SUGAR INDUSTRY POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS (SPRS) APPLICATION KIT

Introduction
Sugar Research Australia (SRA) invests in and manages a portfolio of research, development and extension (RD&E) projects that drive productivity, profitability and sustainability for the Australian sugarcane industry.

SRA makes available a number of SPRS awards every year, tenable at Australian universities and institutions, for postgraduate research study. The purpose of these awards is to enable qualified graduates to undertake research doctorate or research masters study and to facilitate research and training in areas of value to the Australian sugarcane industry.

These guidelines are provided to assist applicants in preparing their application for an SPRS award. This document provides the following information:

1. An overview of SRA
2. Information on the SPRS and eligibility criteria
3. Selection criteria
4. Guide to completing the application
5. Closing dates and selection timelines
6. Application outcomes
7. Contact details

1. An overview of SRA
SRA was established on 5 August, 2013 as an industry owned company funded by a statutory levy paid by grower and milling businesses. This SRA stakeholder investment is also directly supported by matching funds from the Commonwealth Government and grants from the Queensland Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and other bodies.

The SRA vision is to deliver valued solutions for a growing Australian sugar industry. To achieve this vision, SRA collaborates with levy payers, industry representative bodies, government, productivity services, extension providers, other industry stakeholders, researchers and international peers and partners. SRA works to facilitate and deliver innovative technology and best practice to the sugar industry through a disciplined RD&E development and investment program and practical and
effective knowledge exchange that translates research and development (R&D) into practice.

2. Information on the SPRS and eligibility criteria
The purpose of the SPRS is to enable high calibre students to undertake a Masters or PhD research degree in disciplines relevant to the future of the Australian sugar industry.

Scholarships are available for three years for PhD studies and two years for Research Masters studies and are awarded on the basis of academic excellence.

Applicants should consult the SRA Strategic Plan document available on the SRA website and focus on inventive projects that address at least one of the following eight key focus areas of investment:

- Optimally-adapted varieties, plant breeding and release
- Soil health and nutrient management
- Pest, disease and weed management
- Farming systems and production management
- Milling efficiency and technology
- Product diversification and value addition
- Knowledge and technology transfer and adoption
- Capability development, attraction and retention

To be eligible for a full SPRS or a top-up scholarship, the candidate must be a citizen or permanent resident of Australia and must have acceptance at a recognised research institution. The Principal Supervisor for the postgraduate study program must provide evidence that the host organisation supports the project and the applicant’s candidature for the relevant study program.

Awards are tenable at Australian universities/institutions; however for applicants of proven ability who are undertaking a PhD, training at overseas institutions may be approved where benefits will return to the Australian sugar industry and where overseas supervision will confer additional benefit.

Awards are conferred on the student based on merit, with the evaluation criteria set out within this document. Generic applications from prospective supervisors requesting support for postgraduate research projects without identifying a specific candidate will not be considered.
The SPRS award offers supplementary or full scholarships, the number and value of which are at the discretion of SRA. For a higher probability of success, the applicant is encouraged to also apply for an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) scholarship or equivalent through their host university. Preference will be given to applicants who receive an APA or equivalent scholarship.

Successful applicants not holding an Australian Postgraduate Scholarship (APA) or any other base scholarship will be provided a tax-free stipend of $32,000 per annum (exclusive of GST).

Successful applicants with Australian Postgraduate Scholarship (APA) will be provided a tax-free top-up set at a maximum of 75% of the Australian Postgraduate Award stipend rate which is determined by the Australian Government, Department of Education each year.

All successful applicants will also be provided with an additional budget of $10,000 (excluding GST) per year to support research project operating expenses.

A final payment of $1,000 will also be provided to cover the cost of thesis submission. This payment will only be available to applicants who submit their thesis within 4.5 years for PhD studies and 3 years for Research Masters and it will be available only up to a year after the thesis has been submitted.

3. Selection Criteria
SPRS awards are competitive and applications will be assessed by the SRA Research Funding Panel (RFP) against the following criteria:

- Strong academic record as demonstrated by academic transcripts: a first class or a high second class honours degree or demonstrated high level of proficiency in postgraduate research activities is expected.
- Research project quality, relevance of the project and its outcomes to the sugar industry and the likelihood of significant industry benefits.
- Scientific credibility of the supervisor and host institution in the field being studied – this will be evaluated on the basis of the track record of the proposed research supervisor(s) and the capacity of the University and/or other providers to support and mentor the candidate.
- Satisfactory referee reports.

4. Guide to completing the application
The SRA SugarNet online submission system must be used for all SPRS applications. This can be accessed at https://sugarnet.sugarresearch.com.au
Applications will not be considered to be complete until the *curriculum vitae* (CV), certified copies of the academic record and academic transcript, letters of reference from at least two referees and proof of nationality or permanent residence visa are uploaded through SugarNet to accompany the application.

The project title needs to be a concise statement of the aim of the proposed research project. The title, objectives and outcomes expected from the project may be published in the SRA Annual Report. Candidates are encouraged to consult their Principal Supervisor when completing this section of the online submission form.

No additional information or attachments (such as images, diagrams, flow-charts, tables etc.) should be included unless a prior arrangement has been made with SRA.

5. **Closing dates and selection timelines**

SugarNet will remain open throughout the year to handle SPRS applications, but evaluations of submitted applications will be conducted with two closing dates:

- **Round 1** 31 July
  Complete applications for admission and scholarship submitted by 31 July will be evaluated with successful applicants notified within 4 weeks from the closing date.

- **Round 2** 31 December
  Complete applications for admission and scholarship submitted by 31 December will be evaluated with successful applicants notified within 6 weeks from the closing date.

6. **Application outcomes**

Applicants will be advised via email as soon as an outcome to their scholarship application is determined.

7. **Contact details**

For any queries related to SPRS awards, please contact the SRA Research Funding Unit on (07) 3331 3333 or by email at fundingunit@sugarresearch.com.au