

## The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation Master's Research Award

*Established by the University of Otago in 2025, to formalise an award created in partnership with The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation in 2022. This award seeks to support up to four research Master's students each year undertaking ecological research as part of the thesis component of their degree. With a maximum total value of \$10,000 per recipient, intended to help meet research expenses, the award is generously funded by The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation.*

*Leslie Hutchins DCNSM OBE JP (1924-2003) set up The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation as a charitable trust in 1994, inspired by his lifelong passion for nature conservation and a strong desire to pass on the torch. He was a member of both the National Parks & Reserves Authority of New Zealand and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and was also a Guardian of Lakes Manapouri, Monowai, and Te Anau. He devoted his life to ensuring as many people as possible could enjoy New Zealand's southern parks and conservation areas through his dedicated volunteer efforts and astute tourism operating ventures.*

### **Eligibility**

Applicants must be:

- a New Zealand citizen or Residence Class Visa Holder
- enrolled in a research Master's degree featuring
  - a core ecological or conservation objective, and
  - research within, or focussed on, any of the following regions (or surrounding areas):
    - a. Southland (including the Fiordland National Park World Heritage Area)
    - b. Coastal and/or Central Otago
    - c. Stewart Island
    - d. the Sub-Antarctic Islands within New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone
- preparing to undertake the thesis component of their degree.

### **Application Process**

Every application for this award must be submitted to Student Administration (Scholarships) at the University of Otago by the specified closing date.

Every applicant must submit:

- a completed application form, including
  - (i) an affirmation that the applicant:
    - will obtain (or has obtained) ethics approval for their thesis project, if relevant
    - will consult (or has consulted) with local or affected hapori Māori
  - (ii) a short, written statement outlining:
    - the main proposition of their thesis
    - the geographical focus of their thesis
    - the specific ecological or conservation issues their thesis will address
    - the reasonable expenses they expect to incur undertaking their research, such as travel and accommodation costs, childcare fees, the cost of research-related equipment and consumables, and payment for research assistants, supported by any estimates, quotes or invoices they are able to provide

- a work plan detailing when they expect to complete their thesis (if enrolled part-time)
- an academic reference letter
- an academic transcript for any study undertaken at another tertiary institution.

### ***Selection Process***

The Selection Panel will consist of the following members (or their nominees):

- three senior academic staff appointed by the Director of the Ecology Programme, who in most cases will be the Heads of Department for Botany, Marine Science and Zoology, and
- the Director, Development and Alumni Relations.

The Head of the School of Geography and the Head of Department for Geology (or their nominees) may also be called upon to participate in the Selection Panel, in place of one of the other Panel members, but generally only when Geography or Geology research Master's students are amongst the applicants.

The Selection Panel shall consult with the Donor about the final selection of recipients.

The following factors shall be considered in assessing applications for this award:

- the applicant's tertiary academic record and achievements
- the degree of threat faced by the organisms, ecology or natural environment being studied, and consequent need for research of the kind proposed by the applicant
- the potential for the applicant's research to contribute to the scientific understanding of the organisms, ecology or natural environment being studied
- the potential for the applicant's research to have a positive impact on the organisms, ecology or natural environment being studied.

The Selection Panel may require an interview with short-listed applicants for this award.

### ***Financial***

- This award is intended to help cover research-related costs, and will normally be granted to (up to) four recipients each year.
- The maximum total value of the award (per recipient) will be \$10,000, from a total available fund pool (per annum) of \$30,000.
- No funds awarded to an applicant will be released by the Donor without prior confirmation that ethics approval for the applicant's thesis project (if required) has been obtained, and that hapori Māori consultation has been duly undertaken.
- The University will hold the award funds on behalf of recipients, and directly apply the funds to research costs for recipients when incurred.
- Where the recipient pays for reasonable research costs out of their own pocket, some or all of those costs may (in consultation with the University) be reimbursed to the student from the total funding granted to them under this award.
- Any variation to the number and value of awards available each year will be a matter for determination by the Selection Panel.

### ***Tenure***

- Tenure will be concurrent with the thesis component of the recipient's research Master's programme.
- The award will normally be held with full-time tenure, but may also be held with part-time tenure provided the applicant submits a work plan with their application detailing when they expect to complete their thesis.
- The award must be taken up within one year of being granted.
- The award may be held concurrently with any other University of Otago scholarship where its regulations also allow co-tenure.

### ***Other Requirements***

- Conferral of this award is dependent on the recipient being admitted to the University of Otago.
- The University of Otago reserves the right to use the names, photographs, and details of successful applicants for advertising and publicity. Award holders must agree to be reasonably available to participate in interviews and promotional activities if requested by the University of Otago.
- Recipients will be expected to share their research findings via a presentation (in person or online) at a meeting of the Trustees of The Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation.