Frequently Asked Questions
Pacific Agriculture Scholarships Support and Climate Resilience (PASS-CR) Program – 2023 Selection Process

1. What is the PASS-CR Scholarship Program?

The Pacific Agriculture Scholarships and Support and Climate Resilience (PASS-CR) Program provides scholarships and support to postgraduate students in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries at The University of the South Pacific (USP) and Fiji National University (FNU). Since 2008, ACIAR has supported research scholarships at Pacific Universities. The scholarship program has achieved significant results, strengthening agricultural innovation systems in the Pacific.

ACIAR's Pacific post-graduate scholarships are offered in the Pacific, to Pacific Islanders. This enables scholars to research agricultural problems within the context that the solutions need to work, to build professional networks which will be relevant post-study and remain close to family and culture.

The PASS-CR Program aims to strengthen the Pacific agricultural innovation system through building on the strengths of Pacific universities and their regional partners. It is part of the Australian Government's support to our Pacific neighbours.

2. Who are ACIAR?

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) are an Australian Government agency who brokers and invests in research partnerships in developing countries in the Indo-Pacific region to build knowledge to support crucial development objectives.

Since 1982, ACIAR has supported research projects in four regions—eastern and southern Africa, East Asia, South and West Asia and the Pacific. Their research projects focus on agribusiness, climate change, crops, fisheries, forestry, horticulture, livestock systems, social systems, soil and land management and water. They deliver specific development outcomes.

To date, ACIAR has commissioned and managed more than 1,500 research projects in 36 countries, partnering with 150 institutions along with more than 50 Australian research organisations.

3. Which Universities are offering scholarships under the PASS-CR Program?

The University of the South Pacific (USP) and Fiji National University (FNU)

4. Which scholarships are available at USP?

Masters by Research and PhD scholarships.

Please note that:
- Soils is a priority area for USP and students undertaking a Soils project will be considered favorably.
- Projects which consider issues of gender, social systems and youth engagement will also be considered favorably.

5. Which scholarships are available at FNU?

Masters by Research and Masters by Coursework (with a thesis component) scholarships. There is a PhD opportunity which is for FNU staff only.

Please note that:
- Forestry is a priority area for FNU and students undertaking a Forestry project will be considered favorably.
- Projects which consider issues of gender, social systems and youth engagement will also be considered favorably.

6. What does the Scholarship include?

Tuition and Allowances

Allowances and tuition will be paid for up to 24-months for Masters students and over 3 years for a PhD candidate.

Allowances* are outlined below:

Description	Allowance*
Books	FJD750 as a one-off payment
Living Allowance	FJD21,450
Establishment Allowance	FJD1,900, as a one-off payment, if applicable

*Please note that these are indicative only and are dependent on your personal circumstances. For more exact details, please discuss with the contact at your chosen university.

Research Grant

Successful scholarship holders will have access to a Research Grant of up to a maximum of:
- FJD20,000 (USP)/FJD17,500 (FNU) for Masters' students, and
- FJD45,000 (USP)/FJD40,000 (FNU) for PhD students

This grant funding is to cover research operating costs, minor equipment, and travel expenses essential to undertake research.

The Research Grant will be considered and allocated based on a detailed research proposal and supporting budget prepared by the student in consultation with his/her supervisor and the ACIAR co-supervisor.

Additional Assistance

Successful PASS-CR scholars will have additional academic support from the Australian Centre for Pacific Islands Research at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), including access to USC Library resources, HDR training workshops, student placements with a relevant agency or business, and networking opportunities.

7. What is the eligibility criteria?

The eligibility criteria for both the Masters and PhD programs is outlined below. Note that for Educational Requirements, these are specific to the University that you are applying to and can be confirmed with the key University contacts (see Question 10 for contact details).

You need to confirm your eligibility with the relevant University prior to applying. Contact details are provided in Question 10 for both USP and FNU key contacts to assist.

Eligibility Criteria	University	Program	Details
Citizenship	USP and FNU	All	• The postgraduate scholarships are open to current citizens of the Pacific Island Countries of Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
Educational requirements	USP	Masters by Research	• Post Graduate Diploma with a GPA of 3.5 or above at both Undergraduate and Post Graduate levels. • Applicants with a Bachelors degree GPA of 4.0 or above for 200 and 300 level courses, are also eligible to apply (when applying directly from Undergraduate study). • The candidate may be required to complete Postgraduate course(s) as specified for admission to the Master's program.
	USP	PhD	• A Masters degree by research, or a Bachelors degree with a GPA of 4.5 or above for 200 and 300 level courses
	FNU	Masters by Research	• A Bachelor's degree with a GPA of 3.5 or above (FNU GPA equivalent) at level 7; or • A graduate diploma with a GPA of 3.25 or above (FNU GPA equivalent) at level 8; or • A Masters by coursework at level 9; or • Evidence of academic qualification and/or experience inclusive of research reports, or dissertations, or publications or other evidence that satisfies the HDRC that the applicant has developed knowledge of the field of study or cognate field and has the potential for research that is sufficient to undertake the proposed program.
	FNU	Masters by Coursework	• A Bachelor's degree with a GPA of 3.0 or above (FNU GPA equivalent) at Level 7
	FNU	PhD (Staff Upgrade ONLY)	• A Bachelors degree with first or upper second-class honours at level 8, including a research component compromised of a thesis; or • A Masters degree by coursework with a GPA of 4 or above (FNU GPA equivalent) at level 9; or • A Masters by Research degree in a relevant discipline; or • Evidence of academic qualification and/or experience inclusive of research reports, or dissertations, or publications or other evidence that satisfies the Higher Degree by Research Committee (HDRC) that the applicant has developed knowledge of the field of study or cognate field and has the potential for research that is sufficient to undertake the proposed program.

8. Are women encouraged to apply?

The Program aligns to [ACIAR's Gender Equity Policy and Strategy](#). Women are particularly encouraged to apply.

9. How do I find out what the research projects and topics are for the 2023 scholarship round?

A link to the Research Projects and topic list for the 2023 scholarship program is available on:

- ACIAR website - https://www.aciar.gov.au/scholarships/aciar-pacific-agriculture-scholarships-and-support-program
- USP website - https://www.usp.ac.fj/research/pg-affairs/post-graduate-scholarships/australian-centre-for-international-agricultural-research-aciar/
- FNU website - https://www.fnu.ac.fj/study/student-support/financial-support/?id=6373
- PASS-CR Program website - https://www.passcrprogram.com/

Please review the list of research topics and choose a project that really interests you. Research the topic and email the USP/FNU Supervisor or contact person to discuss the topic. You can then contact the relevant ACIAR research Project Leader using the email provided. Please work with the Project Leader to draft your research proposal.

Please note that your research proposal will need to be signed by both the USP/FNU Supervisor and the ACIAR Project Leader prior to submission of your application.

10. How do I apply?

You are required to check your eligibility with the relevant university prior to completing the application form.

For more information on how to apply and to check your eligibility, please email the key contacts for each university below. Application forms and research proposal templates are available on the relevant university website.

The University of South Pacific (USP)

Mr Josevata Cava, ACIAR-USP Graduate Officer
Email: aciarga@usp.ac.fj
Website: https://www.usp.ac.fj/research/pg-affairs/post-graduate-scholarships/australian-centre-for-international-agricultural-research-aciar/

Fiji National University

Dr Archibold Bakare
Email: archibold.bakare@fnu.ac.fj
Website: https://www.fnu.ac.fj/study/student-support/financial-support/?id=6373

11. Are there any online Q&A sessions where I can learn more?

Online briefing sessions about the program, how to apply, meet the project leaders and how to put together a research proposal will be held to support you through the application process. Dates and registration links are provided below:

Zoom Q&A session

A Zoom Q&A session will be held on **Friday 15 July 2022 at 12pm FJT** for anyone interested to learn more. Please register at the following link:

https://usc-au.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUrcOqvqDosHNMiSlVObrqcqX7SAhaKl_A5

Zoom Project Showcase

A Zoom Project Showcase, where you can meet the Project leaders and learn more about the projects and research topics, will be held on **Friday 22 July 2022 at 12pm FJT**. Please register at the following link:

https://usc-au.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYocu-srj0rHd151HtUUYh9UOInwNYBwhKm

Research Proposal Training

Research Proposal Training will be held on **Tuesday 23 August at 12pm FJT** to support applicants to put together their research intent and future research proposals. Please register at the following link:

https://usc-au.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwud-2tqDouHtw_dG8K86Bu8TkfYA0Ef0wb

12. Do I need to check my eligibility before applying?

Yes, you need to ensure you have confirmed your GPA and Citizenship requirements are eligible before applying. Please contact the relevant contact at FNU and USP to confirm your eligibility (see Question 10).

13. How do I complete the application form and submit the required documents?

Before completing the application form, please reach out to the relevant University contact person (see Question 10) to discuss your eligibility to apply.

Fill out your personal details and use the checklist to make sure you have attached all the required documents. You are required to submit the document in **one PDF document** in the following order:

- Application Form
- Academic Transcript/s
- Certificate/s
- Letters of Support
- Birth Certificate/Passport

Please save your documents with the following name: PASS2023-your name-university-program (e.g. PASS2023Application-LisaWard-USP-MSc).

Once you have chosen your project and research topic (see Question 9), please also complete your research intent including detailed research proposal which must be signed by your USP/FNU supervisor and ACIAR co-supervisor.

Your research intent is to be submitted as a separate PDF with the following name: PASS2023ResarchIntent-your name-university-program (e.g. PASS2023ResearchIntent-LisaWard-USP-MSc).

Please note that incomplete applications will not be considered.

14. What documents are required?

- Certified copies of academic transcripts
- Completed application form
- Completed research intent including a detailed research proposal which has been signed by your USP/FNU supervisor and ACIAR Co-supervisor

15. Can I enrol part-time?

- Students may not engage in paid employment while enrolled in the scholarship scheme, unless with the express permission of the supervisor and head of the relevant school. Short term work experience placements linked to the field of study approved by ACIAR may be organised by the Academic Support Team.
- Students enrolled in a full-time capacity are expected to maintain a full-time study load.
- In the case of applicants who are already employed in the public sector, a letter confirming release of the applicant, if successful, from his/her duties by the relevant Public Service Commission for the term of the scholarship, is a requirement.

16. I am already enrolled in a Masters or PhD program, am I able to apply?

Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If your current study is aligned with an ACIAR Project and you have the support from a USP/FNU Supervisor and ACIAR Co-supervisor, you can apply.

17. How will my application be assessed?

A Selection Panel at each university, including representatives from ACIAR and the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), has been established to review the applications. Applications will be assessed based on eligibility and merit.

18. What is the application process and expected timeframes?

Process	Timeframes
Applications Open	Friday 8 July 2022
Q&A session explaining the program and application process – Online Zoom Sessions	12pm FJT, 15 July 2022
Research project teams to pitch to potential applicants – Online Zoom Session	12pm FJT, 22 July 2022
Research proposal development training – Online Zoom Session	12pm FJT, 23 August 2022
Applications Close	5pm FJT, 19 October 2022
Interviews with shortlisted applicants (if applicable for PhD students only)	Mid October 2022
Applicants advised of outcome of process	Late November/Early December 2022