New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program
2025 Round
Advice to Applicants

The 2025 New Colombo Plan (NCP) Scholarship Program Guidelines outline round eligibility requirements, assessment criteria and how funding will be allocated to successful applicants. Applicants must read these Guidelines on GrantConnect before starting an application.

Key changes in the 2025 round

Updates to the 2025 Guidelines aim to ensure consistency with the Australian Government's policy priorities. Key updates include:

Section in Guidelines	Change	Rationale
4.2	Removed limit on number of nominations by Australian universities NB: Australian universities must only nominate students they assess to demonstrate resilience and initiative sufficient to thrive overseas whilst completing their proposed scholarship program.	To encourage a wider pool of applicants
2.2.1, 4.2	New language stream: To further support Australia's capability in the Indo-Pacific and enhance Australia's Asia literacy, nominations are strongly encouraged for students who will have language study as a focus in their NCP program i.e. these scholars must undertake a program where at least half of their study component will be the study of an official or commonly spoken language of an eligible NCP host location (other than English) for credit towards their Australian home degree. This proposed study component must be supported by their Australian university. Longer term language study and a higher language-focused study load will be prioritised.	To support Australia's capability in Indo-Pacific languages
4.1	Clarified that scholars must be enrolled in and undertaking, at least one Bachelor degree, Bachelor Honours degree or eligible undergraduate language-focused course until the completion of all components of the scholarship program (not just the study component)	To ensure scholars remain eligible as undergraduate students while undertaking their scholarship program
4.1, 4.2	Removed the minimum graded average eligibility requirement NB: Australian universities must only nominate students they assess to be academically capable of successfully completing their proposed overseas study	To eliminate a barrier to participation in NCP scholarships
5.2.2	Minimum duration of full-time internships increased to two weeks	To ensure immersive internship experiences

Section in Guidelines	Change	Rationale
5.2.4	Minimum duration of full-time language training increased to two weeks	To support acquisition of Indo-Pacific languages
5.4.2	Maximum total benefit (cap) for tuition fees for study components increased to: - $15,000 per semester, and - $10,000 per trimester	To reflect increases in host university tuition fees
5.4.2	Removed $20,000 combined tuition fee benefit cap for study and language training components. Individual caps for study component and language training remain.	To reflect increases in host university tuition fees
5.5.3	A maximum of two secondary host locations may be approved during a scholarship program	To ensure immersive experiences
6.3	Establishment of NCP Language Fellow	To align with the government's priority

Smartraveller advice

NCP scholarship programs cannot commence (or continue) 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 5.5.4 of the Guidelines).

Applicants are strongly discouraged from proposing programs to a host location (or a region within a host location) with the travel advice described above, except where that advice is likely to be short-term, for example due to the temporary impact of a natural disaster.

Travel from Australia cannot proceed to such locations if Smartraveller advice described above is in place at the time of the scholar's departure from Australia or previous location.

Tips for successful applications

It is important that applicants provide evidence to support their claims in applications. Based on previous rounds, the following advice is offered to applicants to strengthen their applications.

Criterion 1: Academic excellence at the tertiary level
Higher scored responses:
- demonstrated prolonged dedication to academic achievement, learning and personal development, supported by concrete examples and strong academic references. These responses demonstrated creativity, innovation, strong communication skills, problem-solving skills, and/or critical thinking skills. Examples included participation in competitions or projects that required high levels of innovation or problem solving
- provided evidence of commendations, awards, scholarships, internships, or acceptance into selective academic programs etc, and explained how these opportunities developed the applicant's critical thinking skills

Lower scored responses:
- demonstrated limited achievement beyond standard university student experiences
- did not provide evidence of the applicant's communication skills, higher-order cognitive and critical thinking skills and/or engagement in learning.

Criterion 2: Leadership and engagement in the community
Higher scored responses:
- gave examples of sustained community engagement, often in a variety of fields

- demonstrated longer-term leadership that developed a program/activity/organisation from conception to implementation
- showed an effective ability to collaborate with other stakeholders and positively influence outcomes.

Lower scored responses often:
- only outlined participation, without explaining how the applicant contributed to improved outcomes for their community (which may include a variety of groups: voluntary, community, cultural, educational and/or paid employment)
- did not demonstrate how the applicant utilised their leadership skills to contribute effectively and bring about change, resolve problems or find solutions.

Criterion 3: Adaptability and resilience

Higher scored responses:
- demonstrated strong self-awareness and identified strategies that applicants used to overcome a range of challenges in their academic studies and/or personal life
- demonstrated insights applicant had gained from dealing with challenging situations and setbacks
- explained how lessons learned from past experiences would apply to their proposed NCP program, including their ability to thrive in a cross-cultural environment and deal with unforeseen events.

Lower scored responses often:
- demonstrated limited self-awareness regarding personal growth and development in the face of challenging circumstances
- little understanding of coping mechanisms to adapt or show resilience.

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 explained how their interests, proposed program and NCP outcomes intersected
- provided well-considered examples of where/how people-to-people and institutional relationships could be fostered during their time offshore and maintained on return to Australia
- demonstrated a broad range of strategies to promote the NCP and the scholar's experiences to a range of stakeholders, both while overseas and as an active alumni member after return to Australia

Lower scored responses:
- demonstrated limited understanding of the NCP objective and outcomes
- did not explain how their program would contribute to those objectives

Referees

Some referee reports added little value to information contained in the applicant's responses to selection criteria in their application. Applicants should aim to choose referees that have good knowledge of the applicant's strengths in relation to the assessment criteria, including providing examples to support their views of the applicant.

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]

Other considerations

Where applicants are similarly meritorious at both the application and interview stages, preference may be 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, immersive and comprehensive experience in the Indo-Pacific region. The longer an applicant's program, and the more components it includes (e.g. study, internship and language training), the more transformative their experience is likely to be.

Priority will also be given to applicants who clearly explain the relationship between their proposed study, language and internship components.

We encourage NCP scholars to have an immersive experience at their primary host location. i.e. undertaking their study component (mandatory), internship and language training at the primary host location. Priority will be given to applicants who propose to undertake all components in their primary host location.

When scholars are unable to find a suitable internship at the primary host location, they may propose to 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 secondary host locations. The maximum number of secondary host locations is two. Clear justification of the need for secondary host locations must be included in the application.

The NCP particularly encourages participation from students from a diverse range of backgrounds including, but not limited to, First Nations 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 non-English speaking backgrounds.

Some NCP host locations attract more NCP scholarship applications than others. (Consequently, competition for scholarships to those locations is particularly strong). The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), in the final selection of scholars, may seek to ensure a spread of scholarships across the range of host locations, where possible.

Frequently asked questions

Timing of release of academic results and official academic transcripts

Can the ILO submit a nominee's unofficial academic transcript if the official copy is not yet available at the time of nomination?

Yes. Where official transcripts cannot be provided by the closing of nominations, "unofficial" academic transcripts may be submitted at nominations e.g screenshots, with official transcripts to be provided by the applicant in their application.

Required documents

Why is a CV required as part of the NCP scholarship application?

A CV provides more details of an applicant's achievements, beyond their responses to assessment criteria, by highlighting their academic achievements/awards, work experience, community engagement and extra-curricular interests. The CV enables assessors to gain a fuller picture of the

applicant's achievements over time (for example, the length of volunteering and community engagement).

Police checks

How will police checks be organised for the nominee/applicant?

Police checks will be arranged by the contractor for applicants shortlisted for interview.

In the nomination form, University International Liaison Officers (ILOs) must indicate that the student has provided consent for the contractor to conduct a police check.

The contractor will contact the applicant to seek further information and documents for the police check.

Medical clearance

Will a medical check be required for successful applicants?

Yes. Scholars will be required to complete a medical assessment as part of the pre-departure risk assessment, including a plan to manage any pre-existing conditions.

Host location

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

Yes. The host location specified in the application will be treated as the applicant's final host location.

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

No. NCP scholars must commence their program at their primary host location.

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 in section 5.2.1 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?

No. Please see section 7.4 of the Guidelines regarding documentation required to be attached in relation to your study component. You should show evidence that you have undertaken research and contacted the proposed host university to identify appropriate credit-bearing subjects. Your home university will need to provide a letter attesting to the feasibility of your proposed study component in relation to your new degree.

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

While one letter is sufficient, if the units will be credit bearing to both degrees, then that 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?

No. The NCP will not support study components undertaken at offshore campuses of Australian universities (or offshore campuses of other countries) The NCP aims to establish linkages between Australian and Indo-Pacific universities and for scholars to have an immersive local experience at their host location.

Applicants should explore all possible locally-based host institutions as prospective host institutions or consider an alternative primary host location.

Only if all such options are exhausted, should an applicant consider a host institution that is an offshore campus of a university. If an applicant proposes an offshore campus, they must provide evidence of genuine efforts to identify courses at locally-based institutions and address the following in their scholarship application:

   a. whether there are local host institutions in the proposed location that offer relevant courses that could receive credit from the home university, and

   b. whether Australian (and other international students) are the minority of the student body and students are taught predominantly by local academics at the proposed host institution.

An applicant cannot apply to study at an offshore campus of the Australian university at which they are enrolled in Australia (and to which the offshore study would be credited). The NCP aims to build linkages between Australian institutions and Asia-Pacific institutions.

NCP Scholars may not undertake Australian university courses delivered offshore.

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

Yes, you may undertake two study components during your NCP scholarship program, where each study component is a semester long.

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 one study component at host institution B, where both institutions are in the same host location.
   - one study component at host institution A and one 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 undertake their most substantial study component and also 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. The maximum number of secondary host locations is two. The total duration of your NCP scholarship program must not exceed 19 months.

Honours students

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?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for an NCP scholarship. Please 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 a 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?

No, 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 undertake 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 your Australian degree.

<u>**Referees**</u>

Can I nominate two academic referees?

Yes. Both your referees may be academic referees, 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 can comment substantively on the assessment criteria, particularly the criterion on academic excellence at the tertiary level. An academic from your university, rather than from your high school, will 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?

Yes.

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

Yes, provided they are from your current home university and 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 blank the response to the remaining assessment criteria. Your personal referee must be able to comment substantively on the remaining assessment criteria.

Students studying online may find it difficult to nominate an academic referee, due to having had 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 one or all of the other criteria blank (if they are unable to comment on them). Applicants should ensure their other referee can comment substantively on the remaining criteria.

Can referees save their draft report and complete it later?

Referees may save each completed section of the report and return to the report at a later stage. There is no need to complete the entire report in one session.

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

No, referees cannot edit a report after it has been submitted. However, the applicant can remove the referee from their application (select the "Remove" button) and re-enter the referee's details. The referee will receive an email containing a new link and password to start a new report.

Language Training

Do I need to have my language training approved?

Yes, all language training must be approved by DFAT through the contractor before commencement.

What types of language training providers are acceptable for NCP-funded language training?

Scholars must provide evidence that a language training provider:
- is a registered local language training organisation with physical premises and appropriately qualified and experienced language teaching staff; and
- has a demonstrated track record in delivering language programs; and
- certifies progress achieved by students; and
- have policies ensuring student welfare, managing risk and monitoring student attendance; and
- provide an outline of course content, mode/s of delivery and assessment; and
- provide a certificate of completion indicating the attendance and level of language competence achieved by the scholar

To be considered full-time, how many hours per week must I undertake in language training?

Full-time language training requires at least 15 contact hours per week. The scholar is expected to also undertake personal language study/practice, bringing the total expected hours of language study to between 22 and 38 hours per week.

Internships

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

No, any internships in your application do not need to be confirmed. However, we encourage you to conduct research, speak to NCP alumni, and make enquiries with potential internship host organisations on possible internship opportunities, and include the details of these potential internships in your application. You should demonstrate that you have researched possible

internships and explain how they will align with your study/career goals and the NCP program objective and outcomes.

Does my internship have to be approved by DFAT?

Yes, all internships and mentorships have to be approved by DFAT through the contractor before commencement. Internships that are credit-bearing to the scholar's degree must also be approved by the home university before commencement.

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

We encourage NCP scholars to have an immersive experience at their primary host location. This means undertaking their study component (mandatory), internship and language training at the primary host location. However, if scholars are unable to find a suitable internship at the primary host location, they 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 and the maximum number of secondary host locations is two. Please explain how your proposed program components will achieve your study/career goals and NCP program objective and outcomes.

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

No, there is no limit to the number of internships you can complete, provided they meet the requirements stated in section 5.2.2 of the Guidelines.

Visas

Do I need to find out about visas during the application stage?

No. You only need to seek advice regarding visas if you are awarded an NCP scholarship. If you are awarded an NCP scholarship, you will need to organise a visa for your host location by contacting the relevant immigration authorities of the host location/s to seek up-to-date advice on the appropriate visas for your program.

Visa requirements for study may be different from those for internships, even in the same host location, and can be subject to change at short notice. Some visas may only be obtainable in Australia. Scholars are required to ensure that they comply with up-to-date advice from immigration authorities of the host location for all components of their program. Scholars must not depart until they receive the appropriate visa for the component of their NCP program.