Program Guidelines

Nuclear-Powered Submarine Student Pathways

1. Program overview and objectives

The Australian Government will invest $128.5 million to support 4,000 commencing Commonwealth supported places (CSPs) over the next four years to develop a pipeline of highly skilled science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates who will strengthen Australia's sovereign capabilities, and support Nuclear-Powered Submarine (NPS) Program initiatives, industry and the economy.

Of these places, 800 (200 each year from 2024 to 2027) will be allocated to South Australian universities in line with the public announcement of the Commonwealth and South Australian Government Cooperation Agreement in March 2023.

The 4,000 additional CSPs will be specifically targeted to deliver graduates from STEM disciplines, including accredited engineering, mathematics, chemistry and physics to grow Australia's excellence in STEM disciplines.

South Australian universities can also apply for additional places in computer science, psychology and management. Places in these fields of education are available to South Australian universities only.

Support for these places is in addition to the 20,000 Commonwealth supported places already allocated by the Government to address skills shortages in areas of national priority, and to provide more opportunities for students from under-represented backgrounds.

The 4,000 additional CSPs under this measure will be provided for bachelor level courses only. Places will not be provided for sub-bachelor or postgraduate courses.

2. Grant amount and grant period

Funding is provided under section 30-1 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

Funding is provided through the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) for 1,000 commencing CSPs each year from 2024 to 2027. These places are non-ongoing and funding for these places will terminate by 2031.

This program does not include research funding. The Australian Submarine Agency (ASA) will engage the higher education sector separately on potential ASA-related research support.

3. Eligibility

Only higher education providers listed on Table A of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* will be eligible to receive an allocation of places. Higher education providers who are not a Table A provider are not eligible to apply.

The Department recognises that some organisations may want to join as a group to deliver additional places. In these circumstances, applicants must appoint a 'lead organisation'. Only the lead organisation will enter into a grant agreement with the Department of Education and will be responsible for submitting an application on behalf of the consortium, the lead organisation must have the authority to do so on behalf of the consortium members. The application must identify all other members of the proposed group and a formal agreement must be in place between all consortium members and provided to the department in the form of a letter of support, during the application submission period.

Each letter of support should include:
- Details of the partner organisation.
- An overview of how the partner organisation will work with the lead organisation and any other partner organisations in the group to successfully deliver places.
- An outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise the partner organisation will bring to the group.
- The roles and responsibilities of the partner organisation and the resources they will contribute including number of CSPs proposed to be delivered on behalf of the lead organisation.
- Details of a nominated management level contact officer.

It is the responsibility of the lead organisation to ensure that all parties and subcontractors comply with the relevant aspects of the written agreement. A formal agreement must be in place between all consortium members and provided to the department if requested, prior to the execution of the grant agreement.

Organisations applying as a consortium must also be aware that all additional funding will be provided to the lead university and all funding will be reconciled against lead university student data. Program reporting will also only refer to the lead university rather than multiple institutions.

4. Selection process

Allocation of places will be determined based on the outcomes of a competitive selection process, with distribution of places also taking into account the overarching objectives of the program in section 1 above.

There are 1,000 commencing places to be allocated each year from 2024 to 2027. Of these, 200 places in each year must be allocated to South Australian universities in line with the Commonwealth and South Australian Government Cooperation Agreement.

Applications will be assessed against criteria developed jointly by the Department of Education and the Australian Submarine Agency. The Department of Education and the Australian Submarine Agency will then make recommendations to the Minister for Education on proposed allocations of places for approved courses for individual providers. Final allocations will be determined by the Minister for Education, following consultation with the Minister for Defence.

5. Selection criteria

The application template requires providers to identify proposed courses, requested places of commencing CSPs for delivery in each year from 2024 to 2027 for individual courses, and a written statement against five criteria to demonstrate intended delivery against program objectives.

The selection criteria are:
- Delivery of places in STEM disciplines and areas that will meet the priorities of the Australian Submarine Agency (ASA) for future workforce needs and how an institution has demonstrable graduate results in those respective fields.
- Evidence-based strategies for maximising student academic success as well as graduate success rates for specific course fields.
- Membership of the Defence Industry Security Program.
- Provider capacity and student demand including the ability of the provider to deliver increased numbers of foundational engineering and science graduates.
- Student support and equity policies and programs in place to attract, retain and support students from under-represented backgrounds whilst studying, including wrap-around services and flexible learning modes, to improve academic participation and student success.

Scores will be determined based on assessment of written statements and consideration of data collected through CGS estimates and TCSI data collection processes related to enrolment trends, performance, and progress supporting students from under-represented and educationally disadvantaged groups, such as First Nations people, students from low SES backgrounds, regional, rural and remote students, people with a disability, first in family to study at university, and women in non-traditional areas.

5.1 Delivery of places in STEM disciplines and areas that support the NPS program and ASA enterprise workforce requirements

Places will only be allocated to courses which deliver STEM graduates which will grow Australia's capabilities in STEM disciplines that support the Australian Submarine Agency enterprise workforce requirements. The overall allocation of places will have regard to the span of places across study areas outlined below.

The courses eligible for this funding include, but are not necessarily limited to, courses in:
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Material Science
- Naval Architecture
- Mathematics
- Mechanical Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Chemical Engineering
- Nuclear Engineering
- Nuclear Science

South Australian universities may also apply for places in the following fields:
- Psychology
- Computer science
- Management

Providers may nominate courses from areas related to, but not directly listed above. However, where they do, compelling evidenced based analysis as to how the proposed courses support ASA objectives must be provided.

The application template requires providers to identify proposed courses, requested places, and provide written statements of up to 1,000 words demonstrating how the proposed courses will meet the priorities of the NPS future workforce needs and how the institution has demonstrable graduate results in the respective fields that will benefit the ASA.

Responses should include how these courses represent modern and innovative approaches in their respective field as well as how these courses can be shaped (i.e. content, structure and mode of delivery, expertise, exposure to work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities etc) to deliver ASA-specific experiences through WIL and other courseware.

Highly suitable	Courses are explicitly linked to the identified target study areas supporting the STEM disciplines and ASA enterprise workforce requirements.
	Course design and delivery based on innovative, modern approaches that are grounded in strong research and academic performance.
	Courses and institutions integrate the delivery of ASA specific WIL opportunities.
	Written statement provides strong claims to demonstrate courses will directly benefit the Nuclear-Powered Submarine (NPS) Program initiatives, industry and the economy.
Suitable	Courses are explicitly linked to STEM disciplines and support the ASA enterprise workforce requirements.
	Course design and delivery are modern and are able to integrate the delivery of relevant WIL opportunities.
	Written statement provides claims to demonstrate courses will benefit the national STEM capabilities, industry and the economy.
Not suitable	Courses are not in STEM disciplines and do support the ASA enterprise workforce requirements.
	No written statement provided.

5.2 Evidence-based strategies for maximising student academic success as well as graduate success rates for specific course fields

Places will be allocated to providers that can demonstrate a strong level of support for proposed courses and detail strategies and timelines for how additional funding will be used to enhance teaching and engagement in ASA and wider AUKUS related priority areas to maximise student success.

Providers should outline their planned investments to engage quality teachers who can inspire students to succeed in these courses and to utilise evidence-based resources that are constantly informed by new developments in educational practice and research. Applicants should provide details on graduate outcomes and professional body linkages to demonstrate prior commitment to student success in these study areas.

Highly suitable	Written statement provides strong claims of the provider's commitment to enhancing teaching and engagement in ASA and wider AUKUS related study areas to maximise student success.
	Provider details investments that will be made to provide specialised teaching staff and high-quality learning resources in these courses. Provider outlines evidence of strong historical graduate outcomes and student success.
Suitable	Written statement provides claims of the plans to enhance teaching and engagement in ASA and wider AUKUS related study areas.
	Provider details investments that will be made to provide additional teaching staff or learning resources in these courses. Provider outlines evidence of graduate outcomes and student success.
Not suitable	No written statement provided.

5.3 Membership and adherence to Defence Industry Security Program (DISP)

Applicants must demonstrate their membership and adherence to the **Defence Industry Security Program (DISP)**. The enhanced security arrangements to demonstrate capability to safeguard sensitive research, technologies and capabilities early in the research and innovation cycles.

Highly Suitable	Applicant has demonstrated achievement of DISP Level 2 performance.
Suitable	Applicant has demonstrated their membership and adherence to the DISP Program.
Not suitable	Applicant has failed to demonstrate their membership and adherence to the DISP Program.

5.4 Provider capacity and student demand

Places will be allocated to providers who can demonstrate clear, unmet demand for places in proposed courses and an ability to expand current enrolment levels in target study areas.

The application template includes a requirement to provide a written statement of up to 300 words detailing expected levels of unmet demand from students, plans to support expansion of current enrolment levels, and why current CGS funding provided under their Maximum Basic Grant Amount (MBGA) cannot meet this demand.

The Department of Education will consider data collected through CGS estimates and TCSI data collection processes to demonstrate delivery across the target courses. As applicable, the Department will also consider providers' history of under or over-enrolments and anticipated enrolment levels based on CGS estimates and enrolments.

Highly suitable	Written statement provides strong claims to demonstrate unmet demand from students and strong capacity to grow enrolments in target study areas. Data demonstrates history of persistent demand, ongoing demand and a capacity to deliver additional places.
Suitable	Written statement provides some claims to demonstrate unmet demand from students in target study areas. Data demonstrates some history of demand and potential to deliver additional places.
Not suitable	No written statement provided. Data suggests history of low enrolments or under-enrolment.

5.5 Student Support and equity

Allocations of places will be prioritised towards providers that invest in policies and programs in place to attract, retain and support students in the designated STEM fields.

Providers should outline and describe any existing initiatives they participate in as well as any further steps they will take to increase the participation of students from under-represented backgrounds in the target study areas including:

- First Nations students
- students with disability
- students from low SES backgrounds
- students from regional, rural, and remote areas
- first in family to study at university; and
- women studying in non-traditional areas.

Applications should include how these initiatives will be measured and evaluated.

Providers should also detail specific programs to support under-represented and educationally disadvantaged groups, such as First Nations people, students from low SES backgrounds, regional, rural and remote students, people with a disability, first in family to study at university, and women in non-traditional areas.

The Department of Education will consider data collected through TCSI data collection processes related to performance and progress supporting students from equity groups.

Highly suitable	Written statement provides strong investment in policies and programs in place to attract, retain and support students in proposed courses. Provider has also outlined clear steps to increase the participation in target study areas and how outcomes will be measured and evaluated. Written statement also highlights success of provider to increase participation of students who are first-in-family and may face other compounding barriers to access higher education, specifically in target study areas. Data demonstrates provider's clear record of success to increase participation of under-represented and educationally disadvantaged groups, such as First Nations people, students from low SES backgrounds, regional, rural and remote students, people with a disability, first in family to study at university, and women in non-traditional areas.
Suitable	Written statement outlines policies and programs in place to attract, retain and support students in proposed courses. Provider has also outlined steps to increase the participation in target study areas and how outcomes will be measured and evaluated. Written statement also highlights intention to increase participation of students who are first-in-family and may face other compounding barriers to access higher education, specifically in target study areas. Data demonstrates provider's efforts to increase participation of under-represented and educationally disadvantaged groups, such as First Nations people, students from low SES backgrounds, regional, rural and remote students, people with a disability, first in family to study at university, and women in non-traditional areas.
Not suitable	No written statement provided. Data does not demonstrate provider's commitment to increase participation of under-represented and educationally disadvantaged groups, such as First Nations people, students from low SES backgrounds, regional, rural and remote students, people with a disability, first in family to study at university, and women in non-traditional areas.

6. Application submission

Applications will open on 1 September 2023 and close on 28 September 2023.

Applications must be submitted to NPSpathways@education.gov.au.

The Department of Education and the Australian Submarine Agency, at their discretion, may seek additional information, or allow applicants to remedy minor errors, but will not accept responsibility for any misunderstanding arising from the failure by an applicant to comply with the requirements set out in these guidelines, or arising from any ambiguity, discrepancy, inconsistency, error or omission contained in the application.

Late applications will not be considered.

7. Selection process

The Department of Education and the Australian Submarine Agency will assess the information detailed in the applications.

Recommendations on allocations will be considered by the Deputy Secretary, Higher Education, Research and International, and the Director General of the Australian Submarine Agency.

Recommendations will then be made to the Minister for Education on which providers should receive funding for approved courses and a proposed number of places. The Minister for Education will then consult with Minister for Defence prior to deciding a final allocation of places.

While a provider's application may be rated highly suitable or suitable, it does not guarantee that the provider will receive an allocation of places under this measure. After providers have been ranked in the competitive process, the allocation of places will consider the following factors:

- How the allocation of places overall will meet the overarching objectives of the program in section 1 above, including the aim of growing Australia's excellence in STEM disciplines across the nation.
- The provider's aggregate score in the assessment process and ability to support NPS program objectives.
- High level of interest – if the total number of requested places is above 4,000, then high scoring applications will be prioritised over lower scoring applications. Depending on the level of oversubscription, high scoring providers may also be granted a higher proportion of their requested places compared to lower scoring providers, while some providers may not receive an allocation at all.
- Course priority, as ranked by the provider in their application. If funding is significantly oversubscribed, funding to successful providers may be based on the 'Course Priority' rank that the provider has given each course in line with consideration of NPS program priorities. In this instance, more places may be allocated to courses which the provider has ranked highly, and they may receive a lower allocation for the courses they have ranked lower.

8. Successful providers

Funding will be allocated to successful providers for each respective commencing place in an approved course, pipelined for the duration of the course based on the standard 75 per cent costing methodology. The use of a 75 per cent pipeline is consistent with the provision of additional Commonwealth supported places.

Funding will be reflected in successful providers' CGS funding agreements via a list of the approved courses and combined total funding provided for courses for each program year (as a funding envelope) within the funding agreement period.

If a cost neutral reallocation of funding (to another approved course) is required, the provider will need to contact the Departments who will assess the reallocation accordingly.

9. Reconciliation of funding

Funding will be provided for 1,000 commencing students each year from 2024 to 2027 only. Funding must be used for CSPs in approved courses only. Funding distributed as part of this measure will be subject to reconciliation processes in future years. While the funding will be included in a provider's total Maximum Basic Grant Amounts (MBGA), it does not fall under a provider's base MBGA and will not be subject to the Higher Education Continuity Guarantee in 2024 or 2025.

Funding under this measure is dependent on successful universities first exhausting their higher education course funding under their MBGA. If a university allocated funding under this measure does not exhaust its higher education course advance for any year in which funding for this measure has been allocated, then all additional funding under this measure will be recouped.

Providers will be required to submit estimates of utilisation of these places as per usual CGS estimates collection processes. Funding provided under this measure may be considered for reallocation in instances where providers are unable to deliver additional places.

10. Accountability and monitoring

These places are intended to result in an increase in enrolments of students in STEM disciplines which will grow Australia's capabilities in STEM disciplines and support the Australian Submarine Agency enterprise. The Department of Education will track the progress of providers in meeting the objectives of the measure.

This will include additional reporting as part of standard estimates process, where providers will be required to report on the number of students enrolled in approved courses. This is to ensure that providers are meeting their commitments to expand existing enrolment numbers.

The Department of Education will also engage with providers regularly to seek advice on the providers' utilisation of these places to ensure it is in line with program objectives and may request additional information as part of the condition of grant.

11. Roles and responsibilities

The Minister for Education has overall responsibility for the program and will make decisions including which provider will receive an allocation of funding and the level of funding provided.

The Departments and relevant officials will assess applications and provide advice to the Minister for Education on which proposals from providers (including courses and number of CSPs) should receive funding. The Minister of Education will consult with the Minister of Defence prior to making final allocations.

The Department of Education will also develop conditions of grant for each successful provider, to be reflected in the provider's CGS funding agreement.

12. Additional information

In general, the information contained in applications will reflect publicly available information regarding the provider's strategies and courses, or publicly available as part of the Department of Education suite of provider and student enrolment data. The Department of Education will not disclose data relating to CGS estimates for individual providers.

Providers' Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding agreements will be published on the Department of Education's website. This will include details of allocated funding, approved courses, and number of places.

Questions on the program and application process can be submitted via email to NPSpathways@education.gov.au.