



Australian Government



NEW COLOMBO PLAN

Connect to Australia's future - study in the region

New Colombo Plan Guidelines Scholarship Program

2015 Round

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1 Definitions of key terms

Academic Transcript means the list of subjects and academic results provided to the applicant by their Australian University, usually at the end of each semester, trimester or term.

Academic Year means the annual period of study sessions (or Study Periods) of a Home University and/or Host Institution.

Australian University is defined as a supplier listed under Table A or Table B of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

Bachelor Degree means undergraduate studies at a Bachelor's level as defined in the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Bachelor Honours Degree means undergraduate studies at a Bachelor's Honours level as defined in the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Commencement of the Scholarship Program means the date the Scholarship holder commences their Scholarship Program as confirmed by their Host Institution / Host Organisation for payments that are reliant on the commencement of the Term of the Scholarship.

Confidential Information is information which satisfies the four criteria listed at item 12.3 of these guidelines or is designated by the Commonwealth as confidential or that either party knows or ought to know is confidential. This does not include information that is otherwise in the public domain.

HECS-HELP means the scheme that is both a student loan and a student discount. Eligible students may access a HECS-HELP loan to pay their student contribution amount. Alternatively, eligible students can access the HECS-HELP discount by receiving a 10 per cent discount on any upfront payment of \$500 or more, if they choose not to use a HECS-HELP loan. NB: The Australian Government has announced its intentions to remove the HECS-HELP discount. Until the relevant legislation is passed, the current arrangements apply.

Home University means the Australian University in which the applicant or Scholar is enrolled at the time they applied for a Scholarship and that determines whether an applicant's proposed study program overseas is credit-bearing.

Host Location means the eligible geographic location in the Indo-Pacific region (see section 5.1) to which the Scholar will travel to undertake their Scholarship Program.

Host Institution means the academic institution the Scholar will attend for study in the Host Location.

Host Organisation means the organisation/s in which the Scholar undertakes their Internship/Mentorship in the Host Location.

Internship means a paid or unpaid professional work experience in which an individual has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience. Internships offer students the chance to test their skills in real-life situations, explore career options and gain an insight into an organisation or career path.

Low Socio-Economic Status (SES) means students who are from a low SES background, as measured by the ABS Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) index measured at Statistical Area 1 (SA1) level or postcode level.

Mentorship means a personal developmental relationship where a business professional or academic helps guide a student in her or his study or work to support learning and professional growth.

Mobility Program means the New Colombo Plan Mobility Program.

New Colombo Plan Liaison Officer for Scholarships means the person(s) nominated by each Australian University to submit nominations on behalf of their university and receive updates.

Personal Information has the same meaning as in the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*.

Program means the New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program.

Program Delegate means a Deputy Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or an Associate Secretary of the Department of Education in their role as co-chairs of the Program Implementation Group.

Program Implementation Group is the group of officials, co-chaired by the Program Delegates, which oversees implementation of the New Colombo Plan.

Scholar means a successful applicant who receives a New Colombo Plan Scholarship.

Scholarship means scholarship funding paid to successful applicants for funding under the Program.

Scholarship Program means the study, Internship/Mentorship activities and language training applicants propose in their application for a Scholarship.

Study Period means a period of study as defined by the Host Institution, e.g. may be semesters or trimesters.

Support Services Organisation means a third party provider contracted by the Department of Education to manage support services for Scholars.

In these guidelines:

- 'may' is permissive and not mandatory;
- a reference to the singular includes the plural and vice versa; and
- if a word or phrase is defined its other grammatical forms have corresponding meanings.

2 Program Overview

2.1 Purpose of these Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to outline the process for selecting a group of Australian undergraduate students for the 2015 round of the New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with any Frequently Asked Questions available on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website at www.dfat.gov.au/new-colombo-plan.

These guidelines commence on 4 August 2014.

2.2 About the New Colombo Plan

The New Colombo Plan is a flagship initiative of the Australian Government that aims to lift knowledge of the Indo-Pacific region in Australia and strengthen our people-to-people and institutional relationships, through study and Internships/Mentorships undertaken by Australian undergraduate students in the region.

The New Colombo Plan is intended to be transformational, deepening relationships with the region, both at the individual level and through expanding university, business and other stakeholder links. Over time, the Australian Government hopes to see study in the Indo-Pacific region become a “rite of passage” for Australian undergraduate students, and as an endeavour that is highly valued across the Australian community.

The Australian Government agreed to provide \$100 million of funding for the New Colombo Plan between 2013-2014 and 2017-2018. A close partnership between governments, universities and business is supporting the realisation of this important initiative. The pilot phase – begun in 2014 – is progressing well.

The New Colombo Plan has two key program funding elements: a Scholarship Program that will provide opportunities for individually selected undergraduates to undertake one or two semesters of study in the Indo-Pacific region; and a Mobility Program that will support increasing numbers of Australian undergraduates to undertake a range of flexible study options in the Indo-Pacific region. The opportunity for an Internship/Mentorship is also a hallmark of the New Colombo Plan.

The New Colombo Plan aims to increase the number of Australian undergraduate students studying in our region – particularly through new linkages supporting students who otherwise may not have accessed such an opportunity.

New Colombo Plan budget¹

2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
\$5,372,000	\$10,958,000	\$19,577,000	\$19,625,000	\$42,768,000

¹ Does not include capital expenses.

2.3 The New Colombo Plan strategic objectives

The New Colombo Plan aims to:

- lift knowledge of the Indo-Pacific in Australia and strengthen our people-to-people and institutional relationships by increasing the number of Australian undergraduate students undertaking study and Internships in the region;
- deepen Australia's relationships with the region through the engagement of university, business and other stakeholder networks in supporting the program and ensuring such experiences are highly valued across the Australian community; and
- be transformational in establishing study in the Indo-Pacific region to become a "rite of passage" for Australian undergraduate students, and increase the number of work-ready Australian graduates with regional experience.

Specifically, in 2015 the New Colombo Plan's objectives are to:

- provide around 60 Scholarships and \$8 million in mobility grants;
- support increased study experiences in as many Indo-Pacific locations as possible;
- support and promote innovative Mobility Program projects that provide opportunities in the Indo-Pacific for Australian undergraduate students to meet the New Colombo Plan objectives. New partnerships and programs between universities – as well as projects that build on and strengthen existing partnerships – are encouraged;
- support satisfying experiences for participating students and universities;
- engage New Colombo Plan students, universities and other stakeholders in public diplomacy and outreach;
- promote and support initiatives that lead to a substantial number of New Colombo Plan students undertaking an Internship/Mentorship; and
- continue to develop an active alumni community that provides the opportunity for participants to share their experiences, promote the New Colombo Plan and continue to develop knowledge of and professional links within the Indo-Pacific region.

2.4 The New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program

The Program provides opportunities for Australian undergraduate students, between 18 and 28 years of age, to undertake study, participate in an Internship/Mentorship and receive intensive language training in an eligible Host Location in the Indo-Pacific region. The Program also encourages students to participate in community engagement and advocacy in relation to the Program.

Study component

Scholars must undertake a full-time study program for which they will receive full credit at their Home University towards their Bachelor Degree or Bachelor Honour's Degree. The study component of the Scholarship Program is mandatory and must be full-time for at least one Study Period (as defined by the Host Institution), and up to one full Academic Year in duration. Scholars may study at two institutions provided that all eligibility and process requirements for the Program are met for study at both institutions and that the Scholar receives academic credit at their Home University for study undertaken at both Host Institutions. For information on the status of a proposed study program, applicants should

seek advice in the first instance from their nominated course convenor, the New Colombo Plan Liaison Officer for Scholarships or the international office in their Home University.

Internship/Mentorship component

An Internship/Mentorship component is strongly encouraged. Internships may be undertaken on a part-time basis concurrent with study at a Host Institution or on a full-time basis (for a maximum of six months) subsequent to study at a Host Institution. Mentorships may only be undertaken on a part-time basis concurrent with study. If an Internship is undertaken subsequent to study at a Host Institution, the stipend will continue for the duration of the Internship. Internships/Mentorships may attract credit (or be a mandatory component of the course of study) as part of a Scholar's study program or separately, subject to agreement between the Scholar and their Home University. However, Internships/Mentorships do not need to be for additional credit or a mandatory component of the course of study. An Internship/Mentorship alone cannot constitute a Scholarship Program.

Language training

All Scholars are eligible for support to undertake intensive language training as part of their Scholarship Program. The training must be in a language that is applicable to the Host Location or the course of study in which the Scholar is completing their Scholarship Program, and be undertaken in-country. In addition to a training allowance, a maximum of one month of stipend will be provided for this training, if the training is not taken concurrently with either the study program or an Internship/Mentorship component.

Community engagement and advocacy

Following their return to Australia, Scholars are encouraged to participate in activities (including through engagement with the New Colombo Plan Secretariat in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) that share the experiences of their Scholarship Program with other students and their community. The activities will aim to identify and foster potential New Colombo Plan Scholars and advocate for the Program. Scholars will also be asked to complete evaluation reports and/or presentations, and an exit survey.

3 Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Australian Government

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for taking the strategic leadership and setting the policy direction for the New Colombo Plan. The New Colombo Plan Secretariat, within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, will participate in short-listing applications for interview and is responsible for convening interview panels that will make recommendations on applicants to the Program Delegate/s. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will manage pre-departure events and alumni activities for Scholars in consultation with the Department of Education. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will also provide any consular support to Scholars in line with that offered to all Australian citizens, should the need arise.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade does not arrange work placements or study programs, including accommodation in the Host Location, nor direct Host Institutions, Host

Organisations, or Scholars about the manner in which work placements and study programs are carried out. Such matters are for Home Universities, Host Institutions, Host Organisations and Scholars to determine. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade does not have a direct or indirect contractual, financial, or supervisory relationship with any Scholars.

Contact: ncp.secretariat@dfat.gov.au

The Department of Education is responsible for administering the Program, including by procuring a Support Services Organisation. The Department of Education will undertake eligibility checks of applicants and participate in short-listing applications for interview and in interview panels. The Department of Education will be the first point of contact for students and New Colombo Plan Liaison Officers for Scholarships on administrative matters, including eligibility for the Program, nominations, applications, and attendance at interview. All enquiries, including for assistance in the nomination or application stage should be directed to the contact email below.

Contact: ncp.scholarships@education.gov.au

The Program Delegate/s will approve final Scholarship outcomes based on the advice of the interview panels.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Education will be advised of successful applicants prior to notification of successful and unsuccessful applicants.

3.2 Australian Universities

Each Australian University is responsible for identifying and nominating up to 10 Scholarship applicants for the 2015 round. It is the responsibility of Australian Universities to seek and receive appropriate consents from students for their details to be provided to the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in the nomination process. Australian Universities are also responsible for ensuring each applicant's proposed study program is credit-bearing and assisting with obtaining the required evidence of acceptance with Host Institutions. Australian Universities are also encouraged to provide support to the applicant as needed in arranging any Internship/Mentorship.

Australian Universities are requested to nominate a New Colombo Plan Liaison Officer for Scholarships (and an alternative contact, where possible) who can submit nominations on behalf of their university and receive updates throughout the selection process.

3.3 Applicants

Applicants must meet all the relevant eligibility criteria set out in these guidelines and be nominated by their Home University. Eligible undergraduates who are interested in applying for a New Colombo Plan Scholarship and feel they have strong claims against the selection criteria (see section 8.1 of these guidelines) should contact the New Colombo Plan Liaison Officer for Scholarships or the international office in their Home University. A list of New Colombo Plan Liaison Officers for Scholarships is available at www.dfat.gov.au/new-colombo-plan/liaison-officers.html. It is the applicant's responsibility to arrange and (if successful) confirm any Internship/Mentorship.

Applicants should read carefully sections 5-11 of these guidelines. It is their responsibility to ensure that their completed application and supporting documentation, including referee reports, are submitted by the closing date. Applicants must meet all costs associated with the preparation and lodgement of their application. Applications (including supporting documentation) received after the closing date will not be considered.

Applicants must obtain the required evidence of affiliation with their Host Institution and if offered a Scholarship they are responsible for obtaining the required evidence of acceptance with their Host Institution and the correct visa/s for the duration of their Scholarship Program. If offered a Scholarship, the decision to take up a New Colombo Plan Scholarship and travel overseas is the responsibility of the Scholar. The Australian Government will not be liable for any loss, damage, injury or harm that might be suffered during, or in connection with, the Scholarship Program. Applicants should make their own independent inquiries about the risks involved in overseas travel, and to the Host Location, and be fully informed about the risks at all times. Successful Scholars are required to read carefully the www.smartraveller.gov.au website operated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for information about risks overseas and how they can prepare for overseas travel. Scholars must also register on the Smartraveller website and subscribe to relevant travel advisories on www.smartraveller.gov.au prior to commencement of their Scholarship.

4 Scholarship benefits and acknowledgement of Fellows

4.1 Benefits of the Scholarship

A Scholarship will provide Scholars with:

- a travel allowance of \$2,500
- an establishment allowance of \$2,500
- a variable location-based monthly stipend of up to \$2,500
- health and travel insurance for the duration of their overseas Scholarship Program
- a dedicated case manager for the duration of their Scholarship Program who provides services including: pre-departure briefings; advice on health and travel insurance, advice and assistance relating to accommodation; and payment of allowances; and
- a certificate of completion.

A Scholarship may also provide:

- Payment of up to one Academic Year's international tuition fees to a maximum of \$15,000, payable directly to the Host Institution (see section 4.2); and
- Payment of \$1,000 for in-country language training fees, payable directly to the language training provider (see section 4.2).

The maximum duration of a Scholarship Program is 17 months.

4.2 Tuition and language training fees

Where a Scholar is not undertaking an exchange program, payment of international tuition fees will be covered by the New Colombo Plan. Payment of international tuition fees (where incurred) of up to \$15,000 (\$7,500 per semester based or \$5,000 per trimester based Study Period) for a maximum of one Academic Year will be made directly to the Host Institution. For the purposes of the New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program tuition fees also include student service and amenities fees.

If the Scholar's study abroad is under the auspices of an exchange program and the Host Institution does not charge tuition fees, the allocation for tuition fees will not be provided. The Scholar may not use the international tuition fees allocation to pay for fees charged by their Home University. That is, a Scholar may still be liable for HECS-HELP if on exchange.

Where relevant, payment of in-country language training fees (where incurred) of up to \$1,000 will be made directly to the language training provider.

4.3 New Colombo Plan Fellows

For each Host Location within the Indo-Pacific, the top-ranked candidate will be acknowledged as a New Colombo Plan Fellow. In determining Fellows, preference may be given to candidates undertaking one Academic Year of study. In addition to the benefits outlined in section 4.1, New Colombo Plan Fellows will be awarded \$1,000 to purchase study or learning materials in preparation for or during their Scholarship.

5 Eligibility

5.1 Eligible Host Locations

Scholarship Programs can be conducted in the following eligible Host Locations. Scholars must undertake the majority of their Scholarship Program in one eligible Host Location. However, they may study or undertake an Internship/Mentorship at multiple Host Institutions or Host Organisations. In certain circumstances, Scholars may undertake some study or Internship/Mentorship activities in another eligible Host Location where it is demonstrated that it adds meaningful value to the core Scholarship Program. No additional funding (to that outlined in section 4) will be provided for a Scholarship Program undertaken in more than one eligible Host Location – that is, the travel allowance and the establishment allowance each will be paid once only to a Scholar. Such a program would also be subject to relevant visa conditions.

The following eligible Host Locations span South Asia, South East Asia, North Asia and a number of locations in the Pacific:

- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- Brunei
- Burma
- Cambodia
- China
- Cook Islands

- Federated States of Micronesia
- Fiji
- India
- Indonesia
- Hong Kong
- Japan
- Kiribati
- Laos
- Malaysia
- Maldives
- Marshall Islands
- Mongolia
- Nauru
- Nepal
- Niue
- Pakistan
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Philippines
- Samoa
- Singapore
- Solomon Islands
- South Korea
- Sri Lanka
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Timor-Leste
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu
- Vietnam

To ensure a diversity of Host Locations is represented in the Program, an expected maximum of around 10 Scholarships will be awarded for study in any single eligible Host Location, noting that a maximum of around 60 Scholarships will be awarded in the 2015 round. Some eligible Host Locations may receive no Scholars.

Scholars must not travel to a Host Location for which the Australian Government's Smartraveller travel advice recommends 'Do not travel' (see www.smartraveller.gov.au). Host Locations for which the Smartraveller travel advice is at the level 'Reconsider your need to travel' are eligible for New Colombo Plan funding, but applicants must acknowledge explicitly that they have considered the risks carefully before deciding to apply/travel.

Study will preferably take place at local Host Institutions. Applicants cannot study at off-shore campuses from other locations. On a 12-month trial basis, study is eligible at off-shore campuses of Australian Universities if the following conditions are met:

- there are no local universities in the proposed location that offer relevant courses that would receive credit from the Home University;
- the off-shore campus offers a genuine local experience, where Australian students are the minority of the student body, students are taught predominantly by local or international academics and the course has a local/regional context; and
- the Australian Home University is continuing to explore and expand exchange or other partnerships with local universities in that location.

5.2 Who is eligible to apply?

Applicants must:

- be an Australian citizen. Applicants with dual citizenship, permanent residency or similar in another country/location are eligible, however, they must undertake their Scholarship in a third Host Location, in which they do not have citizenship or residency rights;
- be enrolled in an on-shore campus of an Australian University at the time of application;
- be between 18 and 28 (inclusive) years of age as at 1 January 2015;
- be undertaking a Bachelor Degree or Bachelor Honours Degree at the Commencement of the Scholarship Program. Bachelor Degree applicants must have completed at least one year of their Bachelor Degree at the Commencement of the Scholarship Program;
- have achieved a minimum 70 per cent graded average or equivalent for their undergraduate course to date;
- not be undertaking another Australian Government funded off-shore scholarship at the Commencement of, or concurrently with, the Scholarship Program; and
- not be a previous recipient of a New Colombo Plan Scholarship.

Where applicants are similarly meritorious, preference may be given to a student who has not previously been the beneficiary of an Australian Government funded off-shore scholarship. Successful applicants are also required to not accept another Australian Government funded off-shore Scholarship or mobility grant (including a New Colombo Plan Mobility Program grant) while holding a New Colombo Plan Scholarship.

Additionally, the applicant's proposed Scholarship Program must:

- be full-time. Students who are studying part-time in Australia are eligible to apply for a Scholarship, if they are in accordance with other eligibility requirements. However, while overseas, Scholars must undertake a full-time study program (for which they will receive full credit); and
- commence between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2015. Applicants who have already commenced or will commence a study abroad or exchange program overseas prior to 1 January 2015 are not eligible to apply for a Scholarship to continue that study.

6 Timeline for selection process

The table below summarises key dates and steps for the selection process.

Timeline	Activity
4 August 2014	Program guidelines distributed to universities
4 August – 29 August 2014	Australian Universities nominate applicants via the online system

1 Sept – 26 Sept 2014	Nominated students receive application guide and an invitation to complete an online application form. Applicants complete their application and gather supporting documentation
26 Sept 2014	Applications close at 11.59pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST)
October 2014	Applications are shortlisted and shortlisted applicants are notified
October – November 2014	Shortlisted applicants are interviewed
November 2014	<p>Selections are finalised and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Education are notified of selection outcomes</p> <p>All successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified of the outcome of their application</p>
December 2014	Details of successful Scholars published on website, as per Commonwealth Grant Guidelines requirements
1 January – 31 December 2015	Successful Scholars leave for their Scholarship Program

7 Nomination and application for Scholarships

7.1 Number of nominations per university

Students must be nominated by their Home University in order to apply. Each Australian University is asked to conduct an internal process to nominate up to 10 students to apply for the 2015 round of the Program.

7.2 Issues to consider in nominations

Eligibility and selection criteria

Australian Universities must consider all eligibility criteria when conducting their nomination process, including the requirement of a minimum graded average of 70 per cent or equivalent, as academic performance is a key selection criterion for the Program.

Maximum applied to each eligible Host Location

In addition, Australian Universities should note that to ensure a degree of geographic spread, an expected maximum of around 10 Scholarships is likely to be awarded for study in any single Host Location, noting that a maximum of around 60 Scholarships will be awarded in the 2015 round. Some Host Locations may receive no Scholars. Universities may wish to consider this in making their nominations.

7.3 Submission of nominations

Nominations must be submitted through the New Colombo Plan Online application system. The Department of Education will provide New Colombo Plan Liaison Officers for Scholarships with instructions on how to submit nominations.

The following details about applicants will be requested in the online nomination form:

- Name;
- Gender;
- Date of birth;
- Email;
- Mobile phone;
- Degree in which the applicant is enrolled;
- Students graded average as represented by a percentage mark; and
- Intended Host Location (where known).

7.4 How should applications be submitted?

Applications must be submitted through the New Colombo Plan Online application system. The application requires applicants to provide details of their proposed Scholarship Program (including the mandatory study component, and the Internship/Mentorship and language training components, where applicable) and the Host Location in which they intend to complete their Scholarship Program. The application form also requires applicants to respond to three selection criteria (see section 8.1).

The Department of Education will provide students nominated by their Home University with an application pack, including instructions on how to complete and submit an application and the required supporting documentation (including referee reports).

Applicants are responsible for all costs incurred in the preparation and lodgement of their applications.

Applicants should be aware that giving false or misleading information to the Commonwealth is a serious offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth).

Applications may be disregarded, offers revoked or a Scholarship Program terminated if it is the belief of the Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, that false or misleading information has formed a component of an application.

7.5 What supporting documents are required?

Applicants must have two referee reports, including at least one report prepared by an academic referee. Referee reports must be submitted by referees through the New Colombo Plan Online application system.

Applicants must submit the following documentation, in addition to a completed application form:

- evidence of Australian citizenship (copy of birth certificate, current passport or citizenship certificate);
- evidence of current enrolment at their Home University;
- a current, complete-to-date Academic Transcript from their Home University; and
- evidence of affiliation with their Host Institution(s).

Applicants do not require evidence of acceptance at their Host Institution(s) at the time of application. Rather, at the time of submitting their application, applicants must provide evidence of affiliation – that is, evidence that demonstrates that they have considered a study program and institution(s) with which they would like to study in one of the eligible Host Locations, should they be successful in obtaining a Scholarship. The evidence must also demonstrate that the applicant has begun the process of determining their eligibility with that proposed Host Institution(s).

The evidence confirming affiliation could be, for example:

- a **copy of a partnership agreement** between the applicant's Home University and the Host Institution
- a **letter from the applicant's Home University** (on the Home University's letterhead) outlining partnership arrangements to allow for commencement between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2015
- an **email or letter from the applicant or the applicant's Home University to the proposed Host Institution(s)** indicating the student is in the process of applying for a New Colombo Plan Scholarship and, if successful, they would be seeking to enrol and undertake a study program with that proposed Host Institution. This evidence should include a response from the proposed Host Institution.

Evidence of acceptance at the Host Institution must be provided to the Support Services Organisation by Scholars prior to commencing their Scholarship. Evidence of acceptance at a Host Institution could be in the form of:

- an acceptance letter or email from the Host Institution to the applicant confirming enrolment;
- an acceptance letter or email from the Host Institution to the Home University confirming enrolment; or
- a letter from the Home University to the applicant confirming that the placement at the Host Institution has been agreed.

Applicants should liaise with their Home University's New Colombo Plan Liaison Officer for Scholarships or international office to obtain this evidence.

8 Selection process

Following the closing of applications, Scholars will be selected through a competitive, merit-based selection process.

All applications submitted by the closing date will be subject to eligibility checks. All eligible applications are then short-listed by the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade using the selection criteria.

Shortlisted applicants will be advised in October 2014 and an interview with a panel will be scheduled during October-November 2014. Interview panels may comprise representatives from among the following: government officials, members of the business community, academics, diplomatic corps representatives or others as determined appropriate.

The Program Delegate/s will approve final Scholarship outcomes based on the advice of the interview panels.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Education will be advised of successful applicants prior to notification of successful and unsuccessful applicants.

8.1 What are the selection criteria for applications?

The following are the selection criteria against which applicants will be assessed, including their relative weighting. Applicants should address each criterion and limit their responses to 300 words per criterion. Applicants should use the guidance in the square brackets to draft their response.

- Demonstrated academic excellence (50 per cent weighting)
[Note: The total assessment of this criterion will relate to academic excellence as demonstrated through the applicant's graded average achieved in tertiary studies and to academic awards and commendations at the tertiary level and evidence of excellence demonstrated through referee reporting.]
- Demonstrated leadership in the community (25 per cent weighting)
[Applicants may consider including volunteer and not-for-profit roles and/or activities they have undertaken in their local community, overseas or in their university.]

- The applicant describes how this experience enhances their cultural awareness, employment potential and their ability to operate in new and changing environments. The applicant also demonstrates an understanding of the overarching goals of the New Colombo Plan and how their proposed Scholarship Program contributes to those goals (25 per cent weighting)
[Applicants may wish to consider how all elements of their Scholarship Program, including an Internship or Mentorship, support their response to this criterion.]

8.2 Other considerations

In addition to the selection criteria, where applicants have similarly meritorious claims, preference may be given to applicants whose inclusion will promote:

- balance and diversity in: Host Locations; fields of study; study options; Home Universities and Host Institutions; amongst the states and territories; and across the genders;
- Internships/Mentorships;
- longer term (e.g. two semesters) study;
- opportunities for students who have not previously received an Australia Government funded off-shore scholarship; and
- representation from diverse student groups (including but not limited to: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; students from a Low Socio-Economic Status; students from regional/remote areas; students with disabilities or students from a non-English speaking background).

9 Acceptance process

9.1 How will applicants be advised of the outcome of their application?

All successful and unsuccessful applicants will be advised of the outcome of their applications by the end of November 2014.

Due to the large number of applications usually received, the Department of Education does not provide individual feedback on why an individual's application was unsuccessful. There may be a number of reasons why an application does not progress through the process. Please see the Program website <http://www.dfat.gov.au/new-colombo-plan/Scholarship-program.html> at the conclusion of the round for the most common reasons why applicants did not receive an offer.

9.2 Offer of Scholarship

Applicants who are offered a Scholarship must agree to the terms and conditions of their Scholarship and accept their Scholarship online within the prescribed time. Those applicants who are offered a Scholarship must be able to satisfy all the visa requirements of the Host Location/s in which they wish to undertake their Scholarship Program.

Police Checks

All Scholars will be required to undergo a police check before their Scholarship is confirmed. It is an important consideration of the Australian Government that a Scholar is a suitable

person who will enhance the reputation of Australia and the New Colombo Plan overseas. A criminal record will not automatically disqualify an applicant from receiving a Scholarship. However, if a successful applicant is found to have a criminal record or conviction which the Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, considers would harm the reputation of the New Colombo Plan, then the Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, may refuse to grant or may revoke a Scholarship.

Support Services Organisation

After satisfying a police check, successful applicants will be allocated by the Department of Education to a Support Services Organisation contracted by the Department of Education to manage support services for Scholars. Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Scholarship agreement with the Support Services Organisation.

10 Scholarship agreement

The scholarship agreement between the Scholar and the Support Services Organisation will need to be executed before the Scholarship can be paid to the Scholar. If the Scholarship Program is commenced before there is a scholarship agreement executed, the Commonwealth will not be liable for an expenditure incurred before the date of execution of the scholarship agreement.

The scholarship agreement will detail the successful applicant's responsibilities in relation to the Scholarship Program and outcomes that need to be achieved. It will also set out the arrangements for the provision of funding for the Scholarship Program as well as arrangements relating to (but not limited to):

- payment of entitlements;
- pre-departure advice and assistance;
- arrival in Host Location;
- assistance with arrangement of return flights;
- travel and health insurance;
- confirmation of Internships/Mentorships;
- minimum monthly contact;
- Australian community engagement/advocacy;
- permissions relating to use of photographs, footage, words, images, quotes or other comments made by or attributed by the Scholar and information about the Scholar (e.g. name, Home University and field of study); and
- requests to vary Scholarship Program arrangements.

10.1 Taxation

Scholarship funds provided to Scholars are to be treated as exempt from income tax as per section 51.10, 2.1A of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*.

10.2 What documents about the Program should be retained?

It is a condition of being paid the Scholarship that Scholars retain all documents and records in relation to their application and the Scholarship Program for a period of seven years after the completion of the Scholarship and that the Scholars provide this information to authorised officers of the Department of Education or the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade if requested to do so.

11 How are complaints and feedback handled?

The Australian Government will not accept responsibility for any misunderstanding arising from the failure by an applicant to comply with these guidelines, or arising from any ambiguity, discrepancy or error contained in an application.

Complaints, inquiries and feedback in relation to the processing of applications should be sent to ncp.scholarships@education.gov.au.

Appeals against decisions on the selection of Scholars will not be considered.

12 Disclosure of information

The use and disclosure of information provided to the Department of Education and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade by applicants and Scholars for the Program is regulated by legislation including the *Public Service Act 1999* (Cth), the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth), the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) and the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth), as well as the common law.

12.1 What information about successful applicants will be announced?

The Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs may publicly announce details of individual Scholarships, including, but not limited to:

- the names of successful applicants, their Home University, Host Location and Host Institution;
- a brief description of study areas and Internships/Mentorships being supported (and their timing); and
- the amount of funding awarded.

12.2 Privacy

The Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and their contractors are bound by the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Privacy Act). Schedule 1 of the Privacy Act outlines the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), which prescribe the rules for handling Personal Information.

Without collecting Personal Information the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will not be able to process an application. Personal Information provided to the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in relation to applications under the New Colombo Plan will be used only for the following purposes ('the purposes'):

- assessing applications;

- administering and performance monitoring the New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program;
- promoting the New Colombo Plan, including in promotional material, information and publications in hardcopy and/or on the internet; and
- congratulating and/or inviting successful recipients to functions and events held in Australia and overseas, before during or after the term of the recipient's Scholarship.

The Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade may disclose Personal Information in relation to applications under the New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program for the same purposes listed above to the following recipients:

- other Australian Government Departments and agencies, including Austrade, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, the Australian Federal Police and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet;
- Australian Parliamentarians and Parliamentary committees;
- contractors and agents of the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- Australian universities, including the New Colombo Plan Liaison Officer for Scholarships;
- Potential Internship hosts, including but not limited to companies, Host Location governments/authorities or non-government organisations. These may be foreign organisations (noting that representatives of foreign companies or organisations are not bound by Australian privacy legislation);
- representatives of Host Location governments/authorities (noting that representatives of foreign governments/authorities are not bound by Australian Privacy legislation); and
- in publicly available promotional material, information and publications in hardcopy and/or on the internet.

The Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will not otherwise use or disclose the Personal Information for a purpose other than that identified in these Guidelines, except where:

- the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have the individual's consent to use or disclose the information for that other purpose;
- the individual would reasonably expect a use or disclosure to be made for that other purpose and it is related to the purposes outlined in these Guidelines;
- the use or disclosure of the information for another purpose is required or authorised by or under an Australian law or a court/tribunal order;
- permitted general situation exists (such as serious threats to life, health or safety of an individual or the public, suspected unlawful activity or serious misconduct; missing persons; legal or equitable claims; alternative dispute resolution processes; or diplomatic or consular functions); or
- the use or disclosure is reasonably necessary for enforcement related activities by or on behalf of an enforcement body.

For more information on privacy, including information on handling of Personal Information, how someone can access or correct Personal Information, or how to make a complaint, go to:

- Department of Education - www.education.gov.au/privacy or contact privacy@education.gov.au;

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – www.dfat.gov.au/privacy.html or contact privacy@dfat.gov.au .

12.3 Confidentiality

Identification of Confidential Information

Information which satisfies the four criteria listed below will be treated by the Commonwealth as Confidential Information:

- the information to be protected has been clearly identified by the applicant;
- the information is commercially sensitive;
- the disclosure of the information would cause unreasonable detriment to the applicant or another party; and
- the information was provided by the applicant under an understanding that it would remain confidential.

Confidential Information also includes information designated by the Commonwealth as confidential or that either party knows or ought to know is confidential. This does not include information that is otherwise in the public domain.

Applicants must ensure that they clearly mark information in their application that is confidential and explain why it should be treated as Confidential Information.

Use of Confidential Information

Even if information belonging to the applicant is marked confidential, it may be used by the Department of Education, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other parts of the Commonwealth.

The Confidential Information will be disclosed to Commonwealth employees and contractors and agents for the purposes of determining the suitability of applicants to enhance the reputation of Australia as a New Colombo Plan Scholar.

In addition to the above, the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade may disclose the Confidential Information to:

- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner;
- the responsible Minister(s);
- a House or a Committee of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia;
- a third party contractor engaged by the Commonwealth for audit-related purposes;
- other Commonwealth agencies for law enforcement purposes, where the disclosure will serve the Commonwealth's legitimate interests and, if necessary, to substantiate an applicant's claims; or
- a technical, financial, economic and/or industry expert (including auditors) from whom the Department of Education or the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade wishes to seek advice.

Confidential Information may also be disclosed if the Commonwealth is otherwise required or permitted by law to do so (for example in accordance with the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*), where the consent of the applicant and/or Scholar to the release of information is obtained prior to its disclosure, or where the information enters the public domain due to the actions of someone other than the Commonwealth. Personal Information will be handled in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act.

12.4 Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act) provides a legally enforceable right to government documents, including documents with regard to the New Colombo Plan.

Decisions regarding requests for access under the FOI Act are made by authorised FOI decision-makers in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act.

The right of access to documents is subject to exemptions, including in relation to personal and business information. In certain circumstances where documents within the scope of an FOI request contain Personal Information or information which relates to the business, commercial or financial affairs of third parties, the FOI Act requires the decision-maker to consult with the individuals and business affected if release of the material is being considered.

All FOI requests must be referred, immediately via email at foi@dfat.gov.au, to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. As required, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will consult the Department of Education on FOI requests.

13 How will the Program be evaluated?

Any information collected as part of the Program can be used by the Support Services Organisation, the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for performance monitoring and management of the New Colombo Plan. Information will also be used to create testimonials for promotional material.

The New Colombo Plan Online application system will be used by the Support Services Organisation, the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for performance monitoring and management. New Colombo Plan Online is used to collect information about applicants, Program outcomes and performance (including reports).

Program stakeholders may be asked to participate in the evaluation of the Program, including university representatives, interview panel members, nominees, applicants and Scholars.