



Why become a Pearl sponsor?

Neuroscience Research Australia's recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. 30th anniversaries are associated with the pearl. We consider our PhD students - the next generation of neuroscientists - our PhD Pearls and we invite you to support one.

These are the students who will find the answers to dementia, healthy ageing, mental illnesses and more. These are the students who will ensure that the brain health problems of today are not the health problems of tomorrow.

A doctorate by research or a PhD is the highest level of study offered in Australia. A PhD requires conception and management of a three-to-four year, self-directed research project, and submission of a thesis assessed by examiners who determine whether your research is worthy of the qualification.

A PhD student must show through their thesis that they have made a significant and unique contribution to their field.

Please read on to find out why making a philanthropic pledge to help your own PhD Pearl will be so rewarding.

To discuss, contact: Lauren Moore | 02 9399 1093

'I'm expanding the frontiers of human knowledge by doing a PhD. I'm making how we understand the world better than before. Isn't that just the coolest thing?'

- Simon



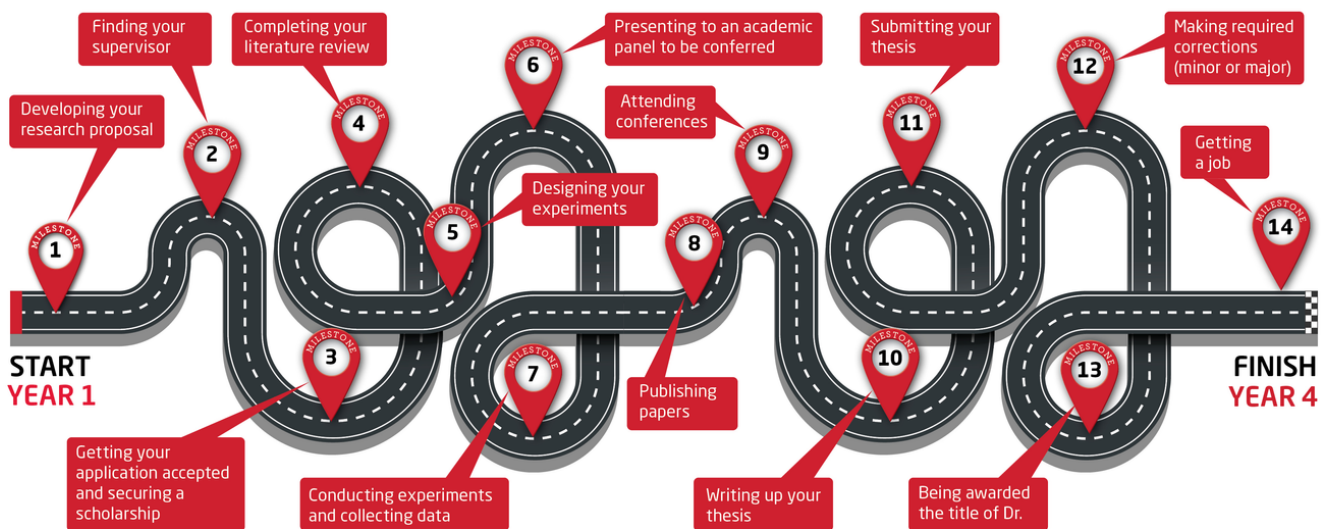
UNSW
SYDNEY



Health
South Eastern Sydney
Local Health District

The PhD Pilgrim's Progress

The pathway of a PhD candidate is not linear. You encounter many milestones to clear, ups and downs, unplanned directions and wrong turns. And the challenges are immense:



FINANCIAL

Students vie to secure a scholarship, usually from the Government's Research Training Program, which is worth \$35,000. The scholarship is only for three years, not four.

To survive, students need to take a variety of part-time or casual jobs but often have no time to do so.

Some students have children to support and/or elderly parents.

Students need to be preparing to secure a job at the time they are embarking on writing their thesis. This is impossible, so it tends to take them a long time once the thesis is finished to find a job.

'I see myself falling behind all my friends on the earnings ladder. I'm on such a tight budget and there's no margin for error if I incur an unexpected cost. It's really scary.'

- Mae Ling

MENTAL

Although every PhD student has one or more supervisors, their research needs to be self-directed and self-sustained through four years (on average).

Extraordinary mental fitness, confidence and research creativity is required to initiate, plan, implement and deliver the research project over this time to the highest academic standards.

The focus is on designing experiments to address your research question and recording and analysing their outcomes. This often means assembling and managing complex numerical datasets.

Finding the right supervisor(s) is key but really hard. This can make or break your later research career.

'You will never stretch your brain like a PhD forces you to. You are the captain of the ship with no crew, and have to bring it into port.'

- Richard

EMOTIONAL

Up to 40% of PhD students globally are undertaking their PhD in a foreign country. They must adapt to being a world away from family, friends and support, as well as huge cultural differences.

Mental health is a significant problem amongst PhDs. A 2019 Nature survey of 6,300 reported 36% had sought help for anxiety and depression. A UK survey of 50,000 found 86% reported anxiety.

'The critical success factor for a PhD is resilience to failure. Your research never goes according to plan. Everyone at some point just cries their eyes out.'

- Sophie

'I was a Faculty member at my university in Bangladesh and needed a PhD to progress. I relocated to Sydney, leaving my wife and family behind. The first year was very hard, it's a very different culture and I had never done research this way.'

- Mohamed



Our PhD Program

Our PhD students are enrolled in their degree through the University of New South Wales and undertake their study at NeuRA.

We attract the very best and brightest, with first class Honours and University Medals, because we have full-time researchers as supervisors, excellent research facilities and through this PhD Pearls program provide that extra support to help a student succeed.

The intake each year is unpredictable but at any given time our research leaders are supervising and supporting a total of around 50 PhD students.

'When I published my first paper in my second year, I felt so proud - I thought this is my legacy, and it is unique to me.'

- Karine

'I face a 2.5 hour commute each way every day to join my research group at NeuRA, so I can't take a job and the NeuRA top-up is how I survive.'

- Bao

'I am 41. I have two kids in private school, a mortgage and am running clinical trials as part of my studies. The NeuRA top-up helps keep me afloat.'

- Romana

'The ability to travel during my PhD, thanks to the top-up, was a great bonus. I was able to study in Norway, the UK, the US and Canada.'

- Aidan

The Essential NeuRA Top-Up Package

- To be accepted at NeuRA, each student must have secured a competitive scholarship as a mark of excellence, but this is not sufficient for them to live on in Sydney.
- To ensure the student can maximise their time at NeuRA rather than working one or more part-time jobs to survive, we top-up their scholarship each year. This top-up package of support helps to meet their living expenses. It also funds the purchase of a laptop, participation in and travel to conferences and provides for some research costs.



Additional ways we support our PhD students

- We provide an active network of mental and emotional support for our PhD students. With over 250 members of the research community, NeuRA is small enough to still feel like a family; but big enough to offer a wide variety of multidisciplinary expertise and world-class research facilities to draw on.
- Our supervisors are experienced researchers and first-class.
- PhD students form part of the early-to-mid career research body and join a collegiate environment where there is always someone ready to help.
- They present their work to the rest of the NeuRA research community at the midpoint and end of their studies.



'My relationship with my supervisor has been absolutely critical to my success. She has not only supported my studies, but helped me position myself and complete publications.'

- Miranda

'At NeuRA I'm surrounded by like-minded people; I can ask for help with IT or statistics; we have nice workspaces. I know of students elsewhere who are hot-desking and lucky to see their supervisor once a month.'

- Hugh

'I've been a PhD student through COVID-19. I run a clinical trial as part of my research: that's been completely disrupted, but my colleagues have helped me pivot.'

- Adrita

Adopt a PhD Pearl

To show your commitment to supporting neuroscience research, please consider sponsoring a NeuRA PhD Pearl to provide their critical top-up package of support.

By committing to a four-year, tax-deductible philanthropic pledge of \$15,000 per year, you will be joining a special, far-sighted group of philanthropists who choose to invest in moulding the next generation of neuroscientists and make a meaningful contribution to their lives and future impact on the world.



How the program works

- You will be matched with a specially selected student. We will provide you with a profile of your student and progress updates, and facilitate a meaningful ongoing personal relationship between you.
- You will have at least two opportunities to meet face to face each year: one 'in the lab' and one at the annual 'Three-Minute Thesis' presentation which will be given by all the students to their benefactors.
- There is opportunity for you to name your support if you wish: 'The X Scholar', using your own name, a company name or in memory of a loved one.
- Your support will be acknowledged by your student in any publications or conference presentations throughout their time with NeuRA.
- Should you wish to mentor/coach your student in areas of relevance to their future career which sit outside of science and medicine, there is opportunity to do so: for example, public speaking, presentation skills, commercialisation, leadership.

Note: The actual number of PhD students commencing each year varies. Should we be unable to match you with a first year student (which is our preference), we will match you with a student who has already commenced their PhD at NeuRA but we will ensure you always have a Pearl to support over the duration of your four-year pledge.