

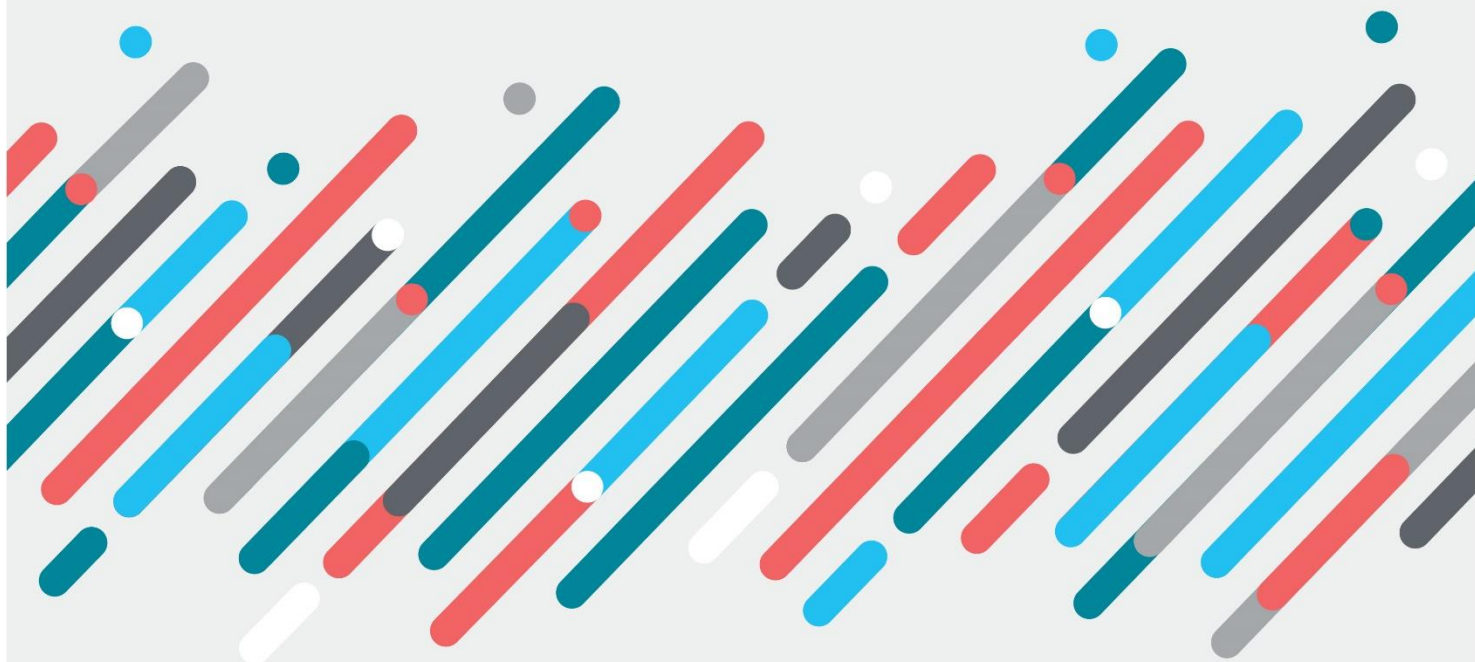


Australian Government
Department of Education

Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program

Administrative Program Guidelines

(Administrative guidance for Scholarship Support Organisations)



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1. About the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program

The Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program will deliver scholarships to students from regional, rural and remote communities to assist with the costs of attending a boarding school or facility.

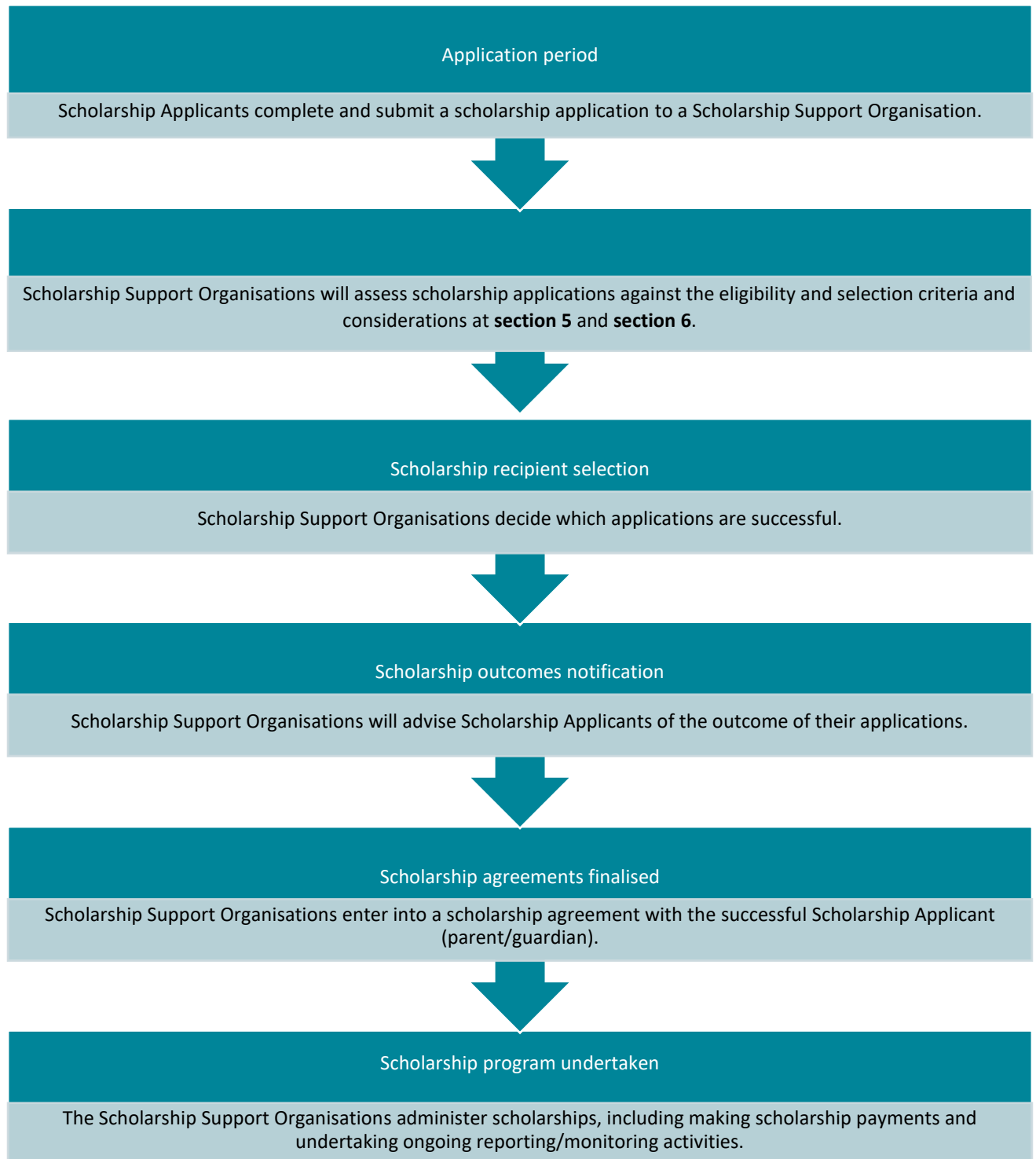
The Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program is a pilot program that will run over 7 years, with scholarships to be offered for up to 6 years. Scholarships will commence from the 2024 school year.

The Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program was originally announced as part of the Supporting Quality Boarding for Rural and Remote Students measure on 29 March 2022. The Assistant Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm, announced revised program settings on 15 March 2023.

The intended outcomes of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program are:

- to assist students from rural, regional and remote areas with a contribution towards boarding fees, in order to provide a quality education option where local alternatives may not exist or be suitable;
- to provide additional financial support to families who are unable to afford the full cost of boarding school fees and associated costs even with existing government support, with the intention to reduce families' financial contribution towards boarding school fees; and
- to provide a supported boarding experience for students and families from low socioeconomic status backgrounds or experiencing financial hardship.

2. Process overview



3. Purpose and value of scholarships

3.1 Purpose of scholarship payments

Scholarship Support Organisations must ensure that scholarship payments are used for the following purposes:

- Scholarship payments are intended to assist with the cost of the Scholarship Recipient's boarding fees.
- If there are excess scholarship funds after the settlement of boarding fees, these can be used for tuition fees or other school-related or boarding-related costs (including technology levies, uniforms, camps/excursions, fees for elective subjects or costs associated with home visits) incurred by the Scholarship Recipient.
- Use of scholarship funds must align with the policies of the Scholarship Recipient's boarding school/facility.

3.2 Scholarship duration

A scholarship is for up to six years of full-time secondary school study.

3.3 Financial value of scholarship payments

The table below outlines the maximum financial value of scholarship payments.

Scholarship recipient tier	Maximum financial value of scholarship payments
Tier 1 (Support for low-income families)	\$20,000 per year for up to 6 years
Tier 2 (Support for low-to-middle income families experiencing financial hardship)	\$10,000 per year for up to 6 years

4. Scholarship application process

4.1 Application process overview

Details of each Scholarship Support Organisation will be listed on the Australian Government Department of Education (the Department)'s website.

Scholarship Support Organisations will administer an application process for scholarships. Scholarship Applicants must submit a complete application, including supporting documentation, to a Scholarship Support Organisation.

Scholarship Support Organisations should provide a contact point, so that Scholarship Applicants who have difficulty in completing the application can contact the relevant Scholarship Support Organisation for assistance.

4.2 When to apply

Scholarship Support Organisations should publish on their websites any scholarship application round details (such as opening and closing dates for applications).

4.3 Completing the scholarship application

Scholarship Applicants should only apply to **one** Scholarship Support Organisation for a Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program scholarship. Scholarship Support Organisations should undertake checks to ensure that Scholarship Applicants are not already receiving a scholarship through the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program.

If more than one application from the same Scholarship Applicant is received by a Scholarship Support Organisation, the Scholarship Support Organisation must only assess the latest application received.

A complete application must include:

- A complete application form
- Required supporting documentation.

The below table outlines examples of required supporting documentation. Scholarship Support Organisations must develop application materials (such as an application form or checklist) that outline requirements for supporting documentation.

Information to demonstrate eligibility for a scholarship	Evidence requirements
Evidence that the Scholarship Applicant (student) will be commencing or undertaking secondary school education in Australia at the time of the scholarship commencement	<p>Examples of evidence include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School report cards and/or attendance records • Current school or teacher reference • Distance education students may wish to provide a statement or reference from their distance education provider.
Details of the boarding school or facility that the Scholarship Applicant is attending or intending to attend	<p>Proof of offer or enrolment in an eligible boarding school or facility (see section 5.2 of these Guidelines),</p> <p>Note: This requirement does not apply where Scholarship Support Organisations have reserved boarding places at partner schools.</p>
Evidence of financial need	See section 5.3 of these Guidelines for evidence requirements for Tier 1 and Tier 2 scholarships
Proof of permanent home address in a regional, rural or remote area	<p>Examples of evidence include Scholarship Applicant (parent/guardian) supplying one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers Licence (front and back) • 18+ card (front and back) • Utility bill • Bank statement (issued within the last 3 months) • Lease agreement • Other appropriate documentation.
Evidence that the Scholarship Applicant (student) is an Australian citizen, permanent resident, holder of a permanent visa or a New Zealand citizen living in Australia	<p>Scholarship Applicant to supply documents for one of the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services Australia letter as outlined at section 5 • Australian Citizenship Certificate which includes the name of the Scholarship Applicant (student), or • Australian Passport issued in the name of the Scholarship Applicant (student), or • Scholarship Applicant (student)'s Australian Birth Certificate and one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parent's full birth certificate showing the applicant's parent was born in Australia before 20 August 1986 ○ Parent's Australian passport issued on or after 20 August 1986 that was valid for at least two years and issued before the Scholarship Applicant was born ○ Parent's Australian citizenship certificate that shows they acquired citizenship before the applicant was born. • Australian Visa or permanent residency letter • Other appropriate documentation.



Information which will be used to assess eligible applications and to select scholarship recipients	Evidence requirements
Evidence to demonstrate that the scholarship will support the Scholarship Applicant (student)'s aspirations, such as by providing access to a quality education option, including access to study a subject not available at their local school or access to support for the student's interests, goals and/or extracurricular activities.	<p>Examples of evidence include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement prepared by the Scholarship Applicant (student) outlining how the scholarship will help them with their aspirations – for example, access to study a subject not available at their local school and/or information about how the scholarship will support the student's interests, goals and extracurricular activities. • A reference from a community organisation demonstrating how the scholarship would support the Scholarship Applicant (student)'s education goals and aspirations, extracurricular activities and/or special interests.
Information to demonstrate the Scholarship Applicant (student)'s potential, effort, motivation and improvement in their schooling	<p>Examples of evidence include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement from the Scholarship Applicant (student) demonstrating a positive attitude to learning and a personal commitment to complete secondary schooling • School report cards and/or attendance records • Current school or teacher reference • Distance education students may wish to provide a statement or reference from their distance education provider.
Information to demonstrate the Scholarship Applicant (parent/guardian)'s ability to support the student's wellbeing while they are boarding	Examples of evidence include a statement from the Scholarship Applicant (parent/guardian).
Declaration from the Scholarship Applicant (parents/guardians) confirming the ability to meet potential gap payments for boarding and/or tuition fees not covered by this scholarship (if needed).	Examples of evidence could include confirmation from the Scholarship Applicant (parent/guardian)
Evidence of eligibility for other equity considerations, if relevant	See evidence requirements at section 6.2 of these Guidelines
Any other relevant information or documentation that the Scholarship Applicant would like to provide to support their application	N/A

Other relevant information	
Conflict of interest declaration (provided as part of scholarship application form)	See section 10.2 of these Guidelines
Privacy statement signed by Scholarship Applicant (student and parent/guardian) including consent to the use and disclosure of personal information (provided as part of scholarship application form)	See section 10.3 of these Guidelines



4.4 Questions during the application process

Scholarship Support Organisations are responsible for responding to any questions during the application process.

4.5 Application assessment process

Scholarship Support Organisations must assess scholarship applications in line with the following process:

- **Step 1:** Scholarship Support Organisations must undertake eligibility and completeness checks of applications, in line with the eligibility criteria at **section 5** of these Guidelines.
- **Step 2:** Scholarship Support Organisations must assess eligible applications in line with the selection criteria and considerations at **section 6** of these Guidelines.

When assessing scholarship applications, Scholarship Support Organisations may stand up a selection panel or involve partner schools (where applicable) to inform their assessment of scholarship applications. Scholarship Support Organisations' assessment processes must align with the relevant criteria and guidance in these Guidelines.

The Department has no direct involvement in assessing scholarship applications.

4.6 Notification of application outcomes

The Scholarship Support Organisation must provide written advice to Scholarship Applicants on the outcome of their application.

4.7 Feedback on applications

Unsuccessful Scholarship Applicants may request feedback on their application from the Scholarship Support Organisation. Scholarship Support Organisations must advise Scholarship Applicants of the process for requesting feedback in the written notification of assessment outcome.

5. Scholarship eligibility criteria

5.1 Scholarship applicant eligibility criteria

To be eligible for a scholarship, the Scholarship Applicant (student) must:

- Be commencing or undertaking secondary school education in Australia in 2024 (the time of scholarship commencement) and be able to provide proof of enrolment in an eligible boarding school or facility (see **section 5.2**);
- Have a permanent home address in a regional or remote area as defined by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS)¹;
- Be able to demonstrate financial need (through evidence provided by their parents/guardians as per **section 5.3** of these program guidelines); and
- Be an Australian citizen, permanent resident, holder of a permanent visa or a New Zealand citizen living in Australia.

5.2 Eligible boarding schools/facilities and approved courses

5.2.1 Eligible boarding schools/facilities

Scholarship Applicants must be enrolled in:

- a boarding school that is recognised by the state or territory education authority as secondary level; or
- a boarding facility or hostel that is either covered by the Bilateral Management Agreement between Aboriginal Hostels Limited and Services Australia, or who have signed the ABSTUDY Standard Hostels Agreement with Services Australia.

5.2.2 Partner schools

Where a Scholarship Support Organisation has arrangements with partner schools, Scholarship Applicants (students) must be willing to attend a partner school if selected for a scholarship.

Where this is the case, Scholarship Applicants can submit their school preferences as part of the application form. The Scholarship Support Organisation may work with families to match Scholarship Recipients (students) with an appropriate partner school. This process may include consideration of factors such as student and family preferences, proximity to family residence, student capabilities and aspirations, family financial capability to meet out-of-pocket costs (if applicable) and the number of available boarding places. Scholarship Support Organisations should advise Scholarship Applicants as part of the scholarship application process whether they have arrangements with partner schools.

¹ Scholarship Applicants can check the remoteness classification of their address under the ASGS using the Department of Health workforce locator (available [here](#)).

5.2.3 Approved courses

Scholarship Applicants must be enrolled or intend to enrol full-time to undertake a course that is recognised by the state or territory education authority as secondary level.

5.3 Financial need

Scholarship Applicants are considered to be experiencing financial need for the relevant scholarship tier if they satisfy the conditions listed in the applicable tables below.

Documents which can be used as evidence of financial need are listed for each category.

5.3.1 Establishing financial need for Tier 1 scholarships (low-income families)

Per-student funding amount: \$20,000 p.a.

Duration of scholarship: Up to 6 years

Financial need category	Evidence
Category 1: Scholarship Applicant (student or parent/guardian) receives an eligible Centrelink benefit or concession card at the time of application	<p>A copy of a Centrelink letter or current Income Statement showing the Scholarship Applicant (student or parent/guardian) receives any one of the following benefits or concession cards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Assistance for Isolated Children – Additional Boarding Allowance received for the Scholarship Applicant (student) or another child in the same familyABSTUDY Living Allowance received for the Scholarship Applicant (student) or another child in the same familyAge PensionAustudyCarer PaymentDepartment of Veterans' Affairs income support paymentsDisability Support PensionLow Income Healthcare CardJobseeker PaymentParenting Payment (Single or Partnered)Special BenefitYouth AllowanceFarm Household AllowanceFamily Tax Benefit Part A (Please provide reconciliation outcome notice for the 2022-23 financial year)Pensioner Education Supplement. <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Parents/guardians using Low Income Healthcare Card as evidence must provide a copy of their card (both sides) showing their full details and card expiry date.If the parent/guardian is providing a Centrelink letter, it must have been issued no more than three months prior to the date of document submission for the scholarship application.

Financial need category	Evidence
<p>Category 2: Scholarship Applicant (student or parent/guardian) expects to receive an eligible Centrelink benefit or concession card after the scholarship application period has closed</p>	<p>Scholarship Applicant (student or parent/guardian) must indicate on their scholarship application form the Centrelink benefit or concession card they will apply for (the benefit or concession card must be on the above list) for Category 1.</p> <p>Scholarship Applicant (student or parent/guardian) must provide proof of a successfully submitted Centrelink application for one of the benefits listed in the above list for Category 1.</p> <p>Note: Scholarship Applicant (student or parent/guardian) must provide evidence of their approved benefit in the form of a Centrelink Income Statement (or other Services Australia correspondence), Health Care Card or Pension Card in order to meet financial eligibility requirements prior to being eligible to receive a scholarship offer.</p>



5.3.2 Establishing financial need for Tier 2 scholarships (low-to-middle income families experiencing financial hardship)

Per-student funding amount: \$10,000 p.a.

Duration of scholarship: Up to 6 years

Note: Scholarship applicants who meet the financial need criteria for a Tier 1 scholarship are automatically considered to meet the financial need criteria for a Tier 2 scholarship without having to provide further evidence. Scholarship applicants who do not meet the financial need criteria for a Tier 1 scholarship should provide the evidence described below.

Financial need category	Evidence
Category 3: Scholarship Applicant (parent/guardian)'s combined household income is at or under the combined parental income limit of \$250,000. ² In addition, the Scholarship Applicant must be assessed as belonging to a financial hardship category as outlined at section 5.3.2.1	Notice of assessment from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) for the 2022-23 tax year, ³ demonstrating income of parents/guardians that the Scholarship Applicant (student) lives with, including step parents. If parents are separated, the income of the parent that the Scholarship Applicant (student) spends the most time living with will be assessed. If the Scholarship Applicant (student) spends equal time living with each parent, the income of the parent that submits the parental scholarship application form will be assessed.

² This aligns with the combined parental income limit for [Tertiary Access Payment](#).

³ This is the most recent tax year at the time of application.

5.3.2.1 Establishing financial need for Tier 2 scholarships – financial hardship categories

Scholarship Applicants applying for a Tier 2 scholarship must provide evidence to show that they satisfy **one or more** of the below categories.

Category	Evidence
Financial hardship categories	
Financial hardship statement	Statement outlining cause and impact of financial hardship, including why this impacts the family's ability to meet the costs of boarding. (For example, this could include information about impacts of medical expenses or other causes of financial hardship on family income).
Families with two or more dependent children	Statement outlining the number of dependent children in the family and how this impacts the family's ability to meet the costs of boarding.
Families affected by Australian disaster events, such as recent drought, flood and bushfire	Statement outlining the declared disaster event or other adverse environmental event (including when and where it occurred) and how this impacts the family's ability to meet the costs of boarding.



6. Scholarship selection criteria

6.1 Distribution considerations

Scholarship Support Organisations are to consider the following categories when assessing eligible scholarship applications, with an aim to ensure a reasonably equitable distribution of scholarships:

Category	Evidence
Gender of Scholarship Applicant (student)	Supplied as part of scholarship application form
Equitable distribution of scholarships across states and territories (where administering scholarships in more than one state or territory) ⁴	Permanent home address of Scholarship Applicant, as supplied as part of scholarship application form

6.2 Prioritisation of equity categories

As part of their application, Scholarship Applicants can optionally provide evidence for **one or more** of the following equity categories:

Category	Evidence
Families with two or more dependent children	Statement outlining the number of dependent children in the family and how this impacts the family's ability to meet the costs of boarding.
Families affected by Australian disaster events, such as recent drought, flood and bushfire	Statement outlining the declared disaster event or other adverse environmental event (including when and where it occurred) and how this impacts the family's ability to meet the costs of boarding.
Students from remote and very remote areas	Permanent family residence (at the time of application, and as stated on the application form) is in a remote or very remote area as defined by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard.

Where eligible applications exceed available funding, Scholarship Support Organisations may give priority to assessing Scholarship Applicants that meet **one or more** of these equity categories.

Note: This may result in not all applications being assessed against the selection criteria at **section 6.3** if there is a high volume of eligible applications.

⁴ This would be a guiding principle instead of a fixed quota, and may involve reserving a nominal allocation for each state/territory, with the remaining scholarship places forming part of a nationwide pool. This process would be informed by the demand for scholarships across states and territories.

6.3 Selection criteria

Scholarship Support Organisations must assess all eligible applications that have progressed through **section 6.1** and **section 6.2** in accordance with the below criteria:

- The extent to which the Scholarship Applicant (student) has demonstrated potential, effort, motivation and/or improvement in their schooling. The evidence to demonstrate this selection criterion may include:
 - A statement from the Scholarship Applicant (student) demonstrating a positive attitude to learning and a personal commitment to complete Year 12 or equivalent
 - School report cards and/or attendance records
 - Current school or teacher reference demonstrating
 - the ability to progress/undertake secondary level coursework
 - the student's potential to complete Year 12 or equivalent
 - Distance education students may wish to provide a statement or reference from their distance education provider.
- The extent to which the Scholarship Applicant (student) has demonstrated that the scholarship will support the Scholarship Applicant (student)'s aspirations, such as by providing access to a quality education option, including access to study a subject not available at their local school or access to support for the student's interests, goals and/or extracurricular activities. Evidence may include:
 - A statement prepared by the Scholarship Applicant (student) outlining how the scholarship will help them with their aspirations – for example, access to study a subject not available at their local school and/or information about how the scholarship will support the student's interests, goals and extracurricular activities
 - A reference from a community organisation demonstrating how the scholarship would support the applicant (student)'s education goals and aspirations, extracurricular activities and/or special interests
 - In making an assessment against this criterion, Scholarship Support Organisations can also consider evidence provided against **section 5.3** and **section 6.2**, to consider the Scholarship Applicant's demonstrated financial need for a scholarship.
- The extent to which the Scholarship Applicant (parents/guardians) can demonstrate their ability to make financial contributions to meet the cost of boarding and tuition fees if gap payments are required, noting this will vary depending on the school.
- The extent to which the Scholarship Applicant (student and parents/guardians) has considered the student's ability to adapt to living away from home, including support that can be provided by their family to support the student's wellbeing.

7. Scholarship recipients

7.1 Acceptance of scholarship offer

Scholarship Support Organisations must arrange to enter into a Scholarship Agreement with each successful Scholarship Applicant (parent/guardian).

Once the Scholarship Agreement is finalised, the applicable student will be referred to as a Scholarship Recipient.

If there are unreasonable delays by a successful Scholarship Applicant (parent/guardian) in entering into a Scholarship Agreement, Scholarship Support Organisations can choose to withdraw the scholarship offer and award the scholarship another applicant. The Scholarship Support Organisation must advise the Scholarship Applicant (parent/guardian) prior to the scholarship being withdrawn.

Scholarship Applicants for scholarships who applied under Financial Need Category 2 (expecting to receive an eligible Centrelink benefit or concession card) must provide evidence of eligibility for a Centrelink benefit or concession card (**see section 5.3**). Scholarship Support Organisations can issue a conditional scholarship offer to these Scholarship Applicants until appropriate evidence is provided.

Note: Scholarship Support Organisations should advise Scholarship Applicants (students and parents/guardians) that prior to entering into the Scholarship Agreement, Scholarship Applicants (students and parents/guardians) should not make financial commitments in reliance on being awarded a scholarship.

7.2 Scholarship Agreement

Scholarship Support Organisations will prepare Scholarship Agreements. The Scholarship Agreement sets out the terms and conditions that apply to Scholarship Recipients and their parents/guardians. The Scholarship Agreement states the maximum scholarship amount to be paid and the timeframe over which it is paid.

Scholarship Support Organisations must require Scholarship Recipients to meet certain requirements to continue to receive the scholarship, such as:

- **Making adequate progress at school:**
 - remaining enrolled in school and continuing to board
 - satisfactory completion of required coursework
 - satisfactory attendance record and behaviour at school

The Scholarship Support Organisation may take the Scholarship Recipient's individual circumstances into account when considering action in response to instances of underperformance. If a Scholarship Recipient is not making adequate progress at school, the Scholarship Support Organisation will in the first instance work with the student, school and family to connect the Scholarship Recipient to appropriate supports.

- **Participating in monitoring and evaluation activities**

- **Continuing to demonstrate financial need** (see **section 7.4**), noting approved assessment intervals would have a focus on ensuring the Scholarship Recipient's schooling continuity.

Deferral of scholarship payments

Scholarship payments cannot be deferred and must be expended in the relevant year as outlined in the Scholarship Agreement. (For example, scholarship funds for the first year of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program must be expended in that year, and cannot be 'carried over' to future school years).

Discontinuing scholarships

Scholarship Support Organisations may be able to discontinue a scholarship if Scholarship Recipients do not meet requirements to continue receiving the scholarship.

If a scholarship is discontinued, Scholarship Support Organisations may recover funds where practical (for example, boarding and tuition fees covering a period where a student is no longer enrolled at school). Unspent and recovered funds associated with discontinued scholarships must be returned by the Scholarship Support Organisation to the Department. Scholarship Support Organisations must report any discontinued scholarships to the Department. Scholarship Support Organisations will not receive grant funding in future years for Scholarship Recipients with discontinued scholarships.

7.3 How the scholarship payment is paid

Scholarship Support Organisations can make scholarship payments to parents/guardians of the Scholarship Recipient and/or directly to the Scholarship Recipient's boarding school, boarding facility and/or school, at its discretion. The Scholarship Support Organisation must work with the Scholarship Recipient's parents/guardians, school and/or boarding facility to determine appropriate payment arrangements and instalments.

Scholarship payments must be paid in line with the Scholarship Support Organisation's grant funding allocations for each financial year.

7.4 Reassessment of financial need

Scholarship Support Organisations must undertake a reassessment of financial need after a Scholarship Recipient has received a Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program scholarship for **3 years**.

As part of this reassessment, the parents/guardians of the Scholarship Recipient will need to continue to demonstrate financial need for the scholarship. The Scholarship Support Organisation must consider the following factors to determine if the Scholarship Recipient has continued financial need for the scholarship:

- **Continuing to demonstrate financial need:** Parental income for the past 3 years against the financial need categories for the relevant scholarship tier, with consideration of the following:
 - Major changes in circumstance since the Scholarship Recipient's scholarship application was originally assessed ⁵
 - Impacts on parental income such as disaster events
 - Any additional information on financial hardship that the Scholarship Recipient's parents/guardians may wish to provide.
- **Focus on ensuring schooling continuity:** Ensuring school continuity for the Scholarship Recipient, including assessing the likelihood the Scholarship Recipient would need to cease boarding arrangements if the scholarship is discontinued.

7.5 Receipt of other support

Scholarship Recipients are permitted to receive support or financial assistance from other sources while participating in the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program, including income from employers, assistance from other government programs and scholarships.

Note: A Scholarship Recipient (student) can only receive one Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program scholarship at any given time.

7.6 Scholarship payments and taxation

Scholarship Recipients should note that study assistance provided to full-time secondary students is exempt from income tax. Payments received under this scheme are not required to be included as assessable income in the tax return of the Scholarship Recipient or their parents/guardians.

7.7 Scholarship payments and Australian Government support payments

Scholarship payments may affect eligibility for some Australian Government support payments. Parents/guardians should contact Services Australia to understand the potential impact on payments.

⁵ Noting that income fluctuations are common to many families from regional, rural and remote areas, the intention of this reassessment is to focus on major changes in circumstances.

8. Program roles and responsibilities

8.1 Scholarship Applicant responsibilities

Scholarship Applicants (parents/guardians) are responsible for:

- submitting an accurate and complete application form (including required supporting documentation);
- providing information as requested by their Scholarship Support Organisation to support reporting on the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program;
- participating in evaluation of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program if asked to do so; and
- informing their Scholarship Support Organisation if their circumstances change.

8.2 Scholarship Recipient responsibilities

Scholarship Recipients and their parents/guardians are responsible for:

- adhering to the terms of the Scholarship Agreement and these Program Guidelines, including:
 - making adequate progress at school;
 - providing information as requested by the Scholarship Support Organisation to support reporting on the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program;
 - participating in evaluation of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program if asked to do so; and
 - informing their Scholarship Support Organisation if their circumstances change.

8.3 Scholarship Support Organisation responsibilities

Scholarship Support Organisations are responsible for:

- administering the scholarship application and selection process, including assessment and selection of Scholarship Recipients, in accordance with these Program Guidelines and the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines;
- where Scholarship Support Organisations have partner relationships with boarding schools/facilities, matching Scholarship Recipients with appropriate boarding schools/facilities;
- paying scholarship funds to Scholarship Recipients in accordance with section 7.3 of these Program Guidelines;
- undertaking regular data collection and reporting on the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program's outcomes in line with the Department's monitoring and evaluation framework and in accordance with legislative and policy requirements regarding the privacy, confidentiality, and protection of personal information;
 - this includes: having systems and processes in place to ensure the safety and security of personal information and to appropriately handle unsolicited information; notifying the Department of any data breaches; ensuring personnel working on the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program have signed confidentiality undertakings; limiting access of personnel to only required information; implementing appropriate information security protections and systems to prevent the misuse of information, including in

- relation to the handling of personal information by selection panels; and regularly reporting to the Department on handling practices and procedures;
- assessing Scholarship Recipients' continued eligibility to receive the scholarship, in line with **section 7.4** of these Program Guidelines; and
 - otherwise complying with their Grant Agreement with the Department.

8.4 Australian Government Department of Education responsibilities

The Department is responsible for:

- selecting Scholarship Support Organisations, including with consideration of the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework;
- providing Scholarship Support Organisations with funding for the program;
- monitoring the performance of Scholarship Support Organisations (including, for example, regularly reviewing Scholarship Support Organisations' compliance with privacy obligations);
- maintaining the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program Guidelines; and
- monitoring and evaluating the overall Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program performance.

9. Performance reporting and monitoring

Scholarship Support Organisations must collect data for the purpose of assurance, including reporting on scholarships funded and demonstrating compliance with these Guidelines and achievement of program objectives. Information about privacy considerations associated with the collection of personal information is at **section 10.3** of these Guidelines.

Scholarship Support Organisations must submit performance reporting to the Department, including on the administration of the scholarship application and selection process, information on Scholarship Recipients' experience and outcomes while participating in the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program, and administration of funding.

9.1 Evaluation

The Department will evaluate the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved.

Scholarship Recipients and Scholarship Support Organisations are required by their respective agreements to provide information to assist with this evaluation.

10. Probity

Scholarship Support Organisations are responsible for administering scholarship application and selection processes. The Australian Government will take reasonable steps to ensure that the application process is fair, is conducted according to these Guidelines, and incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct.

10.1 Complaints process

Scholarship Support Organisations are the contact point for any feedback, enquiries and complaints relating to the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program. Scholarship Support Organisations should respond to enquiries in the first instance. If a Scholarship Support Organisation cannot resolve a matter, it may seek advice from the Department.

If the person making the complaint does not agree with the way their complaint has been handled, they may also make a complaint directly to the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman's Office may require the complaint to be raised directly with the Scholarship Support Organisation and the Department in the first instance. The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted on:

Phone (Toll free): 1300 362 072

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Website: <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

10.2 Conflicts of interest

10.2.1 Scholarship Applicants

Scholarship Applicants (parents/guardians) must declare, as part of their application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interest or that, to the best of their knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

A real or perceived conflict of interest may arise if the Scholarship Applicant has:

- a professional, commercial, or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process
- a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives funding under the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program.

If a Scholarship Applicant later identifies that there is an existing or perceived conflict of interest, or that a conflict of interest might arise in relation to their application, the Scholarship Applicant must inform the Scholarship Support Organisation in writing immediately.

10.2.2 Scholarship support organisation

All personnel of the Scholarship Support Organisation must declare, on an ongoing basis, any perceived or existing conflicts of interest to the Department.

A real or perceived conflict of interest may arise if any personnel of the Scholarship Support Organisation have:

- a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a Scholarship Applicant (student or parent/guardian);
- a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a Scholarship Applicant's nominated boarding school/facility
- a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation that is likely to interfere with or restrict the Scholarship Support Organisation from carrying out its activities fairly and independently.

10.2.3 Australian Government Department of Education

The Department handles conflict of interest matters in accordance with its internal Conflict of Interest Policy.

The Australian Public Service (APS) Code of Conduct (section 13 (7) of the *Public Service Act 1999*) requires that APS employees disclose, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with their APS employment. It is also in the interests of all employees that the firms and people we do business with are confident that we act in accordance with the Code of Conduct and do not make improper use of information. Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff will be handled as set out in the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct (Section 13(7)) of the *Public Service Act 1999*.

10.3 Privacy and protection of personal information

The personal information collected in connection with the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program is protected by law, including under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Privacy Act). Personal information is information or an opinion about an identified individual or an individual who is reasonably identifiable.

In accordance with Australian Privacy Principle (APP) 5, Scholarship Support Organisations must inform Scholarship Applicants and Scholarship Recipients, and their parents/guardians, about the required matters, including:

- what personal information will be collected
- why their personal information is being collected
- to whom the personal information will be disclosed.

Where required and appropriate, Scholarship Support Organisations must ask Scholarship Applicants, Scholarship Recipients and their parents/guardians, as part of their application and Scholarship Agreement, to consent to the handling of their personal information (including any sensitive information) collected for the purposes of the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program. Scholarship Support Organisations must work with Scholarship Recipients and their parents/guardians to keep this consent current.

If the personal information is not collected, the Scholarship Support Organisation, on behalf of the Department, will not be able to assess a Scholarship Applicant's scholarship application and determine eligibility.

Scholarship Support Organisations must only use personal information for the purposes of:

- administering the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program, including:

- the scholarship application process
- the scholarship assessment process
- ongoing administration activities, such as monitoring that Scholarship Recipients are meeting the conditions of their Scholarship Agreement.
- undertaking reporting and monitoring activities for the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program.

The Department will use personal information for the purposes of:

- evaluating the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program
- compliance activities for the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program, to ensure that the program is being delivered in line with the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program Guidelines
- research, statistical analysis, and policy development – where personal information is used for this purpose, information would be aggregated and deidentified.

The Department and/or Scholarship Support Organisations may disclose personal information to the following third parties:

- the Scholarship Recipient’s boarding school/facility, if required to support the administration of the scholarship program
- other Commonwealth agencies to support research, statistical analysis and policy development activities
- the responsible Minister or Parliamentary Secretary and their staff
- a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

The personal information may also be disclosed to other parties where the individual and their parent/guardian has agreed, or where it is otherwise permitted under the *Privacy Act*.

The personal information is unlikely to be disclosed to overseas recipients.

The Department’s Privacy Policy, including information on how individuals can make a complaint and how they can access and correct their personal information held by the Department, can be found at <https://www.education.gov.au/privacy> or by requesting a copy from the department at privacy@education.gov.au.

10.4 Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give members of the public rights of access to information held by the Australian Government and its entities. Under the FOI Act, members of the public can seek access to documents held by the Australian Government. This right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons to whom the information relates, as specified in the FOI Act.

Freedom of Information requests should be sent to foi@education.gov.au

Glossary

Term	Definition
Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS)	The Australian Bureau of Statistics' geographical framework . Its Remoteness Structure classifies Australia into major cities, regional or remote areas based on the area's relative remoteness from services (e.g. health, education or retail)
Department	The Australian Government Department of Education
Eligible boarding school/facility	Boarding school/facility eligible for fee support through the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program, in accordance with section 5.2 Eligible boarding schools/facilities and approved courses
Regional, rural or remote area	An area classified as Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote or Very Remote by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard
Scholarship Agreement	The agreement between the Scholarship Recipient's parents/guardians and the Scholarship Support Organisation detailing scholarship terms and conditions.
Scholarship Applicant (parents/guardians)	Parents/guardians who have submitted a completed Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program application on behalf of a student to a Scholarship Support Organisation
Scholarship Applicant (student)	A student whose parents/guardians have submitted a completed Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program application on their behalf to a Scholarship Support Organisation
Scholarship program	Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program
Program Guidelines	Program Guidelines included in this document
Scholarship Recipient	A Scholarship Applicant (Student) whose parents/guardians have signed a Scholarship Agreement with a Scholarship Support Organisation to receive a Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program scholarship
Scholarship Support Organisations	Third party providers selected by the Department to administer scholarships for the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program