

## **Frequently Asked Questions – New Colombo Plan Mobility Program (2027 Round)**

### **What are the key changes to the NCP Mobility Program in the 2027 Round?**

Key changes to look out for in the 2027 NCP Mobility Program Guidelines include the following:

- Introduction of a priority area to strengthen First Nations engagement including growing First Nations trade and investment with the Indo-Pacific region
- An additional selection criterion to allow applicants to demonstrate how student recruitment and pipeline planning will be undertaken for projects
- Changes to retention of administration funding for the NCP Mobility Program
- Removal of Hong Kong as a standalone host location. Hong Kong projects can be submitted under China (including Hong Kong and Macau).

### **Can projects be proposed for non-priority host locations?**

Yes. DFAT will accept high-quality applications for all eligible host locations in the Indo-Pacific, as outlined in section 5.4 of the NCP Mobility Program Guidelines.

There are 4 priority areas in the 2027 NCP Mobility Program as set out in the Guidelines. Applications in these areas will be prioritised.

### **Do all applications need to include language learning?**

No. NCP Mobility projects do not need to include language learning to be eligible.

Language learning is the core assessment area for projects that focus on building Vietnamese language pathways or Priority Asian language learning.

Applicants proposing language-focused projects should explain how the project supports formal study of an official or commonly spoken language, other than English, of an eligible NCP host location.

### **The Guidelines refer to a ‘Language Target’. What is this and how can a Mobility project meet the language target?**

To deepen Australia’s Indo-Pacific capability and Asia literacy, the NCP has a language target. In the 2027 round, the language target for the entire NCP is 40 per cent of participants undertaking language intensive programs.

A Mobility project may meet the language target where 50 per cent or more of the planned experience is formal language acquisition and learning.

For example, a 4-week project may include 2 weeks of discipline-based study and 2 weeks of intensive language study.

Meeting the language target for an NCP Mobility project is not mandatory and language training should be incorporated in a genuine and coherent way. For projects under the Vietnamese language pathway or Priority Asian Language priorities, projects which meet the language target will be assessed more favourably.

### **What is DFAT looking for in Vietnamese language pathway projects?**

Vietnamese language pathway projects should include structured language learning and show how the project aims to support ongoing Vietnamese language learning.

The Vietnamese language pathway is intended to help stimulate longer-term interest in Vietnamese language learning. Projects under the Vietnamese language pathway priority do not have to meet the language target, however those projects which do will be assessed more favourably.

### **How should applicants address the priority of strengthened First Nations engagement in the Indo-Pacific, including growing First Nations trade and investment with our region?**

Applicants proposing a project under the Strengthened First Nations Engagement priority area should explain how the project meaningfully embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, participation or leadership.

A strong application may show how the project supports First Nations engagement with the Indo-Pacific, particularly through trade and investment links with the region. This may also include Indigenous knowledge exchange, cultural connections, leadership opportunities, engagement with First Nations communities or organisations in the host location, or related themes such as climate, governance, health, culture, heritage or community development.

Applications should also explain how the project has been designed with appropriate First Nations input, such as engagement with an Indigenous centre, First Nations staff, students, alumni or community representatives.

Where relevant, applicants may include up to 2 weeks of directly related preparation or training in Australia as part of the overall Mobility project, within the standard project duration of 4 to 9 weeks.

**Can a Mobility project include online or blended learning?**

No.

**What is DFAT looking for in the student pipeline response?**

Applicants should explain how there is sufficient student demand for the number of student grants sought for the proposed Mobility project. The response should show how the proposed project connects to an identifiable student cohort and how the university will support recruitment before departure.

While DFAT does not set a maximum number of students for each Mobility application, applicants should be realistic about how many students they can recruit and support.

A strong response should provide clear evidence that the university can recruit the number of students proposed in the application and fully expend the student grants sought. This could include information on relevant course enrolments, expressions of student interest, past participation in similar projects, existing study abroad demand, language study cohorts, or links to degree structures that support the proposed Mobility activity.

**Can an application address more than one priority area?**

Applicants may address more than one priority area if the project genuinely cuts across multiple priorities. However, applicants should consider which priority area best represents the project's strongest alignment with the selection criteria.

Applications will be assessed against 1 of the 4 priority areas in the NCP Mobility Program. Projects that address multiple priorities will not receive additional or cumulative scores for doing so.

Where a project cuts across multiple priorities, applicants should clearly explain the project's primary priority alignment.

**What partner checks and risk information should applicants provide?**

Applicants are responsible for conducting due diligence checks for all partners involved in a Mobility project, including industry placement partners and third-party providers.

Applicants should explain how key risks will be managed throughout the proposed project. If successful, applicants are required to submit a risk assessment and critical incident plan at least 4 weeks prior to student travel in accordance with the Guidelines.

## Lessons for writing a strong NCP Mobility Program application

- **Be specific about the project design.**  
 Explain what students will do, where they will do it, who they will engage with, and how each activity contributes to the project's outcomes. Specificity makes the application easier to assess and helps demonstrate alignment with NCP objectives.
- **Use the host location meaningfully.**  
 The strongest examples explained why the host location mattered – whether through Pacific marine ecosystems, rural development challenges in East Java, or Vietnamese language and creative industries in Hanoi.
- **Build a clear outcomes chain.**  
 A strong application shows how preparation leads to in-location activity, how the activity builds student capability, and how student capability leads to outputs, future study, employability or longer-term institutional engagement.
- **Integrate language learning purposefully.**  
 Language learning is more convincing when it is connected to the project's core activities. In the stronger examples, students used language to support fieldwork, community engagement, creative practice or future study pathways.
- **Show genuine engagement with the host location.**  
 Strong applications describe the role of local academics, communities, government stakeholders, creative practitioners or other host location partners. This helps show the project is collaborative, locally grounded and more than an Australian-led activity delivered offshore.
- **Demonstrate credible delivery arrangements.**  
 Assessors need confidence the project can be delivered. Strong applications identify who is responsible for preparation, logistics, teaching, fieldwork, supervision, community engagement, student support and final outputs.
- **Connect student outcomes to NCP objectives.**  
 Avoid generic statements such as “students will gain cultural understanding”. Explain the actual capability students will build – for example language proficiency, field research skills, intercultural communication, regional literacy, professional networks, employability or pathways to future Indo-Pacific engagement.
- **Write for assessors who do not know your project.**  
 A good application should be understandable without insider knowledge. The strongest proposals make their logic obvious: why this host location, why these students, why these partners, why these activities, and why NCP should fund it.

## **Case studies – strong NCP Mobility Program applications (2026 Round)**

### **Case study 1: Fiji marine ecosystems and community-based field learning**

This four-week project offered students an immersive learning and research experience in Fiji, focused on marine ecosystems, biodiversity monitoring, scientific analysis, cross-cultural collaboration and community engagement.

The application explained how students will build Indo-Pacific capability through a combination of academic learning, community-based conservation, cultural immersion, traditional ecological knowledge and introductory Fijian language exposure.

It showed the project is not generic. The Fiji context is central to the learning model: marine ecosystems, island communities, conservation practices, Pacific perspectives and community-led environmental work.

It also connected the project to people-to-people, institutional and community links, which is important for NCP alignment.

The application demonstrated credible project delivery. It explained how Australian and Fijian academic staff would co-deliver the program, how the host partner would provide learning spaces and local expertise, and how students would be supported to engage with community networks.

### **Case study 2: Indonesia fieldwork, language learning and transdisciplinary problem-solving**

This seven-week project brought together students from different disciplinary backgrounds to work with Indonesian peers, local government and rural communities in East Java, Indonesia. The project focused on complex development challenges linked to sustainability, poverty alleviation, community empowerment and rural resilience.

The project was impactful because it was structured as a serious learning and research experience, not simply a study tour. It began with preparatory workshops in Australia, followed by 4 weeks of intensive language training in Malang. Students then undertook methodology development and fieldwork preparation before travelling to Trenggalek Regency for rural fieldwork in local towns and villages.

This structure gave the project a strong outcomes chain. Students were prepared before departure, built language and cultural capability in-country, applied research methods in a real community setting, and produced outputs that contributed to a broader collaborative research agenda. The project also required students to work across disciplines and sectors, engaging with academic, government and community stakeholders.

The application was also persuasive because it showed continuity and partnership depth. It built on previous cohorts and an established Australia-Indonesia collaboration, while linking student fieldwork to longer-term institutional research priorities in East Java.

For students, the project offered practical gains in language learning, cultural adaptability, employability, research capability and professional networks. It also created a bridge to future internships or semester-length study in the region.

### **Case study 3: Vietnam language pathway, financial systems and place-based learning in Hanoi**

This project supported students to build Asia capability, literacy and Vietnamese language skills through structured in-country learning in Vietnam. The project combined daily language learning with site visits, academic workshops, industry engagement and comparative reflection focused on sustainability, digital finance and inclusive growth.

A key strength of the project was providing clear evidence that Vietnamese language learning was not treated as an optional add-on. It was embedded across the full in-country program, with at least 25 per cent of in-country time dedicated to Vietnamese language study. Each week combined language learning with site-based inquiry, including visits to historical and cultural institutions, media organisations, businesses, banks and finance-sector bodies. This helped students connect language and culture with Vietnam's economic, financial and policy environment.

Another key strength was the assessment design. Students demonstrated language development, Asia literacy, professional capability and research skills through credit-bearing tasks such as field briefs, reflective memos and mini-research posters.

The project also supported longer-term institutional engagement. It strengthened partnerships between Australian and Vietnamese institutions, supported staff-student collaboration, and created outputs such as an edited volume drawing on students' learning-through-travel experience. This gave the project a clear pathway beyond the four-week mobility period.

#### **Case Study 4: Indigenous health and community engagement in Malaysia**

This project exemplified how an NCP Mobility project can embed First Nations perspectives, enable comparative Indigenous learning, and strengthen Indo-Pacific partnerships through co-designed, culturally grounded collaboration.

Participants examined health systems, culture and policy affecting Indigenous communities in regional Malaysia. It included language training, cross-cultural capability building and community engagement with local Indigenous leaders.

The project's focus centred on Indigenous health equity, traditional knowledge, and comparative public health approaches.

The project helped build long-term institutional partnerships and shared research opportunities grounded in First Nations knowledge exchange.