communicate their ideas to diverse groups of people.</li> <li>• Can translate complex ideas into simple concepts.</li> <li>• Can adapt own style to better connect with others.</li> <li>• Attentive listener who seeks to understand and relate to others.</li> </ul>
<b>Driven to Succeed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets high standards and strives for excellence and positive results.</li> <li>• Can make things happen and achieves results in a manner that doesn't have negative impacts on their team or stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<b>Emotionally Intelligent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands their own strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>• Is aware of their impact on others and ensure their behaviour creates a positive culture and environment.</li> <li>• Insightful and reflective.</li> <li>• Willing to take on feedback and suggestions from others, including advice on development and growth.</li> </ul>
<b>Exercises Good Judgment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has ability to determine and focus on what is most important and impactful.</li> <li>• Analytical, thorough and detailed.</li> <li>• Takes in information from all perspectives before drawing conclusions.</li> <li>• Thinks outside of own discipline, maintains a vision of the big picture.</li> </ul>
<b>Resilient</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When faced with obstacles and setbacks, perseveres, remains optimistic, committed and focused.</li> <li>• Courageous and confident to take on challenges.</li> <li>• Willing to go outside of their comfort zone, they remain calm and lead with clarity and empathy.</li> </ul>
<b>Thought Leader</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future focused.</li> <li>• Uses knowledge and insights to promote the advancement of their work and inspire others.</li> <li>• Encourages diverse thinking to promote and nurture innovation.</li> <li>• Balances analytical and creative inputs to generate innovative ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>Values Diversity &amp; Openness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamentally believes in the strategic advantage of diversity and actively encourages a culture of open expression of diverse ideas and opinions.</li> <li>• Interested in and respectful of people with different backgrounds and ideas to their own.</li> <li>• Has empathy and concern for the wellbeing and welfare of others and fosters such culture.</li> </ul>