Australia Awards MELF Guidance Note 1: Global Australia Award Program Logic

The *Global Strategy* sets out two Long-term Program Outcomes. These are described below along with three Intermediate Outcomes, and two enabling outcomes which are building blocks to the achievement of Long-term Outcomes. Every country or regional program will implement Australia Awards in a way that is tailored to the specific context and its relevant priorities. This may mean that individual outcomes are accorded greater or lesser priority, and receive greater or lesser allocation of resources within country or regional programs. Furthermore, some modalities may be more or less closely associated with particular outcomes.

The Program Logic diagram is presented below, with an overarching diagram included at the end of this document. It includes the following goal and outcomes:

Goal: to support partner countries to achieve their development goals through education and knowledge transfer and to build enduring relationships with Australia that advance mutual interests

Long-term outcomes:

1: Alumni use their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development

2: Alumni contribute to cooperation between Australia and partner countries

Intermediate outcomes:

i) Alumni view Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise positively

(ii) Alumni have necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to development

(iii) Alumni have relevant and useful networks and relationships

Enabling Outcomes:

(a) Employers deploy alumni so they can use their skills, knowledge and networks

(b) Employers remain engaged with awardees

## Long-term Outcomes

**1. Alumni use their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development**

As a modality of education, training and professional experience, Australia Awards are intended to build skills and knowledge for participants and to enable them to develop relevant professional and personal networks. As part of the aid program, Australia Awards does this with the intention of contributing to sustainable development, including through contributing to human development and private sector growth across the priority areas of the Australian aid program.

The Australia Awards offers a suite of quality education, training and professional development opportunities for alumni to make a tangible difference to their country’s development. Thus, the first Long-term Outcome for the Australia Awards goes beyond just the development of skills, knowledge and networks of its alumni, to focus on those alumni using their skills, knowledge and networks for development benefits. This long-term outcome is also influenced by the extent to which the intermediate outcomes 2&3 are achieved. While alumni are expected to be using their skills, knowledge and networks 1-2+ years after their Award, it is not expected that the majority of alumni will be contributing to development outcomes until 3-5 years+ after award. It is however acknowledged that some alumni are found to contribute strongly from an earlier stage (i.e., from 1-2 years after award). This long-term outcome is considered to be more relevant to scholars.

Partner governments have long acknowledged the contributions made by Australia Awards alumni to their workplaces and professional fields as one of the main reasons Australia Awards are so highly valued. Many partner governments demonstrate this by continuing to pay salaries to public servants who are awarded scholarships for study in Australia or the Pacific, by bonding alumni to return to work in their government employer after graduation, and in some cases by co-funding the participation of staff in short courses.

Aligning Australia Awards with the broader aid program in each country or regional program can ensure that scholarships are directed to candidates from organisations and professional fields that are contributing to the critical development issues considered high priority by Australian and partner governments. It is important to recognise that even when selecting candidates from departments or organisations that are directly relevant to Australia’s broader aid objectives, there is no guarantee they will return and remain in that employment.

Individuals are mobile (albeit to varying degrees depending on their employment conditions, which vary from country to country). Internationally recognised qualifications from Australia, or high-quality training or professional experiences can make people more attractive to new employers. Thus, country and regional programs must consider the scope for individuals to contribute to development more broadly than just in terms of their existing employment. Alumni may also make contributions to development outside of their formal employment. For example, an alumni in South Africa project managed the construction of his community’s mosque, and an alumni in Zambia ran programs on career development with high school students. Some alumni may contribute to development beyond their countries and in the region/globally - such development contributions by alumni should be captured and reported where possible.

The selection of appropriate candidates is the first test of program performance and an important major output of the Australia Awards. This applies to both long-term awards (scholarships) and to short-term activities: selecting the ‘right’ people for the ‘right’ activities is critical to maximising the benefits of the program.

Determining who the ‘right’ people are is the foundation of achieving a clear strategic intent for the program, in the context of the broader aid relationship. This will be calibrated for each individual country or regional program according to its context and focus. It includes identifying the priorities and targets to ensure the program also addresses access issues, making Australia Awards accessible to applicants in line with Australia’s commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and disability inclusive development.

But the experience of studying and living in a new environment offers more than just the acquisition of technical skills and knowledge to expand one’s professional capabilities. It also broadens students’ perspective, can prompt them to become more open-minded and accepting of different cultures, behaviours, and ways of life, and to see new solutions to old problems. Beyond their workplace, alumni can have a considerable influence on their communities by applying new skills and new perspectives.

This Long-term Outcome of Australia Awards is thus concerned with the professional contributions, as well as those contributions alumni make more generally, as they participate in the development of their home countries.

**2. Alumni contribute to cooperation between Australia and partner countries**

This Long-term Outcome is concerned with the contributions alumni make to the relationship between partner countries and Australia. These contributions could take a number of forms, and may be development-focused, or not. They may involve: facilitating business or trade linkages; participation in regional or international bodies that are relevant to the bilateral relationship (perhaps using networks or knowledge to enhance cooperation with Australia); joint community initiatives such as partnerships between Australian groups and partner country organisations; or they may take the form of advocacy or facilitation of aspects of the relationship (drawing on a personal or professional positive disposition towards Australia).

The cohort approach of Australia Awards short courses particularly enables Australia to strengthen its bilateral and regional relationships on priority issues and can often include: workshops; seminars; and meetings with Australian government departments (including DFAT), business and non-government organisations. Links between short courses participants and Australian colleagues and stakeholders are likely to occur immediately after study and then fade away as the time passes by. Observing such links should best be done within one year after the study. For students who undertake long term study in Australia, it is expected that 1-2+ years after their Award, alumni maintain contact with individuals (other alumni, Australian students, friends) and institutions (universities, Australian High Commission, businesses). Scholarships are typically more likely to lead to deeper and more enduring forms of collaboration, with alumni maintaining formal links with Australian government departments, universities institutions, private sector businesses or NGOs to facilitate joint partnerships or projects around 3-5 years+ after Award.

Independent of the links created through study or training in Australia, and on return to their home countries, it is assumed that there will also be a more intangible connection with Australia for the women and men who study there. Even if alumni do not establish or maintain active links with Australian people or organisations, by having a positive view of Australia and Australians, they may contribute to an improved general perspective of Australia in their communities. Over the long-term this positive perception of Australia may have a positive influence on Australia’s relationship with a partner country.

There is substantial anecdotal evidence that influential alumni within partner governments are receptive to approaches from Australia and are well disposed to Australian priorities. Australia’s diplomats report the value of alumni as interlocutors, with Australia Awards providing common ground on which to build understanding and communication. For this reason, it is essential that awardees have a positive experience while they are in Australia, whether for long or short-term activities.

DFAT will work with the institutions and organisations providing in Australia activities – universities, training organisations and short course grantees – to ensure they deliver through the achievement of Intermediate Outcomes described below. DFAT will also play an increased role in connecting directly with awardees, both long and short-term while they are in Australia as articulated in the Linkages Framework, and after they return home through the implementation of the Australia Global Alumni network.

## Enabling Outcomes

Many factors will influence the extent to which an individual awardee will contribute to the Long-term Outcomes of Australia Awards. Many of these are well beyond the scope of the Australia Awards, or Australia, to influence and are not reflected in the program logic. Examples are shifts in the political or economic environment for alumni, or changes in personal circumstances, which make it difficult or impossible for them to contribute as intended.

Several important factors, however, are of concern to DFAT, and are within the capacity of DFAT to influence. They must be the subject of deliberate and strategic effort by DFAT, to the extent that is possible.

For this reason, these outcomes are shown as Enabling Outcomes in the logic model:

*(a) Employers deploy alumni so they can use their skills, knowledge and networks*

*(b) Employers remain engaged with awardees*

Without opportunities to make use of their new skills, knowledge and networks, the ability of alumni to contribute to development or the relationship with Australia will be substantially weakened. For those alumni who retain their employment while on award, and who return to that employment after graduation, their home organisations must remain connected with their staff while they participate in Australia Awards.

Without this they are unlikely to make best use of their returning staff, or to connect with the networks and organisational links the Australia Awards supports. In these cases, the employer is the focus for DFAT engagement. For the many alumni who return home to new employment, DFAT should engage with new employers – where feasible – to advocate for the effective deployment of alumni so they can use their skills, knowledge and networks.

The inclusion of these outcomes in the logic emphasises the importance of the DFAT role in actively engaging with organisations, leaders, and program participants throughout the Australia Awards cycle, including through enhanced alumni engagement and support after their award is completed. This is necessary so that awardees and their employing organisations make the best possible use of the skills, knowledge, networks and other experiences that come from an Australia Award.

However, it is clear that the employment and deployment of alumni is something DFAT can seek to influence, at best, as the context is complex and often political. It is also an issue of concern not just to Australia Awards. The role of other Australian aid program work in these enabling outcomes is equally important: efforts in effective governance and in engagements in other priority sectors of the aid program in each partner country can also influence the effective utilisation of alumni skills, knowledge and networks.

## Intermediate Outcomes

The Long-term Outcomes described above will be realised through the achievement of the Intermediate Outcomes, which, in turn, will result from the Outputs. The Outputs can be understood as the most direct result of Australia Awards, and those which are most substantively within the capacity of DFAT, contractors, institutions and training providers to control. The Intermediate Outcomes – described below – are the subsequent steps along the pathway towards achieving the Long-term Outcomes.

**i) Alumni view Australia, Australians, and Australian expertise positively**

Alumni and their personal and professional attitudes to Australia are fundamental to their contributing to cooperation between Australia and their home countries, and more broadly to the bilateral relationship.

Alumni who participated in in-Australia study are unlikely to view Australia positively unless they leave Australia having had positive experiences, and continue to have positive experiences in their interactions with Australia and Australians post-award.

Establishing links within Australia, and having a positive experience while in Australia on award, are the main ways the program seeks to invest in building a positive view of Australia. These people-to-people links have long been a feature of Australia’s investment in scholarships and training. It has often been assumed that awardees will actually develop those links with Australians while they are in Australia, with little deliberate activity addressing this aim. However, evidence suggests that a more deliberate approach is required in order to achieve this Intermediate Outcome, with Annual Award Surveys showing that just over a third of awardees report regular social interaction with Australians. Recent tracer studies in some countries also show ongoing links with alumni in other countries, but few sustained links with Australia or Australians.

**(ii) Alumni have necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to development**

In order to develop the skills and knowledge that are relevant to their work and professional development – the Intermediate Outcome described here – awardees must complete relevant, good quality and useful activities through their award (which is Output B). This emphasises the requirement that Australia Awards country or regional programs must identify and support participation in those courses that link directly to the priorities of the country or regional aid program, and of the individual awardees.

Bilateral and regional programs will do this through the efforts of DFAT Posts and contractors to undertake good quality planning, promotion and selection processes, and to place awardees in high quality and relevant courses. This can be understood as very much the core business of Australia Awards. Providing the best placements requires optimal matching of students. This does not mean placing students in the four most expensive universities, as other institutions may offer better courses and internships targeted to areas of study. It requires Country Programs to have a comprehensive and up to date understanding of the courses available and benefits of specific courses and institutions to ensure the most appropriate placements.

To ensure courses are relevant, they must be targeted to the needs of Awardees and to country context. Country and regional programs have scope to increase access by opening up Australian education to people who are unable to relocate to Australia for long periods of time and to use remote and hybrid delivery options that are appealing to recipients and pivot towards long- and short-term awards in-country and other investment in alumni when recipients cannot enter Australia. It is expected that this will increase the relevance of Australia Awards to recipients.

**(iii) Alumni have relevant and useful networks and relationships**

The people-to-people and organisational links that are sought through Australia Awards, and which underpin the aim of the Australia Awards to contribute to the achievement of development goals in the region, will be developed during the time that awardees are participating in their scholarships or short course.

Thus attention and effort is required to ensure that Output C is achieved (Awardees build relationships with Australians, other awardees, and Australian organisations and businesses), with relevant and useful networks and relationships thus laying the foundation for the achievement of Long-term Outcomes 1 and 2.

DFAT has developed a framework to guide implementing stakeholders and ensure quality, consistency and equity in on-award engagement. The Australia Awards Linkages framework captures the ambition for Australia Awards scholars, beyond their academic qualification, to build enduring personal and professional links with Australian organisations and Australian individuals. The Australia Awards Linkages framework helps foster enduring and mutually beneficial links with Australia and the promotion of Australian values in our region. An increased investment in alumni activities, starting before awardees leave their home country and expanding once they have returned home, will also support the maintenance of the links and networks awardees develop while on award.

Under the *global strategy*, Australia Awards will be made more flexible and targeted, during COVID-19 and beyond. This includes by providing broader opportunities, beyond face-to-face and in-country completion of an Australia Awards Scholarship to achieve people to people links, exposure to Australia, and soft power benefits.

