Early Start PhD scholarships

The University of Wollongong is a research-intensive university with a vision of being a leader in ideas and solutions, a community of campuses and partners where discovery, learning and technology connect to transform people and the world we live in. This vision is consistent with current research confirming the importance of the early years of children’s lives for their future achievements in education, health and life outcomes.

The Early Start Research Institute is part of the University of Wollongong’s $44 million Early Start initiative that unites cutting-edge research with higher education programs and community engagement. The Institute is one of UOWs Research Strengths and home to more than 135 researchers and students who are engaged in interdisciplinary, evidence-based research across the spectrum of children’s educational developmental, physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. With a specific focus on vulnerable children in regional, rural and remote areas, our purpose is to help children flourish and realise their potential.

Up to half of the projects in the Early Start Research Institute involve children and staff at the 41 Early Start Engagement Centres – early childhood education and care services located in regional, rural or remote disadvantaged communities in NSW and the ACT. These long-term partnerships allow innovation to be pioneered in the areas where it is needed most and aid the transformation of research into best practise.

Two PhD scholarships are currently being offered within Early Start. These scholarships will focus on areas that have been identified by our research and confirmed by the Early Start Engagement Centres as priorities over the next three years.

The first scholarship will focus on Engaging Aboriginal children’s language and literacy skills through sustained oral narratives. The successful student will develop, implement, and evaluate an oral narrative project in collaboration with Aboriginal Elders and educators to promote language and literacy skills in toddlers and pre-schoolers from Aboriginal communities. Eligible Aboriginal students are especially encouraged to apply for this scholarship.

The second scholarship will be in the area of fine motor skills among young children. Typically developing children who have poor fine motor skills as toddlers and pre-schoolers are likely to suffer a range of adverse challenges as they enter and progress through school. This includes poorer handwriting, language and social skills, school readiness, and aspects of cognitive development. The successful student will develop, implement, and evaluate an evidence-based fine motor skills program to improve the fine motor skills of toddlers and pre-schoolers.

Applicants are expected to commit to full-time research for the three years of their project and will be based at the University of Wollongong’s main campus. As both of these projects involve the Early Start Engagement Centres, applicants will be required to commit to travelling as part of their scholarship (travel costs will be covered as part of the scholarship).

Eligibility

Open to Australian and International applicants who meet UOW PhD entry requirements (Hons I or Masters) in the following fields: education, health, psychology, child development, occupational therapy, and language and linguistics.

Stipend

- Scholarship stipend is $26,288 per annum for 3 years (tax-free and indexed annually)
- An additional allowance is available to cover project-related costs such as travel
Dates
- Closing date: 15 July 2016
- Commencement date: Spring Session 2016 (by August 31) although it may be possible to start in Autumn Session 2017 (February or March).

Inquiries
Please contact the following people depending on your area of interest:
- **Oral Narratives**: Dr Elisabeth Duursma (email: eduursma@uow.edu.au)
- **Fine Motor Skills**: Professor Anthony Okely (email: tokely@uow.edu.au) or Professor Marc de Rosnay (email: marcd@uow.edu.au)

How to apply
- All potential candidates should send their CVs (including academic transcript) and a summary of their research background and highlights (**one-page maximum**) to Karen Barrett at kbarrett@uow.edu.au by the 15th July 2016.