

FAQ for PhD Pearls



Eligibility requirements

1. You must be enrolled through UNSW and studying full-time.
2. You must be undertaking your PhD studies at NeuRA, with a NeuRA researcher as your Primary or Joint Supervisor.
3. You must not be in receipt of additional awards, scholarships or a salary that provides a benefit greater than 75% of the main UNSW RTP stipend (\$35,000 in 2023).
4. You must not be in receipt of other internal NeuRA Supplementary Scholarships valued at \$10,000 or more.
5. You may hold an external supplementary scholarship so long as the total scholarship is less than \$40,000 p.a.
6. You must be committed to meeting the engagement and reporting requirements of the program, as outlined in this document.

Benefits of becoming a PhD Pearl

PhD students are supported by relatively meager scholarships that are insufficient to cover the costs of living, especially in expensive cities such as Sydney. To survive PhD students typically seek additional part-time or casual employment to supplement their scholarships but often have no time to do so because of the requirements of their study program. NeuRA's PhD Pearl program aims to provide a top-up package of support for four years to enable full-time PhD students to focus on their research, without the added workload of supplementary paid employment. We also hope to provide financial support by including an allowance for training and attending conferences.

In addition to the financial benefits, as a NeuRA PhD Pearl, you will have the opportunity to form a mentoring relationship with the Pearl benefactor. Pearl sponsors are often people who have achieved success in business, with skills and knowledge to share, as well as professional networking opportunities. In addition, there will be opportunities for PhD Pearls to develop their skills in public speaking with the annual symposium, as well as video production to produce brief progress updates for sponsors.

What's involved in being a PhD Pearl

Submit an application

PhD students are encouraged to [apply via the online form](#). Lauren from the fundraising team will be in contact once the application has been received and create a one-page introductory bio based on your application.

Meet the Philanthropy Team

Liaise with the philanthropy team for a brief, informal meeting onsite at NeuRA so we can get to know you and consider which sponsor might suit your research area.

Meet your Pearl Sponsor

The philanthropy team will arrange a time and place for you to meet with your sponsor for an initial introductory meeting, followed by an annual, in-person catch-up. A member of the philanthropy team will be present to help facilitate the meeting.

Provide a video update

We may ask you to provide a brief progress update or a thank you video at some stage. With support from the fundraising team this will be an opportunity for PhDs to learn how to create a brief high-quality video and practice speaking to camera.

Showcase your project at the symposium

At the end of each year NeuRA fundraising team will host a symposium to showcase the PhDs projects. It will include a selection of students presenting research posters and three-minute thesis (3MT) presentations, and an opportunity for Pearls to meet with their sponsors.

Naming

Donors can ask for the PhD Pearl to be a named scholar for the duration of the sponsorship. If the donor requests naming this will be outlined in your confirmation letter.

Pearl funding

As a NeuRA PhD Pearl, you will receive \$5,000 of top-up funding each year through your payroll account, replacing the \$5,000 NeuRA top-up. The NeuRA top-up is there to help with everyday living expenses, such as food, transportation, and accommodation.

NeuRA PhD Pearls will receive an additional \$4,500 research and training allowance each year to be used for equipment, training, and travel to conferences, etc. The research allowance will be deposited into your supervisor's account after your benefactor's gift has been received and the funding transfer has been approved by the board. These funds can be used to purchase equipment, pay for training, and to travel to conferences, etc. Individual equipment items purchased such as laptops will be gifted to you upon completion of your studies.

The Pearl funding also includes a small contribution towards the costs of fundraising and research support.

Changes to enrolment status

If your enrollment status temporarily changes to part-time candidature, or if you take a leave of absence or other forms of longer-term leave, your Pearl funding will be paused, and your Pearl program commitments will cease until your studies are resumed.

Contacting your sponsor

For privacy reasons, the fundraising team cannot provide a donor's personal contact information to PhD Pearls. If Pearls and sponsors wish to exchange contact information that is fine, but the fundraising team's relationship manager will generally facilitate correspondence. There will be opportunities for you to meet with your sponsor throughout the year.