Australian Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship

Scholarship Guidelines

November 2013
Elite scholarship

CSIRO’s Sustainable Agriculture Flagship and the University of Tasmania, via the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA), invite self-funded candidates or those qualifying for Australian Postgraduate Awards or equivalent base scholarships to apply for an elite (top up) scholarship to conduct a PhD in sustainable agricultural systems.

The scholarships provide $16,666 per year for 3 years up to a maximum of $50,000, consisting of a stipend of $7,500 per year with the remaining funds available for research, operating and travel.

Up to 11 of these scholarships are available for students commencing between 2014 and 2016.

Contact officer

Candidates are expected to discuss their application with potential UTAS and CSIRO supervisors before formally applying. This process can be initiated by communicating with the program Contact Officer, who can answer general questions and link the applicant with potential supervisors.

The Contact Officer for the scholarship program is:
Dr David Parsons
Research Fellow in Agronomy and Agricultural Systems
Private Bag 98
Hobart Tasmania 7001 Australia
Telephone + 61 3 6226 2610 or 0438 577 432
Email: david.parsons@utas.edu.au

Lodgement of applications

All applications should be sent to:
Dr David Parsons
Research Fellow in Agronomy and Agricultural Systems
Private Bag 98
Hobart Tasmania 7001 Australia
or in electronic format (pdf) to: david.parsons@utas.edu.au

Due date

Applications can be submitted at any time. From time to time, calls will be made for applications and advertised nationally. The opening round of applications closes at 5pm on Friday 20 December 2013.
Elite Australian Sustainable Agriculture Scholarships

CSIRO’s Sustainable Agriculture Flagship and the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) have established an Australian Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship (ASAS) to provide elite (top up) scholarships for students undertaking a PhD in agricultural systems research. Agricultural systems include the natural resources, production systems, communities, industries and policy environment within which food and other agricultural products are produced, processed and consumed. Eligible research under these scholarships will expand multi-disciplinary knowledge of the interactions and trade-offs between the biophysical, social, economic and institutional components of agricultural and food systems, and how these interactions contribute to sustainability.

Preferred research projects will:

- involve applied research framed from the perspective of end-users or next-users;
- use methods and outputs that are co-developed using participatory processes; and
- integrate research solutions across academic disciplines and research institutions.

Research projects in this program will focus on issues of national significance to Australia, and can involve local, regional or international issues in Australia and countries that are the focus of Australian development assistance.

Relevant research topics could include, but are not limited to:

On farm:
- increasing productivity and improving economic viability;
- the adoption of sustainable farming practices and strategies for sustaining agriculture’s natural resource base;
- on-farm emissions abatement, energy efficiency, climate change adaptation and their interactions with agricultural productivity;
- benchmarking frontiers of production and resource use efficiency;
- innovation in on-farm food processing and marketing; and
- the contribution of farming to rural livelihoods and regional development.

Landscape, industry and community:
- natural resource management for sustainable production;
- climate change adaptation and mitigation and their relationship with sustaining agricultural productivity;
- innovation in agriculture, food processing and marketing throughout value chains;
- profitability and environmental performance; and
- the contribution of agriculture to the sustainability, adaptability and resilience of rural communities and regional economic development.

National and international:
- interactions between policy and sustainability in national agricultural and food systems;
- changes in international comparative advantage and Australia’s competitiveness associated with climate change, market shocks and trade policy;
- interactions between agricultural productivity, food security and trade; and
- impact of innovations in global food systems on sustainable agriculture systems.
Accelerate your research career

The CSIRO-TIA scholarship is a prestigious award designed to accelerate the research careers of top students in fields contributing to agricultural systems research. The scholarships are an invitation to elite students to begin their research careers working with CSIRO and TIA in the fields of agricultural research at which our organisations excel. This includes issues of state, national and international significance such as the local through to global drivers of agricultural productivity, food security, greenhouse gas abatement, sustainable farming systems and sustainable agricultural communities and industries.

Successful applications to this scheme will be jointly supervised by world-leading scientists from CSIRO and TIA. They will enjoy the benefits of being embedded in teams of professional researchers working with communities and industries to tackle new and emerging opportunities to improve the sustainability of agricultural systems and the communities and industries that depend on them. These benefits include the extensive national and international networks created and maintained by the researchers they will be working with in CSIRO and TIA.

Selection criteria

All research topics will be aligned with the research priorities of CSIRO’s Sustainable Agriculture Flagship, and require a letter of support from the CSIRO Supervisor outlining how the PhD research is aligned with CSIRO’s research priorities.

Selection of students by the Steering Committee will be based on:

- potential of the research topic to expand knowledge of, and ability to manage, agricultural and food systems;
- innovative development or application of methods for generating this understanding of agricultural systems; and
- potential benefits of the research to one or more clearly defined groups of end or next users.

The Australian Sustainable Agriculture Scholarships are available to top students with basic scholarships or equivalent means of support. Candidates eligible for Australian Postgraduate Awards or Tasmania Graduate Research Scholarships are encouraged to apply. Eligibility requirements and application guidelines for Australian Postgraduate Awards and Tasmania Graduate Research Scholarships are available on the UTAS website.

Background

CSIRO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FLAGSHIP

The National Research Flagships program is one of the largest scientific research programs ever undertaken in Australia. The 11 Flagships form multidisciplinary teams from across Australia’s national innovation system to address major challenges and opportunities. They target clearly defined goals, framed from a careful analysis of the needs of people and enterprises, and have a strong focus on adoption and impact.

The Sustainable Agriculture Flagship has as its goal: “To secure Australian agriculture and forest industries by 2030 through a 50% increase in productivity and a 50% reduction in carbon emissions intensity, while enhancing the resource base and partnering for global benefit”

The science is conducted through four inter-connected Themes and delivers to four research areas: agricultural productivity, ecosystem health, carbon, informatics and systems integration.

Theme structure

**Goal:** “By identifying the opportunities and pathways towards maintaining a 2% p.a. increase in productivity, this Theme seeks to increase the total economic value of Australian agriculture and forestry through improved resource use efficiencies and innovative farm and industry management practices that protect natural resource assets.”

**Goal:** “Develop science, technology, measurement and management systems to enable 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions per unit of agricultural and forestry products, and a 30Mt CO2-e/year increase in carbon storage in Australian lands compared to year 2000 values.”

**Goal:** “Australian agricultural and forestry landscapes monitored and managed through innovative observation and knowledge systems that enable landscape evaluation and inform land use planning, policy options and natural resource management.”

**Goal:** “To address the global challenges of food, fibre and carbon security through international research partnerships which both increase the capacity of participants and identify pathways to develop and improve sustainable livelihoods.”
Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) is a partnership between the University of Tasmania (UTAS) and the Tasmanian Government. TIA strives to make a positive contribution to the strategic objectives of UTAS (research, students, global and community engagement), as well as the development of prosperous, innovative and sustainable rural industries and communities. Our projects have a mix of research, development, extension and education (RDE&E) outputs that are delivered via a program structure introduced in the current TIA Strategic Plan (2012-16). Each project contributes to addressing the outcomes in one or more of the six TIA programs (www.tia.tas.edu.au/programs/nested-content/programs). Priorities within each program have been determined in collaboration with our key stakeholders and provide a decision-making framework for strategically seeking new projects in areas of high priority. This scholarship program aligns most strongly with the Agricultural Production Systems program, which focuses on using innovative methods to solve complex, multi-scale problems in agricultural landscapes.

The core organisational units within TIA have been the School of Agricultural Science and five RD&E Centres: Dairy, Extensive Agriculture, Food Safety, Perennial Horticulture and Vegetable. ‘TIA Corporate’ provides corporate support for TIA staff throughout Tasmania. Focus and alignment of TIA’s industry-based Centres is ensured through Centre Advisory Groups. The terms of reference of these groups includes: strategic advice and direction on RD&E activity and alignment, relevant industry issues arising, funding, education and training opportunities, overview of centre strategic plans, develop and maintain networks with industry, and provide advice on centre communication.

As of January 2014, TIA will form part of a larger school within the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology to be known as the ‘School of Land and Food’. The new school will combine staff and expertise of TIA with those from the School of Geography and Environmental Studies. This will provide equal emphasis on production and environmental issues. Large scale landuse changes such as those brought about through irrigation will be amongst the first issues to be addressed.

CSIRO-TIA partnership

CSIRO and TIA have complementary research and extension capabilities enabling collaboration to tackle emerging issues in agriculture. For more than a decade, CSIRO and TIA have worked together through joint appointments and collaborative projects. The world-leading systems analysis and modelling approaches developed by CSIRO globally have been developed and applied to Tasmanian agriculture by TIA. Both CSIRO and TIA recognise the need to frame research on agricultural productivity within a broader program that includes value chains, food systems, markets and trade, as well as the social and institutional issues affecting agriculture and food.
Application Form

1. Personal details
   Name, contact details

2. Supervisor details
   CSIRO
   TIA

3. Enrolment
   Please describe whether you have applied for a base scholarship or have alternative means of support (maximum half page).

   Please describe other top-up scholarships and similar funding that you have been awarded (maximum half page).

4. Research topic
   Please attach a description of the proposed research (maximum 2 pages)

   Please also describe (maximum 2 pages):
   - How will the research expand knowledge and ability to manage agricultural systems?
   - Why is the proposed method or its application innovative?
   - Who are the end or next users, and how will they benefit from this research?

5. Alignment with CSIRO research priorities

   Describe how this PhD aligns with CSIRO research priorities (maximum half page).

   Attach a letter of support from the CSIRO Supervisor confirming this alignment.

   Attach a draft CSIRO Student Agreement Form (insert weblink).

Applications will be accepted until the Scholarship quota is filled. The opening round of applications are due by 5pm on Friday 20 December.
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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The current partnership between CSIRO and TIA is managed by Dr Michael Battaglia and Associate Professor Rohan Nelson.

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