

# NATIONAL ASTHMA RESEARCH PROGRAM

## PHD SCHOLARSHIP: APPLICANT GUIDE

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## General information for Applicants

Over the past ten years the Asthma Australia National Asthma Research Program has resulted in significant contributions to important discovery science, clinical, and population health research projects, as well as PhD Scholarships and research fellowships to promote emerging researchers in the field.

Asthma Australia invites PhD applicants whose research project relates to people with asthma, to apply for Asthma Australia PhD Scholarships.

Applicants for Asthma Australia's PhD scholarship must:

- Be undertaking their PhD in Australia.
- Be supervised by a senior researcher in a NHMRC registered research institution.
- Have not already completed a PhD
- Have applied for a PhD program at their chosen institution. If successful for Asthma Australia's PhD scholarship funding will be made available after the application for admission has been accepted and the candidate has enrolled.

Please refer to the advertisement for specific eligibility requirements.

### Submission process

- Applications should be submitted to [research@asthma.org.au](mailto:research@asthma.org.au). Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.
- Applications must include
  - Completed application form
  - Completed consumer review form
  - Academic transcript
- Applicants must provide their supervisor the supervisor report to complete and submit to [research@asthma.org.au](mailto:research@asthma.org.au).
- Applications must be lodged electronically in Microsoft Windows Word or PDF format, using the application form. Applications not received in this format will not be accepted.
- Files should be no larger than 1mb in size
- Left margin should be at least 2.5cm with content aligned text left
- Font (body) should be Calibri 11 point
- Applications should be in one document (e.g. PDF), and named as follows: SURNAME OF APPLICANT\_PHD\_YEAR

### Reporting expectations

If successful, applicants will provide 6 monthly progress reports to Asthma Australia. Progress reports will include:

- Any changes to the research,
- Any issues or delays which might impact the completion of the project,
- Progress against key milestones,
- Outcomes, and
- Publications, presentations, collaborations and additional funding which have arisen as a result of the research.

These should be provided in language appropriate for a lay audience.

**Affiliation and acknowledgment**

Successful applicants must ensure (wherever possible) Asthma Australia's contribution and support of the Project is acknowledged in publications or presentations related to the research.

## Assessment Process

### Eligibility

Applications are assessed for their eligibility by Asthma Australia staff.

Eligible applications will undergo assessment by:

- 2 x Peer reviews from Asthma Australia’s Research Advisory Committee or delegate/s
- 1 x Consumer Review

All applications are assessed against standardised assessment criteria which are described in this document. Applicants will receive a score out of 100 for both peer review and consumer reviews.

### Peer Review

Peer reviewers assess applications on the extent to which they address the criteria below. Applications will be assessed against the domains described on the following pages. While the described domains provide peer reviewers with some benchmarks for appropriately scoring each application, **it is not essential that all descriptors relating to a given score are met.** The category descriptors are a guide to a ‘best fit’ outcomes. Peer reviewers will consistently refer to these described domains to ensure thorough equitable and transparent assessment of applications.

Peer Review Categories	Weight
Academic record and research achievement	40%
Quality and feasibility of the research proposal	20%
Impact	20%
Research environment and supervisor	20%

### Consumer review

Consumer reviewers assess applications on the extent to which they address the domains described below. Applicants are asked to complete a Consumer Review Form which the consumers will use in reviewing applications. Like peer reviewers, consumer reviewers are provided with benchmarks for appropriately scoring each application against the given domains, but **it is not essential that all descriptors relating to a given score are met.** The described domains are a guide to a ‘best fit’ outcomes.

Consumer Review Categories	Weight
Impact	25%
Equity	25%
Translation	25%
Consumer Centred	25%

## Application Guide

### Academic record and research achievement (40%)

This section should detail the applicant’s academic record and other achievements, which demonstrate the applicant’s suitability for this scholarship. Reviewers will assess the applicant’s academic transcript, supervisor’s report and responses to the following sections:

- Medals, prizes and awards
- Publications and presentations
- Broader community engagement or relevant industry experience/work history.

Reviewers will consider this section relative to opportunity (see peer review guide).

### The Project (quality and feasibility) (20%)

This section should clearly demonstrate the need and rationale behind the research, aims and objectives, scientific quality of the methodology, expected outcomes, timeframes and feasibility of the research. In the outline of the research proposal, applicants should address the following:

1. Background of the research including the need for the proposed research proposal.
2. Aims, objectives and hypothesis
3. Methods, techniques and analyses that will be used for the research
4. Identification of potential risks or anticipated challenges , as well as how these will be addressed
5. Expected outcomes of the research
6. Timelines of the research project
7. Feasibility

### Impact (25%)

This section relates to the potential knowledge gain about asthma, proposed impact on people with asthma, potential impact of the research for the applicant’s career, steps to translation or application of the research, and how the research will address Asthma Australia’s research priority area/s.

Applicants should consider and address the following in each section:

Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The potential impact of this project for people with asthma</li> <li>• The potential knowledge gains or fundamental outcomes of the research</li> </ul>
Research Priority area	<p>Outline how the project meets the Asthma Australia National Research Program Priority(s). If a specific priority area has been outlined in the application information, this criteria must be addressed adequately for the application to be eligible.</p> <p>The priority areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention</li> <li>• Vulnerable groups</li> <li>• Models and system</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Influencing policy</li> </ul> <p>It is not requested that all priority areas are addressed in the application.</p>

Please see the [Research Strategy](#) for more detail.

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Career Impact	This grant stream has been established to support the career development of young researchers in asthma. Applicants should detail how this scholarship will help them achieve their career objectives or contribute to their future career aspirations.
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### Research environment and supervisor (20%)

Applicants must also provide the supervisor report to their supervisor to complete and submit. This should be submitted to [research@asthma.org.au](mailto:research@asthma.org.au) by the applicant's supervisor.

The report must be in PDF format, using the provided form. It should be named as follows: SURNAMEOFAPPLICANT\_PHDGRANT\_SUPERVISORREPORT\_YEAR.

This form will be used to assess the quality and suitability of the research environment and supervisor, including resources and infrastructure available to the applicant and necessary for the completion of the research.

### Consumer Review Form

Asthma Australia is committed to being a consumer-centred organisation, which meets the diverse needs of people with asthma and carers. We seek to champion the expressed needs of people with asthma and ensure their inclusion in our research program. We believe research should be informed by consumers, involve consumers and be meaningful for consumer lived experience.

Please submit the completed Consumer Review Form as part of your application. Your responses to these criteria will be scored by an Asthma Australia consumer representative.

The Consumer Review Form must be completed in plain English and be able to be considered by the consumer reviewer as a stand-alone document and without reference to information provided in the full application. Please provide a simple concise definition of key technical concepts used. We suggest you ask someone without detailed research knowledge to read the completed form, prior to submission, to check for understanding.

This should include; why the research is being conducted, aims and objectives, how you will do the research and what the benefits of the research will be as well as explanations of any technical terms used.

The Consumer Review Form must then describe how the proposed research addresses the following criteria:

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Impact	<p>Applicants should address which Asthma Australia research priority area/s this addresses, the need for the research, proposed outcomes and how these will lead to a benefit for people with asthma.</p> <p>Explain the potential for the proposed research to have a direct, beneficial impact on the lives of people with asthma, in the short, medium and/or long term. Applicants should include what the benefit/s are expected to be, how likely it is they will occur, and when the benefits might be realised. This shouldn't be confused with the benefits for research participants.</p>
Translation	This section should explain how the current study will be applied to the real world over the short, medium and long term to achieve the proposed impacts.

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Consumers recognise that further steps are often required for the benefits of research to be realised. These steps might include additional research, changes in clinical practice, product development, regulation/law and/or policy changes. Consumers also recognise that outcomes achieved in a single body of work may make significant advances to the knowledge of asthma, but not necessarily benefit people with asthma immediately.

Applicants should identify the further steps required for benefit to be achieved and detail these, dot points or numbered timeframe are appropriate. These steps should detail the pathway to realise the benefit of the research, rather than the steps required to complete the research project. It is understood these steps will likely extend beyond the requesting funding period.

Applicants should also note here any potential barriers to translation and how they propose to address them.

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**Equity** This section should describe **who** benefits as a result of this research, and should address how the research benefits can be distributed to the wider population or how they benefit people most vulnerable to poor asthma outcomes (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, people experiencing socioeconomic hardship and people with severe asthma for example).

If a research project focuses on a specific population, the applicant should provide an explanation for the rationale behind this focus, including how relevant groups have been considered/consulted. The applicant should also provide explanation around if/how the benefits could be expanded or apply to other groups in the future.

This is not to say research cannot have a focus on a specific population group to be equitable. In fact, research which prioritises the health of vulnerable populations is a priority of the Asthma Australia research program. However, a study of a new treatment may be inequitable if the results can only benefit people in metropolitan areas or those who can access and afford them.

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**Consumer centred** Asthma Australia is committed to being a consumer-centred organisation, which meets the diverse needs of people with asthma and carers. Applicants should outline how relevant informed consumers have been involved during the development of the research proposal and/or the plan for how they will continue to participate in the research once underway.

Some examples of consumer involvement are:

- Work with researchers to define or refine the research topic
  - Provide informed input on research design and proposed methods
  - Conduct lay reviews of research proposals
  - Participate in recruiting participants to research
  - Assist researchers to develop links to hard-to-reach populations
  - Conduct reviews of participant information sheets and consent forms
  - Assist researchers to pilot a research questionnaire
  - Support the development of lay summaries
  - Assist in disseminating information to the wider community
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## Peer Review Guide

Peer reviewers should assess applications on the extent to which they address the criteria below. Applications will be assessed against the domains described on the following pages. While the described domains provide peer reviewers with some benchmarks for appropriately scoring each application, **it is not essential that all descriptors relating to a given score are met.** The domains are a guide to a 'best fit' outcomes. Peer reviewers will consistently refer to these domains to ensure thorough equitable and transparent assessment of applications.

Peer Review Categories	Weight
Academic record and research achievement	40%
Quality and feasibility of the research proposal	20%
Impact	20%
Research environment and supervisor	20%

### Academic record and research achievement (40%)

Reviewers should use the applicant's academic transcript, supervisor report and responses to the following sections:

- Medals, prizes and awards
- Publications and presentations (including posters)
- Broader community engagement or relevant industry experience/work history

This section should be considered in relation to opportunity with regard to factors such as:

- Career disruption - pregnancy, major illness/injury or carer responsibilities, interruptions caused by major social issues (eg pandemics);
- Clinical, administrative and teaching load;
- Available resources including situations where research is being conducted in remote or isolated communities;
- Building relationships of trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over long periods and subsequent impact on track record and productivity;
- Relocation of an applicant and his/her research laboratory or clinical practice setting or other similar circumstances that impact upon research productivity;
- Typical performance (including publications) for the field in question.

Descriptions	Mark
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GPA 6-7 in related coursework</li> <li>• &gt;5 1<sup>st</sup>/senior author publications in the area</li> <li>• &gt;5 middle author publications in the area</li> <li>• CI on 1 or more NHMRC/ARC or other similar competitive grant applications</li> <li>• Awards, prizes and other presentations</li> <li>• Previous full-time research including current studies, or professional experiences</li> <li>• Demonstrates strong community engagement activities</li> </ul>	Outstanding (10-9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GPA 4-5 in related coursework</li> <li>• 1-4 1<sup>st</sup>/senior author publications in the area</li> <li>• 1-4 middle author publications in the area</li> <li>• CI on 1 or more philanthropic or other grants</li> </ul>	Very good (8-6)



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awards, prizes and other presentations</li> <li>• Research project during training (including electives or volunteer work)</li> <li>• Demonstrates some community engagement activities</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awards, prizes and other presentations</li> <li>• Demonstrates little industry relevant experience</li> </ul>	Satisfactory (5-3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GPA &lt;3 in related coursework</li> <li>• Few awards, prizes and other presentations</li> </ul>	Poor/limited (2-1)

### Quality and feasibility of the research proposal (20%)

Applicants should clearly demonstrate the need and rationale behind the research, aims and objectives, scientific quality of the methodology, expected outcomes, timeframes and feasibility of the research.

Descriptions	Mark
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has objectives that are <b>well-defined</b></li> <li>• Is <b>very well</b> designed</li> <li>• Is <b>highly feasible</b></li> </ul>	Outstanding (10-9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has objectives that are <b>clear</b></li> <li>• Is <b>well</b> designed</li> <li>• Is <b>feasible</b></li> </ul>	Very good (8-6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has objectives that are <b>adequately defined</b></li> <li>• <b>Overall clear</b> research design, <b>but raises some concerns</b></li> <li>• <b>Raises some concerns</b> with respect to feasibility</li> </ul>	Satisfactory (5-3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has objectives that are <b>unclear</b></li> <li>• <b>Raises major concerns</b> with respect to the research design</li> <li>• <b>Raised major concerns</b> with respect to the feasibility</li> </ul>	Poor/limited (2-1)

### Impact (20%)

Applicants will provide responses which describe the potential impact of this research for people with asthma, how the research addresses one or more of Asthma Australia's research priority areas and how the scholarship will contribute to the applicant's career or future career aspirations.

Peer reviewers should consider the five Asthma Australia research priority areas in their assessment. If applicants are asked to address a specific priority area to be eligible for the grant, reviewers will be advised. Otherwise, applicants can address one or more area.

- Research that focuses on primary and secondary **prevention**
- Research, interventions and other methods of enquiry which seek to address the inequity of asthma impact on **vulnerable groups** in Australia.
- Research or design and testing of **models and systems** which seek to address the systemic contributions to asthma health or illness.
- Research which explores and minimises the impact of the changing **environment** on asthma health.
- **Influencing policy** through the consolidation of experience, evidence and consultations with the wider research community.

Descriptions	Mark
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>will result in a highly significant advance in knowledge in this field which addresses an issue of great importance to people with asthma</li> <li>Has a <b>strong focus</b> on <b>one or more</b> of the National Asthma Research Program priority areas</li> <li>Will make an <b>excellent</b> contribution to the applicant's future career aspirations</li> </ul>	Outstanding (10-9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>will advance knowledge in this field which addresses an issue of importance to people with asthma</li> <li>Has a <b>focus</b> on the National Asthma Research Program priority area/s</li> <li>Will make a <b>good</b> contribution to the applicant's future career aspirations</li> </ul>	Very good (8-6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may incrementally advance knowledge in the field which addresses an issue of some importance to people with asthma</li> <li>Has <b>some implications</b> for a National Asthma Research Program priority area</li> <li>Will make a <b>satisfactory</b> contribution to the applicant's future career aspirations</li> </ul>	Satisfactory (5-3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>addresses an issue of some concern to people with asthma</li> <li>Has <b>no implications</b> for a National Asthma Research Program priority area</li> <li>Will make a <b>limited</b> contribution to the applicant's future career aspirations</li> </ul>	Poor/limited (2-1)

### Research environment and supervisor (20%)

Reviewers should also consider the suitability of the research environment and supervisor, using the supervisors report.

Descriptions	Mark
The research environment and supervisor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are well matched to the applicants proposed project</li> <li>Offer outstanding quality research support systems and mentoring for the applicant</li> <li>Offer outstanding potential to extend the applicant's knowledge and skills</li> </ul>	Outstanding (10-9)
The research environment and supervisor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is suited to the applicants proposed project</li> <li>Offer good quality research support systems and mentoring for the applicant</li> <li>Offer very good potential to extend the applicant's knowledge and skills</li> </ul>	Very good (8-6)
The research environment and supervisor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is somewhat suited to the applicants proposed project</li> <li>Offer satisfactory research support systems and mentoring for the applicant</li> <li>Offer satisfactory potential to extend the applicant's knowledge and skills</li> </ul>	Satisfactory (5-3)
The research environment and supervisor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is not suited to the applicants proposed project</li> <li>Offer limited research support systems and mentoring for the applicant</li> <li>Offer limited potential to extend the applicant's knowledge and skills</li> </ul>	Poor/limited (2-1)

## Consumer Review Guide

Consumer reviewers independently score each of the review criteria on a scale of 1-10. The scoring guide below and the detailed description of each criterion is provided to consumer reviewers and is provided here for applicants' information.

Descriptions	Mark
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposal is of the highest quality, provides all the information required, is easily understood, and there is no possibility for improvement.</li> </ul>	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An impressive proposal that provides all required information clearly and in detail.</li> </ul>	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposal provides most of the information required in a clear and detailed way. Little else could be included.</li> </ul>	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposal is sound but could be improved with addition of detail. The response contains minor gaps, or slight confusion in some parts.</li> </ul>	6-7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A barely acceptable proposal which addresses the criterion but provides minimal detail, causes confusion and/or includes some irrelevant information.</li> </ul>	4-5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposal suffers serious inadequacies such as little or no detail, irrelevant information and/or causes confusion.</li> </ul>	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposal does not address the question except in the most fleeting way or is inappropriate to the question. The information provided is very brief or generally irrelevant.</li> </ul>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no proposal, or a response that does not address the question. Nowhere else in the Consumer Review Form is there any information relevant to the question.</li> </ul>	1

In assigning your score, please refer to the general guide to scoring depicted on the scale and considering the following key points:

Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the researcher explained the extent of the problem and its importance?</li> <li>Has the researcher explained how the research will lead to tangible benefit/s to people with asthma?</li> <li>Are there a number of benefits?</li> <li>Has the researcher indicated the probability, magnitude and/or duration of these potential benefits?</li> <li>Has the researcher indicated when in the future the potential benefits might be achieved?</li> <li>Does the research address at least one Asthma Australia research priority area?</li> </ul>
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the researcher explained how the findings could be generalised or applied to other population groups who are not part of the research?</li> <li>Does the research have the potential to provide benefit across all relevant persons groups and/or places?</li> <li>Does the research address an under-studied or under-served population?</li> <li>Does the research address a population with a high burden of illness or poorer outcomes?</li> </ul>

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Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has the researcher explained how the research findings may be translated or further developed to enable translated into meaningful outcome for people with asthma?</li><li>• Do you understand when in the future the benefits might be achieved?</li><li>• Has the researcher provided a description of the broad steps or stages required to reach the stated benefits of the research?</li></ul>
Consumer involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has consumer consultation into the development of this specific project already been undertaken?</li><li>• Are there formal processes/structures in place that link the researchers with consumers?</li><li>• Is the nature of consumer involvement clearly described, including the matters on which consumers will be consulted and the mechanisms by which this consultation will occur, and is the involvement two-way?</li><li>• Has an individual consumer, or a consumer organisation, agreed to act as the consumer representative on this project?</li><li>• Given the nature of the research, does the extent and type/s of consumer involvement seem appropriate? Eg we would not expect a laboratory research project to include extensive consumer involvement</li><li>• Is there a plan for ongoing consumer involvement in the research?</li><li>• Has the researcher considered the role of consumers in the translation of their findings?</li></ul>

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The Consumer Review Guide has been adapted from [Cancer Council NSW](#).