

# WII Travel Grant Award Policy 2024

## Introduction

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) is one of the country's premier training and research institute in the field of wildlife science and conservation. The institute was set up in 1982 with a mandate to train government and non-government personnel, carry out research, and advise on matters of conservation and management of wildlife resources. WII's research projects are being conducted in field sites across the length and breadth of the country and are the primary sources of scientific information to help conservation.

The major activities of WII can be broadly classified into education, research and capacity building in biodiversity conservation. Wildlife research is a major activity of WII that supports field conservation by aiming improve our understanding of biological, ecological, socio-economic and management aspects of protected areas, multiple use/buffer zones and threatened species. Some of the research initiatives have also led to development of field techniques appropriate to Indian field conditions. WII makes extensive use of modern tools and techniques in its research programmes. Research outcomes are disseminated in the form of national and international peer reviewed articles, books, Ph.D. theses, dissertations, research/technical reports, field manuals, etc.

One of WII's most important academic program is the institute's PhD program, started in early 1970s in affiliation with the Saurashtra University, Rajkot. Later, the institute also got affiliated with the Forest Research Institute Deemed to be University (FRIDU) and Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR). Till date, a total of 210 PhD scholars have got their degree from WII and ~138 scholars are registered for their ongoing PhDs. Recently, a policy regarding the externally affiliated students have been implemented, where students registered with outside universities under co-guideship of WII faculties have been included and their names are being registered with the NOEA office. For all these students, a TRAC-approved fee structure is already in place, which is being managed by the NOEA office through an approved NOEA Revolving Fund. The fund is being used to manage various WII academic programs (PhD, internship and dissertation programs, in particular).

The UGC guidelines (as well as various university ordinances) mandate WII PhD scholars to attend national and international conferences/workshops to deliver oral presentations/posters of their research as part of their respective PhD programs. The students apply for travel grants and other associated support for this from various government (DBT, DST, UGC, CSIR etc.) as well as private (Tata Trust, Mahindra Trust, Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation, WWF-India, WCT etc.) funding sources to cover the costs. It has been observed that very few students from wildlife/biodiversity PhD pools are able to secure such travel grants and WII has earlier supported such student travels through some extramural CSR funds. Given that the extramural funding program is currently lapsed, the institute has decided to develop a mechanism to implement a competitive travel grant program for WII Ph.D. scholars. This policy document details all information and mechanism related to this WII travel grant program.

- A) Name: WII Travel Grant for research scholars
- B) Available grant amount: Rs. 600000/- per year (equally divided into four quarters)
- C) Individual grants: Rs. 50000/- per student (3 students/ quarter; 12 students/ year)
- D) Duration: The grant is available once in every 5 years for the PhD scholars

**Eligibility:** This travel grant is only available for the following PhD scholars affiliated with the NOEA office:

- 1) Regular WII PhD students
- 2) Students working in WII projects but registered with other Indian university/institutes
- 3) Students registered with other Indian/Foreign university/institute

*Note: Currently this fellowship is only available for the PhD students who are paying fees to WII. If M.Sc. students need to be considered for this support for attending any conference/workshop then following mechanism is proposed:*

- *All M.Sc. students need to pay an affiliation fee to the NOEA office*
- *The fees will be Rs. 10000/- for the two years of course (Rs. 5000/- per year)*
- *The students will be eligible to compete for one time travel grant award within next 2-3 years of their course completion. This would enable them to complete their dissertation work properly and then apply for conferences.*
- *Depending on requirement, 1-2 seats from the total 12 students every year can be year-marked for the M.Sc. students (based on competition). This will ensure M.Sc. representation in the travel award pool.*

It is suggested that this scheme can be implemented from the XVIII batch of the students.

*Important point: If the M.Sc. batches are included in this WII travel grant program, potentially slightly more funds/year can be made available for this purpose and accordingly number of grant awardees can be increased.*

*Similarly, if the post-doctoral fellows/project scientists/other senior scholars with PhD are considered a mechanism of fees payment to NOEA for this purpose need to be implemented.*

**Selection:** The selection of the WII travel grant award is going to be very competitive, as the number of candidates are high. For this selection, certain priorities will be considered:

- i) Scholars who have been selected for oral presentations would have a higher priority than the poster presenters.
- ii) Scholars who have received some form of matching grants (for e.g., waiver of registration fees, partial fee waiver, stay expenses etc.) would have a higher priority. Supporting documents need to be submitted by the research scholar as proofs.

- iii) Scholars who have already completed their requirement of conference number for their PhDs would be given lower priority than an applicant who hasn't appeared for such conferences.
- iv) Scholars who are presenting published papers in the conference would have higher priority.

The selection process will involve the following steps:

- The scholars will have to fill up an application form and submit the same to the NOEA office for consideration for this travel award. A specific application form will be prepared by the NOEA office for this purpose, and necessary approval for the same will be taken from the competent authority.
- The application process will be opened for every quarter starting from the month of January every year. The quarters will be January, April, July, October. For every quarter, application received till the end of the first month of the quarter will be considered (Applications received till the end of January, April, July, October will be considered). If available funds are not used for any quarter, the same will be available in equal proportions for the next three quarters. The NOEA office will keep a detailed record of the application details and the same will be made digitally available to Competent Authorities and the WII faculty members.
- All applications received within the timeline will be collated and reviewed by the NOEA office (to ascertain the priority based on the criteria mentioned above). The scholars will be required to make a presentation of their talk/poster (accepted in the conference) in front of an Evaluation Committee, who will unbiasedly judge the applicants based on the merit and criteria of the presentation. This process will have to be completed within 2-3 weeks from the application deadline.
- The constitution of the committee will be as follows:
  - Dean, FWS or his/her nominee (Chairperson). In case of non-availability of the Dean, FWS in office, the chairperson will be nominated by the Director, WII.
  - One faculty member (nominated by Competent Authority). It is suggested that this selection can be done based on a roster (seniority-wise) so every faculty member can be part of this evaluation committee (Four committee meetings/year)
  - Research Coordinator of his/her nominee
  - NOEA (Member Secretary)
- If any of the committee member has his/her student as applicant then that member's marks will not be taken into consideration.
- After the evaluations, the results will be approved by the Director, WII through the Dean, FWS. Half-yearly financial approval will be taken by the NOEA office through Competent Authority so the implementation of this award can be made smooth.
- The awardee will be provided 75% of the grant amount (depending on requirement, maximum grant of Rs. 50000/-) as TA. The remaining 25% will be reimbursed to the

awardee after his/her return to the institute and submission of necessary tickets and a report (format will be prepared by the NOEA office).

- Each PhD student will be able to avail this award opportunity once in a five year term.
- The scholars can use this support to attend either national or international conferences only.

For any queries/doubts the following may kindly be contacted:

- 1) The Nodal Officer, External Affiliations, Wildlife Institute of India ([noea@wii.gov.in](mailto:noea@wii.gov.in))
- 2) The Dean, Faculty of Wildlife Sciences, Wildlife Institute of India ([dean@wii.gov.in](mailto:dean@wii.gov.in))
- 3) The Director, Wildlife Institute of India ([dwii@wii.gov.in](mailto:dwii@wii.gov.in))