

Draft Deed of Standing Offer (DOSO) Consultation

Briefing Q&A

1. Will current institutions delivering Australia Awards transition automatically?

Existing institutions must participate in the new tender process to be eligible for the new contract. Institutions will not automatically transition to the DOSO.

2. Can DFAT clarify comments that evaluation will be based on CRICOS registration?

Institutions must be CRICOS registered to deliver Australia Awards Scholarships. It is highly likely that CRICOS registration will be a tender eligibility requirement, noting tender documents are yet to be finalised.

3. Will institutions have an opportunity to see common themes from the consultation process?

DFAT will publish the final DOSO, which will reflect incorporated feedback. DFAT may consider sharing broader feedback themes if there is a compelling reason proposed by the sector.

4. Will institutions receive individual responses to their submissions?

DFAT does not expect to provide individual written responses, but institutions will be able to see how feedback has been reflected in the final DOSO.

5. Will the DOSO include fellowships and short courses?

Australia Awards Fellowships and short courses are not included in the DOSO services. Fellowships operate under competitive grant arrangements. Short courses are procured separately as partners are not required to be CRICOS registered.

6. Is DFAT only seeking feedback on the DOSO and not the Australia Awards Policy Handbook?

The consultation is focused on the DOSO. While DFAT is also reviewing the Policy Handbook, feedback submitted through this process should primarily relate to the DOSO.

7. Will this be a standard contract for all institutions or will there be variations?

The DOSO will be standard. However, DFAT is still researching potential payment structures, particularly tuition fee arrangements.

8. What are the key differences between the new DOSO and the current contracts?

Major changes include:

- introduction of a Deed of Standing Offer model which allows the use of Service Orders for innovative non-standard scholarship arrangements;
- alignment with modern regulations and policies such as modern slavery, WHS and social safeguards;
- improved alignment with the Australia Awards Handbook;
- clearer legal obligations and service standards;
- key performance measures that seek to move beyond a compliance focus to be more centred on scholar outcomes; and,
- the DOSO has an end date (in ten years) whereas the current arrangements have no end date.

9. Who should be nominated as the contractor representative?

This is determined by each institution. It does not need to be the contract signatory or Student Contact Officer. It should be someone appropriate for contract notices, escalations, and performance-related discussions.

10. How long will the new DOSO remain in place?

The DOSO is expected to have a 10-year term commencing 1 July, with a review point during the contract period.

11. Should institutions provide a single consolidated submission or can multiple teams submit feedback?

Either approach is acceptable. DFAT does not require a single feedback submission per institution, although institutions are encouraged to use a practical and reasonable approach.

12. How are the fees being consulted on and determined?

DFAT is required to consider the value for money of each tender in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. DFAT has researched other scholarship schemes (including UK, New Zealand, and US programs), consulted with the Department of Education and is at early stages of consultation with sector peak bodies (Universities Australia and the International Education Association of Australia). DFAT expects to undertake further targeted market research over the coming month. No model has been predetermined. The aim is to ensure fees reflect the value and services provided by both DFAT and institutions.

Fee discussions are still at an early stage. Institutions are welcome to provide feedback on fees in any feedback provided on the DOSO.

13. Will the recording and presentation slides from the briefing be shared?

The presentation slides and a summary of the discussion will be uploaded to DFAT's Business Notifications webpage.

14. Are there expectations about the level of detail in feedback submissions?

No specific page limit or level of detail has been prescribed by DFAT. DFAT encourages institutions to follow the prompts in the feedback form, specifically allocating a priority to each comment and references to clauses where applicable.

15. The proposed DOSO appears to work closely alongside the Australia Awards Handbook. If there is a future change to the handbook how would this be reflected contractually – would the updated provisions automatically apply under the DOSO, or would this require a formal amendment to the DOSO and/or Service Orders?

If a Handbook change creates a material change to contractual obligations, payment arrangements, contract scope or risk allocation, DFAT would consider whether a formal amendment to the DOSO or relevant Service Order is required. The intention is that the Handbook provides policy and process guidance that aligns with obligations in the contract.

16. Could DFAT provide further information on how Services Orders will be issued or communicated to participating institutions? In particular, will there be a transparent process for institutions to be made aware of new opportunities, the scope and requirements of those opportunities, eligibility criteria and how institutions can express interest or participate? For example, how would arrangements such as ASEAN initiatives or emerging opportunities such as Malaysian TNE-related activities be managed under the proposed DOSO framework?

DFAT recognises institutions' interest in understanding how opportunities will be communicated and considered under the DOSO framework. DFAT will determine the most appropriate process for each

opportunity, having regard to the nature, scope, timing and value of the activity, and in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules.

17. Will DFAT make the original deed and subsequent amendments available to current participating institutions to assist with comparison against the proposed DOSO? For institutions that are not currently participating in Australia Awards, will DFAT also provide a summary of the key changes of the new arrangements?

DFAT does not currently propose to provide the previous contract and subsequent amendments as comparison documents. See question 8 above for a summary of the major changes.

18. Does DFAT have plans to clarify how scholars will be allocated to each university, given there is no guaranteed number of students under the deed? This would help ensure placements are fair and proportionate to each university's capacity to provide academic, welfare, and support services, and allow universities to plan their staffing, resources, and student support effectively, particularly if student numbers increase.

There is no scholar allocation under the DOSO. Scholar placement will continue to depend on scholar preferences, the merit-based selection process, the DFAT budget, and institutions assessment of the scholar meeting relevant placement criteria. DFAT recognises that institutions need reasonable visibility to plan resources and will continue to consider how information on anticipated scholar numbers and placement patterns can be shared.

19. Do we know which documents are required for the tender process?

Tender documentation is not yet finalised. It is expected to be released on AusTender in early 2027.

20. How does the Contractor Representative role differ from the current Institution Contact Officer (ICO) role?

The Contractor Representative is a contract governance role for notices, escalations and service-related discussions under the DOSO. It does not necessarily need to be the contract signatory or the person performing day-to-day scholar administration. The Institution Contact Officer role is not required under the draft DOSO and is replaced by the Contractor Representative.

21. Could not meeting Key Performance Measures (KPMs) lead to termination of the contract?

Failure to meet KPMs would not automatically lead to termination. KPMs are intended to support contract management, performance monitoring and continuous improvement. Where performance issues arise, DFAT would generally seek to understand the cause and work with the institution on appropriate remedies or improvement actions. Persistent or serious non-performance may have contractual consequences, which could include escalation and, in significant cases, termination rights under the DOSO.