The University Of Queensland
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Creating financial access to medical education for every aspiring doctor



Overview

Queensland has one of Australia's fastest – growing and most geographically dispersed populations, with regional, rural and remote communities experiencing persistent shortages of medical professionals. Training more doctors in Queensland and encouraging high school students to pursue medicine are essential to meeting the state's growing and changing health needs. An expanded and locally trained medical workforce helps to ensure timely access to care, reduces pressure on hospitals, and improves health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations. Encouraging students from Queensland to study medicine is essential to meeting the state's growing and changing health needs, increases the likelihood they will practice locally, strengthens workforce sustainability and builds a health system that reflects and understands the communities it serves.

At The University of Queensland, the Doctor of Medicine program equips future doctors with world-class training and hands-on clinical experience, yet the financial demands of study, combined with significant cost of living increases, continue to create barriers for many capable and passionate students.

The Medical Scholarship Endowment was established to address this challenge, helping students facing financial hardship to commence and complete their studies with stability and confidence. While the impact to date has been meaningful, demand for support continues to exceed available funding, leaving many aspiring doctors without assistance.

Strengthening and growing this endowment is essential to ensuring that more students can access medical education, thrive in their training, and ultimately contribute to the lives, health and well-being of people across Queensland and beyond.

Improving access to medical education

As many of you who graduated from the Medical School would know, whilst rewarding, the program is academically rigorous and financially demanding, there is limited capacity for part time work alongside full-time study and clinical training. We are grateful that donors who have supported this fund have enabled financial support for committed students to begin their degree. This has ensured that access to medicine is determined by ability and aspiration, not personal financial circumstance.



"Growing up in poverty can be incredibly challenging and can test the resilience and perseverance of young people before they even enter adulthood. As I develop my skills to becoming a doctor, I've come to love the experience of connecting with patients as people who I can help. "
Jessica Mills, Intercalated PhD, 2022 recipient

Since its launch in 2018, we have received many generous donations, and the Medical Scholarship Endowment fund now sits in excess of $667,000, delivering approximately $5,000 AUD per recipient. Currently, up to 3 students are awarded each year with 16 medical students having received a scholarship since it's launch. As living costs continue to rise and demand for financial assistance increases, the gap between need and available support has widened. Each year, a growing number of capable and passionate students apply for scholarships but are unable to receive support due to limited funding. Scholarships deliver stability, reassurance and a sense of belonging during one of the most demanding periods of a student's life.

Stories like Jessica's demonstrate the lasting value of scholarship support and the ripple effect such investment has on patients, communities and the profession. This growing need is why increasing the financial assistance for our students is a key priority for the Medical School.



The challenge

Whilst we have made meaningful progress, the gap between demand and available support continues to widen. In the last five years, more than 400 medical students have applied for financial aid scholarships. Many eligible students are missing out on assistance due to increased application numbers and cost-of-living pressures. Therefore, strengthening and expanding scholarship support is essential to meeting demand, particularly as economic and social conditions continue to change.

Since 2021, more than 68 per cent of medical students who applied for financial aid scholarships were unsuccessful because the demand out-weighed the number of scholarships on offer. For medical students completing 2,000 hours of placement, this financial support often determines whether they can remain enrolled and fully participate in their education or must withdraw entirely.

The financial burden on students is substantial, even before tuition fees are considered, estimated living costs for a domestic student are between $25,000 to $35,000 AUD each year, a total of between $100,000 to $140,000 over a four-year medical degree. Addressing this shortfall is critical to ensuring continued access to medical education and preventing financial circumstances from limiting academic and professional potential.

Key facts

- **402 students applied for medical financial aid scholarships** between 2021 and 2025
- **Two in three applicants** (68.4 percent) did not receive financial scholarships
- **Basic living costs for a medical student in Brisbane are more than $25,000 per year**, before tuition and travel costs
- **The Doctor of Medicine tuition fees are approximately $13,560** AUD annually, totalling $54,240 AUD over 4 years
- **Estimated weekly living costs are between $510 to $670,** compared to Youth Allowance of $338 per week
- **Students must complete 2,000 to 3,000 hours** of unpaid clinical placement, limiting capacity for paid work
- **The Medical School graduates one of the largest cohorts of doctors in Australia** and is a major contributor to the medical workforce entering Queensland

The University of Queensland explicitly recognises cost of living pressures as a barrier to access and participation



Our goal

Over the next 10 years, and as the UQ Medical School reaches its centenary, our goal is to increase the number of students supported and increase the scholarship value offered. Expanding the value and scope of scholarships awarded will transform equity across medical education access opportunities that were previously out of reach.

Donations towards the fund are essential to enable more interested and motivated students to have access to medical education regardless of their financial circumstances.

The Medical School graduates one of the largest cohorts of doctors in Australia. By reducing financial barriers for these students, we will only strengthen the future of Queensland's medical workforce and ensure that passion, ability and commitment shape the future of medicine, healthcare and outcomes in our state.

"As a passionate group of Medical School alumni, we have come together with a shared vision that all students, no matter their financial position or background should have access to study medicine."

Professor William (Brett) Emmerson AM, MBBS '79
Professor Liz Kenny AO, MBBS '80
Dr John Bashford, MBBS '80
Dr Catherine Yelland PSM, MBBS '81

Learn more about UQ Endowment structures

How the community can help

The opportunity to give back and pay forward is both a privilege and a powerful way to shape the future of the profession. We invite you to join us in our mission to help support and shape the future of our medical workforce.

- **$13,560** will support one medical student's tuition for a year
- **$54,240** will provide tuition for four years
- **$38,560** will support one medical student's tuition and living costs for a year
- **$154,240** will support tuition and living costs for four years

There are many options available for donating. If supporting financial access to medical education is of interest, we would be delighted to discuss the next steps with you.

Your generosity will help remove financial barriers, build equity in medical education, and shape the future of medical care in Queensland.

Donate

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Every student – regardless of background – should have the opportunity to study, succeed and shape the future of our state.