New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program

2022 Round

Advice to Applicants

The 2022 New Colombo Plan (NCP) Scholarship Program Guidelines provide information on the 2022 round including eligibility requirements, assessment criteria and how funding will be allocated to successful applicants.

- You must read the Guidelines on GrantConnect before completing an application.
- Applicants should consider the Guidelines together with the Sample 2022 Scholarship Agreement available on GrantConnect
- Key changes to the 2022 Round (see below)
- Lessons learned from previous rounds to assist applicants for the 2022 round (see below)
- Frequently asked questions – NCP scholarship applications (see below)

Key changes in the 2022 round

A number of updates have been made to the 2022 NCP Program Round. These are reflected in the Guidelines and aim to ensure consistency with the Australian Government's requirements for grant administration and reflect new policies in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the NCP.

These updates include:

- Reference to DFAT engaging a Managed Administration and Support Services Provider to deliver support services throughout the NCP scholarship lifecycle, including during the application period, while scholars are on award and when they transition to the NCP Alumni Program (section 2.4)

- Revert the maximum number of nominees per Australian university to 10 students (from 13 students in the previous round) (section 4.2)

- Clarification that Australian universities must work with their applicants to undertake risk assessments of host locations proposed by applicants and scholars (see Section 2.4 and 5.5.4).

- Change in the weighting of assessment criteria to better reflect the NCP strategic objective and outcomes (section 6.1)

- The nomination period is six weeks (up from four weeks) and the application period is three weeks (down from four weeks) (section 7.5)

Host location eligibility

NCP scholarship programs cannot proceed in a Host Location or region within a host location for which the Smartraveller advice is 'Do not travel' or 'Reconsider your need to travel'" (see section 5.5 of the Guidelines).

It is anticipated that many host locations will still be listed as 'Do not travel' during the application period due to the health risks from the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant disruptions to global travel. Some locations were already set at 'Do not travel' prior to COVID-19 due to the risk to safety. Applicants may propose programs for travel to 'Do not travel' locations, but are strongly discouraged from proposing programs in a Host Location, or region within a Host Location, for which *Smartraveller* recommends "Do not travel" <u>for reasons in addition to the health risks from the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant disruptions to global travel</u>. This distinction is made clear in Smartraveller.

Travel cannot proceed to such locations if that travel advice remains in place at the proposed time of departure.

Lessons learned from previous rounds to assist applicants for the 2022 round

The following general feedback on responding to the assessment criteria might assist universities in nominating applicants, and applicants in preparing their written application.

Criterion 1: Academic excellence at the tertiary level

In past rounds, higher scored responses demonstrated a dedication to academic achievement, learning and development, and were supported by concrete examples and strong academic references. These responses have included demonstrated creativity, innovation, strong communication skills, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking skills. Some examples may include participation in a competition or a project that required a high level of innovation or problem solving.

Higher scored responses also provided evidence of commendations/ awards/ scholarships/ internships/ acceptance into selective academic programs etc and specifically highlighted how these opportunities developed the applicant's critical thinking skills.

Lower scored responses demonstrated limited achievement beyond standard student experiences or did not make a good case for the applicant's communication skills, higher-order cognitive and critical thinking skills and engagement in learning.

Criterion 2: Leadership and engagement in the community

Higher scored responses demonstrated a diversity of community engagement or longer-term leadership that developed a program/activity/organisation from conception to implementation and showed an effective ability to engage other stakeholders and influence outcomes. Lower scored responses outlined participation only, without demonstrating how the applicant's engagement contributed to enhanced community outcomes and/or utilised their leadership skills.

Criterion 3: Adaptability and resilience

Higher scored responses demonstrated strong self-awareness and identified strategies that applicants used to overcome a range of challenges to achieve success in their academic studies and/or personal life. Higher scored responses demonstrated insights applicants gained from dealing with challenging situations and consideration of the way in which these would apply to their proposed NCP program, including their ability to thrive in a cross-cultural environment. Lower scored responses demonstrated a lack of self-awareness regarding personal growth and

development in the face of challenging circumstances, and little understanding of coping mechanisms to adapt or show resilience in response to change.

Criterion 4: Ability to contribute to the NCP strategic objective and outcomes

Higher scored responses demonstrated linkages between the applicant's proposed program and the NCP objective and outcomes, clearly identifying how their interests, proposed program and NCP outcomes intersected, and provided well-considered examples of where/how people-to-people and institutional relationships could be fostered. Higher scored responses demonstrated a broad range of strategies identified by applicants to promote the NCP and scholar experiences to a range of stakeholders, both while overseas and as an active alumni member after return to Australia. Lower scored responses demonstrated little understanding of the NCP objective and outcomes.

Other considerations

In some cases, referee reports did not provide additional value to information provided in the applicant's own written application. As referee reports are a critical source of information for the selection process, applicants should choose referees carefully, ensuring that they have a good knowledge of the applicant's abilities in relation to the assessment criteria. Applicants should allow sufficient time for referees to provide a considered report. Further information for applicants, referees and Australian Universities regarding the referee report process is provided in the [Guide to Referee Reports in New Colombo Plan Online (for Applicants and referees) [PDF 630 KB]](#) | [[Word 1.39 MB]](#)

The interview questions reflect the assessment criteria. Applicants are strongly encouraged to prepare and practise for their interviews ahead of time. A number of universities have assisted students by running mock interviews or including an interview in their nomination process.

Where applicants are similarly meritorious at both the application and interview stages, preference is given to applicants proposing longer periods of study and/or an internship/mentorship and/or longer periods of language training. This aligns with the NCP's objective to give scholars a long-term and comprehensive experience in the Indo-Pacific region. The longer an applicant's program, and the more elements their program includes, the richer their experience is likely to be. Priority will also be given to applicants who can demonstrate a correlation across their proposed study, language and internship components.

Consideration will also be given to encouraging representation from diverse student groups including but not limited to, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, students from a low socio-economic status background, students from regional/remote areas or universities, students who are first in their immediate family to attend university, students across the genders, female students studying in non-traditional fields, students with a disability, and students from a non-English speaking background.

Some NCP locations are more popular than others. While there are no caps on the number of scholarships awarded per host location, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) will seek to ensure a spread across host locations where possible.

Frequently asked questions – NCP scholarship applications

Police checks
What police check should I request?

Applicants are required to undertake an [AFP national police check](). Under 'purpose of check' in the police check form, please select "Other Commonwealth purpose only". If there's an option to provide more detail, please state the reason as "Australian Government New Colombo Plan Scholarship application requirement". A fingerprint check is not required.

Alternatively, you may also undertake an [ACIC police check]().

When do applicants need to provide their police check results?

University International Liaison Officers (ILOs) must indicate in the nomination form whether a police check has been undertaken for the nominee/applicant. If there is an adverse finding, the police check report must be uploaded in the nomination form. Otherwise, a police check does not need to be uploaded or provided to DFAT.

If by the end of the nomination period the police check report has not been received, the ILO should select "Police check initiated" in the nomination form. These nominees must provide their police check reports to their ILOs by the end of the application period; and if there is an adverse finding, the ILO must provide the report to DFAT.

Host location
Can my proposed host location in the application be different from that in the nomination?

Yes. Please see advice above regarding host location eligibility.

Can a scholar commence their NCP scholarship program with an internship component at a secondary host location prior to their study component at their primary host location?

A scholar may commence their NCP scholarship program at a secondary host location for up to three months before relocating to the primary host location for the study component, subject to Smartraveller advice at time of travel.

The scholar will need to provide confirmation of enrolment for their study component (at their primary host location) prior to commencement of their NCP scholarship program and prior to departing Australia.

The scholar will also need to ensure that the visa for the primary host location can be granted if they arrive there from their secondary host location (rather than from Australia).

Study component
If I have recently changed degrees or I am in the process of changing to another bachelor or bachelor honours degree, am I still eligible for the NCP scholarship?

Yes, you are eligible provided your NCP scholarship study component will be fully credit-bearing to your new degree and meet all study component requirements outlined in section 5.2 of the NCP Scholarship Program Guidelines. As per section 7.4 of the Guidelines, your home university must provide a letter attesting to the feasibility of your proposed study component in relation to your new degree.

Do I need confirmation of enrolment at the host university when I submit my NCP scholarship application?

In your NCP scholarship application, we do not require confirmation of enrolment at your proposed host university. Please see section 7.4 of the Guidelines regarding attachments required for your study component.

If I am studying a double degree, would one letter attesting to the feasibility of my study component suffice or would I need a separate letter from each faculty?

One letter is sufficient, but if the units will be credit bearing to both degrees, then the one letter should be signed by both faculties (and the University International Liaison Officer) to confirm the feasibility of the proposed study component.

Can I study at a host institution that is an offshore campus of an Australian university?

One of the goals of the NCP program is for students to have an immersive local experience at their host location, hence we would prefer that the applicant explores all possible locally-based host institutions first. If all such options are exhausted, the applicant may consider a host institution that is an offshore campus of an Australian university as a last resort. If the applicant chooses such a host institution, they must provide documentation that addresses the following in their scholarship application.

    a. there are no local host institutions in the proposed location that offer relevant courses that would receive credit from the home university, and

    b. the offshore campus offers a genuine local experience, where Australian students are the minority of the student body and Scholars are taught predominantly by local and international academics.

Can scholars undertake two study components (i.e. each study component = one semester) at different host institutions and different host locations?

Yes, it is possible to undertake two study components during your NCP scholarship program, where each study component is a semester.

You may undertake your study components in any of the following combinations:

- Two study components at host institution A
- One study component at host institution A and a second study component at host institution B, where both institutions are in the same host location.
- One study component at host institution A and a second study component at host institution B, where the host institutions are in different host locations.

The primary host location is where the NCP scholar will spend the most time during their scholarship program. The total time spent at the primary host location must be longer than the total time spent at all secondary host locations combined. Also, the total duration of your NCP scholarship program must not exceed 19 months.

<u>**Honours students**</u>
I am in the final year of my bachelor degree and would like to undertake an Honours program for my NCP study component. However, enrolment into the Honours program will only open after the closing of the NCP scholarship application period. Am I still eligible?

You are eligible to apply for an NCP scholarship. We ask that you provide as much information on your proposed Honours program as possible at the time of your application e.g a provisional offer for an honours program conditional on your bachelor degree results; a confirmed honours supervisor, a proposed honours project, confirmation from your home university that your proposed NCP study component will be credit bearing to your home honours degree. The award of your scholarship will be conditional on your enrolment into an honours program at your home university.

Do I need to enrol at the host institution if I'm undertaking only a research-based Honours study component i.e. no coursework?

You do not need to enrol at the host institution if you are undertaking only a research-based Honours study component i.e. no coursework.

If you will be undertaking some coursework as part of your NCP study component, you must enrol at the host institution, and ensure your home university credits the coursework units back to the home degree.

<u>Referees</u>
Is it permissible to nominate two academic referees?

At least one report must be prepared by an academic referee. It is permissible for both referees to be academic, as long as they can comment substantively across the assessment criteria.

Can I nominate a referee from high school?

You are required to nominate an academic referee who is able to comment substantively across the assessment criteria especially the first criterion on academic excellence at the tertiary level. An academic from your university, rather than from your high school, will likely be better placed to comment on this criterion. However, you may nominate a personal referee from your high school if they are able to comment on the remaining criteria.

Does my academic referee have to be from my current home university?

Generally, yes. However, if for example, your academic referee has recently left your home university to work elsewhere, you may still nominate them as long as they can comment substantively on the assessment criteria. Or if you have recently changed home universities, you may choose to nominate an academic referee from your previous home university, provided they can comment substantively on the assessment criteria.

If I have changed courses at university recently, can I nominate an academic referee from a previous course?

Yes, provided they can comment substantively on the assessment criteria.

Does my academic referee have to comment on the non-academic related assessment criteria?

You should select an academic referee who can comment substantively on all assessment criteria wherever possible. However, if your academic referee is only able to comment on the academic-related assessment criteria, they can leave the response to the remaining assessment criteria blank. Your personal referee must be able to comment substantively on the remaining assessment criteria.

Students studying their degree remotely or virtually may find it difficult to nominate an academic referee as they may have had very little interaction with academics on campus. What advice would you give?

In such cases, your academic referee may comment only on the first criterion (academic excellence at the tertiary level) and leave the other criterion blank if they are unable to comment on them. Applicants should ensure their other referee is able to comment substantively on the remaining criteria.

Can referees save their draft report and resume later?

Referees must complete their report in one sitting in the NCP Online system; they will not be able to save their work to resume at a later time.

My referee has accidentally submitted their incomplete report. Is it possible for the referee to resume the report?

Referees will not be able to resume their report once they have submitted it. However, the applicant can remove the referee from their application (select the "Remove" button) and re-enter their details. This will then send the referee an email containing a new link and password to start a new report.

Internships
Do I have to confirm or lock in internships during the application stage?

We do not require you to confirm or lock in any internships in your application. However, we encourage you to conduct some research, speak to NCP alumni, and make enquiries with potential internship organisations on possible internship opportunities, and include the details of these potential internships in your application. We like to see that you have given thought to possible internships and how these internships align with your study/career goals and the NCP program objective and outcomes.

The NCP Internship and Mentorship Network will be available for scholars (scholarship recipients) to identify internship and mentorship opportunities; it is not available to applicants.

Can I undertake an internship at a host location that is different from where I will undertake the study component?

Yes, you may undertake an internship at a secondary host location (subject to Smartraveller advice), provided the total time spent at the primary host location is longer than the total time spent at all secondary host locations combined. Please state how your proposed program components will achieve your study/career goals and NCP program objective and outcomes.

I understand scholars must commence their NCP scholarship program between 1 January and 15 December of the round year. Is it possible to undertake a full-time internship at the host location from say 15 December and only commence the study component in March of the following year?

If you are considering commencing your study component in March in the year subsequent to the round year (e.g. you are awarded the scholarship for 2022 but want to commence your study component only in March 2023), you may commence your NCP scholarship program at your host location in December of the round year with an internship component or language training component first (and then commence your study component by March of the following year), subject to international travel restrictions. As per section 5.1(a) of the guidelines, your study

component must commence within three months of commencing your scholarship program subject to international travel restrictions.

For example, if you commence your NCP scholarship program with an internship component or language training component on 15 December 2022, then the latest you must commence your study component is 15 March 2023.

Is there a limit to the number of internships I can undertake during the NCP scholarship program?

Please see section 5.3 of the Guidelines for information on the internship component. There is no limit to the number of internships you can complete provided they meet the requirements stated in section 5.3.

<u>Visas</u>
Do I need to find out about visas during the application stage?

You do not need to conduct research on visas during the application stage.

If you are awarded an NCP scholarship, you will be required to organise a visa for your proposed host location by contacting the relevant diplomatic mission in your state/territory. As visa requirements may change from time to time, we suggest you contact the relevant diplomatic mission for the latest visa advice if you are awarded an NCP scholarship.