

AUSTRALIA AWARDS SCHOLARSHIP SURVEYS

2013 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

This report was compiled by ORIMA Research

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Appendix A: Drivers of overall satisfaction with the Australia Award

I. Background and methodology

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) undertakes a research program of the Australia Awards scholarship recipients on an annual basis. The annual process comprises two surveys of new starters (one for Semester One and one for Semester Two, known as the Arrival Surveys) and a survey of students who have completed at least one semester of study (known as the Ongoing Survey). The three surveys are conducted online by ORIMA Research using a census design methodology.

- ◆ The two **Arrival Surveys** are aimed at gathering information on the application process for an Australia Award scholarship, pre-departure preparation, experience on arrival, and initial thoughts on study programs and institution services and facilities. The two Arrival Surveys conducted in 2013 were for semester one (conducted in May/June) and semester two (conducted in September).
- ◆ The **Ongoing Survey** is aimed at gathering information on living and studying experiences, assessments of facilities and services at Australian academic institutions, entitlements and assistance provided by the program and arrangements for returning home. The 2013 Ongoing Survey was conducted in October/November.

Table 1 provides details on the response numbers for the Scholarship Surveys conducted in 2013.

Table 1: Details of surveys conducted in 2013

Survey cycle	Student population	Survey responses	Response rate
Arrival Survey Semester One 2013	1,651	1,465	89%
Arrival Survey Semester Two 2013	454	418	92%
Ongoing Survey 2013	3,586	2,627	73%

This Executive Summary Report provides the results of the student surveys conducted in 2013, and provides comparisons with previous data back to 2009 for key measures.

- ◆ When reading comparison data with previous years, it is important to note that there was a change in the scales used in the 2013 surveys, from a three point scale in 2009 to 2012 (e.g. very satisfied, moderately satisfied, not satisfied) to a balanced five-point scale in 2013 (e.g. very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied).

II. Primary scholarship outcomes

This section outlines the primary outcome measures of the Australia Awards program for 2013 in relation to:

- ◆ overall satisfaction with the Australia Awards program; and
- ◆ the usefulness of knowledge and skills provided by courses/research for working on development issues in home countries.

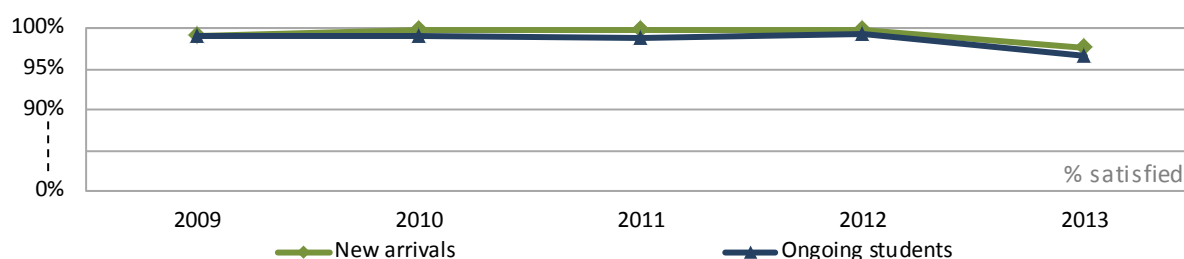
A. Overall satisfaction

Consistent with previous years, almost all students (97%) were satisfied with their scholarship in 2013 for the Arrival and Ongoing Surveys (see Figure 1).

- ◆ The slight dip in the 2013 results was due to a change in scales (from a three-point scale used in 2009 to 2012 to a five-point scale used in 2013) – the mid-point scale, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, is excluded in the 2013 result in Figure 1. Levels of dissatisfaction were consistent across all years at between 0% and 1%.
- The few students who were dissatisfied overall with the Australia Award scholarship mainly mentioned that the entitlements were not enough to support the cost of living in Australia, particularly for students with dependents and students living and studying in major cities.

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction with the Australia Award scholarship

Base: All survey respondents (% satisfied or very satisfied)

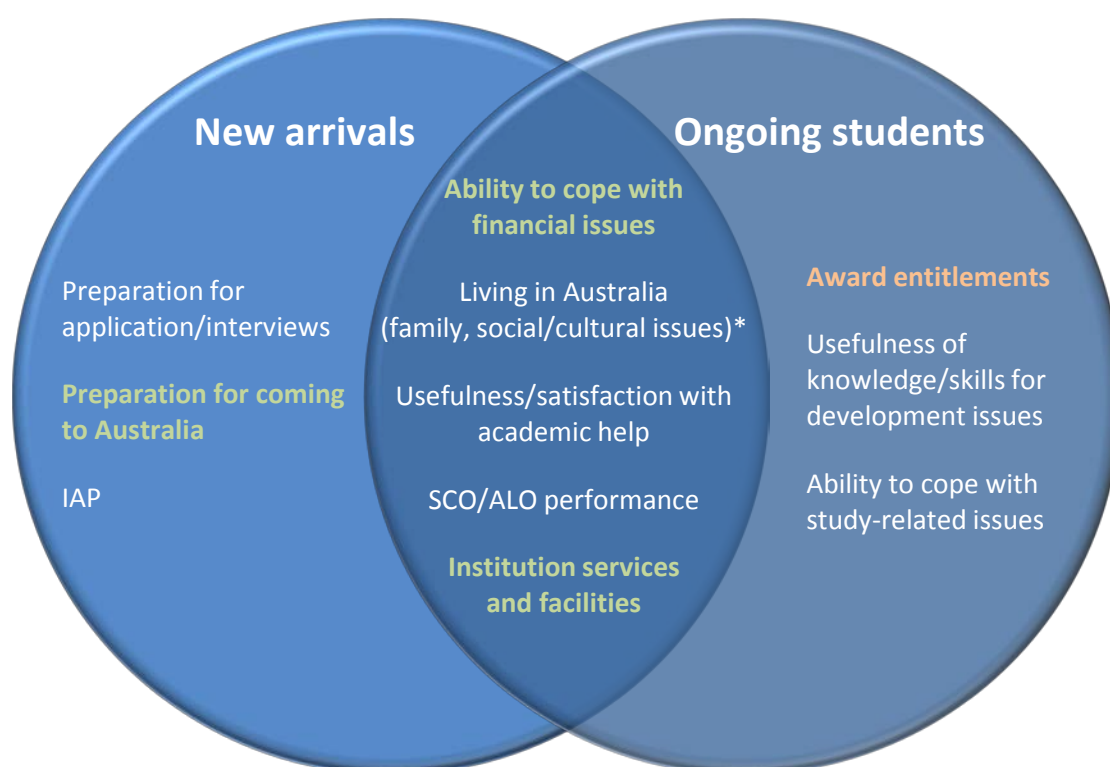


Drivers of overall satisfaction

The research applied regression modeling techniques to identify a range of attributes that had a strong influence (correlation) on how satisfied students are with their Australia Awards in 2013. These few attributes explain around 40% of the movement in overall satisfaction across both the Arrival Survey and the Ongoing Survey. The Arrival Survey and Ongoing Survey models each identified eight main 'drivers' of overall satisfaction (the full description for each regression model is provided in Appendix A). Five of the drivers were common amongst both new arrivals and ongoing students, as shown in Figure 2.

- ◆ The three most influential drivers of overall satisfaction amongst new arrivals (shown in green) were: satisfaction with institution services and facilities; satisfaction with preparation for coming to Australia; and ability to cope with financial issues.
- ◆ The most influential driver of overall satisfaction amongst ongoing students was satisfaction with the entitlements and other assistance under the scholarship program (shown in orange). The next most influential driver (ability to cope with study-related issues) had around a quarter of the impact as the entitlements measure.

Figure 2: Key Drivers of overall satisfaction for new arrivals and ongoing students¹



* Family issues was a key driver of overall satisfaction amongst new arrivals, whereas social/cultural issues was a key driver amongst ongoing students.

¹ IAP: Introductory Academic Program
SCO: Student Contact Officer
ALO: AusAID Liaison Officer

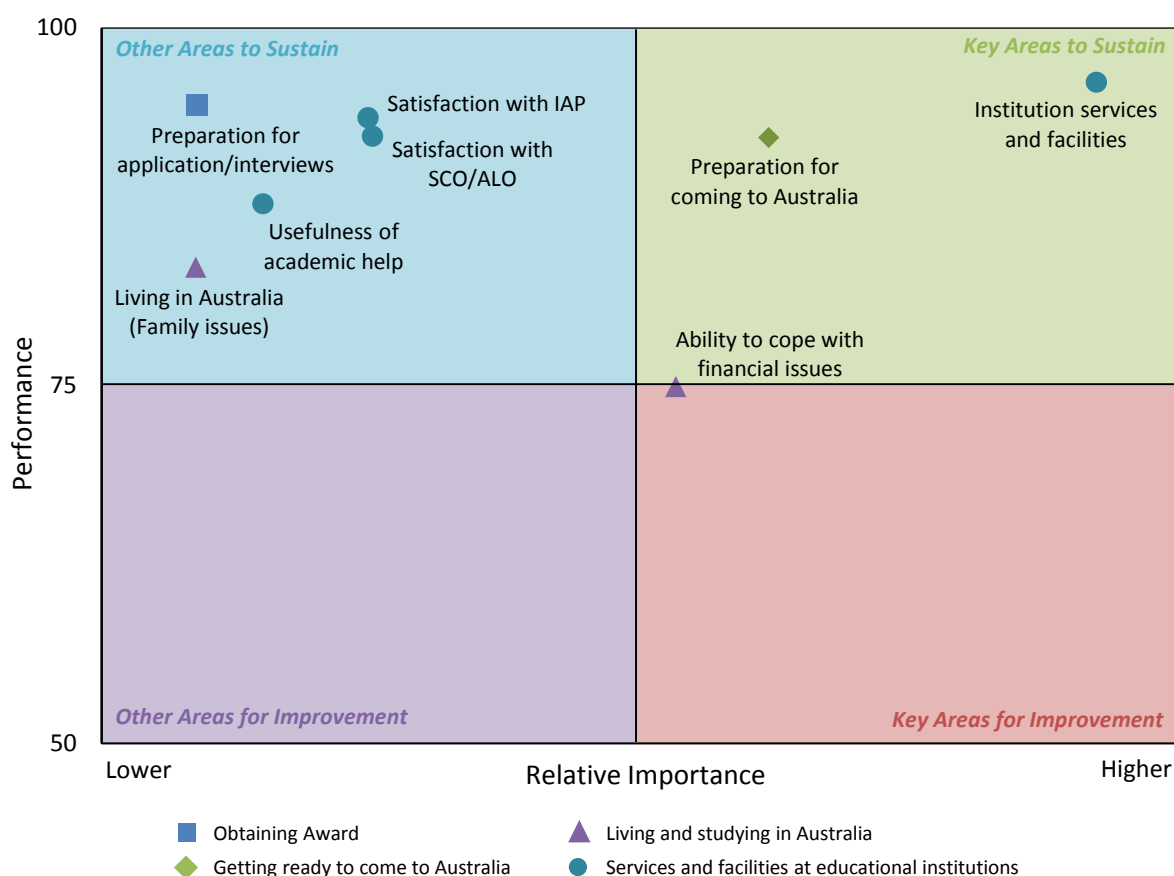
Priorities for improving/maintaining overall satisfaction

As noted earlier, overall satisfaction with the Australia Awards has remained high and steady over the years. Therefore, there are no significant areas for improvement as reflected below. Nevertheless, there are a number of high importance factors driving overall satisfaction that are performing well. Therefore, the focus should be on sustaining these factors to help ensure overall satisfaction with the Australia Awards program is maintained.

2013 new arrivals

The performance of the drivers of overall satisfaction amongst new arrivals remained steady in comparison with the three-year average from 2010 to 2012. As shown in Figure 3, the two most important drivers (institution services and facilities, and preparation for coming to Australia) performed above 90% in 2013. While ability to cope with financial issues performed at 75%, this was consistent with previous years.

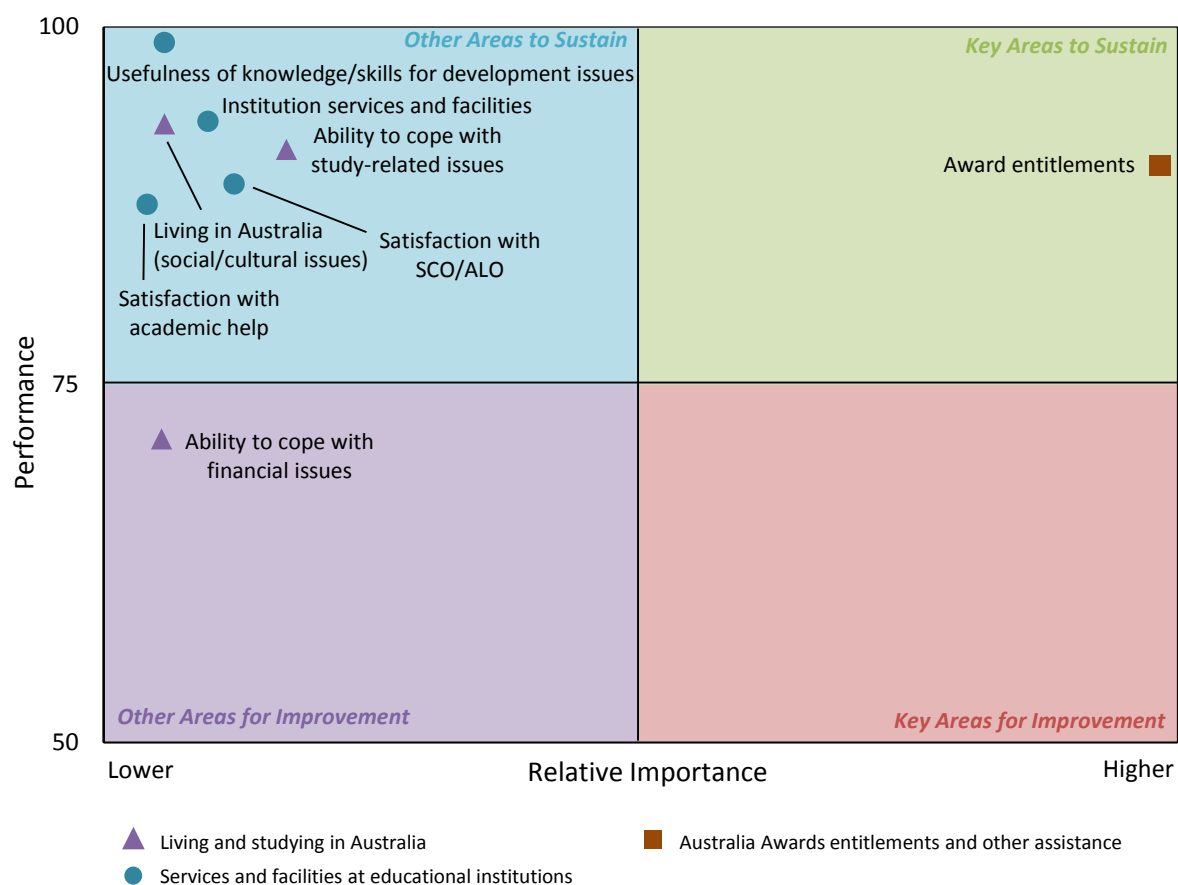
Figure 3: Drivers of overall satisfaction amongst new arrivals



2013 ongoing students

The performance of the drivers of overall satisfaction amongst ongoing students also remained steady in comparison with the three-year average from 2010 to 2012. As shown in Figure 4, more than 90% of students were satisfied with their Award entitlements, which was by far the most important driver of overall satisfaction in 2013.

Figure 4: Drivers of overall satisfaction amongst ongoing students

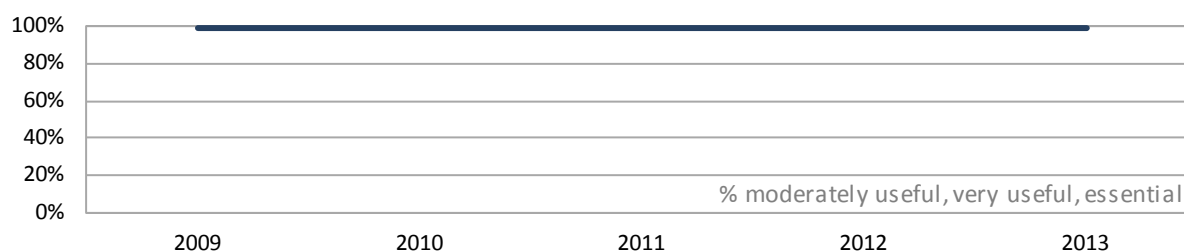


B. Usefulness of knowledge/skills gained from course

Consistent with previous years, nearly all students (99%) found their course/research provided them with **useful knowledge and skills for working on development issues in their home country** (i.e. rated their newly acquired knowledge/skills as being moderately useful or better, see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Usefulness of knowledge and skills in course for development issues

Base: All ongoing survey respondents (% moderately useful, very useful or essential)



Results were similar across all fields of study, with more than 85% of students finding the knowledge and skills they attained as being very useful. The most useful fields of study were mixed fields (100% very useful) and information technology (95%). Comparatively, the least useful field of study was commerce, though a high proportion of students (85%) rated it as being very useful.

93% of students from small institutions (those with fewer than five Australia Awards scholars) found their course/research to be very useful for assisting them in working on development issues, compared to 88% of students from large institutions (those with more than 60 Australia Awards scholars).

More than 75% of students from most countries found their newly attained knowledge and skills to be very useful. A slightly lower proportion of students from the following three countries found their newly acquired skills/knowledge to be very useful for working on development issues in their home country: Mexico (63% very useful); Guatemala (67%); and Peru (71%).

III. 2013 student experiences at a glance

This section outlines the overall experiences that students had in 2013 regarding their Australia Award. The student experiences outlined in this section are in relation to:

- ◆ applying for an Australia Award;
- ◆ preparing to come to Australia;
- ◆ studying and living in Australia;
- ◆ Australian academic institution services and facilities;
- ◆ scholarship entitlements and other assistance; and
- ◆ arrangements for returning home.

A. Applying for an Australia Award

The most common sources from which students first became **aware of the Australia Awards program** were through their friends/colleagues who have studied in Australia (30%) and employers/workplaces (25%).

The most common reason for **applying for a scholarship** and for student **choice of course** was to contribute to their country's development (both at 84%), with most students **choosing their institution** based on the institution's international reputation (80%) and the availability of courses (78%). The top three reasons for applying for an Australia Award and choosing course and institution are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Top three reasons for applying for an Australia Award and choosing course and institution

Reasons for applying for an Australia Award	Reasons for choosing course	Reasons for choosing institution
The education I receive will help me contribute to my country's development (84%)	It is appropriate for my country's development needs (84%)	It has a good international reputation (80%)
The education I receive will help me do my job better (43%)	It is the most appropriate for my future career plans (70%)	It offered the course I wanted to do (78%)
Good research facilities and educational resources are available in Australia (42%)	It matches my personal area of interest (57%)	I met the entry requirements (27%)

Most students **obtained a copy of the application form** through the Australia Awards website (71%, steadily increasing from 48% in 2011). This trend of increasing online usage is also represented in how students have **submitted their scholarship form** – 40% of students submitted their form using the Online Australia Scholarships Information System, up from 24% in 2012.

One-quarter of students had **applied for another scholarship program** within the past two years, with student interest mostly being in relation to the Home Government Scholarship (24%, with 37% of these being successful) and the Fulbright Scholarship (17%, with 9% of these being successful).

The most common resource used by students in **preparing for applications and interviews** was the Australia Awards website (94%), followed by the websites of Australian educational institutions (84%) and advice from staff of the Australia Awards program (80%). Of the students that used the Australia Awards website, 81% found it to be very useful.

Common **issues encountered by students in their scholarship application and selection process** were:

- ◆ having limited time to prepare the application (60%);
- ◆ preparing for tests in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) / Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (59%); and
 - 28% of students that encountered this issue reported that it caused a major problem for them, which was the highest proportion amongst the issues encountered.
- ◆ finding useful information about courses and educational institutions in Australia (58%).

B. Preparing to come to Australia

Most students (92%) were satisfied with their preparation for coming to Australia.

- ◆ All students **sought information about a range of matters prior to coming to Australia**, particularly in relation to: conditions of the Australia Award, cost of living in Australia, campus location, specific course information, accommodation, information about the city they would live in and visa requirements (all 97-99%). Nearly all students (98%) used information provided by the Australia Awards program when preparing to come to Australia, with 85% of these finding this information to be very useful.
- ◆ Attendance at the **Australia Awards Pre-Departure Briefing** remained high in 2013 (98%), as did the proportion of students who reported they had received a copy of the **Australia Awards Pre-Departure Guidebook/DVD** (95%). Most students found the Pre-Departure Briefing to be very useful (90%) and 86% found the Guidebook/DVD to be very useful.
 - Most students (89%) agreed that the information in the Pre-Departure Briefing and Guidebook/DVD reflected the experience that they encountered when they first started living and studying in Australia.
- ◆ In-country bridging training was also provided in Pakistan, which 33% of students from Pakistan attended. All of these students were satisfied with the course.

The most common **issues encountered when coming to Australia** were in relation to the time gap between finishing work and leaving for Australia (64%, with 25% of these students reporting this as causing a major problem for them) and making arrangements for their families (63%, with 27% of these students reporting this as causing a major problem them).

C. Studying and living in Australia

Students typically experience a range of issues during their time living and studying in Australia. Students were asked whether they had encountered particular financial, academic and other issues and, if they had, the degree to which each issue caused a problem for them.

The two most common **financial issues** encountered by students were finding affordable accommodation and finding part-time employment, both encountered by around 80% of students. These two issues also had the largest effect on students, with around one-third of students encountering these issues reporting that they caused a major problem for them.

- ◆ The cost of caring for dependents also caused a major problem for around one-third of students who encountered them, but this issue was encountered by a lower proportion of students (around 50%).

The three most troublesome financial issues encountered by both new arrivals and ongoing students are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Financial issues causing a major problem for new arrivals and ongoing students

New arrivals	Ongoing students
Finding part-time employment (37%)	Finding part-time employment (38%)
The cost of caring for dependents, including childcare and school fees (37%)	The cost of caring for dependents, including childcare and school fees (35%)
Finding affordable accommodation (32%)	Finding affordable accommodation (29%)

- ◆ Around 75% of students were satisfied with their ability to cope with financial issues, with students dealing in a number of ways. The most common solutions amongst students were through adopting a low-cost lifestyle, obtaining part-time or casual employment and/or using their savings.

The most common **academic issue** faced by students was general study skills (faced by around three-quarters of students), with around two-thirds of students encountering issues in relation to understanding or using English, participating in class discussions, prerequisite knowledge for their studies and managing time to attend classes, studying and undertaking assignments.

Academic issues were less of a problem to students than financial issues, with the most problematic academic issues being in relation to participating in class discussions, understanding/using English, prerequisite knowledge and time management (causing a major problem for around 16% of new arrivals and around 10% of ongoing students). The three most troublesome academic issues encountered by both new arrivals and ongoing students are detailed in Table 4.

- ◆ Most students (91%) were satisfied with their ability to cope with academic issues.

Table 4: Academic issues causing a major problem for new arrivals and ongoing students

New arrivals	Ongoing students
Participating in class discussions/making comments in class (17%)	Managing my time to attend classes, studying and undertaking assignments (10%)
Understanding or using English (17%)	Prerequisite knowledge necessary to my current studies (10%)
Managing my time to attend classes, studying and undertaking assignments (16%)	Participating in class discussions/making comments in class (10%)

Other issues commonly faced by students were finding accommodation of acceptable type or quality (affecting just over 80% of students and causing a major problem for around 30% of these) and weather/climate (affecting over 70% of students, but only causing a major problem for around 15% of these).

- ◆ While only affecting around 40% of students, the most impactful issues affected students with dependents, with around one-third of students in this situation having a major problem with bringing their spouse/partner/children to Australia and arranging childcare. Arranging schooling for children was slightly less troublesome, causing a major problem for 22% of new arrivals and 13% of ongoing students.

The three most troublesome other issues encountered by both new arrivals and ongoing students are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5: Other issues causing a major problem for new arrivals and ongoing students

New arrivals	Ongoing students
Arranging childcare (33%)	Finding accommodation of acceptable type or quality (27%)
Finding accommodation of acceptable type or quality (31%)	Arranging childcare (26%)
Bringing your spouse/partner or children to Australia (31%)	Bringing your spouse/partner or children to Australia (24%)

The instances of **discrimination** were lower in 2013, with 19% of new arrivals and 29% of ongoing students having experienced such acts (down from 24% amongst new arrivals and 34% amongst ongoing students in 2012).

- ◆ Most cases of discrimination were based on race (around two-thirds) and ethnicity (around one-third) and originated from a member of the general community (around 70%).
- ◆ Around 60% of students reported that it only happened once or twice, with 12% reporting that they had experienced discrimination more than five times so far during their time in Australia.
- ◆ While around 40% of students reported that it did not affect them, more than 50% reported that it affected them a little and 6-8% reported that it affected them a lot.

D. Australian academic institution services and facilities

Nearly all students (94%) participated in an **Introductory Academic Program (IAP)**, of which 94% were satisfied with the program. The three most useful topics covered in IAPs were:

- ◆ introduction and orientation to the educational institution's campus (91% found this to be very useful);
- ◆ plagiarism and referencing (91%); and
- ◆ study skills and general academic skills such as critical analysis, research skills and academic writing (89%).

Similar to previous years, 96% of new arrivals and 93% of ongoing students were satisfied with the **services and facilities** provided at their institution. The three most useful services and facilities to students, with more than 90% finding them to be very useful, were:

- ◆ the library;
- ◆ computer facilities; and
- ◆ the Student Contact Officer.

Most students (88%) were satisfied with the **academic help** available at their institution. Between 80-90% of students who were provided academic help at their institution found it to be very useful, with the three most useful being:

- ◆ help with referencing;
- ◆ help with other study skills; and
- ◆ help with the English language.

Around one-third of students reported that they had **sought personal help or study assistance outside their institution and the Australia Awards program**, with around two-thirds seeking assistance from friends and classmates and mainly in relation to English skills (40%) and other study skills, such as note taking, research and analytical skills and writing skills (41%).

Down slightly from previous years, 92% of new arrivals and 89% of ongoing students were satisfied with the **assistance provided by their Student Contact Officer** (down from 98% for new arrivals and 96% for ongoing students).

A high proportion of students agreed that they chose the right institution and 89% rated the quality of their institution as high. Similarly, 92% agreed that they chose the right course/research topic (92%) and 87% rated the quality of their course or research supervision as high.

- ◆ 69% of students reported that the theoretical and practical knowledge provided by their course or research was well balanced.

E. Scholarship entitlements and other assistance

Most students (90%) reported that they were satisfied with the **entitlements and other assistance** they received from the Australia Awards program. Student satisfaction with the Establishment allowance (a special on-arrival payment to help students settle in Australia) was the highest with 95% satisfied. Student satisfaction with the other types of entitlements/assistance was around 80%, apart from the fieldwork entitlement where 67% of students were satisfied.'

- ◆ Students from Papua New Guinea (PNG) had access to a **Scholarships PNG Case Manager** in 2013. Nearly all PNG students (97%) had face-to-face contact with their **Scholarships PNG Case Manager** at least once in 2013, of which 81% were satisfied with the support provided.
 - 81% of PNG students participated in a social event or gathering organised by their Case Manager.
 - 99% of PNG students received support from their Case Manager in 2013, with the most common being in relation to academic difficulties. 79% of students who accessed this support found it to be very useful.

F. Returning home

Of the 2,562 students who reported that they were close to completing their studies within the next four months:

- ◆ 75% had work arrangements in place (either returning to the same organisation they left or to a different organisation);
 - Of the students that had work arrangements in place, 45% reported that their employer had a Reintegration/Re-entry Plan in place, with 27% reporting that there was not a Plan in place at the time of the Ongoing Survey. A further 27% of students were not sure whether or not a Plan was in Place.
- ◆ 22% were looking for a job or were intending to look for a job on return to their home country; and
- ◆ 2% planned to undertake further studies.

The most common **barriers expected** when returning home were:

- ◆ their employer may not be able to make full use of their new qualifications (76%);
- ◆ their employer may be reluctant to fully utilise their new qualifications (75%); and
- ◆ home countries may not have the required infrastructure, systems or funding to support implementation of the new qualifications (74%).

While these barriers were the most severe, they were only expected to be a major barrier for 13% of students.

Similar to previous years, 84% of students reported that the **Leadership Development Program** was meeting their expectations. The top three reasons why the five students that reported the program was not meeting their expectations were:

- ◆ the program should be ongoing;
- ◆ there weren't enough practical examples for implementing the theories; and
- ◆ the program didn't cover everything that they felt they needed.

While only 20% of students were already a member of the **DFAT Alumni Network** for their home country, 75% reported that they intend to join.

Appendix A: Drivers of overall satisfaction with the Australia Award

This appendix provides the two regression models that were developed to explain overall satisfaction with the Australia Award:

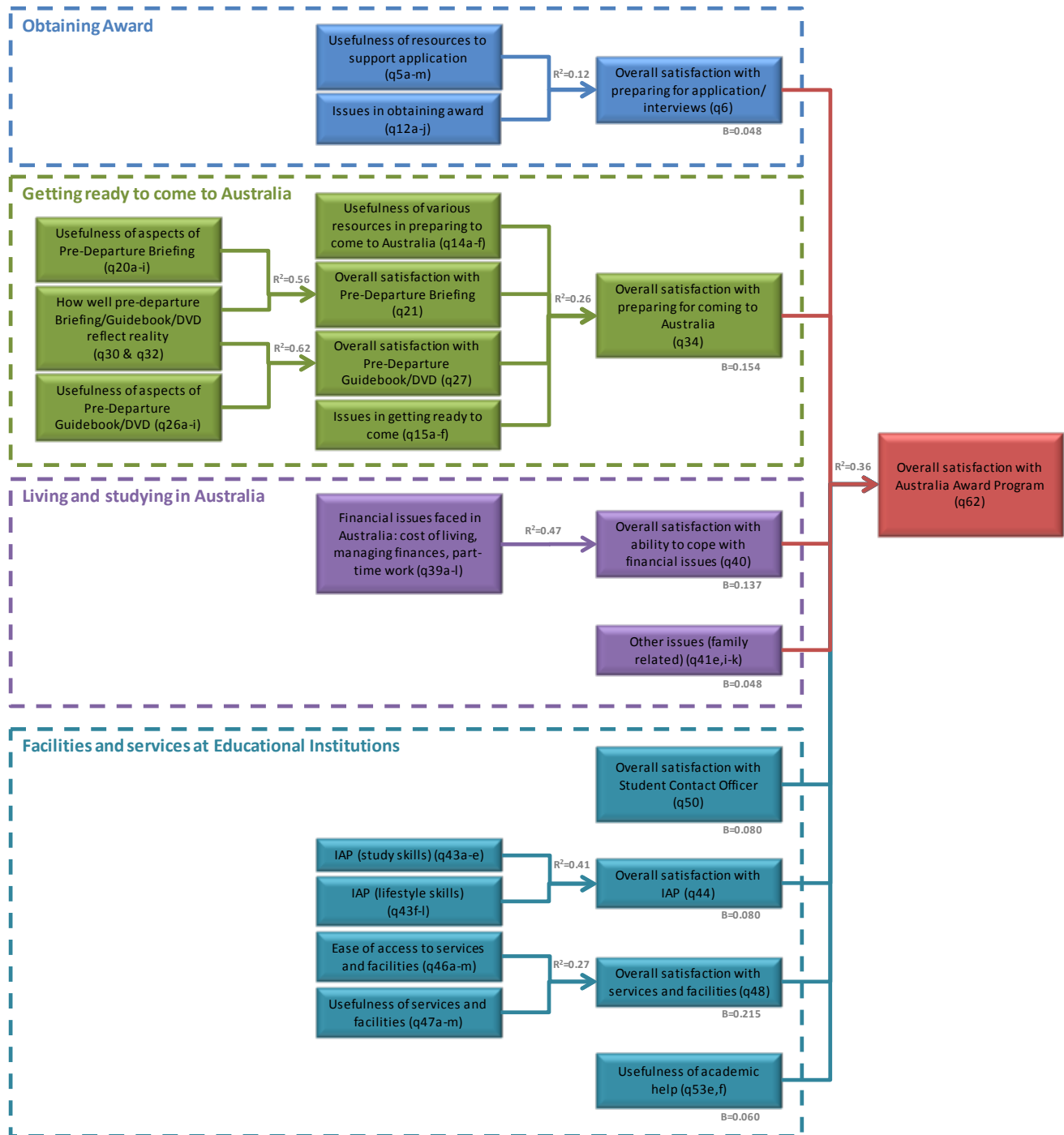
- ◆ the first model maps the drivers of overall satisfaction amongst new arrivals; and
- ◆ the second model maps the drivers of overall satisfaction amongst ongoing students.

Each of the new arrivals and ongoing student models map out the relationships between various attributes that were found to be statistically significant in explaining the movement in overall satisfaction. There were eight attributes that directly impacted overall satisfaction in the new arrivals model and eight attributes in the ongoing student model. Some of these attributes were also found to be explained in part by some lower-level attributes, which are shown in each of the two models.

Each model provides an “ R^2 ” score, which represents the strength of the relationship (correlation) between connecting attributes. The eight attributes for new arrivals explain 36% ($R^2 = 0.36$) of the variation with overall satisfaction and the ongoing student attributes explain 44% ($R^2 = 0.44$). While these represent moderately solid models, there is scope to continue to build on these models through further refinements to the content of the questionnaires.

The Beta coefficients (“B”) are provided in each main model, which reflects the magnitude of the relative impact that a measure has on overall satisfaction. Larger Beta coefficients will have more impact on overall satisfaction, and therefore might represent the areas for prioritisation.

Drivers of overall satisfaction for new arrivals



Drivers of overall satisfaction for ongoing students

