

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

### **Study component rules**

#### **Can I study online?**

No. You must complete your study component face-to-face at your host institution.

#### **Can I do my internship first and then my study component?**

Yes. You may start your program with an internship or language training. However, you must start your study component within the first 6 months of your overall program.

#### **Is there a limit to how much I can study?**

Yes. You can complete no more than one academic year equivalent in study components. Remember that each separate semester or trimester counts as a separate component. Significant gaps between study components need to be filled with components such as language training or an internship.

#### **Can programs be proposed for any NCP eligible host location?**

Yes. You can apply to undertake your program in any eligible NCP host location (as set out in section 5.6 of the NCP Scholarship Program Guidelines). Applications for priority locations where Australia is seeking to expand its engagement will be prioritised and locations where Australia is seeking to maintain existing strong engagement will be assessed more favourably (as outlined in section 6.1 of the Guidelines).

## **Internships and language training**

### **Do I need to confirm the language training provider and/or internship placement in my application?**

No. You do not need to confirm language training providers and internship placements at the application stage. However, you must research achievable options and include a clear plan in your application which shows your program is feasible.

Stronger applications demonstrate research into possible internship host organisations, even if the internship isn't confirmed. You should clearly specify the type of organisation, sector, role or skills sought, location and proposed duration of an internship component if you don't have a confirmed placement.

For language training, you are entitled up to \$10,000 in tuition costs. You should research estimated costs of language training in your proposed location, as these costs may vary between locations, and this will impact how long your language training can be.

### **Do I already need to speak an Asian language to undertake an NCP scholarship?**

No – you do not need to have prerequisite Asian language skills to be eligible to apply for an NCP scholarship. In fact, one of the benefits of an NCP scholarship is that you can undertake non-credit bearing language learning.

In line with the Australian Government's commitment to building Australia's Asia capability, you are strongly encouraged to consider how the study of a priority Asian language can be incorporated into your program.

Applications that demonstrate a focus on learning the following Asian languages will be prioritised:

- Bahasa Indonesia
- Chinese
- Hindi
- Japanese
- Korean
- Malay
- Vietnamese

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

No. NCP scholarship programs do not have a compulsory language learning element, although it is strongly encouraged. Programs with language learning, especially in priority Asian languages (see above), will be considered more favourably.

## **What does the language target mean in the NCP Scholarship Program Guidelines?**

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.

Scholarship programs can meet the language target through two paths:

### Academic integration path

50 per cent or more of the total credit from their study component (for example, 4 out of 8 units/courses) is language-related. This is achieved through any combination of:

- Language Acquisition: units/courses specifically focusing on learning the language itself
- In-Language Instruction: units/courses where the subject matter is delivered in the relevant language.

To count toward the target, the language must be an official or commonly spoken language (other than English) of the primary NCP host location, and instruction must be delivered face-to-face.

### Intensive training path

A scholar meets the language training through full-time language training for at least 10 weeks, commenced in the first 3 months of the scholarship program.

The language training must be a continuous block to meet the target, meaning it is not separated by another component or suspension (see permitted gaps at section 5.8). Shorter intensive courses can be aggregated to meet this target (for example, 6 weeks of a 'Beginner Bahasa Indonesia' course, followed by 6 weeks of an 'Intermediate Bahasa Indonesia' course).

## **Should I include language study if I am already fluent or have a high level of proficiency in the language of my proposed host location?**

If you are already fluent or have a high level of proficiency in an Indo-Pacific language (other than English), you could consider advanced or specialist language study (for example, professional or business language).

## **Workload, leave and bridging components**

### **Can I do a full-time internship while also studying full-time to save time?**

No. You cannot do 2 full-time components at the exact same time (for example studying full-time and interning full-time). All NCP components need to be done in-person.

### **Can I be on program with a standalone part-time component?**

No. You must maintain full-time engagement throughout your program. You cannot remain on the scholarship if you are only completing a part-time component.

When entering dates for your components, take account of the permitted gaps allowed in the guidelines and make sure that you have sufficient gap leave available for any breaks between components and understand the circumstances in which a suspension to your program can be granted. You should aim to ensure that gaps between components are no more than 30 days.

## **Eligibility and compliance**

### **Can I apply if 2027 will be the last year of my degree?**

Yes. You can apply, if you can finish a scholarship program before your degree is complete. Once your degree is complete, you are no longer eligible to remain on the program.

We consider your degree complete on the exact date of your final exam or assessment, even if it takes your university several months to carry over the credit. If your semester or trimester overseas is the final part of your degree back home, it must be the final component of your scholarship program. Plan to undertake your language training and internship before the study component.

## **Do my grades affect my chances of being selected?**

To be an NCP scholar, you must be in good academic standing and meet the enrolment requirements of your host institution.

We are also looking for young Australians who:

- show curiosity
- have resilience
- want to immerse themselves in Asia
- can show a strong reason for undertaking their proposed program.

We also assess your personal attributes and how your program aligns with the Australian Government's priorities and your future goals.

## **Structuring and planning your proposed program**

### **Where can I do my study component? Can I study at an Australian offshore campus?**

You must study at a university in an eligible NCP host location.

Scholarship programs must not be undertaken at an offshore campus of a university set up or headquartered outside the host location except for Australian offshore campuses that are able to offer you a genuinely immersive experience. You must have academic support and credit approval from your home university before you enrol under the program.

### **Can I make changes to my scholarship program set out in my application after I am awarded a scholarship?**

You are expected to achieve your program as set out in your application. You were awarded a scholarship based on what you said you would do and were assessed against your peers in a competitive process. We recognise minor changes to specific details, dates or organisations may be unavoidable, so long as your program is still fundamentally the same when it's undertaken.

As a grants program, the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Principles 2024 govern NCP funding. Program variations can only be considered in exceptional circumstances and will be considered on their merits.

## **What is the language target? Do I need to meet it to be selected?**

The language target is an overall goal for the whole program. It is not mandatory for applications to meet the language target.

However, applications that include language study will contribute to the applicant's overall score – and projects meeting the language target will be scored most highly. You must ensure your language plans are realistic and you follow through with them.

## **What if my proposed host university has not published course dates yet?**

Use current or earlier academic calendars from your host institution to estimate dates. Minor timing changes may be allowed later once official dates are confirmed.

## **Completing your application**

### **Who should I put as my referee?**

Choose someone who can clearly talk about your skills, personal attributes, and experiences that relate to the assessment criteria. Such as:

- a university academic
- a workplace supervisor
- a community leader.

You cannot nominate a family member or close friend to write your reference.

### **Can I change or update my application form after I've submitted it?**

No. You cannot change or update your application after submission.

### **Can I request a specific interview time and date?**

No. If shortlisted, we will invite you to select a time from a set interview schedule.

### **When will I know if I am successful?**

Successful applications will be notified of the outcome of their application in November 2026.

## Preparing to depart

### If I'm successful, what do I need to do before I travel?

Before travelling you must:

- complete mandatory pre-departure training
- complete a police check
- confirm your university placement
- submit and have approved a risk assessment
- organise your visa.

This process usually takes 2-3 months, so plan early.

You should consider the visa processing timelines and requirements for each component in your proposed program, noting that these may change over time.

### My program starts in early January 2027 – what do I do?

If your program begins in early January 2027, you must be available in December and January to complete required pre-departure training for scholars.

The holiday period can delay university and visa processes, so early planning is essential.

## On program

### Will the program help me organise my flights, accommodation and visas?

No. You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements. This includes organising your own flights, accommodation and visas.

### What are the rules around personal travel while on program?

You can take up to 28 days of gap leave between full-time components of your program. This includes:

- up to 28 days in your first 12 months
- an additional 14 days if your program runs longer than 12 months
- Gap leave **cannot** be taken at the start or end of your program. Gap leave is used to connect components.

You must seek approval for any travel outside your host location.

### **Can I come back to Australia during long breaks (for example, the Australian summer holiday period or during in-country holidays)?**

Yes. You may return to Australia during holiday breaks in your program. However, your scholarship benefits will be suspended while you are in Australia.

### **Do I have to pay for my own living expenses?**

We provide an establishment allowance, a monthly stipend, and travel allowance at the start and end of your program.

These contribute to your costs, but you are responsible for managing your own budget and living expenses. Exchange rates fluctuate, so research the cost of living carefully before you apply. You will need your own funds for initial upfront costs.

### **Can I accept another scholarship or grant while I am an NCP scholar?**

No. You cannot take part in another scholarship or mobility project while on your NCP program.

In rare cases, an exception may be considered if the opportunity strongly aligns with Australian Government priorities.

### **Can I have a leave of absence to take part in other events or courses during my scholarship?**

Leave of absence is only approved in limited circumstances, such as compassionate grounds. We may approve leave to attend an external activity that provides significant value to your field of study or how it contributes to building Indo-Pacific capability.

### **I have a medical condition or disability – do I need to declare it in my application form?**

Applicants who have pre-existing medical conditions and/or a disability are strongly encouraged to describe how they will manage the condition or disability in the proposed host location.

Failure to disclose medical conditions or disability may impact on the NCP's ability to assist or accommodate that disability or medical condition or may impact on a scholar's insurance while on the program. NCP insurance has a number of exclusions that scholars must consider carefully and does not cover ongoing treatment of pre-existing conditions.

Scholars require a fitness to travel report from a travel doctor before departing from Australia and should not travel against medical advice. Scholars will be required to discuss health and welfare requirements as part of developing a risk assessment that must be approved before commencing the program overseas.

Assessment against Selection Criteria 3 may favourably consider applications that have demonstrated that they have considered/addressed such factors in developing their proposed program.