



Australia Awards in South Asia and Mongolia: Mid-Term Review

Final Report

24 September 2024



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List of acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym	Description
AAS	Australia Awards Scholarships
AASA	Australia Awards South Asia
AASAM	Australia Awards South Asia and Mongolia
AASWA	Australia Awards South and West Asia
ADIS	Alumni Development Impact Survey
APOs	Australian Professional Opportunities
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DPOs	Disabled People's Organisations
GEDSI	Gender equality, disability and social inclusion
GLE	Global Education and Scholarships Section
GTF	Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OASIS	Online Australia Awards Scholarship Information System
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECD DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
RAW	Regional Alumni Workshop
SDV	South and Central Asia Development Section
SXD	South and Central Asia Division
TOR	Terms of Reference

1 Executive Summary

Summary Findings

This Mid-Term Review (MTR) was commissioned to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the Australia Awards South Asia and Mongolia (AASAM) program, and to identify opportunities for improvement.

AASAM is a well-planned and managed Australia Awards program that continues to deliver results for the Australian Government. It is supported by a professional and experienced managing contractor team and by the global Australia awards delivery framework. Its design and implementation is strongly aligned with Australia's international development priorities and local needs. The regional 'hub and spokes' model of delivery provides considerable advantages for the program, including cost-efficiencies, access to corporate and specialist resources and collaboration.

AASAM includes scholarships programs delivered under the global Australia Awards framework. While AASAM is responsible for components of the scholarship cycle before and after the awardees' time in Australia, management of the in-Australia component is primarily the responsibility of DFAT and Australian tertiary institutions. AASAM also includes short courses and AASAM-specific modalities such as Australian Professional Opportunities (APOs) and local and regional alumni events. The short courses and APOs enable a highly responsive and flexible approach to meeting local development needs and are a growing component of the AASAM offering. An expanded mix of options for Australia Awards has been highlighted in *Australia's International Development Policy*, including short courses and professional experiences. The implementation of modalities in addition to scholarships would benefit from some guidance under the global program to ensure alignment and consistency.

As a result of the mix of modalities offered by AASAM, and its regional structure with multiple program partners with across eight country programs, implementation is a complex undertaking and would benefit from stronger governance and oversight.

The program has a strong focus on managing costs and achieving cost-efficiencies and some guidance is provided in this report on ways to continue this approach, particularly in relation to synergies between modalities and the efficient delivery of APOs. The program and DFAT can also benefit from benchmarking the implementation costs across all Australia Awards programs. This would give more certainty about the cost-efficiency of programs and support ongoing management, value-for-money assessments and procurement decision-making.

There are opportunities for AASAM to improve the effectiveness of its current modalities by ensuring an approach that is more strategic and integrated across modalities and considering the mix of awards and delivery modes.

AASAM's long-term outcomes focus on partner governments harnessing the benefits of alumni skills and knowledge, and while AASAM promotes and supports this, there is a need to strengthen engagement with employers to achieve this.

Monitoring and reporting of AASAM results is comprehensive and supported by the global approach to monitoring and evaluation and learning (MEL), although it tends to focus more on reporting at the outputs level with limited focus on outcomes and impacts, which is challenging. There are opportunities for AASAM to rebalance this focus and strengthen its reporting through impact assessments and other strategies.

AASAM is committed to streamlining gender equality, social inclusion and disability (GEDSI) principles in its programming and implementation and has achieved some improvement in the representation of marginalised groups across its modalities.

Specific recommendations to progress these and other improvements are listed in the following section.

Recommendations

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

1. That DFAT strengthen AASAM's MEL strategy by ensuring that all indicators are mapped to outputs and outcomes, and increasing its focus on impact assessment by undertaking periodic synthesis studies of alumni contributions to long-term outcomes
2. That DFAT and GLE review the AASAM and global program logic and consider refocusing the outputs to directly and clearly reflect program deliverables and reconsider the appropriateness of including employer enabling factors as outcomes in the program logic

Governance

3. That DFAT review its governance arrangements including Oversight Committee functions to ensure they are better aligned with the complexity and interdependence of the AASAM program
4. That DFAT consider strengthening the quarterly update meetings' focus on strategic management of the program, and escalation of issues to the Oversight Committee

Alignment with global programs

5. That DFAT and the Global Education and Scholarships Section (GLE) consider developing guidance to support the global implementation of activities such as short courses and APOs, consistent with the broadening of Australia Awards modalities highlighted in *Australia's International Development Policy*

Relevance

6. That DFAT consider the use of undergraduate and doctorate level scholarships to respond to specific priorities and needs and develop an approach to its AASAM-specific modalities (such as short courses and APOs) that is more strategic and integrated across modalities

Efficiency

7. That DFAT (through GLE or the relevant area) consider developing a mechanism for benchmarking the costs of delivering its Australia Awards programs

8. That DFAT harness opportunities for efficiencies in the design and delivery of AASAM's modalities, including multiple delivery of short courses (and build this option into provider contracts where appropriate), delivery of complex APOs through local partners and leveraging synergies between short courses and APOs

Continuing benefits

9. That DFAT ensure that AASAM activities promoting the continuing benefits for employers target a diversity of employers, including private sector and NGO employers or employer organisations
10. That DFAT explore opportunities to support employer utilisation of alumni benefits through strengthening the reintegration process, securing employer engagement and commitment and ensuring that AASAM short course and APO proposals clearly articulate a benefits realisation strategy

Gender equality, social inclusion and disability

11. That DFAT further mainstream and explicitly state the use of an intersectional lens to support increased affirmative outreach and interventions for women who experience multiple forms of marginalisation
12. That, in relation to scholarships, DFAT increase its engagement with disabled people's organisations (DPOs), especially women-focused DPOs, in targeted countries to promote scholarship opportunities
13. That DFAT consider offering a limited number of undergraduate scholarships in targeted fields to people with disabilities from targeted countries
14. That DFAT Post decisions on short courses are made more strategically and with an intersectional lens to enable improved targeting and increased participation of women, people with disabilities and members of other marginalised groups
15. That DFAT offer an increased number of short courses specifically for women, people with disabilities and members of other marginalised groups to address imbalances
16. That DFAT ensure that an increased proportion of women, people with disabilities and members of other marginalised groups are selected as participants in APOs through use of an intersectional lens and affirmative action measures
17. That DFAT, Post, and GLE strategically support alumni who contribute as advisors and leaders (and continue to do so for those already receiving support, such as the Alumni Disability Advisory Group). This could include the provision of stipends or honoraria; nomination to participate in short courses, APOs or other professional development activities; or another form of support
18. That DFAT offer at least one Alumni Disability Initiative Grant that meets merit criteria at the regional level on an annual basis
19. That DFAT explore with Indigenous scholarship recipients the potential for establishing a regional Indigenous alumni network

2 Background, purpose and approach

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) engaged Sustineo to conduct a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of Australia Awards in South Asia and Mongolia (AASAM).

2.1 Background to the Review

Australia Awards are a key component of the Australian Aid program and provide scholarships and support to emerging leaders to undertake research and professional development in Australia. By investing in human capital, Australia Awards support growth and stability in the region and strengthen links and relationships in mutually agreed development sectors.

The predecessor of AASAM was called Australia Awards in South and West Asia (AASWA) and operated in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. AASWA ended on 31 January 2021 and was replaced by Australia Awards South Asia (AASA) covering all AASWA countries except Afghanistan. After Mongolia was included in the program later that year it was renamed Australia Awards South Asia and Mongolia (AASAM). The program is co-funded by DFAT's bilateral and regional development programs and is managed by Palladium. The initial three-year management contract was extended in June 2024 for a further three years.

2.2 Review purpose and approach

The purpose of the review is to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of AASAM implementation arrangements and governance covering the period 2021-2024. The findings of the MTR will contribute to the strengthening and future improvement of the program. The review was guided by a review plan developed by the review team in consultation with DFAT and which outlined the focus and scope of the review as well as the review methodology. The review plan included key review questions which have been used as the basis for data collection, analysis and reporting.

Key review questions

The following key review questions were developed in consultation with DFAT.

1. How effective is the current AASAM implementation in achieving program outputs and outcomes? What results can be shown so far?
2. Are AASAM services and support appropriate and aligned with Australian Awards global policies and practices?
3. Are the AASAM-specific program modalities relevant and appropriate to the needs and priorities of stakeholders?
4. How well are the AASAM resources being used, particularly in terms of cost, operational and time efficiency?
5. Has the AASAM implementation assisted partner governments to maximise continuing benefits from program alumni?

6. How well does AASAM routinely collect and use Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) data and reports, including for management decision-making, learning, and accountability purposes?
7. How well does AASAM manage risks?
8. How well is the current AASAM implementation supporting gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) and First Nations Australians considerations?
9. What are the key learnings from the current AASAM implementation in terms of strengths, aspects that worked well, challenges and aspects that can be improved?
10. What are the key areas of improvement for future AASAM implementation, including in relation to the achievement of outcomes?

Methodology

The mid-term review used a mixed-methods approach to data collection comprising document review, stakeholder consultation and a brief survey of recent participants in AASAM's scholarships, short courses and APOs. Data collection and analysis was guided by the key review questions, developed in consultation with DFAT. The extent of stakeholder consultation is discussed in the next section and the results of the alumni survey are summarised in Appendix C.

Stakeholder Consultation

The review team consulted over ninety stakeholders in-person and remotely. Stakeholders were drawn from a number of groups including DFAT, Palladium, alumni and short course providers. Appendix A includes details of the stakeholders consulted for the review. A number of these stakeholders also participated in a briefing discussion on the initial high-level summary of the review findings, and a few stakeholders then participated in follow-up consultations in relation to the briefing.

3 Key Findings

The key findings are discussed below in relation to each review question. Overall, AASAM is well-planned and well-managed, has robust policies and procedures in place and is performing well.

3.1 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Key Review Question

How well does AASAM routinely collect and use MEL data and reports, including for management decision-making, learning, and accountability purposes?

AASAM's approach to MEL is guided by the Australia Awards *Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework 2022* and *AASAM Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan 2023-2024*.

The MEL approach is comprehensive and includes routine data collection, periodic surveys (conducted by AASAM and Australia Awards) and regular reporting. It provides useful information on the delivery of the program, achievement of outcomes and its contribution to long term impacts.

AASAM actively participates in and leads the MEL community of practice facilitated by DFAT and this supports AASAM to improve its MEL practice.

By its nature, AASAM (as with other Australia Awards programs) is data rich at the level of program activities and throughputs. As a result, data collection and reporting are heavily focused on activity reporting, with less reporting at the level of outcomes and impacts.

Indicators

AASAM's approach to MEL is guided by an indicator framework comprising 49 indicators, including the Australia Awards global indicators. The quantity of indicator may seem large, particularly as DFAT's standards warn against the use of excessive indicators and advocate the use of a '... small set of meaningful indicators' (Standard 5.4). However, this quantity may not be excessive given the nature of the program deliverables and the use of separate indicators for the same of aspects of scholarships, short courses and APOs (resulting in some duplication).

The AASAM MEL plan maps these indicators to the AASAM outputs and outcomes, and this is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 – AASAM indicators

Output / outcome	No. of indicators	%
Output A.	1	2.1
Output B.	4	8.3
Output C.	3	6.2
Intermediate outcome (i)	2	4.2
Intermediate outcome (ii)	2	4.2
Intermediate outcome (iii)	2	4.2
Long-term outcome 1.	2	4.2
Long-term outcome 2.	2	4.2
Unmapped indicators	31	63.3
Total	49	100.0

Source: AASAM Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan 2023-2024

Only 18 indicators are mapped to current outputs or outcomes (36.7%), which includes two indicators which were mapped to both an output and an outcome. Of the 31 unmapped indicators, only one was related to intermediate or long-term outcomes (and only indirectly). Of the 49 indicators in the framework, 14 (28.6%) relate to intermediate or long-term outcomes – over 70% measure activities and throughputs. The implications of this spread of indicators include:

- there is a large focus on measuring deliverables and a lesser focus on measuring outcomes
- the use of a large number of indicators measuring deliverables which are not identified as outputs.

In regard to AASAM's outputs, DFAT's *Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Standards 2023* treats deliverables as outputs which are measured in terms participation in deliverables by different target groups and quality of deliverables from the perspective of the participants (Standard 5.8). While AASAM's indicators measure its deliverables in these terms, the program logic (included at Appendix B) does not specify outputs reflecting these deliverables. This is discussed in the next section.

Outputs and intermediate outcomes

The outputs and intermediate outcomes specified in the AASAM / Australia Awards program logic are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – AASAM outputs and outcomes

Output	Intermediate Outcome
A. Awardees (and their families) have positive experiences in Australia	(i) Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively
B. Awardees complete good quality, relevant education, training, other professional development and research activities	(ii) Alumni have necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to development
C. Awardees build relationships with Australians, other awardees, and Australian organisations and businesses	(iii) Alumni have relevant and useful networks and relationships

Source: AASAM Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan 2023-2024

In DFAT's *Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Standards 2023*, the program logic should illustrate '... the link between what the investment is doing (activities and outputs) and the results we hope to see (intermediate and end-of-program outcome)' (Standard 5.2). The outputs specified in the AASAM / Australia Awards program logic focus on the results (for awardees) rather than what AASAM is doing, and do not illustrate the link between AASAM's deliverables and the outcomes, despite the large number of indicators used to measure these deliverables. In addition, these outputs are not substantially different to the intermediate outcomes. For example, Output C (Awardees build relationships) does not describe the deliverables provided by AASAM and is not significantly different to the related Intermediate Outcome (Alumni have networks and relationships).

AASAM's definition of outputs is also different to DFAT's, as illustrated in the following box.

Output definitions

DFAT

The physical products, goods and services delivered by an investment implementing team.

Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Standards 2023

AASAM

A tangible result (a product or service) of implementing a program or activity. We are accountable for the outputs, as they should be largely within our control to deliver.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan 2023-2024

While DFAT's definition of outputs focuses on the deliverables, AASAM's focuses on the results. However, AASAM's definition also conflates the deliverable and its results by framing the result as a product or service (yet an awardee building a relationship is not a product or service). While AASAM's definition (correctly) acknowledges that outputs are largely within its control, in practice the outputs as defined are outside its control (an awardee's completion of a postgraduate course is not largely within AASAM's control).

As AASAM's current outputs are actually outcomes, AASAM's definition of outputs need to be reframed to enable them to reflect the deliverables, demonstrate their link to outcomes and allow the large number of unmapped indicators to be mapped to the

program's outputs. While this reframing is subtle, it is important for the clarity of the program's planned performance. Table 3 suggests the simple reframing of outputs that is required.

Table 3 – Re-framed AASAM outputs

Current Output	Re-framed Output	Intermediate Outcome
A. Awardees (and their families) have positive experiences in Australia	AASAM provides awardees with assistance and support to ensure their experiences (and that of their families) in Australia are positive	(i) Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively
B. Awardees complete good quality, relevant education, training, other professional development and research activities	AASAM provides participants with access to good quality, relevant education, training, other professional development and research activities	(ii) Alumni have necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to development
C. Awardees build relationships with Australians, other awardees, and Australian organisations and businesses	AASAM provides meaningful opportunities for participants to build relationships with Australians, other awardees, and Australian organisations and businesses	(iii) Alumni have relevant and useful networks and relationships

Source: AASAM Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan 2023-2024

Enabling outcomes

The AASAM / Australia Awards program logic specifies two enabling outcomes relating to employers. The challenges in achieving these outcomes were discussed in the section on 'Continuing benefits'.

Although they are included in the program logic, there are no global core indicators or AASAM-specific indicators to measure these outcomes.

While these two elements are clearly enablers, and important contextual factors, the program logic does not demonstrate a link between what AASAM does and the achievement of these outcomes. As they are related to what the employers are doing, and not largely within AASAM's control, they are more appropriately regarded as employer outputs rather than outcomes.

As noted above, the program logic should illustrate the causal link between what AASAM is doing and the intended results (outcomes). As AASAM deliverables related to employers are not identified in the program logic, and they are not measured, they may not be appropriate elements to include in the program logic, except as enabling (contextual) factors.

Long-term outcomes

The program's two long-term outcomes relate to alumni contributing to sustainable development and cooperation. The indicator framework includes two indicators for each long-term outcome – one indicator for each outcome for scholarships and one for short courses.

The program is able to show evidence of participants' contributions to these outcomes, through quantitative and qualitative reporting, with the latter in the form of individual stories. This information is collected as part of the ADIS survey and follow-up interviews of participants up to three years after participation in the program.

As a result, AASAM now has an extensive databank of individual stories used for reporting and communication. In the information available to the MTR team, there is little beyond this collection of examples in terms of synthesis to provide a deeper understanding of the program's impact. Such a synthesis could demonstrate:

- impacts over a longer term than the current three-year focus
- thematic / sectoral impacts
- impacts for individual employer organisations with multiple participants
- factors that support alumni in contributing to these outcomes, including the employers' role.

Recommendation 1

That DFAT strengthen AASAM's MEL strategy by ensuring that all indicators are mapped to outputs and outcomes, and increasing its focus on impact assessment by undertaking periodic synthesis studies of alumni contributions to long-term outcomes

Recommendation 2

That DFAT and GLE review the AASAM and global program logic and consider refocusing the outputs to directly and clearly reflect program deliverables and reconsider the appropriateness of including employer enabling factors as outcomes in the program logic

3.2 Effectiveness of AASAM implementation

Key Review Question

How **effective** is the current AASAM implementation in achieving program outputs and outcomes? What results can be shown so far?

AASAM delivery is co-funded by Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal and Sri Lanka bilateral programs as well as South Asia Regional program which funds India and Pakistan delivery as both countries do not have a bilateral program budget. Multiple stakeholders participate in its implementation, including DFAT's global and regional program areas, Posts, the managing contractor and delivery partners (Australian tertiary institutions and other organisations), with the managing contractor responsible for the majority of the operational delivery before and after the In-Australia component.

Although the current structure and management of the AASAM program is relatively new, it is part of a well-established and proven initiative that has been operating in the region for many years, and some key staff also have considerable experience with the program and other Australia Awards programs. AASAM operates under a global framework, has well documented internal policies and practices and successfully

delivers its program activities each year. In many respects AASAM is a ‘well-oiled’ machine that continues to meet its requirements and expectations.

Planning and delivery

The implementation of the AASAM program is guided by DFAT’s global Australia Awards strategy, policies and guidelines and the AASAM Annual Plan. This includes projected scholarship numbers and planned activities including short course topics. The Annual Plan includes areas of focus and priorities, and strategies to improve delivery of the program and sets out clear responsibilities and timeframes for contributions to each stage of the program cycle of each modality.

The annual planning process also includes individual country plans as well as related plans and strategies covering areas such as governance, GEDSI, MEL, risk, outreach and engagement and budgeting. The operational delivery is supported by a comprehensive Regional Operations Manual and associated tools and templates that provided guidance on a wide range of AASAM functions and tasks.

The approach to planning and delivery of the AASAM program is detailed and thorough and is supported by a focus on quality and continuous improvement. AASAM has a quality management system supported by its Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Working Group. This focus on quality is evident in the extensive documentation of policies, procedures and processes and tools and templates, as well as the use of internal working groups to explore best practice approaches to program delivery and participation in global Australia Awards communities of practice.

The Annual Plan clarifies the governance arrangements at the whole-of program and country level with strategic-level direction-setting, decision-making and oversight provided by the Oversight Committee, which meets annually. This is complemented by quarterly update meetings which provides a mechanism for review, coordination and communication. Update meetings are attended by all DFAT and managing contractor staff involved in the delivery of the program.

Achievement of outputs

Effective delivery of the program is demonstrated in the successful completion of each annual program cycle across program modalities (scholarships, short courses, APOs and alumni networking and engagement). Surveys of program participants, including a survey of alumni conducted for this MTR, show high levels of satisfaction with the delivery of the program.

AASAM has identified three program outputs which are aligned with the global Australia Awards outputs (on the next page).

Outputs

- A. Awardees (and their families) have positive experiences in Australia
- B. Awardees complete good quality, relevant education, training, other professional development and research activities
- C. Awardees build relationships with Australians, other awardees, and Australian organisations and businesses

While it has been acknowledged in the previous section that technically these outputs are outcomes, AASAM has achieved these outputs in delivering the program. Annual Reports provide evidence of this, in terms of:

- facilitating **positive experiences in Australia** through information and support provided to awardees pre-departure, on-award and on-return, as well as enrichment, networking and other activities
- providing **education, training and development opportunities** through scholarships, short courses, APOs and other activities
- providing opportunities for **awardees to link with other awardees and Australian individuals and organisations** across the AASAM modalities.

In addition, surveys of participants in AASAM modalities have indicated high levels of satisfaction with the delivery of these outputs, which is an important quality indicator. These surveys include the Alumni Development Impact Survey (ADIS) conducted by AASAM, the Annual Alumni Tracer Survey conducted by the Australia Awards Global Tracer Facility (GTF), scholar pre-departure, arrival and ongoing surveys conducted by ORIMA Research and other surveys conducted by the program, as well as the survey conducted for this MTR. For example, 99.9% of scholars were satisfied with the pre-departure briefing (Pre-departure Survey 2023) while 89% of scholars were satisfied with the application process and 83% were satisfied with on-award support, enrichment and engagement (MTR survey).

Supporting the achievement of outcomes

Although AASAM's identified outputs are effectively outcomes, they are not significantly different to its **intermediate outcomes** detailed below. AASAM has identified three **intermediate outcomes** which are aligned with the global Australia Awards program logic.

Intermediate outcomes

- (i) Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively
- (ii) Alumni have necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to development
- (iii) Alumni have relevant and useful networks and relationships

AASAM's program delivery is directly linked to and focused on supporting these outcomes and clearly support their achievement. While it may be that other factors can

contribute to these outcomes, it can be assumed that AASAM has played a significant role in their achievement.

ADIS survey results show that alumni have reported high levels of positive responses to questions related to these outcomes, which are shown in Table 4. Note that respondents were asked about links and networks in several categories and only the highest category is shown in the table.

Table 4 – Alumni views on intermediate outcomes

Question	%
I had a positive experience in Australia	97
My family had a positive experience in Australia	94
I am confident that the skills and knowledge developed through my Australia Award are relevant and will enable me to contribute to the development of my country	87
I maintain links or networks with lecturers and other staff at the university where I was studying ¹	57
Total	

Note 1: Respondents were asked about links with several categories – only one category is shown here

Source: AASAM Annual Report 2022, AASAM Annual Report 2023

AASAM has identified two **long-term outcomes** which are also aligned with the global Australia Awards program logic.

Long-term outcomes

1. Alumni are using their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development
2. Alumni are contributing to cooperation between Australia and partner countries

AASAM's activities have a strong and direct link to these outcomes and can support their achievement. While it can be assumed that AASAM makes an important contribution to achieving these outcomes, it is acknowledged that other factors will contribute to this, particularly over the longer term as alumni gain other experiences.

There is clear evidence that these outcomes have been achieved, with 47% of scholarship alumni and 72% of short course alumni reporting collaboration with an Australian or Australian organisation (ADIS 2023). Further examples of this are contained in the alumni stories collated by AASAM. In relation to using their skills and networks to contribute to sustainable development, while this is not an indicator in the AASAM indicator framework or measured through surveys, the alumni stories collated by AASAM illustrate this.

Implementation challenges

AASAM is administered and delivered in a **complex stakeholder and governance environment**, which includes DFAT's South and Central Asia Development Section (SDV), Posts and Global Education and Scholarships Section (GLE), managing contractor (regional hub and country offices), partner governments in each country (through a designated coordinating agency), alumni bodies and contracted providers.

This stakeholder environment requires careful management, particularly in terms of communication and decision-making, and decision-making processes vary between the scholarship modality and AASAM-specific modalities.

AASAM is also **a complex program** from a delivery perspective and includes:

- eight country programs
- delivery through a regional hub and separate country teams
- multiple modalities including scholarships, on-award enrichment activities, short courses, APOs, alumni activities and communication and public diplomacy activities
- inputs to priority setting and decision-making from DFAT desks and posts and partner governments
- program cycles for each modality with critical pathways, decision points and deadlines
- procurement of external providers for service delivery.

Put simply, AASAM has a lot of moving parts and multiple actors, and while AASAM planning and coordination is thorough and detailed, the effective implementation of the program relies on the contribution of partners. These contributions include funding as well as inputs to program implementation such as identification of priorities, decision-making and engagement with the program and other relevant program partners. The program has complex funding (and decision-making) arrangements. Scholarships are funded by the global Australia Awards program, six bilateral programs and South Asia Region program. Short courses and APOs are funded by six bilateral programs and South Asia Region program.

In its 2023 Annual Report, the managing contractor discussed the impacts that late decisions by Posts about short courses and APOs can have on effective implementation, particularly regarding timeframes for promotion, course design, selection and procurement and can lead to suboptimal implementation. These challenges were also discussed with the review team.

These activities involve multiple processes – planning and development, procurement of the contracted provider, design, delivery and reporting. To comply with Commonwealth procurement guidelines, the engagement of a short course provider requires a minimum lead time of 2 months. Late decision-making pushes planning, procurement and delivery of some short courses and APOs into the last six months of the financial year and the condensed timeframe places pressure on the managing contractor and providers to complete delivery before the end of the financial year. Other implications include limited time to manage budget variations to the estimated costs of the activity and budget underspends where APOs are not able to fill the places allocated to the activity.

Timely decision-making is a key responsibility of program partners and ultimately this is a matter of program governance. The primary governance body of the program is the Oversight Committee, and its role is defined on the next page.

Oversight Committee

The Australia Awards – South Asia & Mongolia Oversight Committee affords high-level governance to the Program, providing strategic leadership and guidance, ensuring an appropriate level of cohesion and consistency across the South Asia and Mongolia country programs, and monitoring alignment with the Global Australia Awards strategy and policies.

Oversight Committee Terms of Reference

Although it is not currently articulated in the committee's Terms of Reference (TOR), a key role for the committee should be ensuring the effective functioning of the AASAM architecture, including the roles, responsibilities and contributions of stakeholders in program delivery (a number of these responsibilities are clearly outlined in AASAM's Regional Operations Manual). This is particularly the case as the Oversight Committee is not primarily a decision-making body and a number of decisions related to implementation are made by stakeholders. The committee can add value to its role by ensuring that the timing and nature of decisions by others, on balance, are in the best interests of the program.

The quarterly update meetings are an appropriate mechanism for surfacing and managing strategic issues related to the management of the program, including challenges in engaging with stakeholders, and can escalate any unresolved challenges to the Oversight Committee. However, the frequency and timing of the Oversight Committee meetings may not be sufficient to provide governance oversight of a program with this level of complexity and interdependence of partner contributions.

Recommendation 3

That DFAT review its governance arrangements including Oversight Committee functions to ensure they are better aligned with the complexity and interdependence of the AASAM program

Recommendation 4

That DFAT consider strengthening the quarterly update meetings' focus on strategic management of the program, and escalation of issues to the Oversight Committee

As a **regional program**, there are advantages in the 'hub and spoke' model used for program delivery particularly due to economies of scale. These advantages include the ability to provide senior executive leadership, specialist resources and systems, and policies and procedures to country programs in a cost-effective and cost-efficient manner. However, this does necessitate some regional travel that needs to be factored into the operational budget.

AASAM's program delivery is based on a large number of **activities and throughput**, and this is critical to delivering AASAM's intended outcomes. Activities and throughput are relatively easy to measure, particularly as throughput and other program data is collected through the global scholarships information management system (Online Australia Awards Scholarship Information System – OASIS) and AASAM's own alumni, short course and APO information management systems. However, the measurement of outcomes and impacts is a challenge for the program and as a result the focus of program implementation, monitoring and reporting is more on activities than on

outcomes and impacts. There are opportunities for AASAM and GTF to strengthen their focus on impact assessment and this has been discussed in more detail in the previous section on ‘Monitoring, evaluation and learning’.

3.3 Alignment with Australia Awards global policies

Key Review Question

Are AASAM services and support appropriate and aligned with Australia Awards global policies and practices?

AASAM’s approach to delivering services and support is based on the Australia Awards global approach, managed by DFAT’s Global Education and Scholarships Section (GLE). This approach is guided by global resources such as:

- *Australia Awards Global Strategic Framework, 2021-2024*
- *Australia Awards Global Scholarships Policy Handbook, April 2023*
- *Australia Awards Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, February 2022*

The global M&E framework identifies the intended results of Australia Awards programs, provides guidance on monitoring and reporting and facilitates globally-managed regular surveys of scholarship awardees and tracer surveys of alumni.

To support its implementation of programs, AASAM initiated a series of working groups to enable sharing of information, knowledge and good practices and facilitate participatory management across program staff (which also contributes to professional development). The working group topics include communications, GEDSI, scholarships, the Regional Alumni Workshop (RAW) and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The AASAM working groups have been expanded to other Australia Awards programs under Palladium management and developed into Australia Awards cross-program communities of practice. AASAM’s participation in these communities of practice further ensures alignment of AASAM’s approach with the global approach.

Alignment with DFAT policies and priorities, including *Australia’s International Development Policy*, is a clear priority for AASAM in its approach to program planning and implementation. In its annual planning process, AASAM anticipated the policy’s priorities and factored climate change, First Nations and GEDSI into program planning. AASAM also ensures that its communications are aligned with DFAT’s messaging and language and closely follows DFAT’s procurement policies and practices. As evidence of its alignment with the new international development policy, Australia Awards is showcased in the policy, and AASAM’s design and implementation is consistent with a number of the commitments discussed in the policy. This alignment between the policy and AASAM’s approach is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 – AASAM alignment with Australia’s International Development Policy

Commitment	AASAM Implementation
Build more genuine and respectful partnerships	AASAM programming is informed by local needs and priorities and Development Partnership Plans
Anchor our approach in our strengths, including First Nations perspectives	Australian tertiary institutions, researchers and experts deliver AASAM activities First Nations perspectives are provided in pre-departure briefings, specific enrichment activities, short courses, APOs and alumni events
Support all people to fulfill their potential, including through GEDSI strategies	AASAM program delivery adheres to GEDSI principles including representation of GEDSI target groups in AASAM activities Specific enrichment activities, short courses, APOs, alumni events and alumni grants focus on GEDSI strategies, including activities for gender training, networking for women in leadership etc. GEDSI disaggregated participation data is collected and reported
Increasing our climate investments and better addressing climate risks	Specific short courses address climate change Scholar engagement activities focus on climate change Alumni activities on climate change support the regional Champions for the Environment and Climate Action alumni community of practice Alumni grants support local initiatives to combat climate change and mitigate disaster risk
Support local leadership and local actors	Local alumni networks and events are supported Alumni grants are provided to support local projects and initiatives

The AASAM-specific activities such as short courses, APOs and alumni grants provide opportunities to deliver activities that are responsive to local needs and priorities, and they are discussed further in the next section. There are currently no global policy guidelines to support their implementation as they are managed locally rather than globally, and AASAM has developed its own detailed policy and procedures. However, the new international development policy suggests a broader mix of modalities of the type covered by the AASAM-specific modalities.

We will expand the mix of short and long-term study options as well as professional placements and leadership initiatives.

Australia’s International Development Policy, p. 30

It is likely then that modalities such as short courses and APO will be an established component of Australia Awards programs. Given this, there is a need for global guidance on these approaches to ensure they are aligned with and relevant to the Australia Awards program, while also recognising the localised approach and context. It is appropriate then that GLE provide clear guidance, even at a high level such as principles, to ensure the consistency and integrity of these modalities.

Recommendation 5

That DFAT and the Global Education and Scholarships Section (GLE) consider developing guidance to support the global implementation of activities such as short courses and APOs, consistent with the broadening of Australia Awards modalities highlighted in Australia's International Development Policy

3.4 Relevance of AASAM-specific modalities

Key Review Question

Are the AASAM-specific program modalities **relevant and appropriate** to the needs and priorities of stakeholders?

This section discusses the **relevance** of AASAM-specific program modalities to the needs and priorities of stakeholders and challenges. Suggested future improvements in relation to design and implementation of these modalities is discussed in later sections of this report.

The previous section demonstrated how AASAM's short courses, APOs, scholar and alumni events and small alumni grants are aligned with DFAT's policies including the international development policy. These AASAM-specific program modalities, particularly short courses and APOs (which are developed in consultation with Posts and partner governments) provide flexible methods for delivering development opportunities that are aligned with DFAT priorities and respond to local or regional needs and priorities, making them highly relevant and appropriate.

In addition, AASAM-specific modalities have significantly expanded opportunities for participation in AASAM programs. Table 6 summarises participation in AASAM activities across all country programs in 2022 and 2023, and shows that, in terms of participation, the AASAM-specific activities are very significant compared to scholarships. For example, in 2023, 411 people participated in short courses compared to the 144 scholarships awarded (for the 2024 intake).

Table 6 – Participation in AASAM programs

Activity	2022	2022	2023	2023
	Activities	Participants	Activities	Participants
Scholarships ¹		89		144
Short courses	8	330	19	411
APOs	13	143	14	41
Regional Alumni Workshop	1	44	1	44
Alumni Grants	52	80	61	84
Alumni events	34	1,818	45	2,233

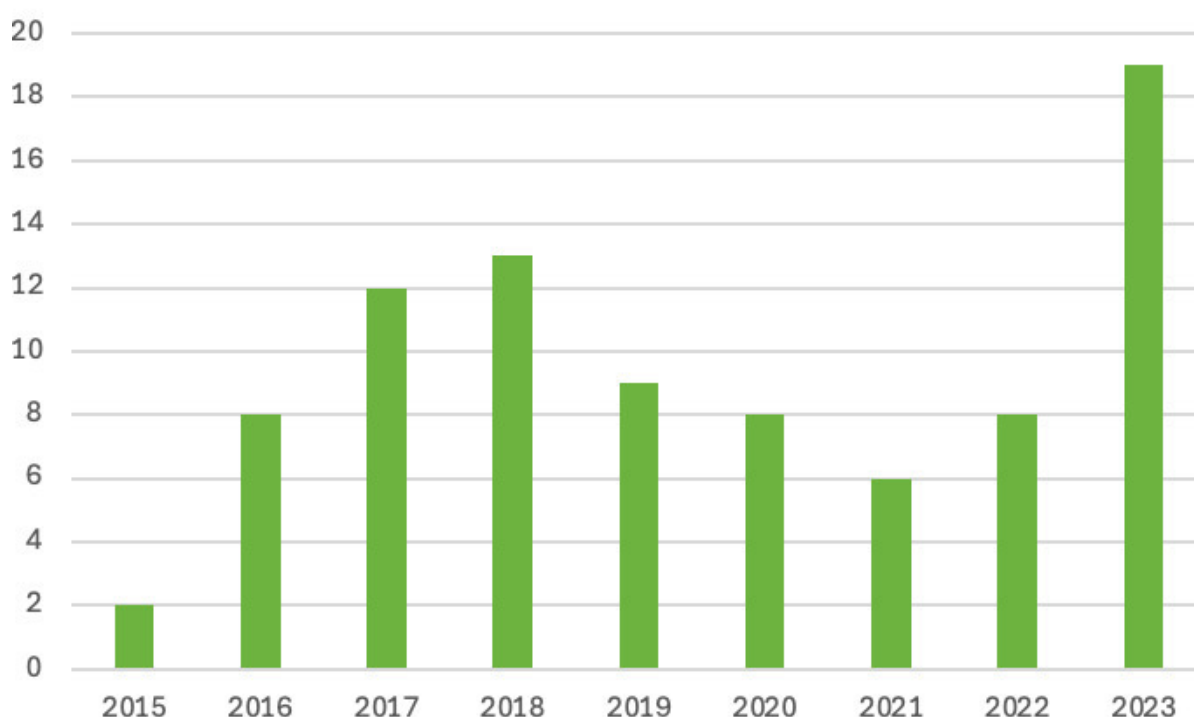
Note 1 – awarded for intake in the following year

Source: AASAM Annual Report 2022, AASAM Annual Report 2023

Short courses

Short courses are developed with Posts and are aligned with the priorities of country Development Partnership Plans and funded through the bilateral aid budget. Of the 19 short courses completed in 2023, 17 were delivered in-person and two were delivered remotely. Three of the in-person courses were delivered as regional courses (focusing on climate change related topics). Figure 1 shows the number of short courses offered in each year in the period 2017-2023 and demonstrates significant growth in short courses in recent years, noting that this growth pattern also reflects the impact of COVID-19.

Figure 1 – Number of short courses by year



Source: AASAM Annual Report 2023

Stakeholder feedback indicates a strong consensus among short course alumni that the courses they attended were highly relevant to their jobs and the sectors they work in, significantly contributing to their career progression and networking. This is confirmed by the results of the 2023 ADIS and the alumni survey undertaken for this review. Table 7 shows the survey results for relevant questions in the ADIS and MTR alumni survey, with the combined percentage show for strong agreement and agreement with the question. These results indicate very high levels of agreement with statements relating to the relevance and value of the short courses.

Table 7 – Short course participant views

Element	Source	%
Relevant to my current work (or future career)	ADIS	99
A good opportunity to build skills, networks and experience	ADIS	100

Element	Source	%
I am using the links to help my employer partner with individuals or organisations in Australia	ADIS	87
I am contributing to collaborations with individuals or organisations in Australia	ADIS	72
Value to me	MTR Survey	88

Source: AASAM Annual Report 2022, AASAM Annual Report 2023, MTR Alumni Survey 2024

In addition to meeting local needs and priorities, the flexibility of short courses provides opportunities to address barriers to participation in scholarships that specific groups may experience including GEDSI and vulnerable groups. This is discussed further in the section on ‘Gender equality, social inclusion and disability’.

Australian Professional Opportunities

In addition to short courses, APOs provide a method to deliver direct support that meets specific needs in the context of broader development priorities and are designed and delivered in response to Post requests. Feedback from posts indicates that the flexibility of APOs is essential in being able to respond to opportunities that may arise and are seen to have a positive impact in relation to development priorities. While the APO modality is a highly flexible mechanism for responding to local needs, clearer guidance is needed to ensure that this flexibility does not result in its use for purposes not fully aligned with its intent or impractical or inefficient for AASAM to implement (which is discussed further in the section on ‘Efficiency’). The need for developing guidance on APOs was discussed in the previous section on ‘Relevance of AASAM-specific modalities’.

Alumni Small Grants

The small grants provide opportunities for recipients to apply skills and knowledge developed through AASAM program initiatives that can make significant contributions to development impacts, as evidenced by the stories collected by the program. As the projects funded by the grants are locally-led and designed by recipients to meet specific local needs, they are a relevant and appropriate modality. Feedback from recipients indicates that the process is well-targeted, ensuring that grant proposals focus on seed funding for projects that address specific needs and priority. Recipients acknowledged that although grants were small in value (AUD3,000–10,000), the impact can be quite large, such as in the example below.

The Reading Room

An alumni grant recipient in the Maldives used the grant funds to establish a non-government organisation (NGO) called the Reading Room. The project developed teaching resources and teacher professional development workshops to improve the literacy levels of primary school students, which had declined during COVID-19. The program has been taken up nationally and expanded to include other student literacy development strategies.

As the alumni grants are an effective modality for contribution to development outcomes, and grant-writing is a valuable capability in the development context more

generally, consideration might be given to offering grant-writing training workshops to alumni.

Alumni Activities

Alumni activities provide opportunities for AASAM to support locally-led initiatives that can contribute to local development needs and are valued by stakeholders – 70.3% of respondents to the MTR alumni survey were satisfied or very satisfied with the ‘usefulness’ of alumni networking activities. The relevance of alumni activities is enhanced by the participation of alumni holding leaderships positions in partner government agencies.

The approach to local alumni activities varies across country programs, in terms of the structure of alumni associations, level of engagement with partner governments and Posts, level of activity and range of events offered. In the context of AASAM’s approach to professional development generally, and supporting alumni associations specifically, AASAM is well-placed to support the capability of associations and their leaders, where required, while respecting the principle of locally-led initiatives. During consultations with alumni, suggestions were made about specific approaches that may support the development and effectiveness of associations, including:

- offering short courses on association leadership
- extending alumni events from predominately urban areas to regional areas
- targeting smaller groups of alumni based on specialisations or sectors etc.
- holding biannual meetings with Posts and alumni associations
- encouraging more cross-country alumni collaborations.

In relation to cross-country collaboration, AASAM hosts an annual regional alumni workshop (RAW), which focuses on a topic relevant to the development agenda (the 2023 topic was climate resilience), provides opportunities for alumni to lead learning activities and facilitates networking with alumni from other AASAM countries. The annual RAW is a relevant and appropriate modality for AASAM, highly valued by participants and appropriate for a regional Australia Awards program.

A responsive offering

As AASAM is a multi-country program, there will be variability across countries in terms of context, culture, level of engagement with government agencies and development needs and priorities. In addition, the needs of target groups including women and people with disabilities will vary as will the ability to commit to studying in Australia. In this context, a ‘one size fits all’ approach will not always be appropriate. The ability to offer AASAM-specific modalities provides AASAM opportunities to respond to both development priorities and to the needs and circumstances of participants, particularly marginalised groups for whom current approaches and requirements may limit participation.

As the popularity of short courses grows (reflecting both the demand for and utility of this modality), it will be important to ensure a strategic approach to short courses and APOs that considers issues such as:

- alignment of short course and APO offerings with partner government workforce planning, both short-term and long-term planning, and professional development strategies
- strategies to ensure that partner governments or other employers harness the benefits of short courses and APOs
- micro-credentialing
- mix of delivery modes including face-to-face / remote and in-country / in-Australia
- identification of credit transfer pathways for short courses and their alignment with relevant qualifications frameworks
- links and commonalities across short courses (in terms of development priorities, sectors and capabilities) and between short courses and APOs.

Although the AASAM scholarship program currently focuses on postgraduate study at the graduate diploma and masters level, there are opportunities for the scholarship program to respond to specific needs by offering scholarships for study at the undergraduate and doctorate level. The use of undergraduate scholarship applies particularly to marginalised groups and is discussed in the section on ‘Gender equality, social inclusion and disability’. In addition, as the program matures, its ability to attract qualified applicants may decline if the market becomes saturated or due to other factors and diversifying its offering will enable the program to remain relevant.

Recommendation 6

That DFAT consider the use of undergraduate and doctorate level scholarships to respond to specific priorities and needs and develop an approach to its AASAM-specific modalities (such as short courses and APOs) that is more strategic and integrated across modalities

3.5 Efficiency

Key Review Question

How well are the AASAM resources being used, particularly in terms of cost, operational and time **efficiency**?

Efficiency can be evaluated on the basis cost (economic), operational and time efficiency.

Cost Efficiency

Using the OECD DAC definition, cost or economic efficiency generally refers to the efficient use of inputs to produce outputs (and the minimisation of waste), compared to feasible alternatives. It also considers contextual factors such as choices made in

design and delivery, allocations between target groups and market conditions for purchasing inputs. This approach to efficiency is about **choices between options** for delivering similar results with the same resources. As a long-established program with proven modalities, considering efficiency at this level is less relevant to AASAM.

Operational efficiency

Operational efficiency focuses on how well resources are used **during implementation** and considers factors such as:

- budget underspend or overspend
- misallocation, reallocation or redirection of resources
- enhancing efficiency (cost savings)
- optimal procurement processes.

AASAM, like other Australian Awards programs, works within a fixed budget and closely manages its costs. In 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 AASAM held expenditure to slightly less than forecast. In 2021–2022, expenditure was 2.1% less than forecast and in 2022–2023 expenditure was 0.8% less than forecast.

As a **regional program**, AASAM can harness cost efficiencies through scale, with the ‘hub and spokes’ model ensuring that corporate and specialist resources are available to country teams that would not be cost-effective to provide within each country team. The shared-services approach used under this model provides a very efficient way to utilise AASAM resources. Efficiencies gained by this approach enables the costs of elements of program delivery to be shared across the eight country programs. These elements include:

- senior / strategic leadership
- region-wide resources such as finance and administration, communications, continuing professional development, MEL, GEDSI, scholar and alumni engagement and management information systems
- specialist advisors including academic, GEDSI, MEL, First Nations and engagement
- operational resources including the operations manual and related frameworks, policies, procedures, tools and templates
- a collegiate approach to program delivery which facilitates support, information sharing and learning, for example through region-wide working groups.

In principle, the reduced duplication of country program resources enables each country program to cover these and other implementation requirements at a much lower cost than if they were a stand-alone country program.

Assessment of the efficiency of programs can be informed by a comparative analysis with other similar programs or other options for delivering the program’s objectives. In the case of AASAM, an objective assessment of its efficiency compared to stand-alone country programs is not possible as the review team did not have access to comparative data in relation to resourcing and other costs of stand-alone country

programs. However, the experience of merging the Mongolia program with AASAM shows that reduced duplication does lead to cost savings.

Benchmarking of the resourcing and other costs of Australia Awards programs would assist with the assessment of operational efficiency, assist with ongoing management and continuous improvement of the program and inform future procurement decisions. DFAT should consider benchmarking the costs of its Australia Awards programs.

AASAM is focused on achieving cost savings in the delivery of the program. Significant **cost savings** have been achieved through:

- the merger of Australia Awards Mongolia and Australia Awards South Asia, which is reported to have saved AUD850,000 in contract management costs , plus savings to DFAT through the reduced contract management requirements
- multiple delivery of short courses which yields savings in procurement and course design costs
- use of full or partial online delivery modes for short courses
- use of regional short courses which enables country programs to provide access to courses that would not be viable to offer as a country short course
- use of technology, such as digital materials and online sessions, for promotion and selection processes
- granting of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) credits which shortened the on-award timeframe and reduced costs of tuition and living expenses (saving a combined AUD1.6 million for intakes 2023 and 2024).
- in Mongolia, Nepal and Sri Lanka, providing preparatory English training in-country rather than in Australia, which in the case of Sri Lanka reduced the course cost from AUD140,000 to AUD4,000 (for six participants).

Short courses are now a significant component of AASAM's offering, with 411 participants in 19 courses in 2023. They provide opportunities for increased efficiencies, including multiple delivery of a course and use of online delivery modes (as mentioned above). Multiple delivery is a simple way to reduce costs without diminishing the quality of the course or the participants' experience and AASAM should continue to pursue these opportunities. Online delivery of short courses enables AASAM to significantly reduce the per-participant cost – in 2018 the average per-participant cost was AUD19,200, whereas in 2023 it was AUD15,232. If the 411 participants in 2023 were costed at the 2018 average, this would entail an additional expenditure of AUD1.6 million.

As bespoke and individualised programs, **APOs** can often entail significant administrative and logistical requirements that may result in inefficiencies, particularly when they are requested as an opportunistic response or at short notice. This is particularly the case for APOs that involve groups and a variety of activities or locations (for example study tours) that need to be designed and arranged. APOs involving complex programs have been efficiently delivered where a local agency or partner has taken responsibility for design and logistics.

Short courses and APOs can sometimes have synergies – for example through common experts or field visit sites and / or providing similar opportunities for linkages and future collaboration. Efficiencies may be able to be achieved through strategic use of these synergies.

There have been some minor issues in the management of reimbursable expenses. AASAM is currently working with DFAT to update the Regional Operations Manual to strengthen procedures in relation to this and provide clarity and certainty around eligible expenses aligned with annual planning process.

Recommendation 7

That DFAT (through GLE or the relevant area) consider developing a mechanism for benchmarking the costs of delivering its Australia Awards programs

Recommendation 8

That DFAT harness opportunities for efficiencies in the design and delivery of AASAM's modalities, including multiple delivery of short courses (and build this option into provider contracts where appropriate), delivery of complex APOs through local partners and leveraging synergies between short courses and APOs

Time efficiency

Time efficiency relates to delivery of the program within the intended timeframe, and includes efforts to manage delays. AASAM has program cycles for each modality with clear responsibilities and timeframes for each stage of each program cycle. AASAM's planning and coordination across these program cycles is focused on meeting timeframes, particularly the scholarship cycle which is aligned with course commencement. Delays in meeting timeframes in the short course program cycle have been discussed in a previous section, and this necessitates remedial action by AASAM to ensure the timely delivery of courses.

3.6 Continuing benefits

Key Review Question

Has the AASAM implementation assisted partner governments to maximise **continuing benefits** from program alumni?

AASAM's program logic (Appendix B), which is based on the global Australia Awards program logic, specifies two outcomes in relation to employers. These outcomes are framed as enabling outcomes. These outcomes present a challenge for AASAM as they are not within AASAM's control, and the program logic does not identify the links between AASAM's activities and these outcomes

Enabling outcomes

- (a) Employers deploy alumni so they can use their skills, knowledge and networks
- (b) Employers remain engaged with awardees

There are no indicators for these outcomes. These challenges are discussed in more detail in the next section on ‘Monitoring, evaluation and learning’.

Assisting employers

Ultimately, whether and how partner governments maximise the continuing benefits of program alumni will be determined by agencies and alumni and influenced by factors such as resourcing, organisational context, competing demands and priorities, workforce requirements and the capability and aspirations of alumni.

Multiple elements of the AASAM program support and promote partner government utilisation of alumni, including:

- AASAM is a well-established and well-known scholarship program
- the program has produced a number of alumni who are placed in partner government agencies (some of whom are in leadership positions)
- AASAM regularly conducts promotional activities with government agencies
- AASAM produces and disseminates a range of communication materials that highlight the benefits and the impacts that AASAM alumni can provide to employers, including alumni stories that demonstrate the contributions of individual alumni to their employer
- AASAM and Posts actively engage with partner governments on the delivery of the program, including the development of short courses and APOs
- AASAM facilitates a reintegration process, including reintegration workshops and return-to-work planning to support alumni in using the benefits of their program in their workplace.

It could be assumed that these factors would be sufficient to encourage and support employers to maximise the benefits that alumni can provide. However, given that a proportion of alumni are employed in the private and NGO sector, or self-employed, broader approaches to promotion are appropriate to enable all employers to maximise the continuing benefits of program alumni.

Recommendation 9

That DFAT ensure that AASAM activities promoting the continuing benefits for employers target a diversity of employers, including private sector and NGO employers or employer organisations

Demonstrating benefits

The knowledge and skills and links and networks that alumni gain through participation in AASAM programs can and do benefit employers. The stories collected by AASAM provide examples of alumni applying their new skills and knowledge by working at advanced levels (through promotion upon their return to their employer), working on specific projects or initiatives for their employer and sharing their knowledge with colleagues. In addition, there are numerous examples of alumni using links developed

with Australian organisations to initiate projects that benefit their employers, and a few examples are summarised in the box shown on the next page.

Alumni linkages with Australia

Maldives

An alumni developed programs for health workers and ambulance drivers by working with Griffith University and the Maldives Ministry of Health (which was an outcome of the earlier Paramedics Skills Development Short Course in the Maldives).

Sri Lanka

An alumni collaborated with Australian academic researchers to exchange knowledge and best practice in nutrition education programs for communities in Sri Lanka, including joint research to address child nutrition and promote healthy eating habits.

Mongolia

An alumni initiated a Memorandum of Understanding between Mongolia's National University of Medical Science and Curtin University of Technology for Mongolian student exchanges for Masters and PhD degrees.

Source: Country Update, October 2023

Information collected on the benefits to employers is used in communication products to promote the program, such as biannual Country Updates, and individual alumni stories published on the program website. However, these individual stories, which capture a point in time, do not easily measure the impact of the program overall, over the long term and across AASAM activities, including in relation to the impact for employers or sectors with a cohort of alumni. It is important to consider impacts across AASAM modalities as there may be strong connections between an alumna's participation in various AASAM modalities. Assessing the impacts for employers is discussed further in the section on 'Monitoring, evaluation and learning'.

Employer take-up

Employer utilisation of the continuing benefits of program alumni is not within AASAM's control, and feedback from alumni suggest that employers could be more intentional and strategic about how they utilise alumni. In some cases, alumni reported that they felt that their potential contribution was not recognised or utilised by their employer. While AASAM is implementing a number of strategies to promote and encourage take-up, there may be an opportunity to strengthen employer engagement in the reintegration process and through closer tracking and follow-up of alumni. Short course providers consulted for this MTR indicated that while follow-up of participants takes place informally through social networks over the short term, it was initiated by them or the participants and there was a need for a formal AASAM process to track progress and maintain connections.

Short courses and APOs, which can be a direct response to a specific employer need and may be developed in consultation with employers, have potential to provide direct benefit employers. Given this, the proposal for offering a short course or APO could be enhanced by clarifying and strengthening the activity's benefit realisation strategy,

particularly by articulating the benefits that employers expect, the mechanism for achieving these benefits and the employer's role and commitment to utilising the alumni's experience.

Recommendation 10

That DFAT explore opportunities to support employer utilisation of alumni benefits through strengthening the reintegration process, securing employer engagement and commitment and ensuring that AASAM short course and APO proposals clearly articulate a benefits realisation strategy

3.7 Risk Management

Key Review Question

How well does AASAM manage risks?

While the program implementation team has responsibility for the management of risks, risk management is also a governance responsibility. AASAM's annual plans identify the approach to risk management and key risks for the year ahead. As the AASAM Oversight Committee has the responsibility to review the annual plans and performance reports, it has oversight of risk. In addition, as AASAM operates in a multi-stakeholder environment, oversight and management of risk has additional complexity. There is an opportunity to strengthen the Oversight Committee's role in the oversight of AASAM's multi-stakeholder environment and in the escalation of issues, which has been discussed in the previous section on 'Effectiveness of AASAM implementation'.

AASAM's approach to risk management is comprehensive, systematic and well-managed and ensures that its procedures and processes comply with global Australia Awards policies and procedures. AASAM uses a risk management framework and risk assessment matrix to identify potential risk and implement appropriate treatment strategies. The approach is informed by both DFAT's and Palladium's risk management frameworks and tools. The approach to risk management is supported by comprehensive planning and documentation of policies and practices including briefings and communications with participants and providers. In addition to the risk assessment matrix and the ongoing alignment of AASAM's policies and procedures with this matrix, AASAM's *Annual Plan 2023-24* identifies the following specific policies and tools to support risk management.

- the promotion of a risk management culture
- clear lines of accountability for risk management
- all travel plans are reviewed and approved, in accordance with Palladium's *Travel Policy*
- Palladium's Global Safety and Security team monitors, identifies and assesses potential threats and crisis events and provides access to crisis management support and resources in accordance with Palladium's *Crisis Management Policy* and related guidelines and procedures

- program staff, contractors and participants are bound by DFAT's *Child Protection and Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy* and staff undertake mandatory PSEAH training
- Palladium provides a Whistle-blower Hotline to enable employees and contractors to report corruption, fraud, terrorism support, human trafficking, slavery, child abuse, sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse (SEAH) or any other violations.
- monitoring of scholars by Student Contact Officers in Australian tertiary institutions, including predefined 'check-ins'.
- scholar 'check ins' conducted by AASAM
- clear incident management procedures in both the *Australia Awards Scholarships Policy Handbook* and *AASAM Short Course Providers' Handbook*
- *AASAM Fraud Control Strategy* underpinned by Palladium's corporate *Fraud Prevention, Detection and Investigation Policy*
- robust IT security measures
- ongoing staff training in fraud and risk identification and management; Work Health and Safety-mandated reporting; safety and security protocols, processes and reporting; whistleblower policy; PSEAH; and privacy laws
- regular communication and reminders to Program staff regarding personal security, cyber-security, the security of physical assets and online systems and risk management.

Risk assessment and planning is very detailed and thorough and covers all aspects of program operations, is integrated with program planning and informed by formal and informal processes for learning and reflection. It includes separate risk assessment and planning in relation to deliverables including scholarships, short courses, APOs, engagement and public diplomacy as well as risks related to financial and program management. Risk management is integrated with and embedded across AASAM's policies, procedures and practices and regularly reinforced.

Stakeholder feedback suggests that risk is well-managed. It was noted that some recent isolated incidents presented some risk and were due to exceptions made to normal procedures. For example, an exception was made for a family member to accompany a short course attendee and during this time required support. The incident was appropriately managed, and procedures strengthened to minimise future risk.

3.8 Gender equality, disability and social inclusion

Key Review Question

How well is the current AASAM implementation supporting gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) and First Nations Australians considerations?

The AASAM program demonstrates a strong and increasing effort to mainstream GEDSI and First Nations considerations across its operations and practices. This is evidenced

by the continuous high level of participation of women in in AASAM programs and the integration of staff positions and working groups focusing on inclusion and diversity. Nevertheless, there is scope for improvement, especially with regard to increasing the participation of people with disabilities and women who experience multiple forms of marginalisation (intersectionality), although the reviewers acknowledge that AASAM program staff recognise these limitations and the need to improve.

Scholarships

The percentage of scholarship applications from women demonstrated increases between the 2020 and 2023 intakes, with women representing 42.7% of applications for the 2020 intake and 44.2% for 2023. However, this fell for the most recent 2024 intake, with women representing just 37.3% of scholarship applications. This is due to an almost 250% increase in the number of applications from Pakistan, particularly from men; if Pakistan is removed from the calculations, women represented 53.6% of scholarship applications for the 2024 intake. In several AASAM countries, more women applied for the 2024 intake than men, including Maldives, Mongolia and Sri Lanka. This indicates that women are, overall, successfully being reached by promotions, although women experiencing multiple layers of marginalisation (such as disability and care responsibilities) require additional targeting (see below).

The percentage of scholarships awarded to women in the 2024 intake was 59.7%, up from 57.3% for the previous year. This demonstrates that gender equality principles are well embedded in the selection process through an affirmative action approach. Interview panels generally reflect this, with AASAM staff noting in interviews the importance of equal male and female representation to avoid potential gender-based bias against women applicants. It is important that this is maintained.

Although levels of participation of women are high, women experiencing multiple forms of marginalisation (such as mothers, caregivers, women with disabilities and ethnic minority women) require additional targeting and support to apply and participate in the AASAM program. For example, interviews with women alumni found that many potential women applicants reach out to them for clarity on whether their children can accompany them while studying in Australia. While it is valuable that alumni are able to share their experiences with applicants, and demonstrates the strength of the alumni network, it suggests that AASAM should make this clearer in program promotions and specifically address these queries. AASAM should also actively use an intersectional lens when selecting scholarship recipients, ensuring that women with family and other care responsibilities are not disadvantaged. This would also demonstrate to future women applicants that caregiving responsibilities do not make them ineligible.

With regards to disability, less than 2% of applications for the 2023 and 2024 intakes were from people with disabilities. Of these, 31% of applications for the 2024 intake were from women, down from 39% for the previous year. However, as a result of affirmative action during selection, 3.5% of scholarships for the 2024 intake were awarded to people of disabilities, of whom 40% were women.

AASAM has already identified the need for increased outreach and engagement with disabled people's organisations (DPOs) to improve participation in the program; this is an appropriate approach, especially if engaging with women-focused DPOs. This

avenue should be explored more deeply by AASAM through collaboration and targeted promotion. Doing so will also enhance AASAM's understanding of the barriers and enablers to be addressed through an intersectional lens and affirmative action.

It must be recognised that people with disabilities in the region have fewer educational opportunities than people without disabilities. This means that only a small number of people with disabilities have obtained undergraduate degrees. In Bangladesh, for example, just 1.57% of people with disabilities have attained a higher education qualification. A stark gender disparity is also evident, with just 0.85% of Bangladeshi women with disabilities having completed higher education compared to 2.08% of their male counterparts.¹

As the AASAM program currently only offers Masters scholarships, the number of people with disabilities eligible for post-graduate studies is small. Other Australia Awards programs – such as those in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Solomon Islands – offer a limited number of undergraduate scholarships in Australia to people with disabilities and to candidates wanting to pursue a program not available for study in their home country. In addition, Australia Awards PNG offers undergraduate scholarships for study in PNG in targeted areas of workforce need. In recognition of the limited access to education opportunities for people with disabilities in the region, AASAM should consider offering undergraduate scholarships to a limited number of people with disabilities.

Recommendation 11

That DFAT further mainstream and explicitly state the use of an intersectional lens to support increased affirmative outreach and interventions for women who experience multiple forms of marginalisation²

Recommendation 12

That, in relation to scholarships, DFAT increase its engagement with disabled people's organisations (DPOs), especially women-focused DPOs, in targeted countries to promote scholarship opportunities

Recommendation 13

That DFAT consider offering a limited number of undergraduate scholarships in targeted fields to people with disabilities from targeted countries

¹ BBS (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics) (2022) *Report on National Survey on Persons with Disabilities (NSPD) 2021*, BBS.

² AASAM could refer to Australia Awards Indonesia for an example of how this is done. For example, the program's website states: 'Based on this understanding of how specific vulnerabilities can result in entrenched marginalisation for women and using intersectionality lens, Australia Awards in Indonesia will prioritise women-headed households, women with caregiving responsibilities, women with disability, women from disadvantaged regions, and women from customary/traditional communities (perempuan masyarakat adat), and other groups of women who are disadvantaged because of their gender and socioeconomic status. The program will support affirmative outreach and interventions to these groups of women to support their access and participation in the program.'

Short courses

Participation rates of women in AASAM short courses are good at 47% in 2023 and 54% in 2022. Some countries have extremely high rates of women's participation in short courses, such as Sri Lanka (78% women in 2023) and Maldives (56% in 2023).

Only two people with disabilities, both men, participated in AASAM short courses in 2023, representing just 0.5% of all short course participants who completed the programs. Even the one short course dedicated to women – the 'Women Trading Globally 2023' course – did not have any women participants identifying as a person with disability. This is a drop from 2022, when 4% of participants were people with disabilities, of whom 8% were women. As noted in the *AASAM Annual Report 2023*, this is likely because '[d]ecisions on Short Courses are made [by Post] less on the basis of strategy and the best use of funds than on the basis of opportunism (i.e. what is available at short notice)' and therefore do not enable the contractor to target and support people with disabilities as short course candidates. This approach should be reconsidered to provide increased short course opportunities to people with disabilities.

Recommendation 14

That DFAT Post decisions on short courses are made more strategically and with an intersectional lens to enable improved targeting and increased participation of women, people with disabilities and members of other marginalised groups

Recommendation 15

That DFAT offer an increased number of short courses specifically for women, people with disabilities and members of other marginalised groups to address imbalances

APOs

Women's participation in AASAM APOs varies considerably from year to year. While in 2022, 71% of APO participants were women, in 2023 this fell to just 32%. This is because in 2023, most APO participants were directly nominated by Posts or Post partners, whereas in the previous year, participation in regional APOs was determined by an open application process. No APO participants self-identified as having a disability in 2023 or 2024.

If nomination is to remain the chosen approach for APO participant selection, three factors may lead to low representation.

- Posts and Post partners may retain subconscious bias against women and people with disabilities.
- Posts and Post partners may not sufficiently understand GEDSI principles and how to put them into practice through affirmative action approaches.
- Posts and Post partners are not aware of eligible women and people with disabilities who could be nominated for APOs.

These concerns should be resolved through targeted GEDSI capacity building, development of intersectional guidelines for APO participant selection and improved networking.

Recommendation 16

That DFAT ensure that an increased proportion of women, people with disabilities and members of other marginalised groups are selected as participants in APOs through use of an intersectional lens and affirmative action measures

Alumni

Alumni are valuable assets and alumni associations are active in all AASAM countries. AASAM alumni are also involved in the newly relaunched Regional Women in Leadership Network and the Alumni Disability Advisory Group. However, a particular challenge for AASAM – although one certainly not unique to the program – is that in seeking to address GEDSI principles by engaging representatives of marginalised groups, the burden placed upon these individuals increases. This is especially true when the contributions requested are made voluntarily (that is, without remuneration or non-monetary incentive), as the individuals are then not only expected to provide unpaid input or guidance based on their lived experiences (which potentially may include traumatic experiences) but also to juggle their already-busy work, community and family responsibilities. This situation not only raises barriers to people's participation in such alumni groups but can also lead to alumni feeling under-appreciated and under-recognised for their contributions and the effort exerted in doing so. The Alumni Disability Advisory Group has a clear TOR, and its members receive a small stipend in recognition of their contributions as advisors. This is a positive step, and AASAM should consider how to increase support alumni who contribute as advisors and leaders.

Through exposure to increased knowledge about First Nations through the AASAM program (particularly through pre-departure briefings and scholar enrichment activities), there appears to be interest from indigenous AASAM alumni in establishing a regional indigenous alumni network. Many of the national AASAM alumni networks are dominated by public sector employees (who indeed make up the majority of scholarship recipients across the region). However, alumni interviewed for this review noted that this can result in the unintended marginalisation of indigenous alumni, who often work in other sectors such as civil society. Establishing a regional indigenous alumni network could be explored as a way of strengthening links and knowledge sharing, and as a resource for promotional activities and encouraging more indigenous candidates to apply for scholarships.

Women's involvement in successful grant applications is high (59.5% of alumni involved in successful grant applications were women in 2023), but the participation rate of alumni with disabilities is lower. In 2021, seven out of 61 successful grant applications (11.5%) involved people with disabilities. Compared to women, participation in grants by alumni with disabilities may reflect fewer applicants, weaker grant-writing capacity or a lack of dedicated grant opportunities for alumni with disabilities. However, as a program that is not designed to specifically support people with disabilities, AASAM has

seen higher levels of participation in alumni grants by alumni with disabilities than in other AASAM modalities.

Without data on disability rates among graduates for each AASAM country, it is not possible to benchmark AASAM's results, although the UN estimates that in developing countries, 20% of the population lives with a disability, compared to 11% of graduates.

Recommendation 17

That DFAT, Post, and GLE strategically support alumni who contribute as advisors and leaders (and continue to do so for those already receiving support, such as the Alumni Disability Advisory Group). This could include the provision of stipends or honoraria; nomination to participate in short courses, APOs or other professional development activities; or another form of support

Recommendation 18

That AASAM offer at least one Alumni Disability Initiative Grant that meets merit criteria at the regional level on an annual basis

Recommendation 19

That AASAM explore with Indigenous scholarship recipients the potential for establishing a regional Indigenous alumni network

Operations

AASAM has thoroughly mainstreamed GEDSI and First Nations concerns across its operations. There has been a demonstrated improvement in GEDSI and First Nations mainstreaming in recent years, such as through the establishment of the GEDSI Working Group and the recruitment of a short-term First Nations advisor. Other ways in which this mainstreaming occur include:

- a GEDSI audit was undertaken of the Nepal country program
- new GEDSI and First Nations factsheets were prepared by the GEDSI Working Group
- pre-departure briefings for scholarship recipients are now supplemented by an additional online session covering gender equality, gender identity, gender-based violence, disability-inclusive development, Indigenous Australia and Australian law.

These efforts should be maintained and expanded in the next implementation period, ensuring First Nations and GEDSI concerns remain a core part of AASAM's operations.

3.9 Key learnings

Key Review Question

What are the key learnings from the current AASAM implementation in terms of strengths, aspects that worked well, challenges and aspects that can be improved?

This section summarises and highlights the key learnings from the current AASAM implementation, a number of which have been discussed in previous sections.

Strengths

Although the country composition of the program (and its name) has changed over recent years, it is a well-established program that is part of a long-running **global program** with a recognised brand and reputation. The global program has a proven strategic framework and delivery model and provides whole of-program resources and services that support AASAM. The **managing contractor team** is highly experienced and professional and underpins its work with a rigorous approach to planning, policies and procedures. While the program implements multiple delivery modalities, they are delivered year-on-year which enables standardisation and streamlining of procedures and continuous quality improvement.

The **regional** hub and spokes model affords advantages including economies of scale (and cost efficiencies), high levels leaderships and specialist resources, information sharing across country programs and the facilitation of regional alumni links and collaboration.

Another key strength of the program is its **human focus** in the context personal and professional development that can yield benefits – the good news stories of alumni changing their lives and the lives of the communities they serve. These alumni stories are valuable assets of the program that can support public diplomacy.

What worked well

Overall, the program continues to work well and delivers the program activities efficiently and effectively. There have been specific initiatives that have worked well including:

- managing through the challenges of COVID-19 and other emergencies and crises and pivoting to alternative delivery arrangements
- merging Australia Awards Mongolia with AASAM
- implementing RPL arrangements which reduced the scholarship timeframe and costs
- trialling in-country English language training at significantly reduced cost
- delivering AASAM-specific modalities including short courses, APOs and RAW
- establishing thematic working groups across the regional hub and country programs, and participating in global communities of practice
- streamlining GEDSI principles in the delivery of the program and achieving improved representation of marginalised groups.

Challenges

AASAM is delivered within a **complex stakeholder environment** with a variety of funding and decision-making arrangements.

While the regional program provides some advantages, implementing the program needs to recognise that **diversity across country programs** does not allow an ‘one size fits all’ and necessitates a level of flexibility and agility in program implementation.

Although the program can readily capture information about its activities and throughputs as part of monitoring and reporting performance, the measurement of **outcomes and impacts** is a challenge for AASAM. In addition, AASAM’s long-term outcomes relate to partner governments’ utilisation of alumni skills, and AASAM’s capacity to influence this is limited

3.10 Future improvements

Key Review Question

What are the key areas of improvement for future AASAM implementation, including in relation to the achievement of outcomes?

The discussion in relation to each of the review questions, and the recommendations provided, identify the key areas where AASAM implementation can be improved, and these include:

- increasing the focus on measuring outcomes and impacts
- adopting a more strategic approach to AASAM-specific modalities including clarifying policies and guideline for each modality (in conjunction with GLE)
- strengthening strategic oversight of the program by both the Oversight Committee and the quarterly update meetings
- diversifying the scholarship offering by including undergraduate and doctorate level scholarships to cater for specific needs
- broadening promotion and engagement to include private sector and NGO employers and organisations representing marginalised groups
- improving employer engagement with reintegration and utilisation of alumni capabilities
- clarifying AASAM’s articulation of its outputs and outcomes (with GLE)
- improving the representation of marginalised groups in short courses and APOs.

Appendix A Consultations with Stakeholders

Table 8 summarises the consultations by category of stakeholder and mode of consultation.

Table 8 – Stakeholder consultation by categories

Stakeholder	Location	In-person	Remote	Total
DFAT	National Office		4	4
DDFAT	Posts	8	3	11
AASAM / Palladium	Regional Hub	5	3	8
AASAM / Palladium	Country Programs	8	3	11
AASAM / Palladium	Head Office		1	1
Alumni	Bangladesh	7	1	8
Alumni	Maldives	23	1	24
Alumni	Sri Lanka	10	10	20
Short course providers	Australia		5	5
Total		61	31	92

Table 9 lists the stakeholders consulted during the review.

Table 9 – List of stakeholders

Organisation	Location / Unit	Name	Position
DFAT	SDV	Matthew Lapworth	Director
DFAT	SDV	Iris Yam	Assistant Director
DFAT	GLE	Dr Hazel Lang	Assistant Director, Australia Awards
DFAT	GLE	Gabrielle Kneipp	Outreach Officer, Australia Awards
DFAT	Bangladesh Post	David Tang	Third Secretary (Development)
DFAT	Bangladesh Post	Nahil Imam	Program Manager
DFAT	India post	Emily Magow	First Secretary (Development)
DFAT	Maldives post	HE David Jessup	Head of Mission
DFAT	Maldives Post	Andrew Hodges	Deputy Head of Mission
DFAT	Nepal post	Kavitha Kasynathan	Head of Development
DFAT	Nepal post	Sunita Gurung	Program Manager
DFAT	Sri Lanka Post	HE Paul Stevens	Head of Mission
DFAT	Sri Lanka Post	Lalita Kapur	Deputy Head of Mission
DFAT	Sri Lanka Post	Sophie Gordon	Second Secretary (Development)
DFAT	Sri Lanka Post	Themari Mendis	Program Manager
Palladium	Regional Hub	Tony Crooks	Team Leader
Palladium	Regional Hub	Dave Gordge	Deputy Team Leader
Palladium	Regional Hub	Karon Beattie	Senior Program and Ops Manager
Palladium	Regional Hub	Kerry-Ann Klop	CPD Manager
Palladium	Regional Hub	Dulani Atapattu	Senior Finance and Admin Officer

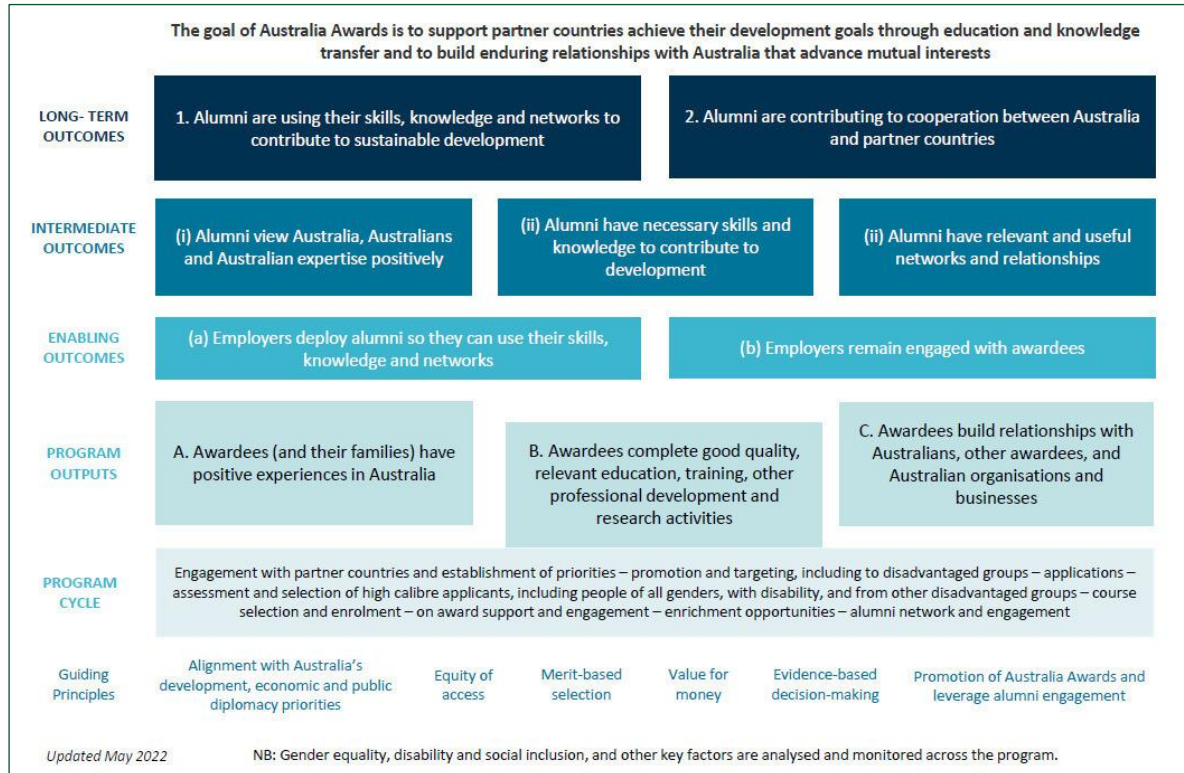
Organisation	Location / Unit	Name	Position
Palladium	Regional Hub	Kalum Bandana	Finance and Admin Officer
Palladium	Regional Hub	Tharanga Gurrwardena	Communications Coordinator
Palladium	Regional Hub	Lakmina Dissanayake	MEL Coordinator
Palladium	Bangladesh	Tahmina Rashid	Country Program Manager
Palladium	Bangladesh	Kanchan Khisa	Program Manager
Palladium	Bangladesh	Hridita Dewan	Program Officer
Palladium	Bangladesh	Israt Ara Islam	Scholarship Coordinator
Palladium	Bhutan and India	Karma Tenzin	Country Program Manager
Palladium	Pakistan	Faizia Mahmood	Country Program Manager
Palladium	Maldives and Sri Lanka	Sajani Ranatunge	Country Program Manager
Palladium	Maldives and Sri Lanka	Dale Kanagasabay	Program Coordinator
Palladium	Maldives and Sri Lanka	Andrea David	Program Officer
Palladium	Maldives and Sri Lanka	Kushmin Perera	Program Officer
Palladium	Mongolia	Enkhee Lunden	Country Program Manager
Palladium	Head Office	Jo Simpson	Director Higher Education
Griffith University	International Development	Belinda de Luca	Digital Media Officer
Griffith University	International Development	Samantha Hilbig	Project Manager
QUT	School of Justice Studies	Dr Mark Lauchs	Associate Professor
UQ	International Development	Nicole Ross	Development Coordinator
USC	Centre for Int Development	Tami Harriott	General Manager
Alumni	Bangladesh	Fatema Jahan Sharna	District and Sessions Judge (General Secretary, alumni association)
Alumni	Bangladesh	Hafiz Hasan Shohag	Senior Monitoring Officer Department of Agricultural Extension
Alumni	Bangladesh	Joy Prakash Barua	Deputy Director, Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs (UCEP)
Alumni	Bangladesh	Sadil Roomy	CEO, Acme IT
Alumni	Bangladesh	Nazneen Kawshar Chowdhury	Executive Director, Insurance Development and Regulatory Agency
Alumni	Bangladesh	Nahid Sultana Malik	Joint Secretary and Director, Department of Disaster Management
Alumni	Bangladesh	Pallab Chakma	Executive Director, Kapaeeng Foundation (General Secretary, scholars association)

Organisation	Location / Unit	Name	Position
Alumni	Bangladesh	Dr Khurshid Alam	Principal Scientific Research Officer Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (Secretary Research and Publication, alumni association)
Alumni	Maldives	Aminath Shashee	Deputy Minister of Higher Education
Alumni	Maldives	Dr Fathmath Nishan	Deputy Minister of Education
Alumni	Maldives	Shanna Farooq	Director General, Infrastructure Department, Ministry of Construction and Infrastructure
Alumni	Maldives	Aishath Ifhada	Senior Legal Counsel, Ministry of Social and Family Development
Alumni	Maldives	Ashfa Hamdi	Senior Protection Officer, Ministry of Social and Family Development
Alumni	Maldives	Mohamed Saif Abdulla	Deputy Director, Maldives Urban Development Corporation
Alumni	Maldives	Ibrahim Mohamed	Consultant, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Technology
Alumni	Maldives	Gasith Mohamed	Partnerships Specialist, United Nations Office for Project Services Maldives (UNOPS)
Alumni	Maldives	Usha Moosa	Principal, Thaa Atoll School
Alumni	Maldives	Aminath Shaliny	Grants and Learning Manager, Transparency International Maldives
Alumni	Maldives	Ismail Shariu	Legal Officer, National Social Protection Agency
Alumni	Maldives	Nayasheen Ahmed	Head, Solutions Mapping, UNDP Maldives
Alumni	Maldives	Aishath Reeham Harris	
Alumni	Maldives	Ahmed Mohamed Shihab	Lecturer, MAPS College
Alumni	Maldives	Hawwa Leesha	Self-employed
Alumni	Maldives	Nafaa Ahmed	Consultant
Alumni	Maldives	Mohamed Nimal	Lecturer and Head, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, The Maldives University
Alumni	Maldives	Ayesha Junaina Faisal	Consultant
Alumni	Maldives	Mohamed Azhan	Tax Consultant
Alumni	Maldives	Hussain Amir	Deputy Director, Maldives Inland Revenue Authority
Alumni	Maldives	Aminath Mohamed	Assistant Manager. Ooredoo Maldives
Alumni	Maldives	Khadeeja Shakir	Lecturer, School of Nursing, The Maldives University

Organisation	Location / Unit	Name	Position
Alumni	Maldives	Zeenath Shakir	Lecturer in Social Work, Faculty of Health Sciences, The Maldives University
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Dr Kapila Senanayake	Director General, Fiscal Policy, General Treasury, Ministry of Finance
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Rohan Crishantha	Director, Technical Assistance, Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Madushanka Dissanayake	Director General Telecommunications and Regulatory Commission
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Dr Randika Jayasinghe	Plastics and Waste Specialist, Sustainable Development Reform Hub, UNSW / University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Anuk De Silva	Head of Corporate Affairs, Standard Chartered Bank
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Sujantha Ekanayake	Government Agent, Polonnaruwa
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Manori Wathsala	Zonal Director of Education, Kekirawa
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Prabath Wijewarnasuriya	Zonal Deputy Director of Education, Balangoda
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Sharveshwara Rathnasinge	Lecturer, University of Jaffna
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Ashoka Weerawardene	Consultant
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Dr Madura Thivanka Pathirana	Senior Lecturer in Sustainable Tourism, Edith Cowan University
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Indika Sovis	Independent M&E consultant
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Sulochana Senevitatne	Lecturer, Department of Agribusiness, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Delaxana Manoharan	Managing Director, Shades IT Solutions
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Nasar Ismail	Training Officer, Business Incubation, Small Enterprises Development Division
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Sampath Nissanka	Provincial Director of Industries Development, Department of Industries Development, Uva
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Yathusa Kulenthiran	Managing Director, Olai Shop
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Sarah Soysa	National Programme Analyst, UNFPA Sri Lanka
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Nirosha Liyanathanthrige	Technical Director, Asian Science Labs
Alumni	Sri Lanka	Madhavi Gunewardene	National Research and Partnerships Officer, International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Appendix B AASAM Program Logic

Figure 2 – AASAM Program Logic



Appendix C Participant Survey

Response Profile

Table 10 – MTR Survey Response Profile

Category		Number	%
Total Responses		155	100.0
Gender	Male	76	49.1
	Female	79	50.9
Country	Bangladesh	82	52.9
	Bhutan	15	9.6
	India	16	10.3
	Maldives	0	0.0
	Mongolia	21	13.6
	Nepal	21	13.6
	Pakistan	0	0.0
	Sri Lanka	0	0.0
AASAM Participation	Scholarships	125	80.6
	Short Courses	100	64.5
	Australian Professional Opportunities	31	20.0
Scholarship Commencement	2019	7	6.8
	2020	15	14.6
	2021	11	10.7
	2022	28	27.2
	2023	42	40.8

Response Results

Table 11 – MTR Survey Results

AASAM Program	Item	% Satisfied
Scholarship	Information about the Australia Awards Scholarships	91.3
	The scholarship application process	89.3
	The assessment and selection process	88.3
	Course selection and enrolment	85.4
	Pre-departure briefing	79.6
	On-award support, enrichment and engagement	82.5
	Reintegration support	73.8
Short Courses	Information about available short courses	87.1
	The application and selection process for short courses	86.0
	The organisation and delivery of short courses	84.9
	The value of short courses to me	88.2
APOs	Information about APOs	78.6
	The application and selection process for APOs	78.6
	The organisation and delivery of the APO	92.9
	The value of the APO to me	92.9
Alumni Networking	Information about networking activities	73.3
	The range of networking opportunities available to alumni	61.4
	The organisation and delivery of networking activities	67.3
	The usefulness of networking activities for me	70.3