Ag Emissions Centre PhD Scholarship application guidelines

Developing the capability pipelines for the development of agricultural greenhouse gas mitigation options.

A capability pipeline with the right mix of skills and the right number of people is critical to delivering options to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to farmers. The Ag Emissions Centre (AgEC), in partnership with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), has launched a multi-year scholarship and fellowship program for Early Career Researchers to help meet that need.

The 2026 Call for PhD scholarships will be open to project teams researching options to reduce agricultural GHG emissions that could benefit from incorporating PhD candidates into their programs. Standalone student applications will not be accepted.

Up to five (5) PhD Scholarship grants will be funded in this call.

Eligible topics

We will consider PhD project ideas that address agricultural GHG mitigation challenges and provide students with the opportunity to contribute to a larger, well-resourced research effort supported by a strong team of researchers and collaborators. Examples of areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Development of GHG mitigation options (technologies and management options) for biogenic methane (enteric and manure management) and nitrous oxide from soils.
- Development of novel methods for high-throughput identification of low-GHG animals.
- Integration of mitigation options into farm systems, including identification of co-benefits and trade-offs.
- Understanding the economic, environmental, behavioral, and social drivers and barriers influencing farmer uptake of agricultural GHG mitigation options.

If you are unsure if your proposed PhD project fits the call, please email fund@ag-emissions.nz.

Timeline

1. **November 2026**
   Call for proposals opens
2. **30 November 2026**
   Call for applications close.
   Applications must be submitted to fund@ag-emissions.nz
3. **Mid January**
   Successful applications announced
4. **30 June 2027**
   Deadline to complete recruitment and enrolment of PhD candidate

Who can apply

The main applicant will be a researcher from a New Zealand university, research institute, or any other organisation conducting research relevant to the call (not prospective students themselves). The application must include a supervisory team, one of whom should be approved to supervise students at a New Zealand university. The application should describe i) how the team can support the development of a PhD research project, ii) how the scholarship will contribute to expanding or accelerating the research toward the goal of developing mitigation options and iii) how the scholarship can support capability pipelines in a research field related to GHG research.

The application will need to identify:

- Funded research project(s) that focus on research towards reducing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions which could host a PhD student.
- Potential supervisors, co-supervisors or mentors.
- Support resources available to students and fellows.
- Expected start and end dates.

Projects with a science-based approach are welcomed as well as projects taking a mātauranga Māori/Kaupapa Māori approach to GHG mitigation research.

This Call will also consider applications for stand-alone projects (e.g., desktop-based PhD projects) that can be completed within the budget allocated for research support included in the scholarship (see Funding Table 1). The AgEC will also consider applications from researchers with funded projects in the wider field of agriculture but that are not GHG-related. In these cases, the applicant should demonstrate how the PhD grant can support expanding the reach of those projects to generate knowledge and insights related to agricultural GHG measurement or mitigation.

Successful applicants will recruit a PhD student to be enrolled at a New Zealand University. The recruitment of the PhD candidate shall be the responsibility of the applicant, in collaboration with the Graduate Research Office at the hosting University. The recruitment should be made through an open process, although existing prospective candidates may be nominated. Recruitment costs are not included in the grant.

If you are a student, please contact teams or researchers at the Universities and research providers who are conducting research in your field of interest.

Funding

The grant provides a comprehensive package that includes stipend, tuition fees, research support and allowance for travel (Table 1 below). The PhD scholarships are offered for a period of three (3) years from commencement of the degree. Additionally, the AgEC offers a ‘wrap-around’ capability development programme where our student cohorts are connected with industry experts to help develop skills beyond the technical, such as communication, commercialisation and leadership.

Disclaimer

The AgEC reserves the right to withdraw or amend this document and/or the timelines within it. All enquiries for the AgEC PhD Scholarship are to be sent to fund@ag-emissions.nz. All completed applications must be submitted to fund@ag-emissions.nz by 5 pm on 30 November 2026. No late applications will be accepted.

Table 1. Components included in the Ag Emissions Centre PhD Scholarships – Call 2026.

Grant component	Amount
Stipend	NZ$45,000 per year.
Tuition fees	Up to NZ$10,000 per year.
Research, training, publication costs	Up to NZ$10,000 per year.
Travel allowance	Up to NZ$5,000 per year.

If an application is successful, the applicant organisation will be contracted to facilitate the delivery of the PhD project, including the recruitment and supervision arrangements. Stipend and tuition fees will be disbursed yearly, subject to demonstration of adequate progress. Research costs and travel support will be applied for by the main applicant and subject to approval by the AgEC before disbursement. Progress will be reported every 6 months using a template provided by the AgEC.

Candidate eligibility

The scholarships are available for domestic (citizens and residents) and international students who meet the eligibility criteria defined by the host university. For international students, the grant recipient will ensure that prospective students meet the requirements for enrolment that apply to international candidates (e.g., immigration requirements, proficiency in the English language, among others).

Successful applicants are expected to recruit students with backgrounds in environmental science, agricultural science, animal science, microbiology, soil science, engineering, genetics, social science or any related field that contributes to the development of greenhouse gas mitigation solutions.

The programme will be looking for a diversity of skills across the successful applicants and particularly encourages those wishing to build Māori research and knowledge capability across the research, development and adoption pipeline.

Recruitment of students already undertaking doctoral studies is not allowed.

Evaluation of applications

Applications will be evaluated by an external panel appointed by the AgEC. The assessment of applications will be based both on the technical/scientific strength of the proposed project and the contribution it will make to the capability pipelines for GHG mitigation research.

Specifically, applications will be assessed against the following criteria using a 1-5 scoring scale (1 – does not meet the criterion, 2 – weak alignment, 3 – moderate alignment, 4 – good alignment and 5 – excellent alignment with the criterion).

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Scientific merit and innovation / Research excellence

- The proposed PhD project will progress current knowledge or will open new enquiry lines on GHG mitigation research
- The proposed PhD project design and methodology is robust and fit for purpose
- The proposed PhD project makes use of and builds on existing research

Potential impact of the research

- The proposed PhD project has a credible pathway to contribute knowledge towards reducing agricultural GHG emissions directly. and/or
- The proposed PhD project has a credible pathway to contribute knowledge to reduce barriers for adoption of mitigation options

Capability gap

- The PhD candidate in the project will address a capability gap related to research towards reducing agricultural GHG, and/or
- The PhD candidate could strengthen capability areas in need of succession planning

Track record of the team and support offered

- The supervisors have a demonstrated track record in the necessary supervision skills, knowledge and resources needed to support the PhD student
- The team and host institution(s) can provide good wrap-around support for the PhD student (e.g. access to lab resources, IT support, pastoral care)

Mātauranga Māori considerations (if applicable)

- The project includes distinctive research, science and innovation contributions of Māori people, knowledge, and resources, including mātauranga Māori
- If so, there is appropriate Māori expertise in the team to support the development of the student
- There is credible engagement with Māori at the appropriate stage(s) or levels to ensure effective implementation
- The project has identified and evaluated the potential impacts for Māori, including culturally-appropriate considerations for use of resources.

IP considerations

Any Background IP (BIP) brought into the PhD project will be retained by the respective owner(s). As a principle, it is expected that the research undertaken during the PhD project will be publicly available and not embargoed. If IP of commercial value is anticipated to be created, ownership will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account potential commercialisation opportunities, respective contributions to the project, and the applicant's experience and expertise.

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