

Independent Progress Report

Australia Awards in Pakistan Independent Progress Report

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The findings contained in this report are those of the Independent Progress Report Team and are not necessarily those of AusAID

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List of Acronyms

AA:	Australia Awards
AAP:	Australia Awards in Pakistan Program
ACIAR:	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ADA-P:	Australian Development Awards in Pakistan
ADS:	Australian Development Scholarships ¹
APARDS:	Australia Pakistan Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy
APAS:	Australia Pakistan Agriculture Scholarships
APSP:	Australia Pakistan Scholarships Program
ASA-Pakistan:	AusAID Scholarships Alumni - Pakistan
AUD:	Australian Dollar
AusAID:	Australian Agency for International Development
CPA:	Contractor Performance Assessment
DIAC:	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DIISRTE:	Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education
EAD:	Economic Affairs Division
EC:	Executive Committee
EOI:	Expression of Interest
FA:	Foundation Awards
FAI:	Foundation Awards Initiative
FATA:	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
GOA:	Government of Australia
GOP:	Government of Pakistan
HR:	Human Resources
HRD:	Human Resource Development
IAP:	Introductory Academic program
IELTS:	International English Language Testing System
IPR:	Independent Progress Report
IT:	Information Technology
KP:	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MC:	Managing Contractor
M&E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG:	Millennium Development Goal
MoU:	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO:	Non-Government Organisation
NIC:	National Identity Card
OASIS:	Online Australian Scholarships Information System
PCE:	Pre-Course English
PDB:	Pre-Departure Briefing
PDD:	Program Design Document
PDM:	Program Delivery Mentor
PM:	Project Manager
PWD:	People with disabilities (or working with people with disabilities)
ReAP:	Reintegration Action Plan
RTO:	Registered Training Organisations
SASP:	South Asia Scholarships Program
SOS:	Scope of Services

¹ Now known as Australia Awards Scholarships

SMR: Six-Monthly Report
TOR: Terms of Reference

Executive Summary

The IPR team centred its investigations on the 12 evaluative questions posed by the Terms of Reference (TOR). In gathering information to respond to these questions, the Independent Progress Report (IPR) team identified a number of key issues that directly or indirectly impacted on formulating appropriate response. These key issues included:

- The need to rationalise the logic associated with various program targets (such targets were not always mutually compatible);
- The need to refocus program decision making on achieving development effectiveness outcomes (rather than academic outcomes);
- The need to respond to both partner demand and development effectiveness considerations by expanding the levels of courses offered by both long and short term awards (particularly in relation to being more inclusive of vocational/technical courses);
- The need to increase the availability of short courses;
- The need to rationalise the range of partners engaged under the Human Resource Development Initiative (to focus on the non-government sector) and intensify support given to Human Resource Development partner organisations;
- The need to recognise that it is appropriate for the program to be selective in regard to whom it provides awards (i.e. it does not need to treat everyone 'equally'), provided that the policies directing this selectivity are transparently stated and available;
- The need to choose other Australia Awards programs that are contextually similar to Pakistan (e.g. South Asia, rather than Philippines or Vietnam), when attempting to introduce Australia Award initiatives that have succeeded elsewhere;
- The need to explore means of increasing the profile of the program as a whole using means that do not directly relate to the solicitation of applications;
- Various issues associated with approaches to alumni and the Alumni Association, mostly focussed on ensuring that funding is directed towards directly improving the development effectiveness of alumni;
- The need to streamline AusAID Oversight of the program, including the removal of redundant contractor performance assessment formats in favour of performance update formats;
- Various risk management issues, including those related to staff and participant safety;
- The need to improve the demand-driven basis of Australia Pakistan Agricultural Scholarships (APAS) short course design, including through improved early participation by the Australian Council for Agricultural Research (ACIAR);
- The need to address use of currently underspent funds.

In more general terms, if the Australia Awards in Pakistan (AAP) program is considered as a whole (including both Australian Development Scholarships (ADS)/Australian

Leadership Award Scholarship (ALAS) and Australia Pakistan Agriculture Scholarships (APAS) components),² no clear rationale for either significantly increasing or decreasing annual award numbers is evident. While it is recognised that there will always be a huge unmet demand for this type of assistance in Pakistan, the 100 or so Australia Awards provided to Pakistan each year remains a significant single-country allocation from the perspective of the global AusAID parent program, and the operational constraints and political uncertainties faced in the Pakistan context would suggest that it is not an appropriate point in time to be considering any significant scale-up. Hence, the team have attempted to keep any suggestions affecting the overall scale of the program modest.³

The scope of the operational activities currently implemented under the program appears appropriate, despite its sometimes falling short of that proposed in the original design, particularly in relation to Human Resource Development activities.⁴

AusAID satisfaction with the Managing Contractor is generally high, and the IPR team's assessment of their performance finds no significant failings in regard to their delivery of the processes and tasks assigned to them. Likewise, AusAID direction of the program, from both Post and Desk, has been both considered and appropriate. Given this, the IPR team cannot identify any need to change program management arrangements in the foreseeable future and therefore recommends the extension of the current Managing Contractor contract for the full option period.

However, the above findings do not imply that either the Managing Contractor's implementation or AusAID's direction to date has been flawless, and the IPR team will suggest adjustments to some of the approaches adopted by the program.⁵ Of these, the most significant are prompted by less than feasible design requirements⁶ and recent changes to centralised AusAID policy.⁷ A proportion do result, however, from a need to arbitrate between the Managing Contractor's natural desire to innovate and (an often wise) caution by AusAID staff to allow certain activities⁸ to proceed before their policy-basis has been reviewed.

The program is currently underspent by about 30% of its total budget, but a high proportion of this underspend can be attributed to a very marked increase in the exchange rate in favour of the Australian dollar. Of the remainder, responsibility may be shared between the significant over-costing of certain elements within the design, a

² All now combined into a single award known as Australia Award.

³ Viz. limited to the provision of one additional short course per annum – see 2.4.

⁴ See 2.5.

⁵ Mainly in relation to HRD initiatives, alumni support and Monitoring and Evaluation systems – see 2.5, 2.9 and 2.11.

⁶ E.g. becoming engaged in HRD planning within government agencies – see 2.5.

⁷ E.g. Australia Awards branding and Monitoring and Evaluation systems.

⁸ Particularly those to which the Commonwealth Procurement Rules may have implications or other transparency or 'value-for-money' considerations may apply.

failure of the Managing Contractor to adjust for this in budget revisions and AusAID caution associated with approving implementation of untested or new approaches.

The IPR team suggests that a proportion of underspent funds be redirected towards improving the quality of activities that fall within the current scope of the program. The remainder should be returned for reallocation. Further, as APAS is an existing part of the program, the team recommends that, on its completion, underspent funds be used to absorb the numbers of both long and short course APAS awards into the core program.

In line with these findings, the IPR makes a set of 18 recommendations:

Recommendation 1

AAP adopt an application solicitation strategy that directly targets other AusAID programs in Pakistan, and as far as is practical, AAP provide training to the personnel of relevant programs in identifying good candidates (in line with Desired Applicant Profiles) and in assisting their identified candidates to complete application forms and processes.

Recommendation 2

The Managing Contractor adopt a much broader definition of ‘policy’⁹ and collect relevant examples of development contributions from alumni to form the raw data that may contribute to measuring the overall development outcomes of the program.

Recommendation 3

The Managing Contractor shift the emphasis of public relations material from the individuals themselves to the development-related contributions they have made and adopt a comprehensive ‘no names – no faces’ policy in relation to publication of alumni information in program material on any public fora.

Recommendation 4

The proposed small grants scheme for alumni be revised, for approval by AusAID, to reflect the following:

- a) While grant proposals are sourced from alumni, the grants are not awarded to these individuals but to their work units and address a work-***

⁹ To date, ‘policy’ has been taken to include only formal, high-level government policy. This interpretation is far too narrow, with the original definition of this term being inclusive of any form or level of forethought that affects practice. This includes research, development of training materials or manuals, and even basic work planning or scheduling.

related constraint that was preventing utilisation of the alumni's skills or knowledge;

- b) All small grant proposals will be assessed competitively in relation to their ability to allow alumni to increase their contribution to one or more of the program's development objectives. (This would not preclude proposals for further study provided they demonstrate that the study would produce tangible and immediate contributions to a development outcome that relates to the program's objectives);*
- c) Applicants must be members of the alumni association;*
- d) The alumni association's Executive Board may be required to rank proposals, but not make the final selection.*

Recommendation 5

Pre-departure, the Managing Contractor should routinely encourage awardees to think about what materials relating to Pakistan they might need during their studies, and to assemble these and take them with them to Australia.

Recommendation 6

Awardees be encouraged by the Managing Contractor to be proactive before departure about seeking accommodation.

Recommendation 7

In order to streamline AusAID oversight, an 'exceptions reporting' approach be adopted, whereby one main Contractor Performance Assessment is conducted each year, with an intervening (six monthly) update used to record any significant changes or newly arising issues/concerns.

Recommendation 8

Suitably qualified Managing Contractor staff be allowed to attend selection interviews as observers, and provide additional advice to the formal panel (only) when they deem it necessary to improve selection outcomes. The formal panel should be required to consider this additional advice, but would remain at liberty to use it as they deem fit.

Recommendation 9

Both AAP and APAS should consider approaching Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section for an exemption from standard Australia Awards policy that would allow long term awards to be inclusive of both postgraduate and vocational courses (but not undergraduate degrees), and

revised desired applicant profiles should then be amended to allow for this greater range of long term award course options.

Recommendation 10

Consideration be given to introducing short course awards into the main AAP program for Pakistan for 2014 – 15; and that as a short term measure an additional short course for about 20 participants be delivered under the APAS program in 2013 using underspent funds. This course would serve as a pilot for future introduction of vocational level train-the-trainer short courses.

Recommendation 11

A proportion of underspent funds be used for the following purposes:

- *Maintaining the current numbers of awards (including APAS) beyond the completion of the APAS program;*
- *Intensification of assistance to Human Resource Development partner civil society organisations, including possible additional temporary staff support or training opportunities for the Managing Contractor;*
- *Addition of one or more additional organisations (whether public or private) for intensive organisational support that have a cross-sectoral focus related to women's empowerment (see section 2.12 below);*
- *The development impact of alumni strengthened by revision and possible expansion of the proposed small grants scheme, so as to provide for the grant to be made to the organisation on the basis of a competitive application initiated by the alumni;*
- *A pilot vocationally-oriented train-the-trainer short course to be delivered in the first instance under the APAS Program (and then absorbed into the core program);*
- *Remaining under spent funds should be returned for reallocation.*

Recommendation 12

Consideration be given to:

- *Facilitating the meeting of cross cutting gender and disability targets by adopting a more flexible approach to seeking applications from women and from people with disabilities (or working with people with disabilities) and to their shortlisting so that shortlisted applicants are not limited to those from the priority geographic areas;*

- *The Managing Contractor identifying one or more additional organisations (whether public or private) that have a sectoral or cross-sectoral focus related to women's empowerment; and*
- *Inviting the selected organisation(s) to undergo critical appraisal with a view to including them as partners in the HRD Initiative.*

Recommendation 13

The AAP program establish stronger ongoing linkages with the Australia Awards in South Asia program, at both AusAID and program staff levels. This should include (as a minimum), Pakistan awards staff (AusAID and Managing Contractor), participating as observers in the general forums and coordination meetings currently held by the Australia Awards in South Asia program.

Recommendation 14

The program's M&E systems be modified to comply with the new AusAID centralised guidance as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 15

The HRD initiative should proceed, provided:

- *The current focus of limiting such HRD partnerships to organisations within the NGO and/or private sector is continued for the foreseeable future; without an onus on the program to eventually expand this initiative into government agencies;*
- *The assistance provided to partner organisations is significantly boosted and focussed on train-the-trainer, institutional strengthening, rather than direct assistance to individual applicants or potential applicants (refer to text of report for more detailed explanation and examples).*

Recommendation 16

The current Managing Contractor's contract be extended for the full option period.

Recommendation 17

A roles and responsibilities table should be developed between AusAID, the Managing Contractor and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) to more clearly define the expectations placed on each partner in regard to APAS processes. This should include:

- *Allowing ACIAR to have a greater role in developing basic ‘course outlines’ for the proposed mix of vocational or postgraduate level APAS short courses;*
- *An initial orientation meeting between ACIAR representatives and the consultant contracted by the Managing Contractor who carries out the short-listing of applicants for APAS short courses, to be conducted before the consultant begins their work.*

Recommendation 18

A formalised system of critical incident management be introduced, including:

- *A critical incidents register;*
- *The establishment of a standing ‘critical incidents team’ made up of specifically identified individuals from Desk, Post, Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section, Department of Immigration and Citizenship and any other relevant organisations.*

1. Background

AusAID has provided awards to Pakistan since 1991. Scholarship numbers increased dramatically from around 15 per year in FY 2005-06 to around 50 per year in FY 2009-10, due to the commencement of the Australia Pakistan Scholarships Program (APSP)¹⁰ in FY 2006-07. Under the APSP, Australia provided a total of 170 Masters and 30 PhD scholarships over five years. This commitment was underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding between the governments of Pakistan and Australia. The APSP ended in 2010.

In 2008, AusAID began to rationalise and streamline its approach to awards in order to increase the development focus and to improve management and administrative efficiency of the awards program. All scholarship programs available to Pakistan at that time were either concluded or merged under the Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) banner. These scholarship programs included: the Carnegie Mellon Scholarships Program which ended in 2008, the Centre for Transnational Crime Prevention Scholarships Program and the Agriculture Sector Linkages Program both of which ended in 2009.

AusAID's awards program in Pakistan was outsourced to a Managing Contractor, Coffey International Development Pty Limited, in December 2009. The scope of the program design was then revised to fit more closely with the Government of Pakistan's development priorities and the geographic focus was aligned with Australia's strategic approach to development in Pakistan.

In September 2009, Australia's then Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs announced an additional 100 agriculture awards to Pakistan, following on from the Friends of Democratic Pakistan Summit. The four year Australia Pakistan Agriculture Scholarships (APAS) program comprises both Masters awards and Short Course awards. The APAS Masters commenced in 2010 and the short course awards commenced in 2011.

The contract of the Managing Contractor for the outsourced program initially covered a period of two years (ending in November 2011), with provision to extend for a further two years. The contract was subsequently extended to November 2013 to cover the management of the APAS. The extension contains a provision for a further extension under the 'Options Period' of the contract.

The main purpose of the Mid-Term Review is to assess how effectively and efficiently the program is being implemented by both Coffey and by AusAID Islamabad Post, with a

¹⁰ Now known as Australia Awards in Pakistan (AAP).

view to strengthening processes for the remainder of the contract period; and to inform AusAID's decision making regarding the options period of the contract.

2. Responses to Specific Questions from TOR

Question 2.1 (Relevance)

Review the extent of cohesion with external aid environment and corporate requirements, and advise on any implications for the program's focus and management. Examples of corporate requirements include the absence of a formal Country Strategy, AusAID Canberra-led consolidation process, branding, greater focus on monitoring and communicating impacts of scholarships.

Note: many of the responses to later questions also provide detailed discussion and recommendations on the issues raised in this initial question (see below).

Generally, there is room for substantial improvement in the cohesion between AAP's operating environment and various AusAID policies, but the program is already actively seeking these reforms.

In regard to recently forthcoming Australia Awards policy, this alignment is already well underway (with the exception of nascent revisions to centralised M&E approaches to scholarship programs that have not yet been widely released – see 2.10).

However, there are also logical limits to which coherence with centralised policy should be attained. The high level of security risk extant in the Pakistan context means that some promotional or communications approaches that would be appropriate in most countries may contradict higher level 'Do No Harm' principles by putting participants or program staff at potential risk. Such contextual security considerations must therefore be given precedence over generalised central policies in designing AAP approaches (see also 2.8).

Regardless of the absence of a formal Country Strategy, AusAID has a broader portfolio of programs and activities in Pakistan. This portfolio of programs is the unambiguous embodiment of AusAID's strategy for Pakistan. As a provider of development-oriented capacity-building opportunities, AAP should seek to integrate with other AusAID programs by making the training tools it provides (i.e. both long and short term awards) available for use by these programs. In real terms this would mean actively targeting other AusAID programs in application solicitation, wherever this matches the objectives and desired applicant profiles of AAP. There are also significant potential benefits to AAP in this approach, as the other AusAID programs could be trained to identify good candidates and assist them to complete applications; thereby increasing the overall quality of applications received. The referral of a candidate application from another AusAID program would also provide one of the only feasible means of adding another

layer of vetting of candidates, and therefore constitute enhanced risk management in this respect (see 2.4). The relationships between AAP and other AusAID programs would therefore be very similar to that proposed by the program (and slightly modified by this IPR) for Non-Government Organisation (NGO) HRD partner organisations - see 2.11/2.12). Again, this is entirely appropriate, as even in the absence of a formal Country Strategy, all AusAID programs in Pakistan are already partners in an implicit AusAID strategy.

Recommendation 1

AAP adopt an application solicitation strategy that directly targets other AusAID programs in Pakistan, and as far as is practical, AAP provide training to the personnel of relevant programs in identifying good candidates (in line with Desired Applicant Profiles) and in assisting their identified candidates to complete application forms and processes.

Question 2.2 (Effectiveness)

The extent to which the scholarship programs ADS and APAS are aligned behind their goals and objectives.

As there are differences between the goals and objectives of ADS and APAS, this section first refers to 'ADS' (now Australia Awards), and then to APAS.

ADS: The goal, purpose and four objectives for the Pakistan awards programs were stated as:¹¹

“Goal: To improve sustainable, pro-poor service delivery and governance,¹² primarily within the three designated priority sectors ((i) maternal, neonatal and child health services (MDGs 4 and 5), (ii) basic education services (MDG 2) & (iii) rural development and food security (MDG 1)), in Baluchistan, FATA and NWFP.

Purpose: To improve technical and leadership capacity of men and women working in federal and provincial governments, non-profit civil society, and the private sector primarily within three designated priority sectors in Baluchistan, FATA and NWFP, and increase the visibility of the ADS program.

Scholarship Objectives: (for the period 2009-13)

The above Purpose will be achieved by providing Pakistan with AusAID alumni who can make personal and institutional, development contributions to Pakistan under the following four objectives:

Objective 1. Within federal and provincial government agencies: AusAID Alumni increasing the development and application of appropriate

¹¹ Design Document for the Pakistan Scholarships Program May 2009, p. 14.

¹² AusAID's governance approach is broken into five main areas: enhancing economic management; strengthening the rule of law; improving public sector management; strengthening democratic institutions and processes; and strengthening civil society.

policy and practice for service delivery in the three designated sectors,¹³ particularly those within the priority provinces.¹⁴

Objective 2. Within non-profit civil society and development organisations:

- a) AusAID Alumni increasing advocacy and engagement with Government, particularly in the three designated sectors and targeted provinces.
- b) AusAID Alumni increasing the development and application of appropriate policy and practices in relation to service delivery, particularly in the three designated sectors and targeted provinces.

Objective 3. Within commercial private sector organisations: AusAID Alumni increasing the development and application of appropriate policy and practice relating to corporate governance¹⁵ and delivery of services.

Objective 4. Increased visibility of the AusAID scholarship program in Pakistan.”

This goal, purpose and four objectives have remained unchanged until the time of the IPR, as is reflected in the Annual Plans for 2011 and 2012.

The first three objectives are focussed on achieving quite specific development-related outcomes.¹⁶ In each case, they refer to ‘policies and practices’ developed or applied by alumni. These words were specifically used by the Program Design Document (PDD) to simplify the task of measuring achievement of the objectives. Any example provided by an alumnus of a policy or practice they had worked on would therefore form the raw qualitative data that could then be aggregated by sector or other targets to provide indications of overall development outcomes of the program.

In application, there appears to have been some confusion as to the definitions of these terms, particularly in regard to ‘policy’. To date, ‘policy’ has been taken to include only formal, high-level government policy. This interpretation is far too narrow, with the original definition of this term being inclusive of any form or level of forethought that affects practice. This includes research, development of training materials or manuals, and even basic work planning or scheduling. For example, a small NGO that helped a local school put in place a set of standard procedures and/or a roster for cleaning of latrines would legitimately be ‘developing policy’ and this would be an ideal example to include in the program’s outcome-level dataset.¹⁷ It should also be noted that the

¹³ The three designated sectors are (i) maternal, neonatal and child health services (MDGs 4 and 5), (ii) basic education services (MDG 2) & (iii) rural development and food security (MDG 1)

¹⁴ The three priority provinces are Baluchistan, FATA and the NWFP(KP).

¹⁵ As benchmarked in the *OECD Principles of Corporate Governance, 2004*, which cover: the basis for an effective corporate governance framework including transparency, efficiency, rule of law and effective regulation and supervision; the rights of shareholders and key ownership functions; the equitable treatment of shareholders; the role of stakeholders; disclosure and transparency; and board responsibilities.

¹⁶ The fourth being added for a contextual purpose – see 2.8.

¹⁷ And could legitimately be reported against both Basic Education and Child Health target areas.

definition of ‘practice’ also includes delivery of training, so that the act of alumni passing on their knowledge is also counted as an appropriate development contribution.

Recommendation 2

The Managing Contractor adopt a much broader definition of ‘policy’ and collect relevant examples of development contributions from alumni to form the raw data that may contribute to measuring the overall development outcomes of the program.

Objective 4 is different in character and was provided separately to reinforce the message provided in the PDD that promotion of the program **need not be directly linked to activities designed to attract applications**. (See Section 2.3 for further discussion and examples.) In terms of the design, this objective has evolved over the period 2010 – 2012, as the variety of scholarships that were previously offered were replaced by a single Australia Award to strengthen the marketing image and reduce complexity.

APAS: The Australian Pakistan Agricultural Scholarships (APAS) program announced by the Australian Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs on 25 September 2009, consists of both long and short term awards focused on the agricultural sector. They are intended to target the following priority fields:

- Pro-poor market development in rural areas;
- Rural economic and market reforms; and
- Irrigation and water resource management.

The objectives of APAS are stated to be:¹⁸

“Objective 1 - AusAID APAS Alumni within key Pakistan agriculture research and policy institutions (both public and private) develop sound policy relevant to the priority fields, particularly where this aligns with the capacity building objectives of the Australia Pakistan Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (APARDS).

Objective 2 - AusAID APAS Alumni within key Pakistan agriculture research and policy institutions (both public and private) apply sound policy relevant to the priority fields, particularly where this aligns with the capacity building objectives of the APARDS.

Objective 3 - Recognition of Australia as an active partner in Pakistan’s agricultural development.”

Six long term awardees were selected in 2010 for 2011 intake, of whom 5 took up their awards for Master’s programs in fields that align with APAS objectives.¹⁹ Eight were awarded and took up their award for Master’s programs in 2012 intake and another

¹⁸ Australia Pakistan Agricultural Scholarships Short Course Awards 2001-12 Annual Report/2012 – 13 Annual Plan, p. 3.

¹⁹ ADS – Pakistan 2nd Annual Plan 2011, Annex 6 Final List of ADS and APAS Awardees.

eight were offered to take up their award for Master's program for 2013 intake. One Short Course had been implemented and awardees were in Australia attending it at the time of the IPR team's visit to Islamabad. Whilst some difficulties were experienced in identifying the appropriate participants and in negotiating the specification of the course design, overall the course aligned closely with APAS' identified priority field "pro-poor market development in rural areas."

Applications were guided by two desired profiles and all selected participants met the eligibility criteria of the profiles. Gender equality was not achieved, however, as only 12% of selectees were female. Gender Equality targets are not applied on APAS as per the design of the APAS program.

The team assesses that, overall, both the ADS and APAS in implementation have been aligned closely behind their objectives.

Question 2.3 (Effectiveness)

Analyse the following subjects entailed from the 2009 design in achieving the stated objectives:

- **On-going promotion, scholarships selection process, M&E and alumni strategies; and**
- **Management arrangements for program administration.**

Promotion: The program's approach to promotion has been strongly linked to the process of attracting potential applicants for awards. *The Promotion and Communications Plan* for 2012 emphasises targeting potential candidates through a range of promotional tools including a website, promotional material, advertisements, networking (including the Alumni Network) and scholar recognition and reintegration.²⁰ Two new tools to be developed in 2012 are a promotional video and alumni video profiles. Although the Managing Contractor's innovation in actively promoting the program is commendable, the team has concerns both about the somewhat narrow interpretation of promotion in terms of seeking applications (rather than visibility of the program more broadly). The visibility of the program more broadly will become more important in the future with the Australia Awards branding.

As noted above, Objective 4 was intended to reinforce the message provided in the PDD that promotion of the program *need not* be directly linked to activities designed to attract applications. This approach was adopted by the PDD in recognition of the security concerns confronting Pakistan and the stated preferences of some alumni for anonymity, which have been reconfirmed by IPR team consultations.

²⁰ Pakistan Scholarships Program 2011 Annual Report/2012 Annual Plan, p. 33.

Objective 4 effectively encourages the program to allocate resources to promotion of the program through more general media releases, events and submission of articles or segments for potential publication in print or broadcast media. This must all be conducted within the branding requirements of the Australia Awards communications guidance, but it should be noted that such guidance needs to present options that cover all country contexts and it is the responsibility of country programs not to blindly implement options that are inappropriate or dangerous in their particular operating environment.

The program currently takes steps to protect the identity of applicants and alumni in most circumstances. A comprehensive 'no names – no faces' policy should be adopted in relation to publication of program material on any public fora, including in relevant reports, promotional material and websites.

In real terms, this would mean shifting the emphasis of public relations material from the individual themselves to the development-related contributions they have made. Any photos used in promotional material would be of these contributions, rather than of the individual alumni. This may well disappoint some alumni who may welcome the opportunity to self-promote. However this sacrifice is necessary both to protect those for whom self-promotion is unwelcome and to ensure the program remains focussed on reporting against development effectiveness objectives, rather than on benefits to the individual. The team considers that simply asking for an alumni's permission for publication of their name or photo is not an acceptable option. The level of gratitude and associated obligation that a candidate/alumni may feel to the program when being considered for, or having received, an award could easily prevent them responding to such requests in a manner that protects their own interests.

In terms of directly soliciting applications, there is scope for an additional approach that could complement other approaches, namely, to seek the cooperation of other AusAID funded programs in Pakistan in sourcing applications (see 2.1). Personnel working on such programs could be encouraged to identify suitable candidates and support them in making good, credible applications.

Recommendation 3

The Managing Contractor shift the emphasis of public relations material from the individual themselves to the development-related contributions they have made and adopt a comprehensive 'no names – no faces' policy in relation to publication of alumni information in program material on any public fora.

Scholarships selection process: The PDD stipulates that the new ADS profiles (1 – 4) will improve the targeting of applicants and promote transparency, fairness and accountability. Through these profiles it envisages that the ADS will have clear selection criteria that will be applied through a selection process that includes external, independent members. The profiles were to be progressively refined by AusAID to accommodate emerging priorities, with the selection criteria being applied by the ADS selection panel. The Managing Contractor is required to support the selection process

through arrangements for the panel venues, contracting external members and providing the secretarial services, but was not permitted to have any voting or selection responsibilities. Selection panels are chaired by AusAID.²¹ The application of this process was verified by the IPR team. To date the profiles have not as yet been refined. However there may be a need to refine these, or the targets associated with them, if approval is given for full implementation of the HRD Initiative as recommended in this report (see 2.12 below).

M&E: The PDD specifies²² that AusAID Post, AusAID Australian Scholarships Group and the Managing Contractor all have responsibilities for M&E. The Managing Contractor's responsibilities include developing and implementing an M&E system for the program.

At the strategic/policy level key features of the M&E system are:²³

- QAI 2011 and 2012
- CPA 2011 and CPA 2012
- Tracer Study 2011
- M&E Review 2012.

Among the key findings of the Tracer Study were that:²⁴

- The majority of alumni have chosen to remain in Pakistan after returning;
- 90% of alumni are in employment. Many alumni, particularly public sector alumni, return to their previous organisations while almost all take six months or less to find employment;
- At least 60% of alumni are in jobs relevant to their study, although figures are lower for alumni in the public sector;
- Female alumni are disproportionately working in the NGO/multilateral sector and, to a lesser extent, in the private sector.

A further Tracer Study is planned for 2014.

The Managing Contractor's process monitoring also focuses on analysis of feedback forms for Foundation Awards, ADS and APAS applicants, as well as ADS and APAS Pre departure briefing feedback.

A further assessment of the program's M&E is presented in section 2.10 and 2.11.

²¹ Pakistan Scholarships Program Design Document, May 2009, p. 42.

²² P. 46.

²³ Powerpoint presentation to IPR team by Abu Rehan.

²⁴ Pakistan Scholarships Program 2011 Annual Report/2012 Annual Plan, p. 24.

Alumni strategies: Progress by the program towards reinvigorating engagement with alumni has been very successful to date. Alumni consulted by the IPR team suggested that there had been a great deal of recent improvement over the past year. However, a significant amount of work remains to be carried out in this area, especially in relation to rendering alumni engagement sustainable and actively strengthening alumni contributions to the objectives of the program.

In regard to the formal Alumni Association, it should be noted that lessons from other programs very strongly suggest that creating an alumni association ‘for its own sake’ is never a self-sustaining option. Other programs are shifting focus towards helping alumni establish what are effectively ‘Professional Associations’ (while still retaining the Alumni Association name). This means much more than just provision of occasional professional development opportunities. Successful examples of such professional associations (beyond scholarship programs) routinely encompass employment services, consultancy arms and other profit-taking enterprises. These types of enterprises create engagement incentives for individual members, but also provide a basis for the continued existence of the association itself.

In regard to improving the development effectiveness of alumni, a small grants scheme has already been proposed. The IPR team supports the implementation of this scheme; potentially even in an expanded form, but only if a number of adjustments are made to the current proposals. These adjustments include:

- While grant proposals are still sourced from alumni, the grants should not be awarded to these individuals, but to their ‘work units’.²⁵ Hence, proposals would need to address a work-related constraint that was preventing their utilisation of new skills or knowledge. The benefits of this approach are many. Most importantly, it attempts to address the most common constraint reported by alumni to achievement of relevant development contributions after their return; namely a lack of support from their immediate superiors. By rendering alumni potential conduits for resources, they are not only able to suggest initiatives to their supervisors, but also assist in funding them. This approach is also less of a fiducial risk, as organisations are more likely to be able to provide proper acquittals in relation to their use of grant funds.
- All proposals for grants should be assessed in relation to their ability to allow alumni to increase their contribution to one or more of the program’s development-oriented objectives. This is a very important constraint. As discussed further in 2.1 and 2.10, the program should not be funding proposals

²⁵ This does not exclude self-employed alumni.

that primarily have a personal benefit to an individual. Note that this would not preclude proposals for further study by an alumnus, but such proposals would need to demonstrate a direct link to a development outcome described by the programs objectives, and it would be appropriate in selection processes to discount 'possible longer term' returns in favour of proposals that could produce tangible and immediate contributions.

- The ability of alumni to apply for a small grant should be linked to their membership of the Alumni Association, and the Association's Executive Board may be required to rank proposals (in accordance with the above criterion), but not make final selection. This suggestion will encourage association membership and ensure that the program maintains transparency and accountability standards required by the Australian National Audit Office.

Note that it would be unwise to promote the availability of these small grants other than to alumni. An exception might be made in regard to HRD initiative partners, but no other organisation-focused promotion should be undertaken (to prevent alumni being pressured by superiors into making applications).

Recommendation 4

The proposed small grants scheme for alumni be revised, for approval by AusAID, to reflect the following:

- e) While grant proposals are sourced from alumni, the grants are not awarded to these individuals but to their work units and address a work-related constraint that was preventing utilization of the alumni's skills or knowledge;***
- f) All small grant proposals will be assessed competitively in relation to their ability to allow alumni to increase their contribution to one or more of the program's development objectives. (This would not preclude proposals for further study provided they demonstrate that the study would produce tangible and immediate contributions to a development outcome that relates to the program's objectives);***
- g) Applicants must be members of the Alumni Association;***
- h) The Alumni Association's Executive Board may be required to rank proposals, but not make the final selection.***

A number of alumni commented on the shortage of research material related to Pakistan that they could access whilst on award in Australian universities.

Recommendation 5

Pre-departure, the Managing Contractor should routinely encourage scholars to think about what materials relating to Pakistan they might need during their studies, and to assemble these and take them with them to Australia.

Alumni also commented on the difficulty and stress of finding accommodation on arrival in Australia. For example one alumnus researched the accommodation options in Melbourne using the internet so that on arrival he was able to focus his search. He found this helpful.

Recommendation 6

Scholars be encouraged by the Managing Contractor to be proactive before departure about seeking accommodation.

Management arrangements for program administration:

The PDD provides for AusAID to have overall responsibility in terms of the relationship and communications with the GOP; approval of the Managing Contractor's promotional approach, content and methods, and budget; finalising priorities and weighting; chairing and managing, with support from the Managing Contractor, the shortlisting and selection process for Awards and Foundation Awards; confirming a central coordination point for the Managing Contractor with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC); contributing a pre-departure briefing session; decisions on extensions or variations of scholarships; hosting/facilitating alumni events; and conducting an Annual Contractor Performance Review.

The Managing Contractor was to provide a single point of contact for the management and implementation of all other responsibilities with a senior-level person readily available to AusAID. The Managing Contractor's team was to include a good balance of technical, managerial and public relations/communications capabilities, as well as model good gender balance.

These arrangements are reflected in the Managing Contractor's Scope of Services, and are judged to have worked well overall. However, from the Managing Contractor's perspective, challenges faced have included:

1. Obtaining timely responses from AusAID, especially for HRD related matters;
2. Consolidation of comments from AusAID on documents;
3. Obtaining feedback from Post on strategic policy level recommendations regarding the Tracer Study findings of 2011.

From an AusAID perspective, the oversight of the Managing Contractor has been burdensome and stretched the staff resources at the AusAID Post who are currently required to conduct two program level Contractor Performance Assessments (CPAs) and

one AusAID initiated across agency Contractor assessment (QAI), a total of three in one year.

Recommendation 7

In order to streamline AusAID oversight, an exceptions reporting approach be adopted, where by one main CPA is conducted each year, with an intervening (six monthly) update used to record any significant changes or newly arising issues/concerns.

With this approach the strain on AusAID resources to monitor performance will be reduced without compromising on Managing Contractor oversight. This could contribute to AusAID's capacity to provide a more coordinated and timely response to the Managing Contractor's requests for AusAID approvals.

Question 2.4 (Efficiency)

Assess the performance of the current Managing Contractor, in particular the technical inputs provided and roles played by its key professional personnel.

The performance of the Managing Contractor in 2010 and 2011 has been subjected to formal CPAs by AusAID.²⁶ Both assessments reflect a strong performance by the Managing Contractor overall, particularly in 2011. Critical performance factors are: Personnel Management, Program Management, Risk Management, and Specific Criteria.

The roles and responsibilities of the Managing Contractor, AusAID and the GOP are clearly set out in the PDD. Despite this, the Post had been involved to a greater than expected extent with implementation of the Program.²⁷ The CPAs provide clear evidence that the Managing Contractor's performance has improved significantly and has achieved a reasonably high level of efficiency. The quality and timeliness of activity milestones and deliverables was rated as satisfactory by both AusAID and the Managing Contractor in 2010, and they did not generally require substantial reworking.

Technical Inputs: Early issues that have since been rectified were the timing of interviews and of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) tests for the 2011 intake. Some inefficiencies in the shortlisting were judged to have occurred as a result of the compressed time frame for shortlisting, which may have resulted in the shortlisting of some candidates who were actually ineligible, and possibly some good candidates being overlooked. The short period between shortlisting and commencing interviews meant that candidates only received 3 – 4 days' notice before having to take their IELTS test. Some candidates felt that this allowed insufficient preparation time and may have resulted in some otherwise high scoring shortlisted candidates missing out on

²⁶ Contractor Performance Assessment – Discussion Guide and Record for the period 24.11.2009 – 24.11.2010; 2011 AusAID Annual Contractors Performance Assessment.

²⁷ Quality at Implementation Report for Scholarships Islamabad ADS 2011 Intake, p. 5.

an award. A particular issue of concern was that, after the interviews had concluded, the Managing Contractor team overlooked the IELTS eligibility requirement of a 6.0 score or higher in each band for 13 awardees. This led to six awardees having to defer their scholarship to the second semester of 2011 and having to complete Pre-Course English training prior to actual course commencement.²⁸ Other issues were the lack of sufficient detail and a proper methodology in the first draft of TORs for the Tracer Study, and slow progress in initiating Foundation Awardees' Training for the first intake. The timing and planning of activities was identified as an area for improvement.²⁹ Another area in which inefficiencies occurred was in the implementation of the HRD Strategy. One of the strongest areas was identified as the alumni activities and network.

The team considered whether there would be merit in including in the selection panel the Team Leader or another suitably qualified member of the Managing Contractor staff, given their valuable local knowledge. The team also noted that the selection panel was already of a significant size. In the light of experience from other Australia Award programs, the team considered that the inclusion of any Managing Contractor staff in the panel would introduce two significant risks. Firstly, it could make such staff local targets for frustrations of people who failed to be selected. Secondly, as has been experienced in other countries, it could increase the potential for fraudulent behaviour by Managing Contractor staff. The team considered it was imperative to avoid exposing Managing Contractor staff to actual or perceived conflict of interest. The team considered that it would be acceptable, however, to allow selected Managing Contractor staff to attend interviews as "observers", and permit the Team Leader or the Program Delivery Mentor to provide confidential comments to the panel when they felt it was necessary.

Recommendation 8

Suitably qualified Managing Contractor staff be allowed to attend selection interviews as observers, and provide additional advice to the formal panel (only) when they deem it necessary to improve selection outcomes. The formal panel should be required to consider this additional advice, but would remain at liberty to use it as they deem fit.

In 2011 the Managing Contractor was assessed as having a very good team in place with clear roles and responsibilities.

The Managing Contractor's performance in risk management has been maintained at a high level throughout.³⁰ However a specific risk management issue identified by the IPR team

²⁸ Contractor Performance Assessment – Discussion Guide and Record for the period 24.11.2009 – 24.11.2010, Section 3, p. 7.

²⁹ Contractor Performance Assessment – Discussion Guide and Record for the period 24.11.2009 – 24.11.2010, p. 12.

³⁰ With the proviso that the contractor has not so far adopted a comprehensive 'no names – no faces' policy in relation to publication of program material on any public for a which the IPR recommends in section 2.3 to this report.

relates to a number of awardees applying for other visas to remain in Australia. This is not an uncommon problem in contexts similar to Pakistan, and is often met with calls to strengthen 'screening' of candidates. In reality, no screening process is ever likely to be successful in identifying who may eventually choose to apply for other visas. This is not least because many candidates are unaware of this option before they arrive in Australia and it is often the influences and information that they encounter while on-award that prompt attempts at using this avenue to gain permanent residency there. The fact that the program has target areas of Balochistan, FATA and KP unavoidably also increases the risk of application for other visas, as residents of these areas are likely to have the best potential cases for acquiring other visas. Apart from some basic and ongoing reinforcement of the financial implications of breaking the conditions of their award contract, there would appear to be little that can be practically done to mitigate this risk, short of removing the focus of the program on the three target geographic areas in Pakistan. The IPR team sees no other significant justification for amending this geographic focus, so would be reluctant to base a call for such an amendment on this risk alone.

Any discussion of efficiency would not be complete without taking into account the use of resources. In 2010 the financial input provided by the Managing Contractor was assessed by AusAID as reliable and timely, with accurate updates provided as and when requested by the Post. Under expenditure in the first 6 months was noted, and the Post indicated it would like to see an improvement in allocated budget utilisation for the remainder of that and in future financial years.³¹ The 2011 CPA rated the activity financial management as very good, and noted that the Managing Contractor had:

"... provided financial updates to AusAID as requested and regularly on a six monthly basis. The six monthly progress reports include a summary of the financial progress, actual and estimated expenditure to enable AusAID to keep a track of any over and under spends. The invoices are always on time and include accurate financial information. The expenditure estimates over the plan period are within the contract limits. However, the current estimates show there will likely be a total saving of approximately AUD 1,000,000 by the end of the contract. Main factors contributing to the savings are (i) the strong exchange rate of the Australian dollar, (ii) the over-costing of some reimbursable budget lines, (iii) the utilisation of Post administered Alumni Seed Fund, and (iv) delays in implementation of some activities in Year 1. Coffey have submitted a concept note outlining various options to make effective use of the savings. The concept note is currently being reviewed by AusAID."

³¹ Contractor Performance Assessment – Discussion Guide and Record for the period 24.11.2009 – 24.11.2010, p. 11, point 15.

The program was currently under spent by about AUD 1M, but a high proportion of this under spend can be attributed to the very marked increase in the exchange rate in favour of the Australian dollar. Of the remainder, responsibility may be shared between the significant over-costing of certain elements within the design, a failure of the Managing Contractor to adjust for this in budget revisions and (often justified) AusAID caution associated with approving implementation of untested or new approaches.

The IPR team suggests, as discussed further in section 2.6 below, that a proportion of under spent funds be redirected towards improving the quality of activities that fall within the current scope of the program. The remainder should be returned for reallocation. Further, as APAS is an existing part of the program, the team recommends that on its completion under spent funds be used to absorb the numbers of both long and short course APAS awards into the core program.

Question 2.5 (Efficiency)

Broad review of the advantages of the program in relation to those offered by other countries, to determine where AusAID can increase visibility and/or quality.

The AAP program is already regarded very highly in Pakistan. While it is difficult to assess this objectively, many stakeholders claim that Australian Awards are the most highly regarded, both by government and potential applicants. Reasons quoted to support this perspective are that the Australian Awards are generous in their entitlements (which allows recipients to focus on study), offer many more places and are more broadly accessible (selection being based on realistic, development-relevant 'profiles', rather than an exclusive, 'best of the best' academic bias).

There is also evidence that other scholarship programs, including the more 'prestigious' ones, have started to look towards the AusAID program to improve their own approaches and popularity. In particular, providing for a more focussed (profile-based) approach to selection, and removing unintentional barriers to participation, such as requirements for pre-application IELTS/TOFEL testing.

It must be acknowledged that most of the elements of the program mentioned above are derived from the PDD, and there has been a tendency, both by AusAID and program staff, to inadvertently weaken the focus and appropriate accessibility of selection of the program in favour of more academically-biased or administratively convenient, generic approaches. This issue is partially discussed under the response to Question 2.2 in relation to a need to maintain a stronger focus on the development related objectives of the program, but also applies to a reluctance to being seen to favour some candidates or organisations in selection preferences and other assistance provided.

It is a very common misconception held by both Managing Contractor and AusAID staff associated with scholarship programs that ‘all applicants must be treated equally’. While this is well intentioned, it is also patently impossible. All selection processes need to be selective. They *should* actively discriminate in favour of the applicants that are needed to meet the program’s objectives, and discriminate against those that are not able to do so. All programs routinely demonstrate their selectivity by defining desired applicant profiles and setting gender and other targets. In the context of the Pakistan program this also applies to engagement with partner organisations under the HRD initiative. To date, the program has been careful not to be seen to provide ‘unfair’ advantage to applicants from these partners and has avoided giving partners any intensive assistance. This has resulted in partners so far not receiving any full awards under the current program (although foundation awards have been provided).

Such an approach to partnership is counter-productive and unnecessary. Provided that the program is transparent in stating that it intends to give additional assistance to HRD partners, it may legitimately give them any level of assistance it wishes. Having said this, there remain a number of forms of assistance that it is probably inappropriate to provide under a HRD strengthening initiative. Providing direct third-party training to applicants from partners is potentially inappropriate both on efficiency grounds and in regard to avoiding duplication of the function of foundation awards. It also defeats the HRD strengthening intention of the initiative.

A more appropriate approach may be to target the HRD personnel of partners with training that they could then pass on to their own staff. This training should be provided directly by program staff to ensure it remains pertinent to AAP and could include coaching related to any topics relevant to completion of high quality, development-oriented applications (e.g. writing skills, development theory, understanding of the desired applicant profile and selection criteria, etc.), or interview techniques (e.g. presentation skills, self-confidence skills, etc.). In order to deliver this training to HRD personnel of partners, program staff should be able to use complementary external resources and/or undertake necessary related training themselves (see 2.11 & 2.12).

Other options for actively improving the level of participation of partners in the program include giving their approved applicants preference in regard to allocation of foundation awards (much like is already done for women), or giving such applicants a higher weighting in selection processes – but the latter should not be considered until other options have been shown to be ineffective. It should be noted that assigning ‘fixed quotas’ for partners is not an option.

Question 2.6 (Efficiency)

Assess the appropriateness of the current program scope and size with respect to administration arrangements with the Managing Contractor and the level of work being conducted on the program, additionally consider drawing lessons learnt from other donor run programs in country. (This is to draw comparison with programs like the British Chevening Scholarship and American Fulbright Scholarship.)

If the Australia Awards in Pakistan program is considered as a whole (including both 'ADS/ALAS' and APAS components), no clear rationale for either significantly increasing or decreasing annual award numbers is evident. While it is recognised that there will always be a huge unmet demand for this type of assistance in Pakistan, the 100 or so Australia Awards provided to Pakistan each year remains a significant single-country allocation from the perspective of the global AusAID parent program, and the operational constraints and political uncertainties faced in the Pakistan context would suggest that it is not an appropriate point in time to be considering any significant scale-up. Hence, the IPR team have attempted to keep any suggestions affecting the overall scale of the program modest.³²

The scope of the operational activities currently implemented under the program appears appropriate, despite it sometimes falling short of that proposed in the original design, particularly in relation to Human Resource Development activities.³³

AusAID satisfaction with the Managing Contractor is generally high, and the IPR team's assessment of its performance finds no significant failings in regard to its delivery of the processes and tasks assigned to it. Likewise, AusAID direction of the program, from both Post and Desk, has been both considered and appropriate. Given this, the IPR team cannot identify any need to change program management arrangements in the foreseeable future and therefore recommends the extension of the current Managing Contractor contract for the full option period (see Recommendation 16).

Some lack of clarity appears to have originated from comparing this AusAID program with other scholarship programs, such as Fulbright and Chevening. The Fulbright and Chevening programs are both academically-oriented and have their own education-related objectives and approaches. As demonstrated by its objectives, the AusAID Pakistan scholarship program is firmly focused on achievement of specific development outcomes. Hence, the fundamental decision rules for whether something should be carried out by this program are rightly markedly different.

Currently all courses offered under the Australia Awards in Pakistan Program are at postgraduate level. The IPR team notes that PhD awards concentrate a large investment in few individuals, and therefore considers that other levels of postgraduate award deliver better value for money. There may, however, be merit in including a number of split PhD level awards provided they are only offered to active researchers in academic

³² Viz. limited to the provision of one additional short course per annum – see 2.4.

³³ See 2.5.

and research institutions. In regard to long term awards, this is in-line with centralised AusAID policy on scholarships. In regard to the short course awards (offered under APAS), the postgraduate level appears to have been accepted as the default option. However, given that awards are being offered in less developed provinces of Pakistan, and in very practical fields (e.g. maternal, neonatal and child health; basic education; and rural development) that have a strong vocational focus, it appears highly counterproductive to artificially limit the educational and training opportunities provided to postgraduate levels.

This view is supported by alumni data that suggests many of the awardees sourced from Balochistan, FATA and KP have moved to the larger urban centres of Pakistan after return. Given the very low level of government or private enterprise taking place in the targeted provinces, it is very likely that this outflow of alumni is a natural and unavoidable consequence of very low demand for postgraduates within the employment markets in these provinces. Given the nascent state of these economies, it is also very likely that the economic rate of return on provision of technical skills will be higher than on postgraduate study in many of the fields targeted by the program.

Ensuring that any technical training provided is train-the-trainer oriented could further enhance this rate of return, and the lower academic entry requirements for many technical or vocational courses would provide far greater scope to address gender and disability targets, given that the program is unable to address the pre-existing inequities these groups generally face in relation to accessing higher levels of education.

While the IPR team does not suggest a complete change in focus towards technical or vocational training, it does recommend selectively relaxing requirements that all study or training must be postgraduate level. In regard to long-term awards, it is recognised that this would require some form of exemption from central AusAID awards policy, but the case for applying an exemption in the Pakistan context appears very strong. Experience from other AusAID scholarship programs has shown that attempting to provide long-term awards at undergraduate degree level is problematic, so this option should remain unavailable in Pakistan. However, technical or vocational level diploma or certificate courses (longer than the maximum allowed for short courses) should be permitted.

Recommendation 9

Both AAP and APAS should consider approaching Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section for an exemption from standard Australia Awards policy that would allow long term awards to be inclusive of both postgraduate and vocational courses (but not undergraduate degrees), and revised desired applicant profiles should then be amended to allow for this greater range of long term award course options.

In regard to short course awards, there are no current AusAID policy impediments to offering these at any level of study. APAS could already target this level of short course provision. Given that APAS effectively only offers a single short course each year, and in

deference to the fact that there is a range of demand for short courses, it is suggested that rather than divert the entire short course component of the program into technical or vocational 'train-the-trainer' exercises, underspent funds should be reallocated to allow the conduct of a second course of approximately the same size (about 20 participants). The requirement would then be that at least one of these courses would be technical or vocational train-the-trainer exercises carried out in accordance with the AusAID definition of short course awards. This would have the effect of increasing the overall total of Australia Awards by approximately 20, but this addition would be entirely composed of short course awardees attending a single additional course. Selection of course topics could again be used to support improvements to gender and disability targets.

As discussed previously, the IPR team suggests that the number of awards associated with the APAS component of the current overall program be absorbed into the main ('ADS/ALAS') Australia Awards program on completion of APAS. This should include the provision of the suggested two short courses per year with approximately 20 participants in each.³⁴ While the APAS program is still extant, it makes sense to allow it to administer the additional short course, in order to avoid duplication of systems. On completion of the APAS program, the focus of short course provision should be extended beyond agriculture to cover the full range of priority fields.

In summary, short courses of a vocational nature, particularly if delivered in country using a train-the-trainer model, could potentially reach target populations (such as women, People with disabilities (or working with people with disabilities, rural) who would be unable to attend long term courses overseas. Government and non-government stakeholders expressed interest in short courses (including those of a vocational nature) as they can more readily be accommodated within work programs and can be targeted on particular needs.

Recommendation 10

Consideration be given to introducing short course awards into the main AAP program for Pakistan for 2014 – 15, and that as a short term measure an additional short course for about 20 participants be delivered under the APAS program in 2013 using underspent funds. This course would serve as a pilot for future introduction of vocational level train-the-trainer short courses.

The IPR team considers that the under spend presents an opportunity for some quality improvement to be achieved:

Recommendation 11

A proportion of underspent funds be used for the following purposes:

³⁴ If the absorption of two short courses per year is considered too onerous and the program defaults to only one short course a year, care should be taken to alternate these courses between postgraduate and vocational levels in each successive year.

- ***Maintaining the current numbers of awards (including APAS) beyond the completion the APAS program;***
- ***Intensification of assistance to HRD partner civil society organisations, including possible additional temporary staff support or training opportunities for the MC;***
- ***Addition of one or more additional organisations (whether public or private) for intensive organisational support that have a cross sectoral focus related to women's empowerment (see section 2.12 below);***
- ***The development impact of alumni strengthened by revision and possible expansion of the proposed small grants scheme so as to provide for the grant to be made to the organisation on the basis of a competitive application initiated by the alumni;***
- ***A pilot vocationally oriented train-the-trainer short course to be delivered in the first instance under the APAS Program (and then absorbed into the core program);***
- ***Remaining under spent funds should be returned for reallocation.***

The IPR team assesses that the Managing Contractor has existing administrative capacity to be able to cope with these expanded initiatives.

Lessons learnt from other donor run programs in country: Programs like the British Chevening Scholarship and American Fulbright Scholarship are academically focused, rather than on development impact as is the focus of the ADS and APAS. At the time of the Program Design, the Fulbright Scholarship was considered to be high status and well regarded, with the selection process clearly focused on academic record and the capacity to engage with senior US scholars and institutions and little scope to include others who may have potential to contribute significantly in priority development sectors.³⁵

The team was unable to meet with a representative of the Fulbright Program due to the rescheduled timing of the IPR in country visit. However in an interview with the Joint Secretary of the Economic Affairs Division of the Federal Secretariat of the GOP, the team learned that Australian experience of Public Sector Reform is particularly highly regarded. Australian awards were therefore highly sought after.

The team met with a representative of the Chevening Scholarships. From this meeting it became clear that the Chevening Scholarships are not targeted and had not been actively promoted. Although originally providing for study programs as short as 3

³⁵ Pakistan Scholarships Program Design Document , May 2009, pp. 8 – 9.

months, Chevening is now providing only Masters scholarships. Only 2 out of the 20 (i.e. 10%) in the latest round of Chevening awards had been made to women, and gender equity as such had not been targeted. Indeed, the Chevening program in Pakistan was about to be reviewed, and lessons were being sought from the Australia Awards in Pakistan (AAP) program. It appears therefore that the AAP, being nearly three times larger than the Chevening program in terms of numbers of scholarships, is currently perceived as a leading scholarship program in Pakistan. Furthermore there is no duplication with other important scholarship schemes due to the fact that AAP seeks to address development impact and targets scholars from related sectors and geographic areas, rather than purely academic criteria.

Question 2.7 (Gender)

Assess the appropriateness of gender targets at the time of application against the total percentage of working women in the priority provinces. How effective are the strategies in place to improve gender balance and the extent of positive results?

The Program seeks to meet five different types of targets for the ADS: cross cutting targets (gender and disability related); and ADS targets that relate to development objectives (these include sectoral targets (health, education, rural development), geographical targets (3 priority provinces) and organisational targets (public sector, civil society and commercial private sector). As reflected in Section 2.4 of the Managing Contractor's Scope of Services (SOS) the prioritisation of these multiple targets is:

1. Organisational
2. Sectoral
3. Geographical (excluding commercial private sector)
4. Cross cutting

Section 2.5 of the SOS introduces an additional level of complexity by setting targets for applications as well as for awards. Cross cutting targets are:³⁶

Amongst all scholarship applications (Profiles 1-4):

- 50% of awards applications received are from females and 50% of awards are awarded to females
- 5% of applications and 5% of awardees are from those living with a disability or from those working with people with disabilities.

Section 2.5 also implies a different prioritisation as follows:

1. Disability

³⁶ 2012 Annual Plan, p.6.

2. Gender
3. Organisational
4. Sectoral
5. Geographical (including commercial private sector)

The team notes that some of these targets conflict with each other, and that APAS is not governed by these targets. The selection committee has struggled with this target logic and the inconsistency within it.

In terms of Labour Force Participation, females accounted for 21% of the overall labour force in Pakistan. However this varied between 26% for rural areas (reflecting female participation in the agricultural labour force) and 10% for rural areas. While females accounted for 20% in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, they accounted for only 11% in Balochistan.³⁷ Women's participation across the board in employment in all government departments was reported to be approximately 10%.³⁸ There are very low numbers of women participating in higher education. For instance, the gender ratio in universities in FATA was 0.33 females:1 male, and 0.31:1 in Balochistan. In this context, target application rates of 50% are clearly aspirational and not realistic.

The Annual Report for 2011/Annual Plan 2012 reports that overall 50% of final awardees were female, and compares targets with actual achieved for each profile:

Female percentage of Awards (2011 for 2012)

	Profile 1	Profile 2	Profile 3	Profile 4
Target	50%	50%	50%	50%
Actual	42%	75%	56%	40%

It is important to remember that the absolute number for each profile is small (i.e. 16 or less). In other words, these are very small samples and the percentages are not statistically significant. Too much weight should not be placed on variations in these percentages from their targets, given that the overall target of 50% was met. Given the skewness of the eligible population in terms of gender, the team considers the achievement of 50% female overall a very significant achievement, for which the Managing Contractor should be commended.

To date the geographic and organisational targets have been prioritised and difficulty has been experienced in meeting the target number of females and the targets for public sector and commercial private sector. The Managing Contractor has been innovative in terms of the Foundation Awards (FA) program and quite successful through this and other strategies in increasing the pool of female applicants. The IPR team notes, however, the Managing Contractor's recognition that if gender targets

³⁷ Source: Labour Force Survey 2008-09, cited in ADS – P Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy, March 2011, p.5.

³⁸ ADB Sustainable Development Policy Institute 2008.

continue to be subordinated to geographic targets the supply of eligible female applicants is likely to be exhausted. Arguably, and importantly, ADS could inadvertently impact negatively on the priority geographic areas by drawing the short supply of most highly educated females away from those areas. Similarly the number of commercial private sector organisations operating in those provinces is very limited.

The team proposes that a distinction be made between the cross-cutting targets and the ADS targets. As the cross-cutting targets are driven by the central policy applying to the Australia Awards as a whole, these targets should be prioritised. In practical terms, this means that the program should seek applications from women and people with disabilities (PWDs) from a broader catchment not limited to the priority geographic areas. Sectoral priorities need not be affected.

It has already been recognised, as reflected in the HRD Pilot Initiative, that gender and geographic targets may be more effectively met by focusing on civil society organisations. There may well be a case to reflect this by adjusting the targets for the profiles. The team also believes there may be scope to provide intensive organisational support for one or more additional organisations (whether public or private) that have a cross sectoral focus related to women's empowerment. Such organisation(s) would, however, need to be subjected to the same sort of critical appraisal as led to the selection of three civil society organisations for inclusion in the Pilot HRD Initiative (see section 2.12 below).

Recommendation 12

That consideration be given to:

- a) Facilitating the meeting of cross cutting gender and disability targets by adopting a more flexible approach to seeking applications from women and from people with disabilities (or working with people with disabilities) and to their shortlisting so that shortlisted applicants relating to these targets are not limited to those from the priority geographic areas;***
- b) That the Managing Contractor identify one or more additional organisations (whether public or private) that have a sectoral or cross sectoral focus related to women's empowerment; and***
- c) Invite the selected organisation(s) to undergo critical appraisal with a view to including them as partners in the HRD Initiative.***

The team's rating of the Program in terms of Gender Equality reflects that, while gender targets have not always been met, significant efforts have been made to increase the proportion of women given awards through the selection process. More could be done in regard to implementing recruitment measures that go beyond selection preference.

Question 2.8 (Analysis and Learning)

Assess whether the program branding is consistent with the Australia Awards and how can this be improved:

- **How can the AusAID scholarships program develop greater linkages with the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIIS RTE) program i.e. Endeavour, under the Australia Awards overall banner in an effort to present a united front?**

The program has already undergone a name change (to Australia Awards in Pakistan) to comply with Australia Awards standards, and is in the process of complying with relevant alumni and communication policies. As noted in 2.1, the Pakistan operating environment carries high security risks, so compliance with Australia Award policies does need to be filtered through contextual risk assessments. The AusAID Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section recognises this need and requires adherence to such policies only insofar as it does not represent a risk to program participants or staff.³⁹

There are opportunities for closer ties to the DIIS RTE program, but these are limited to promotion or information provision that is **not** directly associated with soliciting applications or selecting awardees (see also 2.3). Attempts to align application solicitation and selection processes are not recommended, as this would necessarily involve seriously compromising the specific objectives and associated targeted approaches of AAP/APAS. Given that scholarship programs of other donors are currently considering following the AusAID lead in regard to more targeted promotion and selection (see also 2.5), this would clearly be a step in the wrong direction.

As alignment with the DIIS RTE program is not something that should be formulated and agreed entirely at country level, a valuable first step in improving such alignment would be to build stronger ties with a relevant AusAID Australia Awards regional program (see Recommendation 13).

Question 2.9 (Analysis and Learning)

Recommend any enhancements to the program based on the experience and models used by AusAID in other country scholarship programs such as Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia.

The cross-fertilisation of approaches from AusAID Scholarship programs of other countries and regions is happening with AAP, but on an inappropriately limited scale.

³⁹ AusAID also adheres to the 'Do No Harm' Principle.

Many of the approaches adopted, particularly in relation to reintegration planning and alumni support have been drawn from the experiences of the Philippines and Vietnam programs. Unfortunately, these programs are operating in contexts that are very different to that of the Pakistan program, particularly in regard to their already having long and close associations with specific institutions.

To some extent the design document has forced the hand of the Managing Contractor in this regard with highly unrealistic requirements, such as becoming involved with HRD planning within Government agencies. In reality, the context of the Pakistan program has far more in common with programs that do not have a long and historical association with a few specific institutions, so it would be more appropriate if lessons and approaches were to be gleaned or adapted from this quarter.

AusAID's Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section is also in the process of revising and rationalising its formal guidance, particularly in the area of M&E and alumni support, in recognition that solutions must be context sensitive. This has led to far simpler and systematic solutions being proposed for country programs that are in similar positions to Pakistan - without strong and historical institutional ties. While adopting these forthcoming policies will require modest revision of existing practices, the end result is likely to be very beneficial to the Pakistan program in terms of streamlining workloads and adding clarity to decision making processes (including through the clarified application of a development effectiveness focus).

Note that there remains an argument to say that these historical associations with selected institutions 'have to start somewhere'. However, all indications relating to the feasibility and acceptability of initiating such 'HRD partnerships' with Government agencies are that this is not feasible or welcome at this point in time. The current focus of limiting such partnerships to organisations within the NGO and/or private sector is a sensible rationalisation and should be continued for the foreseeable future; without an onus on the program to eventually expand this initiative into government agencies.

To link the Pakistan program into stronger channels of communication regarding new and/or innovative approaches to Australia Awards provision, it would be beneficial to have this program form enhanced relationships (formal or informal) with contextually similar AusAID programs. The obvious choice for such a relationship in this regard is the Australia Awards in South Asia program. As a regional program dealing with multiple countries, it has routine contact with Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section in Canberra and has needed to address issues arising from countries with contextually similar operating environments to Pakistan.

Recommendation 13

The AAP program establish stronger ongoing linkages with the Australia Awards in South Asia program, at both AusAID and program staff levels. This

should include (as a minimum), Pakistan scholarship staff (AusAID and Managing Contractor), participating as observers in the general forums and coordination meetings currently held by the Australia Awards in South Asia program.

Question 2.10 (Monitoring and Evaluation)

How well the M&E framework is designed and whether it will provide further impact assessment for future reporting against the program objectives:

- Will the awards bring desired impacts to development in Pakistan?
- Are the impacts measurable and how are they measurable?
- How can we best collect and communicate evidence on impacts, to AusAID Canberra, Government of Pakistan and the public?

To understand what an AusAID-delivered Australia Award program should be producing as outcomes, it should be noted that AusAID scholarship programs are consistently classified as capacity-building programs. They are *not* placed under the Agency's *education* sector program. In a development context, capacity-building is never regarded as an outcome in itself, but rather a means to a specific end. In the case of the Pakistan awards program, these ends are explicitly defined by the program's development-oriented objectives. As discussed in 2.2, the program has not always made a clear distinction between delivering a development, rather than an academic program.

Diversion into activities more appropriately associated with educational or academic programs is not a trivial problem. It has serious ramifications for the credibility of all AusAID scholarship programs. These credibility issues relate to the Australian Government ratified definition of development assistance used by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, which (with the exception of emergency responses – food aid, etc.) makes a clear distinction between 'welfare or charity' and 'development assistance'. Generally, welfare and charity are assistance that provides benefits to individuals and development assistance needs to demonstrate more systemic effects. AusAID policy specifically prohibits use of development assistance funding for welfare or charity purposes and strictly holds all Australian and international NGOs that it funds to this restriction

Note that the above discussion does not mean that the program may not impart substantial individual benefits (this is unavoidable in a scholarship program), just that these **should not be reported as primary outcomes**, and program resources should not be used to further enhance them.

AAP M&E systems are very strong and comprehensive at the output level with routine and ongoing data collection instruments and processes in place for this purpose. AAP M&E systems are far weaker at the outcome level, with only occasional tracer studies being relied upon to identify alumni achievements against program objectives. While these tracer studies do collect some relevant development impact data, they also collect a substantial amount of 'individual welfare' information. Hence, there is significant room for better focusing these instruments, to render them more efficient and help avoid the temptation to routinely report the wrong type of scholarship outcomes. There is also a need to put in place more regular and routine systems for collecting outcomes data, as reliance on periodic tracer studies is unlikely to produce highly representative datasets, especially in regard to recording both shorter and longer term development contributions of alumni.

These types of issues are not limited to the Pakistan program, and there has been significant recognition of the above problems by the Australia Awards Scholarship and Fellowship Section. One of the responses of the Section is in the area of M&E, with guidance currently being produced that aims to make it far simpler for country programs to comply with the requirement to collect valid development outcome information. For the first time, a full 'system' has been proposed using modified versions of four traditional tools (on-award surveys, reintegration plans, tracer studies and case studies) to create a complete M&E system for any program that utilises them. The shared development focus of all AusAID Scholarship programs means that, while the instruments that make up the proposed system are standardised, their application is sufficiently flexible to allow specific country-program level objectives to be monitored. It is strongly recommended that the Pakistan Program proactively seek to adopt the new system as soon as practicable. While formal advice on this system is not yet available, the system is described in an Annex 1.

Recommendation 14

The program's M&E systems be modified to comply with the new AusAID centralised guidance as soon as practicable.

Questions 2.11/2.12 (Monitoring & Evaluation and Sustainability)

- The impact of the targeted approach in the context of potential sector-wide contributions;
- Based on assessment findings and analysis provide recommendations to modify, as appropriate, the focus, approaches and activities:
 - a) Assess the appropriateness of the intensive organisational support to organisations/agencies under the HRD Initiative, including proposing to develop HRD plans for identified organisations at federal and provincial levels;

b) Suggest whether or not to continue, and the cost-effectiveness in doing so, the contractual arrangement with the current MC. (Relates to Sustainability of the Program.)

Initially a Human Resource Planning approach was adopted which strategically linked scholars and their employers in both government and non-government sectors by connecting awardees current employment, their planned study programs and anticipated alumni employment on return to Pakistan.⁴⁰ This approach required the ADS HRD Adviser to work with the targeted organisations to assist with the development of HRD plans and support organisations to maximise the impact of the ADS program. This involved workshops to provide organisations with tools and mechanisms for facilitating the development of and finalising their own HRD Plans over some 5 months. Linked to this was the development of Reintegration Action Plans (ReAPs) to assist organisations and scholars to be reintegrated into the working life of their respective organisation once they return to Pakistan.⁴¹ By mid 2010 it was recognised that the ADS HRD Plan was too ambitious regarding the HRD Plans of target organisations and the approach was refocused on the ReAPs.⁴² However the quantity and quality of the ReAPs received from the 2011 awardees was poor. Only two-thirds submitted ReAPs and only 17 were countersigned by their employers.⁴³ The ReAP was further modified to a non-binding approach to assist awardees to focus on Pakistan broader priorities, the issues they face in their respective sectors and positions, and how study in Australia will help improve upon them.⁴⁴ There has been an upward trend in the rate of submission of completed ReAPs:⁴⁵

- In 2010 around 75% completed ReAPs were received;
- In 2011, a methodological approach as adopted, and 98% ReAPs were quality checked and completed; and
- In 2012 100% completed ReAP's were received.

To make best use of the scholars' expertise on their return from Australia and ensure reintegration, the first reintegration workshop was conducted in September 2012.

A Tracer Study conducted in 2011 found that the non-government sector made more effective and relevant use of the awards compared to other sectors and led to the development of a Concept Note for a new approach towards HRD. It proposed to pilot capacity building at the organisational level in order to build the 'critical mass' required for change leading to development.⁴⁶ The resulting HRD Initiative (Pilot Phase) maintained the program's focus on maternal, neonatal and child health services, basic

⁴⁰ Concept Note for Human Resource Development Pakistan Initiative 2011, p. 1.

⁴¹ ADS Pakistan Annual Plan 2010, pp. 18 – 19.

⁴² ADS Pakistan Annual Plan 2011, p. 2.

⁴³ ADS Pakistan Annual Plan 2011, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Concept Note for Human Resource Development Pakistan Initiative 2011, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Powerpoint presentation on HRD and M&E to the IPR team.

⁴⁶ Concept Note for Human Resource Development Pakistan Initiative 2011, p. 2.

education services, and rural development/food security in the three priority provinces. It targeted three non-government organisations that were engaged in service delivery in these sectors and provinces. At the time of the IPR the HRD Initiative, following its Pilot Phase, was awaiting approval from the Post for its roll-out in 2013. No 'intensive organisational support' had been provided by the Managing Contractor, on the basis that this initiative was a pilot only. In the selection for 2013 Awards, no applicants from these pilot organisations had been successful under the current program. However two applicants had been accepted into the Foundation Awards program for 2013. This seems to imply little if any impact of capacity building in these three partner organisations has as yet been felt.

The IPR team endorses the overall approach represented by the Initiative, and specifically its focus on civil society organisations. The IPR team sees no problem in principle in providing intensive organisational support if it is directed towards staff of the partner organisation rather than directly towards applicants themselves.⁴⁷ Indeed, it appears that intensive organisational support will be essential to help applicants from these target organisations to compete successfully for Awards. However, the initiative should use a 'train-the-trainer' rather than a 'training' model, focused on strengthening the capacity of the partner civil society organisations to help their applicants to prepare strong and well-presented applications. In providing intensive organisational support of this type, some support for strengthening relevant Managing Contractor staff capacity could be included. Potentially the range of partner organisations could also be expanded if, for instance, an organisation that addresses women's empowerment were identified as a suitable potential target organisation. The approach could be strengthened if small grants awarded to alumni were paid to the alumni's partner organisation to support activities to be carried out jointly by the alumni and the institution.

Recommendation 15

The HRD initiative should proceed, provided:

- ***The current focus of limiting such HRD partnerships to organisations within the NGO and/or private sector is continued for the foreseeable future; without an onus on the program to eventually expand this initiative into government agencies;***
- ***The assistance provided to partner organisations is significantly boosted and focussed on train-the-trainer, institutional strengthening, rather than direct assistance to individual applicants or potential applicants (refer to text of report for more detailed explanation and examples).***

In reaching its rating on sustainability of the program, the team also took into account that 236 of a total of 526 alumni are contactable. This is a significant proportion (i.e.

⁴⁷ See 2.6

45%) of alumni (including some from much earlier intakes who are delivering the outcomes in line with the objectives under which they were provided awards).

The IPR was also asked to suggest whether or not to continue the contractual arrangement with the current Managing Contractor, and the cost-effectiveness in doing so. The IPR team notes that AusAID satisfaction with the Managing Contractor is generally high. The team assesses that the Managing Contractor's performance shows no significant failings in regard to their delivery of the processes and tasks assigned to them. Likewise, AusAID direction of the program, from both Post and Desk, has been both considered and appropriate. Given this, the IPR team cannot identify any need to change program management arrangements in the foreseeable future.

Recommendation 16

The current Managing Contractor's contract be extended for the full option period.

2.13 Additional Points

Improving Clarity in APAS Short Course Processes

Section 5.14 (a) of the Scope of Services (SOS) limits the role of ACIAR in planning the short course awards to facilitation of engagement with key Pakistani agriculture research and policy institutions. This limitation appears counter-productive and in application there seems to have been some ambiguity in the role of ACIAR at short course design and selection stages.

The team proposes development of a clear roles and responsibilities table, including allowing ACIAR a greater role in developing basic 'course outlines' for the proposed mix of vocational or post graduate level short courses. The course provider would then receive greater initial direction in short course design and promotional activities and selection processes associated with course could be better targeted. Course providers would still have some flexibility to adjust courses to meet the needs of specific attendees, but the current approach of not fixing a course outline until selection of awardees has been made is significantly impeding planned alignment with program objectives.

The provision of such course outlines by ACIAR would also give them a firmer basis for early input into selection processes associated with short courses. An initial orientation meeting between ACIAR representatives and the consultant contracted by the Managing Contractor to carry out the short-listing of applicants for short courses should therefore always be conducted before the consultant begins work.

Recommendation 17

A roles and responsibilities table should be developed between AusAID, the managing contractor and ACIAR to more clearly define the expectations placed on each partner in regard to APAS processes. This should include:

- ***Allowing ACIAR to have greater role in developing basic ‘course outlines’ for the proposed mix of vocational or post graduate level APAS short courses;***
- ***An initial orientation meeting between ACIAR representatives and the consultant contracted by the Managing Contractor to carry out the short-listing of applicants for APAS short courses to be conducted before the consultant begins work.***

Critical Incidents Responses

To date critical incidents involving participants or staff have been handled in a relatively *ad hoc* manner. While this approach has sufficed to date, the potential for an increasing number of such incidents in future warrants a more formalised approach.

Recommendation 18

A formalised system of critical incident management be introduced, including:

- ***A critical incidents register;***
- ***The establishment of a standing ‘critical incidents team’ made up of specifically identified individuals from Desk, Post, Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and any other relevant organisations.***

3. Ratings Against Generic AusAID Criteria

Note these ratings pertain to the whole Australia Awards program, and are not a direct indication of Managing Contractor performance alone.

Evaluation Criteria	Rating	Explanation
Relevance	5	The objectives of the program remain highly relevant to the Pakistan Context.
Effectiveness	5	There is significant evidence (from the most recent tracer study) that alumni are generating the development outcomes stipulated by the program objectives.

Evaluation Criteria	Rating	Explanation
Efficiency	5	AusAID and other stakeholders appear highly satisfied with the implementation of program tasks and processes to date.
Sustainability	5	A significant proportion of alumni from much earlier intakes are contactable in Pakistan and are delivering the outcomes in line with the objectives under which they were provided awards.
Gender Equality	4	While gender targets are not always met, significant efforts are made to increase the proportion of women given awards through the selection process. More could be done in regard to implementing recruitment measures that go beyond selection preference.
Monitoring & Evaluation	4	Output level monitoring is comprehensive. Some relevant outcome information is collected under periodic studies, but this outcome focus should and can be significantly improved through application of forthcoming central M&E guidance from Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section.
Analysis & Learning	4	The Managing Contractor has put in place functioning learning feedback systems that assist in continuous improvement, but cross fertilisation of approaches from other AusAID scholarship programs remains focussed on examples from less relevant contexts.

Rating scale: 6 = very high quality; 1 = very low quality. Below 4 is less than satisfactory.

4. Summary of Recommendations and Responsibilities

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
<p><u>Recommendation 1</u></p> <p><i>AAP adopt an application solicitation strategy that directly targets other AusAID programs in Pakistan, and as far as is practical, AAP provide training to the personnel of relevant programs in identifying good candidates (in line with Desired Applicant Profiles) and in assisting their identified candidates to complete application forms and processes.</i></p>	<p>AusAID Post Managing Contractor</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 2</u></p> <p><i>The Managing Contractor adopt a much broader definition of 'policy' and collect relevant examples of development contributions from alumni to form the raw data that may contribute to measuring the overall development outcomes of the program.</i></p>	<p>Managing Contractor</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 3</u></p> <p><i>The Managing Contractor shift the emphasis of public relations material from the individual themselves to the development-related contributions they have made and adopt a comprehensive 'no names – no faces' policy in relation to publication of alumni information in program material on any public fora.</i></p>	<p>Managing Contractor</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
<p><u>Recommendation 4</u></p> <p><i>The proposed small grants scheme for alumni be revised, for approval by AusAID, to reflect the following:</i></p> <p><i>i) While grant proposals are sourced from alumni, the grants are not awarded to these individuals but to their work units and address a work-related constraint that was preventing utilisation of the alumni's skills or knowledge;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• All small grant proposals will be assessed competitively in relation to their ability to allow alumni to increase their contribution to one or more of the program's development objectives. (This would not preclude proposals for further study provided they demonstrate that the study would produce tangible and immediate contributions to a development outcome that relates to the program's objectives);</i> <i>• Applicants must be members of the alumni association;</i> <i>• The alumni association's Executive Board may be required to rank proposals, but not make the final selection.</i> 	<p>AusAID (Desk/Post) Managing Contractor</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 5</u></p> <p><i>Pre-departure, the Managing Contractor should routinely encourage scholars to think about what materials relating to Pakistan they might need during their studies, and to assemble these and take them with them to Australia.</i></p>	<p>Managing Contractor</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 6</u></p> <p><i>Scholars be encouraged by the Managing Contractor to be proactive before departure about seeking accommodation.</i></p>	<p>Managing Contractor</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 7</u></p> <p><i>In order to streamline AusAID oversight, an exceptions reporting approach be adopted, where by one main CPA is conducted each year, with an intervening (six monthly) update used to record any significant changes or newly arising issues/concerns.</i></p>	<p>AusAID (Post)</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
<p><u>Recommendation 8</u></p> <p><i>Suitably qualified Managing Contractor staff be allowed to attend selection interviews as observers, and provide additional advice to the formal panel (only) when they deem it necessary to improve selection outcomes. The formal panel should be required to consider this additional advice, but would remain at liberty to use it as they deem fit.</i></p>	<p>Managing Contractor Selection Panel</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 9</u></p> <p><i>Both AAP and APAS should consider approaching Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section for an exemption from standard Australia Awards policy that would allow long term awards to be inclusive of both postgraduate and vocational courses (but not undergraduate degrees), and revised desired applicant profiles should then be amended to allow for this greater range of long term award course options.</i></p>	<p>AusAID (Desk/Post) Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section Managing Contractor</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 10</u></p> <p><i>Consideration be given to introducing short course awards into the main AAP program for Pakistan for 2014 – 15, and that as a short term measure an additional short course for about 20 participants be delivered under the APAS program in 2013 using underspent funds. This course would serve as a pilot for future introduction of vocational level train-the-trainer short courses.</i></p>	<p>AusAID (Desk/Post) Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section Managing Contractor</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
<p><u>Recommendation 11</u></p> <p><i>A proportion of underspent funds be used for the following purposes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maintaining the current numbers of awards (including APAS) beyond the completion of the APAS program;</i> • <i>Intensification of assistance to HRD partner civil society organisations, including possible additional temporary staff support or training opportunities for the MC;</i> • <i>Addition of one or more additional organisations (whether public or private) for intensive organisational support that have a cross sectoral focus related to women's empowerment (see section 2.12 below);</i> • <i>The development impact of alumni strengthened by revision and possible expansion of the proposed small grants scheme so as to provide for the grant to be made to the organisation on the basis of a competitive application initiated by the alumni;</i> • <i>A pilot vocationally oriented train-the-trainer short course to be delivered in the first instance under the APAS Program (and then absorbed into the core program);</i> • <i>Remaining under spent fund should be returned for reallocation.</i> 	<p>AusAID Post Managing Contractor</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
<p><u>Recommendation 12</u></p> <p><i>Consideration be given to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Facilitating the meeting of cross cutting gender and disability targets by adopting a more flexible approach to seeking applications from women and from people with disabilities (or working with people with disabilities) and to their shortlisting so that shortlisted applicants relating to these targets are not limited to those from the priority geographic areas;</i> • <i>The Managing Contractor identifying one or more additional organisations (whether public or private) that have a sectoral or cross sectoral focus related to women's empowerment; and</i> • <i>Inviting the selected organisation(s) to undergo critical appraisal with a view to including them as partners in the HRD Initiative.</i> 	<p>AusAID Post Managing Contractor</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 13</u></p> <p><i>The AAP program establish stronger ongoing linkages with the Australia Awards in South Asia program, at both AusAID and program staff levels. This should include (as a minimum), Pakistan scholarship staff (AusAID and Managing Contractor), participating as observers in the general forums and coordination meetings currently held by the Australia Awards in South Asia program.</i></p>	<p>AusAID Post Managing Contractor</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 14</u></p> <p><i>The program's M&E systems be modified to comply with the new AusAID centralised guidance as soon as practicable.</i></p>	<p>Managing Contractor</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
<p><u>Recommendation 15</u></p> <p><i>The HRD initiative should proceed, provided:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>The current focus of limiting such HRD partnerships to organisations within the NGO and/or private sector is continued for the foreseeable future; without an onus on the program to eventually expand this initiative into government agencies;</i><i>The assistance provided to partner organisations is significantly boosted and focussed on train-the-trainer, institutional strengthening, rather than direct assistance to individual applicants or potential applicants (refer to text of report for more detailed explanation and examples).</i>	<p>AusAID Post Managing Contractor</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBILITY
<p><u>Recommendation 16</u></p> <p><i>The current Managing Contractor's contract be extended for the full option period.</i></p>	<p>AusAID (Desk/Post) Managing Contractor C</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 17</u></p> <p><i>A roles and responsibilities table should be developed between AusAID, the managing contractor and ACIAR to more clearly define the expectations placed on each partner in regard to APAS processes. This should include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Allowing ACIAR to have greater role in developing basic 'course outlines' for the proposed mix of vocational or post graduate level APAS short courses;</i> <i>• An initial orientation meeting between ACIAR representatives and the consultant contracted by the Managing Contractor to carry out the short-listing of applicants for APAS short courses to be conducted before the consultant begins work.</i> 	<p>AusAID Post Managing Contractor ACIAR</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 18</u></p> <p><i>A formalised system of critical incident management be introduced, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• A critical incidents register;</i> <i>• The establishment of a standing 'critical incidents team' made up of specifically identified individuals from Desk, Post, Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section, DIAC and any other relevant organisations.</i> 	<p>AusAID (Desk/Post) Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section Managing Contractor DIAC</p>

Annex 1. Outline of Upcoming M&E Reforms Arising from Australia Awards Scholarships and Fellowships Section

Introduction

The main change to the M&E systems guidance provided to Australia Award programs is that the four traditional instruments used by such programs (viz. on award surveys, reintegration plans, tracer studies and case studies) have now been systematised such that they better integrate into a complete outcomes-level M&E framework (output and performance monitoring remain unchanged). In all cases this is (or is in the process of) leading to significant simplification of the traditional instruments as clear functional delineations are identified and a wide range of repetitive or redundant content can then be removed.

The approach also incorporates a conditional minimal standard model, in that it will be considered sufficient for most programs to use the system of four standard instruments as their outcome-level M&E data gathering. Programs wishing to use more than just these four instruments to identify outcomes are at liberty to do so, but only if they are able to demonstrate that the four standard instruments are in place, functioning appropriately and fully analysed. No 'substitution' of other instruments for one or more of the standard instruments is permissible.

The broad overview of how these instruments now fit together to form a system is as follows:

- On-award surveys capture data relating to the perceptions of Australia developed by awardees (as well as other data related to academic outputs, institution performance, etc.).
- Reintegration plan monitoring captures the short to medium term outcomes (up to 18 months post-return) generated by awardees, in the form of concrete qualitative examples of how returnees have used their new skills or connections
- Tracer studies capture the longer term outcomes (greater than 3 years post-return) generated by returnees, again in the form of concrete qualitative examples of how returnees have used their new skills or connections
- Case studies focus on specific examples of development impacts, rather than on individual returnees, and are selected as a representative sample from the range of examples generated by the reintegration plan monitoring and the tracer studies. This approach provides a vast improvement in defensibility of using qualitative case studies as an M&E tool compared to the largely anecdotal approach to selecting case studies previously used by many

programs. The case studies are also the only instruments that now involve collection of significantly detailed information. Collection of detailed information at the reintegration plan monitoring or tracer study stage is hugely inefficient, as in many cases the information collected is simply never used⁴⁸.

Hence, this system provides for gathering of immediate (perceptual), short - medium and long-term outcomes to be recorded, analysed and is used to identify a set of appropriately representative and more detailed case studies from which defensible extrapolations of overall impact may be made.

The key change to analysis of the data collected is the requirement that programs become familiar and comfortable with the qualitative analysis methods required to summarise and report on aggregations of qualitative examples of development impacts. These methods are simple and can be used to generate basic quantitative indicators, but actively avoid inappropriate short cuts, such as seeking to collect non-subjective data on subjective rating scales and other means of 'false quantification'. This new approach is based on the recognition that the examples of development impacts generated by returnees are the most powerful (and in many cases the only defensible) raw data available to development oriented award programs.

The most advanced guidance available to these changes to date is in relation to the format and use of reintegration plans and their monitoring:

Reintegration Plan Reform

(Note that some of this advice is currently being refined using the South Asia Scholarships Program (SASP) as a test bed, so reference to the latest SASP formats is also recommended.)

Australia Award Scholarships and Fellowships Section guidance on reintegration plans has recently been revised. This revision recognises that early 'good practice examples' of reintegration planning were inadvertently based on formats used by programs that incorporated a substantial component of direct human resource management capacity building within a set of selected recipient institutions. Any prescriptive approach for defining a plan of action and then checking whether this plan is adhered to is only feasible or logical for programs incorporating such components.

Other programs (including Pakistan) face a much more non-linear (unpredictable) results environment. In such environments attempting to constrain alumni contributions within prescriptive plans is not only impractical but also potentially

⁴⁸ In the past, tracer studies in particular have tried to make a 'case study' of every returnee contacted, regardless of whether it is sensible to use them as a case study or not.

counterproductive. For example, by constraining alumni/employers to doing what they initially agreed, the program may prevent them from utilising unpredicted opportunities to achieve more relevant or useful results). The new AusAID guidance recognises these factors and allows for a much simpler and more flexible approach to reintegration planning and tracking. This annex uses this new guidance to develop options for reintegration planning revision in the Pakistan context.

Purpose(s) of Reintegration Plans (RPs)

There are three valid purposes for doing reintegration plans.

The most relevant two are:

- As initial selection tools. The quality of thought that goes into how a candidate intends to use the skills gained from an award provides a solid and additional selection criterion.
- As a 'basis' of tracking development (or linkage) contributions made by alumni post-return (i.e. outcomes). For reasons explained below, this 'basis' should be a very loose one in most circumstances.

The other purpose is useful, but less measurable:

- As a performance enhancement tool. The reintegration plan can encourage candidates to think about how they can realistically use the new skills they will gain, so they can better position themselves to do so on return. This is something that would be largely done 'on faith' as it will be quite hard to measure if it ever really makes much difference.

Rationalisation of Reintegration Plans

A number of key issues arise that should guide rationalised approaches to use of reintegration plans:

- The first issue is that if a reintegration plan is being used in a way that does not satisfy one of the above purposes, effort is being wasted.
- Secondly, if the purpose(s) that the use of reintegration plans is attempting to address are not explicitly recognised, it is likely that very inefficient (i.e. very over-complicated) instruments will be developed.
- Compromising good survey design principles in attempts to streamline analysis is false economy.

The first issue guiding rationalisation is pretty clear. If a valid purpose is not being addressed, why do reintegration plans? Reintegration plans should not be done just for the sake of doing them.

The second issue guiding rationalisation is a little subtler, but has significant ramifications. If an initial reintegration plan is being done for a selection purpose, an updated one (say just before return) for a performance enhancement purpose, and some post-return updates as outcome monitoring, then there are separate purposes for each phase of reintegration planning, and there is no logical need to have them 'intimately connected'. For simplicity, put aside the pre-return update, and consider it this way:

If a candidate states a set of worthwhile 'intentions' before departure, does it *really* matter if those particular intentions are fulfilled, provided they do produce development impacts? Also, is it preferable that alumni were adaptable enough to make the optimal use of all and any appropriate opportunities that arise for use of their award-based skills? If they are merely encouraged to 'stick to plan', they may well be unintentionally constrained/discouraged from taking opportunities to do even better things.

In practice, it is very apparent that the temporal employment environment faced by most awardees is 'non-linear'⁴⁹. Under such conditions a reintegration planning and tracking approach that assesses how well awardees stick to their initial plans is making the survey design error of 'mismeasurement' – it wishes to measure development outcomes, but actually measures how well a candidate can predict the future.

Given this consideration, post-return updates of reintegration plans need not be complicated, inter-related comparisons of past intentions and actual achievements – they just need to collect the actual achievements made.

Note: it is recognised that these considerations fall on a spectrum. Reintegration plans associated with short courses may not face such a high degree of unpredictability, and even longer-term scholarship programs that are highly integrated with HR planning of specific institutions⁵⁰ may be able to plan with a bit more certainty (and may also want to inject some institutional accountability). However, experience shows that most of AusAID's current long term Scholarships do operate in a largely non-linear employment environment, even (if not especially) those in 'Public' categories.

⁴⁹ In real terms, this just means it is highly unpredictable.

⁵⁰ In fact, the current over complication of reintegration plan usage can be traced to their genesis in the Philippines program. These early reintegration plans were (rightly) quite detailed and linear, as the Philippines scholarships program was highly integrated with associated HR planning within specific institutions. The mistake made was to take these detailed formats as good practice for *all* scholarships programs, without recognising that the Philippines was an exceptional case.

The third point affecting rationalisation is simply the need to practice good survey design that explicitly recognises the purpose of the survey instrument and does not defeat those purposes. A common problem of more complex reintegration plans is that they often ask respondents to ‘pre-codify’ the responses, regardless of the impact of this on data quality. This allows for ‘easy’ later analysis, but is very dangerous. For example, using questions like “Which development related sectors do you intend to contribute to?” and “Which MDGs do you intend to contribute to?” with response options that require checking of appropriate option boxes in set lists.

Although this approach makes later analysis easy, it also makes it largely meaningless for two reasons:

1. If an initial reintegration plan is being done for the purpose of assessing how well a candidate has thought about the development contributions they wish to make, then these checkbox approaches mean they are not just being led to the extent of ‘telling them the answers we want to hear’, but they are not being allowed to answer anything badly! This defeats the purpose of using the results to separate those candidates who have put some real thought into their responses from those who have just randomly checked boxes. In short, such approaches are critically flawed in regard to generating reintegration plans of differentiable quality.⁵¹
2. The checkbox approach effectively asks respondents to categorise their own responses. The problem with this is that respondents are not (and cannot be) trained in maintaining consistent classification. For example, different respondents may well classify the same achievement under different sectors or MDGs. So, while responses come in pre-classified form from such approaches, there is no basis to ensure that the classification is consistent. An inconsistent classification is not a valid or useful classification. Hence, while analyses will be easier, they will also be largely meaningless.

Proposed Changes

The revised set of more focussed reintegration plan formats will include:

1. An initial (on-application) format
2. A pre-return update format
3. A post-return update format

⁵¹ And the accompanying narrative components suffer the same limitation on structured analysis as the open narrative entries of the application form that they effectively duplicate (see later).

The Initial (on application) Format:**CANDIDATE:**

Q1. Please provide (up to 10) practical and realistic examples of how you will try to use the skills or Australian connections gained during your scholarship, and state the main constraints you may face in doing so:

(Note examples may be professional or personal in nature)

Examples	Probable Constraints

Note this does not go much further than what is already asked in the standard application form, but the differences are significant. In order to be able to codify and thereby analyse such qualitative data there is a minimum level of structure that must be required of responses (see below). The open-ended narrative responses boxes of the standard application form do not provide for this.

The purpose of this initial format is mainly as a basis for improving selection, and each reintegration plan will be given a tentative 'quality score' (after eligibility checking) that will be fed into shortlisting and later assessments.

An expanded format is also available for bringing in employer input where feasible. This expanded format would also include:

EMPLOYER (where applicable)

Q2. Please provide (up to 5) practical and realistic examples of how you will try to provide this returnee with opportunities to use the skills or Australian connections gained during their scholarship, and state the main constraints you may face in providing these opportunities:

Examples	Probable Constraints

The Pre-Return Update Format

Reintegration plans may be updated prior to return of awardees on two occasions. The first at the Pre-departure Briefing of the selected awardees, where feedback from course advisors or the selection panels will be used to reality-check the awardees' initial intentions. The format of this update is the same as that of the initial format, except that at completion of these updates, program staff⁵² will insert codification against all entries to enable analysis:

Coding

(Note examples may be professional or personal in nature)

Examples	Probable Constraints	Sector	MDG	Etc.

The key use of this first pre-return update will be to allow very tentative outcome reporting (at the intention level) of likely contributions to be made by new cohorts.⁵³ Another pre-return reintegration plan update may also be conducted just prior to return of an awardee. The purpose of this will be limited to performance enhancement (i.e. getting awardees thinking about what to do on return), so it will again just use the initial format and codification is unnecessary.

The Post-Return Update Format

This is the key outcome-monitoring format. It will consist of a slightly augmented version of the initial format and codification will always be added to responses by program staff (respondents will not see these columns).

CANDIDATE:

Q1. Please provide (up to 10) practical and realistic examples of how (in the last six months), you have used the skills or Australian connections gained during your scholarship:

Coding

(Note examples may be professional or personal in nature)

Examples (state specific policies, projects or practices worked on where relevant)	Sector	MDG	Etc.

⁵² These program staff will be trained to maintain a consistent classification regime.

⁵³ Note there is therefore no need to codify responses of reintegration plans from all applications.

*Q2. Please provide (up to 10) main constraints you have faced (in the past six months) in using the skills or Australian connections gained during your scholarship, and give any suggestions for addressing these constraints:*⁵⁴

Coding		
Constraints	Const. Type	Suggestions

An expanded format is again available for bringing in employer input/accountability where feasible. This expanded format would also include:

EMPLOYER (where applicable)

Q3. Please provide (up to 5) practical and realistic examples of how (in the past six months) you have provided this returnee with opportunities to use the skills or Australian connections gained during their scholarship:

Examples (state specific policies, projects or practices where relevant)

Q4. Please provide the (up to 5) main constraints you have faced (in the past six months) in providing such opportunities, and give any suggestions addressing these constraints:

Constraints	Suggestions

The application of this post-return (outcome-monitoring) update will be at 6, 12 and 18 months after return. It will be applied to a stratified sample of approximately 5 - 10% of returnees.

⁵⁴ The reason that the suggestions for overcoming constraints is not included in the pre-return formats is that it is regarded as more appropriate to focus on the more informed suggestions that will come with experience, rather than consider too much conjecture.

Annex 2. TORs for this IPR

Mid-Term Review Mission for AusAID's Australia Awards in Pakistan

TERMS OF REFERENCE

I. Background

AusAID has provided scholarships to Pakistan since 1991. Scholarship numbers increased dramatically from around 15 per year in FY 2005-06 to around 50 per year in FY 2009-10, due to the commencement of the Australia Pakistan Scholarships Program (APSP) in FY 2006-07. Under the APSP, Australia provided a total of 170 Masters and 30 PhD scholarships over five years. This commitment was underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding between the governments of Pakistan and Australia. The APSP ended in 2010.

In 2008, AusAID began to rationalise and streamline its approach to scholarships, in order to increase the development focus and to improve management and administrative efficiency of the scholarships program. All scholarship programs available to Pakistan at that time were either concluded or merged under the Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) banner. These scholarship programs included: the Carnegie Mellon Scholarships Program (CMU-AusAID Scholarships Program) which ended in 2008, the Centre for Transnational Crime Prevention Scholarships Program (CTCP) and the Agriculture Sector Linkages Program (ASLP) both of which ended in 2009.

AusAID's scholarships program in Pakistan was outsourced to a Managing Contractor (MC), Coffey International Development Pty Limited, in December 2009. The scope of the program design was then revised to fit more closely with the Government of Pakistan's development priorities and the geographic focus was aligned with Australia's strategic approach to development in Pakistan.

In September 2009, Australia's then Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs announced an additional 100 agriculture scholarships to Pakistan, following on from the Friends of Democratic Pakistan Summit. The four year Australia Pakistan Agriculture Scholarships (APAS) program comprises both Masters scholarships and Short Course awards. The APAS Masters commenced in 2010 and the short course awards commenced in 2011.

II. Purpose

The main purpose of the Mid-Term Review is to assess how effectively and efficiently the program is being implemented by both Coffey and by AusAID Islamabad Post, with a view to strengthening processes for the remainder of the contract period; and to inform AusAID's decision making regarding the options period of the contract.

III. Objectives

The mid-term review will:

- assess the efficiency and effectiveness of program implementation by the MC (and by AusAID) in regard to its ability to meet program objectives and approaches used in key processes and activities and make a recommendation on extension of the contract from 4-6 years;
- assess the outcomes of the program including management arrangements and program design assessment on the factors of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, M&E and alumni;
- assess how well the program is aligned with strategic approaches and priority sectors as outlined in 'Australia's strategic approach to aid in Pakistan December 2010;
- make recommendations, as required, on options for strengthening implementation including any potential improvements in the management of the program, with special reference to access, equity, gender and transparency; and
- assess the feasibility of maintaining the current program focus, scope and size.

IV. Scope of Services

The review team will undertake to:

- Assess to what extent are the scholarship programs ADS and APAS aligned behind their goals and objectives and how successful are the two programs in meeting the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact over the last two intakes.
- Analyse the following subjects entailed from the 2009 design in achieving the stated objectives:
 - on-going promotion, scholarships selection process, M&E and alumni strategies; and
 - management arrangements for program administration.
- Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of the current MC, in particular the technical inputs provided and roles played by its key professional personnel.
- Assess the appropriateness of gender targets at the time of application against the total percentage of working women in the priority provinces. How effective are

- the strategies in place to improve gender balance and the extent of positive results?
- Assess whether the program branding is consistent with the Australia Awards and how can this be improved:
 - how can the AusAID scholarships program develop greater linkages with the DIISRTE program i.e. Endeavour, under the Australia Awards overall banner in an effort to present a united front?
 - Assess the impact of the targeted approach in the context of potential sector wide contributions.
 - Broadly review the advantages of the program in relation to those offered by other countries, to determine where AusAID can increase visibility and/or quality.
 - Assess the appropriateness of the current program scope and size with respect to administration arrangements with the MC and the level of work being conducted on the program, considered in comparison with other Pakistan-based donor programs?
 - Assess how well the M&E framework is designed and whether it will provide further impact assessment for future reporting against the program objectives:
 - Will the scholarships bring desired impacts to development in Pakistan?
 - Are the impacts measurable and how are they measurable.?
 - How can we best collect and communicate evidence on impacts, to AusAID Canberra, Government of Pakistan and the public?
 - Based on assessment findings and analysis, provide recommendations to modify, as appropriate, the focus, approaches and activities:
 - assess the appropriateness of the intensive organisational support to organisations/agencies under the HRD Initiative, including proposing to develop HRD plans for identified organisations at federal and provincial levels;
 - suggest whether or not to continue, and the cost-effectiveness in doing so, the contractual arrangement with the current MC.
 - Recommend any enhancements to the program based on the experience and models used by AusAID in other country scholarship programs such as Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia.
 - Review the extent of cohesion with external aid environment and corporate requirements, and advise on any implications for the program's focus and management. Examples of corporate requirements include the absence of a formal

- Country Strategy, AusAID Canberra-led consolidation process, branding, greater focus on monitoring and communicating impacts of scholarships;
- Complete the 'Independent Progress Report' template (Attachment 2), for the Managing Contractor's performance against AusAID's standard evaluation criteria ratings for effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, gender equality, monitoring and evaluation, analysis and learning.

V. Methodology

The key methods include, but are not limited to:

- Review background and other relevant materials;
- consultation, as required, with the MC and AusAID Canberra;
- in-Country consultation with internal and external stakeholders, including AusAID Islamabad, MC staff, key HRD Pilot phase organisations, and other Pakistan-based international scholarship providers;
- Incorporate discussions with the GOP on the scope of the program, analysis of successful achievements and lessons learnt; and
- discussions with alumni and scholarship awardees from the 2011 and 2012 selection rounds;

1. Consultation

The Review team will:

- Liaise with AusAID Islamabad, through the Team Leader, to finalise the Evaluation Plan, meeting schedule and logistical arrangements (if any);
- Undertake initial planning, division of tasks, and review of relevant documents, some of which are listed in section XI below, prior to the in-country mission;
- Attend a pre-mission briefing with Post on arrival in-country;
- Attend meeting/s with the key Government agency for bilateral cooperation i.e. Economic Affairs Division;
- Attend meetings with the HRD Pilot phase organisations to assess the extent of support provided;
- Hold discussions, either via face-to-face meetings or emails as appropriate, with AusAID Canberra, the MC (Coffey International Development Pty Limited) in-Australia; Whole-of-Government partners like Austrade, ACIAR etc, other international scholarship providers United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan for Fulbright and British Council for Chevening, selected alumni, and 2011 & 2012 intake scholarship awardees;
- Debrief and submit an Aide Memoire to AusAID Islamabad Post post-mission prior to departure;

- Provide a draft report to AusAID Islamabad and Canberra within 15 working days of completion of the in-country mission;
- Submit a final report taking into account comments on the draft report from AusAID and other stakeholders within seven working days upon receipt of AusAID's comments.

VI. Team Composition and Responsibilities

Skills required from the individual consultants in the MTR are:

- extensive experience in Monitoring and Evaluation of scholarships program to assess impact;
- strong knowledge and experience in technical aspects of scholarships program;
- sound HRD expertise in terms of scholarships and an understanding of organisational background especially in a developing country context;
- sound knowledge of the delivery and operation of donor-funded scholarship programs;
- knowledge of AusAID's systems and policies; and excellent analytical, design/review and writing skills

1. Team Leader – Evaluation Expert

The Team Leader will:

- take responsibility for writing and quality control of the final report coordinating inputs from the other members, to fulfil the scope of work set out in these TORs;
- provide strategic guidance and direction to the MTR team;
- assess and recommend on mechanisms to incorporate corporate requirements for scholarships consolidation, impact reporting;
- provide M&E inputs, assessment of current mechanisms and suggestions to modify and how any processes/tools etc;
- be the main contact point for any consultations and discussions with AusAID Islamabad.

2. Technical Program Specialist/HRD Specialist

The Technical Program Specialist/HRD Specialist will:

- take the lead in providing technical program analysis, addressing any gaps and suggest modifying, as appropriate, the program design and its applicability; and
- assist the Team Leader in writing the final report.
- be responsible for reviewing and suggesting ways to improve the HRD component of the ADS and APAS awards;
- assess the feasibility of the current approach to HRD planning and its relevance to development impact and reporting for the Country;

- assist the Team Leader in writing the final report.

3. AusAID Assistant Program Officer

The AusAID Assistant Program Officer will:

- liaise with the Team Leader and Technical/HRD Specialist to develop the methodology for the review;
- liaise with the managing contractor and with the Team Leader and Technical/HRD Specialist to finalise the evaluation plan, meeting schedule, logistical and security arrangements in-country as required;
- participate together with the team in key discussions/meetings with Managing Contractor staff and other government and non-government counterparts in Islamabad to put forward AusAID's perspective and ensure objectivity of the review process;
- undertake quality assurance on the progress of the Mid Term Review and provide advice to the team as required to assist in fulfilling the TORs; and
- contribute comments to the Team Leader in finalising the draft and final MTR report.

VII. Reporting Requirements

- Detailed Evaluation Plan agreed with AusAID before the mission starts.
- A Draft Report with executive summary provided to AusAID Islamabad in electronic version within fifteen working days of completion of the mission.
- A final report of no more than 20 pages in length (excluding annexes), with a standalone executive summary provided to AusAID Islamabad in both electronic version and hardcopy within seven working days of receipt of AusAID comments on the draft report.

VIII. Timing and Duration

The MTR will start on or around 15 October and will be completed on or around 30 December 2012.

The anticipated MTR workplan with estimated inputs/timeframes are listed below:

Activity	Input Days	Proposed Dates	Location
Desk review (analysing existing background documents and including a briefing session with AusAID Canberra) Prepare and submit the evaluation report/review plan and any relevant documents as required	10 days	15 October 2012 – 24 October 2012	Australia
Travel to Pakistan	1 day	3 November 2012	Australia
Field Work in Islamabad and Submission of Aide Memoire to Post	8 days	5 November 2012 - 12 November 2012	Pakistan
Return travel	1 day	13 November 2012	Pakistan
Writing draft Mid-Term Review Report and submission to AusAID	10 days	18 November 2012 30 November 2012	Australia
Revision and submission of final MTR Report	5 days	14 December 2012 – 18 December 2012	Australia
Total	35 days		

IX. Recommended reading materials

1. Pakistan Scholarships Design Document 4 May 2009
2. Pakistan Scholarships Scope of Services
3. Original and extended contract No 53062 (Amendment No 4) with Coffey and relevant attachments SOS and BOP
4. Coffey program documentation including but not limited to:
 - Annual Plans for 2010, 2011 and 2012
 - APAS Short Course Awards Annual Report 2011/2012 and Annual Plan 2012/2013
 - Six-monthly Reports
 - Subject reports (Selection, Gender and Social Inclusion, HRD Initiative/Workshops Reports, FA Review, M&E Review, etc.)
 - Foundation Awards Completion Report 2011 for 2013 intake
 - Capability Statement and Financial Proposal for APAS
 - M&E Review Report
 - Foundation Awards Evaluation Report
 - HRD Initiative report
5. Options Paper 2012

6. AusAID Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance
7. AusAID's 2011 and 2012 Quality at Implementation (QAI) Reports
8. Australia's strategic approach to aid in Pakistan December 2010 (precursor document to Pakistan country strategy 2012-2016)
9. Pakistan's Medium Term Development Framework 2005-2010
10. Pakistan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)-II June 2010.
11. Vietnam and Indonesia Scholarship Program Design Documents.

Attachment 1**OVERVIEW – AUSAID’s AUSTRALIA AWARDS IN PAKISTAN****The Current Program**

AusAID’s Australia Awards in Pakistan comprises ADS and APAS scholarships and, from 2013, will include Australian Leadership Award Scholarships (ALAS). The ADS is an ongoing program whereas the APAS is a four year program that will conclude in 2014. One scholarship intake is processed annually with 42 Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) Masters awards, 8 Australia Pakistan Agriculture Scholarships (APAS) Masters awards, and up to 22 APAS Short Course Awards. Five ALA recommendations are being considered for the 2013 intake.

AusAID also offers additional modest levels of support to Pakistan scholarship candidates under the ‘Foundation Awards’ initiative (FAI). The FAI, introduced in 2010, targets priority ADS candidates who fall outside the required selection criteria, but demonstrate a high potential to contribute to development in Pakistan and an aptitude for study. The awards are designed to increase the chances of individuals from disadvantaged groups being awarded an ADS scholarship when they re-apply. Ten foundation awards were delivered in 2010 of which nine awardees qualified for ADS scholarships in the 2012 intake. Fourteen foundation awards were offered in 2011, and successful candidates will apply for the 2013 ADS Scholarships intake.

The Pakistan Awards Program has developed a profile approach to targeting relevant scholarship applicants working in federal and provincial government agencies, non-profit civil society, and the private sector. The program focuses on three designated priority sectors aligned with the identified needs of the Government of Pakistan: maternal, neonatal and child health services; basic education services; rural development and food security. Emphasis is placed on targeting candidates from three priority geographical regions: Balochistan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK).

Services delivered by the MC include promotion, advertising, pre-selection, placement, student mobilisation, student re-integration, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), strengthening of program outcomes, increasing program visibility and supporting the development and running of a more effective alumni network.

From 2010, a number of new initiatives have been implemented under the program including:

- a more targeted promotion and selection by using profiles, innovative promotion and alumni management strategies;
- development of an Alumni database;
- introduction of Reintegration Action Plans;

- initiation of an HRD strategy which was later redesigned;
- various M&E exercises conducted including tracer study, case studies, alumni profiles, application feedback analysis; and
- development of a 'Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy'⁵⁵ to promote the awards for working females and people living with disabilities.

Key Issues:

Corporate issues

a. Country Strategy

In the absence of a final Pakistan Country Strategy the program is aligned with Australia's other aid interventions, as noted in the document 'Australia's strategic approach to aid in Pakistan' as well as the priority human resource needs identified by the Government of Pakistan under the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

b. Communication of Scholarships Impact

There is a corporate drive to implement a sound monitoring and evaluation strategy with objectives that are measurable and accountable and reporting against the impact of scholarships program through various tools in Canberra. Over the last three to four years, Scholarships Section has increased its efforts to collect relevant data from country programs and make the contributions of scholarships programs publicly available through its website, the aid magazine 'Focus' and other social media sites. In the first two years of the program a number of M&E activities were conducted, however, questions still remain in regard to the design of the M&E framework and how we determine impact of interventions.

c. Consolidation of major Australian Government Scholarships Programs

There is a corporate expectation that the promotion, selection, M&E and alumni activities of major Australian Government scholarships programs will be consolidated under a single Australia Awards (AA) brand. This will likely include DEEWR and AusAID-funded scholarships, but the extent of consolidation will vary by country. From 2011, AusAID started to consolidate the different ADS and ALAS milestones and processes across country programs, including Pakistan.

A global, single online application system was introduced in early March 2011. To date, Pakistan program has opted out of the online process due to the fact that specific requirements from applicants are not catered for. In order to target, identify and report against the objectives of the ADS and APAS programs, applicants need to identify the scheme at the time of application. Additionally, ADS has four profiles with profile-specific eligibility criteria and targets. Hence, any systemic and management

⁵⁵ Included in the Annual Plan for 2011

arrangements for future years will need to reflect anomalies across the programs being implemented in Pakistan.

d. Branding

The Australia Awards program was announced by the Prime Minister in November 2009. The program consolidated awards implemented by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) under the banner of the AA. Effective branding and communications were critical to the implementation and success of the program. An interim branding and communications strategy has been developed and shared with country programs. Further consideration is needed to determine whether branding is consistent with the Australia Awards and how we can develop greater linkages with DEEWR's program.

Pakistan Specific Issues

a. Relevant applications and gender

The program implements various promotional tools to attract relevant applications including targeted meetings, radio and other advertisements, participation in exhibitions, etc. It has been a challenge to obtain equal numbers of applications from women and men.

Overall, in the targeted geographical areas, gender equality statistics are relatively low with education uncommon amongst females, and approximately 20% of them in the labour force. There is, therefore, the dual gender equality problem of being unable to tap into a large pool of high calibre female candidates, and high calibre male candidates being denied a scholarship due to the need to achieve the 50-50 gender quota as indicated in the program design. Although in the last few intakes, a positive trend has emerged, the program is far behind in meeting its target.

An additional factor is the provincial focus of the awards and its impact on gender representation. The MC's "Gender, Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy" conducted in 2011 raised concerns with respect to achieving gender targets in the priority province of Balochistan where the total percentage of working women is approximately 2%. Similarly, female professionals are scarce in the priority province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and in the course of next few intakes there will be an increased challenge of identifying female professionals from these provinces.

The program implements various tools to increase representation from women at the time of application, however, there is a need to learn from experiences of other country programs. The MTR will need to assess and make recommendations on the gender targets in the priority provinces.

b. Profile Targeting

In the last two intakes the program has been successful in most cases to award scholarships according to the profile targets developed for public sector professionals and policy makers, civil society workers and private sector professionals.

In 2011 a Tracer Study was conducted to capture information on scholarship outcomes in terms of benefits to individuals; evaluation of alumni contributions to human resource needs in their fields, organisations, institutions or groups; and evaluation of the extent to which these scholarship programs were successful in helping address Pakistan's development, educational and research needs.

The use of the profiling approach, in achieving the desired outcomes as envisaged by the 2009 design, will need to be examined by the MTR, and modified as appropriate. The MTR will need to assess the current design and targeting of scholarships and distribution of awards amongst sectors, and make recommendations on the relevance of the current program focus.

c. Autonomous Alumni body and an Alumni Strategy

The MC has implemented a range of alumni support activities, such as social networking events, alumni profiles and newsletters to showcase alumni's professional successes. A number of activities are in the pipeline including a national conference, professional development events, journal subscriptions, and a small grants scheme post-award in country research. The MC's Alumni Strategy is being developed and the MTR will need assess this in terms of its benefits to the country program.

d. Reintegration and HRD Initiative

As part of the program, all awardees develop reintegration action plans that are rolled out in three phases: prior to going on award, upon return and one year after return. The purpose of the reintegration action plans is to chart out and measure the impact made by individual awardees and collective organisational change, in cases where an appropriate cluster of alumni are available. The HRD Initiative Pilot phase launched in 2012 is based on the principle of creating a mass of change agents in a particular organisation working in a priority sector.

The MTR will need to assess the quality of implementation of the HRD Pilot phase for the last two intakes. Similarly, the MTR will need to assess the relevance and feasibility of the Pilot phase and make recommendations on continuing within its current parameters.

e. Management Arrangements

The program currently has one MC responsible for all administrative scholarships activities including promotions, placements, mobilisation, reintegration, etc.. As per existing clauses, and subject to the MC's effective performance, the contract can be extended under the 'Options Period' of the contract.

The MTR will assess the outcomes of the ADS outsourcing arrangements, the performance of the MC, and recommend a cost-effective management arrangement, including whether or not to expand the existing program administration contract for the 'Options Period'.

