



## Postgraduate Research Culture Excellence Award

Applications are invited from departments, faculties, schools or centres for the annual *University of Otago Postgraduate Research Culture Excellence Award*.

Applications close at **5 pm on Monday, 30 September, 2019**.

### Purpose

The purpose of the annual *University of Otago Postgraduate Research Culture Excellence Award* is to recognise and celebrate positive, creative, supportive and vibrant research communities developed by departments or faculties or schools or centres (henceforth referred to simply as ‘departments’) for their postgraduate research students.

### Background and rationale

The particular culture (‘the way we do things around here’ or ‘the rules of the game’) of a place, while amorphous in some respects, has real and tangible effects, either negative or positive depending on various factors. An excellent postgraduate research culture in a department assists in attracting high calibre research students and in nurturing, supporting and recognising research students, which naturally has benefits for the wider University too.

According to Kiley (2005), “belonging to a research community or being immersed in a research culture can have many benefits for students, the discipline, the university and the broader Australian [New Zealand] society. The benefits include timely completion, development of skills, and the preparation of future academics.”

Fostering a world-class experience for thesis students is part of achieving research excellence, one of the University’s strategic imperatives. The *Postgraduate Research Culture Excellence Award* supports the University’s objectives of continuing “to take decisive steps to advance our research culture and ethos”, providing an “attractive, supportive environment for research students”, and recognising and celebrating “outstanding success in research”. The Award also feeds into both the University’s vision of being a “research-led University with an international reputation for excellence” and part of its mission statement of building on a foundation of “unique campus learning environments”.

## The Award

The Award is an annual one and comprises a framed official certificate and a rotating trophy (to be returned each year to the University so that it can be awarded to the following year's winner).

There are two categories:

- (1) Large departments: for departments comprising 30 or more postgraduate research students (EFTS); and
- (2) Small departments: for departments comprising fewer than 30 postgraduate research students (EFTS).

Recognition and publicity will be the primary reward for a winning department, in addition to the inherent benefits mentioned above of a positive postgraduate research culture. Winning departments will be encouraged to display their framed certificate and award in a prominent place in their departments in addition to making mention of it on their websites, social media and other marketing material.

To share good practices across the wider University community, winning departments will be expected to provide a presentation to the wider University community on their particular approach to developing a positive postgraduate research culture.

There will be a two-year stand down period after winning the award, i.e. a department may apply again in the third year following an award being made. For example, if a department receives the 2016 award, they may apply again in the 2019 round.

## Application process

Departments are invited to submit applications using the prescribed cover form (attached). Together with the prescribed cover form, applications must include a portfolio of evidence drawing on the previous three years of activity. The portfolio must include, but not necessarily be limited to, discussion of the following:

1. Pre-arrival and orientation practices
2. Supervision and research support practices
3. Student participation in research activities (e.g., publication, conferences, journal clubs, departmental seminars/forums), including student-led initiatives such as peer-support groups
4. Social activities for students
5. Evaluative data for the postgraduate experience such as the University's Student and Graduate Opinion Surveys, departmental surveys, student testimonials, and informal feedback
6. Other evidence (e.g., celebratory activities, completion rates)

*At least the first five criteria should be addressed in the application, with no more than one page for each criterion.*

Applications should be submitted electronically to [dean.grs@otago.ac.nz](mailto:dean.grs@otago.ac.nz). Any queries should be directed to the Dean of the Graduate Research School, Professor Rachel Spronken-Smith.

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## Selection

The Graduate Research Committee, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) will assess applications. In addition to the usual members of the Graduate Research Committee, the Chair will co-opt two postgraduate students each from the two winning departments from the previous year.

Note that departments successful in gaining an award must wait a period of two years before being eligible to apply again.

### References:

- **Kiley, M.** 2005. *Engaging students in doctoral communities*. Paper presented at the Engaging Communities, Australian Universities Quality Framework Conference, 6 – 8 July, Sydney.
- **Kiley, M.** 2011. *Assessing research culture for higher degree by research (HDR) students in your school/research group*. Material presented at the Providing Quality Postgraduate Supervision Workshop, University of Otago.
- **Tustin, C. & Gallop, C.** 2012. *Getting the most out of your department*. In *Doctorates Downunder: Keys to successful doctoral study in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*, edited by Denholm, C. & Evans, T. Acer Press, Camberwell.

# University of Otago Postgraduate Research Culture Award Application Cover Form

Department/Centre/School/Faculty (circle the appropriate one): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Head of Department/Centre/School/Faculty\*: \_\_\_\_\_  
(\*applications from individual laboratories cannot be accepted)

Postgraduate research student\* EFTS over the last three years:  
(\*research students: those enrolled in a programme which includes a research component (i.e. dissertation or thesis) of at least 40 points)

Year	Number of PhD candidates	Number of Master's research candidates	Number of other postgraduate research candidates (e.g., Honours, coursework Masters (where applicable etc.))
2019			
2018			
2017			

Date of application: \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly explain (no more than 200 words) the **nature** of the postgraduate research culture in your department:

As a **separate attachment** to this cover form, please address at least the first five criteria, with no more than one page (single-sided) for each criterion. Font size should be at least 11 and single spacing is permitted. Appendices (up to 10 pages in total) can be used to attach supporting evidence.

Applications should be submitted **electronically** to [dean.grs@otago.ac.nz](mailto:dean.grs@otago.ac.nz). Any queries should be directed to the Dean of the Graduate Research School, Professor Rachel Spronken-Smith.

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