Australia Awards MELF Guidance Note 2: Monitoring and evaluation across the Australia Awards cycle

## Australia Awards data Collection tools

| **Tool** | **Required/ Optional** | **Status** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Awardee information (including application, academic progress and pastoral care data), stored in OASIS | Required by all programs | Established |
| On Award Surveys | Required by all programs | Established |
| Managing Contractor M&E | Required by all outsourced programs | Established |
| Tracer Studies | Required by all programs | Global Tracer Facility established in 2016 |
| Short Course Awards M&E | Required by all programs[[1]](#footnote-1) |  |
| Media Monitoring | Required by all programs | Requires systematisation across Posts |
| Post-managed Program M&E | Required by all programs | Requires development |
| Other Evaluation studies | Optional |  |

### Awardee Information (stored in OASIS)

The Online Australia Awards Scholarships Information System (OASIS) is the global database for the administration and financial management of DFAT’s long-term scholarships. All Posts have access to OASIS. OASIS manages data on awardees from the time of application/selection[[2]](#footnote-2) until the time of their completion and return home. Once awardees commence their studies, data is managed by their academic institution, although it is accessed by Posts, the Global Education and Scholarships Section and (in some cases) managing contractors.

OASIS is the central mechanism by which DFAT can examine the cohort of long-term awardees across the global Australia Awards. It provides common data across all awardees enabling comparison and aggregation, and offers some scope for additional development to increase its capacity to support global level M&E through expanding the common fields of data. DFAT uses the MicroStrategy reporting tool to query data in OASIS and to produce reports as required.

### On Award Surveys

The Global Education and Scholarships Section maintains a contract with a commercial survey company to undertake two regular surveys of Australia Award scholarship awardees: the **Arrival Surveys**, (Semesters 1 and 2) shortly after their arrival in Australia, and the **Ongoing Survey**, annually for all current awardees. The surveys collect feedback from the awardees on many aspects of their experiences with Australia Awards, such as:

* The application, selection and mobilisation processes
* The pre-departure briefing they received before departing for Australia
* The support received from their institution on arrival, to settle in, and to begin their studies
* The ongoing support from their institution throughout their studies, to assist with addressing academic issues, personal issues and other difficulties
* The adequacy of support received from DFAT, including entitlements
* Any experiences with discrimination
* Their experiences interacting with Australians on a social level

The On Award Surveys are conducted online, and include only long-term scholarship awardees (i.e. not those undertaking short-courses) and those studying in-Australia. These are conducted in May-June (Semester 1 Arrival Survey) and September (Semester 2 Arrival Survey and Ongoing Survey). Global data reports from the surveys are provided to the Global Education and Scholarships Section and reports of country-specific, regional or institution-specific data are distributed to the relevant Posts and academic institutions (typically in March-April the following year).

The two surveys are well established and provide consistently good quality data.

### Managing Contractor Monitoring and Evaluation

As noted above, most major country programs of Australia Awards are supported by managing contractors, who develop and operate monitoring and evaluation systems tailored to the specific requirements of the relevant country or regional program. These systems complement global systems such as OASIS and the Australia Global Alumni network, and generally provide additional details of program delivery in areas such as: management performance and efficiency; selection outcomes in line with the specific objectives of each country program; post-award outcomes for awardees such as employment or promotions; small grant details or detailed qualitative information from evaluations, alumni impact assessments and case studies.

Post-award outcomes evaluation is of particular importance for Australia Awards and the approach taken by managing contractors varies considerably across programs. Tools and methods include tracer studies, post-award surveys, Alumni Development Impact Surveys (ADIS), impact assessments, case studies and other small-scale evaluation studies.

Current practice sees managing contractors develop M&E systems on a program-by-program basis in line with individual program contracts (i.e. usually on a country-by-country basis). Country and regional level M&E plans typically include a range of context specific indicators designed to meet Post’s learning and reporting purposes. M&E Plans must also support reporting of more uniform information that can be routinely aggregated or analysed to support global monitoring and reporting.

### Tracer Studies and Post-Award Outcomes Evaluations

There are various ways to explore the outcomes of Australia Awards scholarships and short courses. Tracer Studies are central amongst the possible approaches, and are an important tool to seek information about the experiences and outcomes for alumni after the completion of their award. They have been undertaken inconsistently over the history of Australia Awards and its predecessors, using a diverse range of methods. This has made it difficult for the Australian Government to report on the Long-term Outcomes of the scholarships program at the global level.

The DFAT Global Education and Scholarships Section has established a **Global Tracer Facility** (the Facility) in 2016 that manages a program of consistent and high quality tracer studies across all Australia Awards scholarships and short courses. The Facility, managed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) also plays a role in supporting and advising DFAT on the establishment of a more consistent and coherent overall approach to post-award M&E, utilising the full range of tools including tracer studies, alumni impact assessments (or similar), case studies and other evaluations.

### Short Course Awards Monitoring & Evaluation

Some country programs offer Australia Awards short courses as well as long-term scholarships. Some short course awards are monitored and reported by managing contractors as part of their M&E systems; others are delivered on an ad hoc basis, with limited reporting. There is currently no global system (like OASIS) that brings together data on short courses – who is participating, what sectors or fields are the courses in, who is delivering them, what are the outcomes – for DFAT’s use. Neither is there a systematic approach to evaluating the outcomes of short courses. DFAT requires routine access to good quality data that supports the requirements of

### Media Monitoring

Many Posts undertake, or commission, routine monitoring of local print and electronic media for mentions of Australia and the Australian relationship. The take-up of Post public communications efforts – including the aid program and its activities and achievements – is a key driver for this monitoring, but it also provides opportunities to monitor the perceptions of Australia and Australia Awards as well as the activities of alumni. However the extent and nature of Post media monitoring, and its use, varies considerably depending on the size and political significance of the Post. The Global Education and Scholarships Section has responsibility for in-Australia media monitoring and for making the data collected through this process available to relevant Posts and programs.

There is a strong shift to the use of social media and web metrics as a means of measuring reach, particularly in regards to promotions and communications. The Global Education and Scholarships Section and country programs are encouraged to make greater use of routine media monitoring.

### Monitoring & Evaluation by Post-Managed Programs

Those programs that are not supported by a managing contractor generally have minimal formal M&E, and generally collect, analyse and report less than other Australia Awards programs. Good practice suggests that these remaining programs warrant an investment of time and resources to bring their monitoring and evaluation into alignment with the rest of Australia Awards. This must be done even in the absence of a managing contractor, possibly through the engagement of a stand-alone M&E contractor, or through the allocation of sufficient and skilled staff resources within the relevant geographic division of DFAT or The Global Education and Scholarships Section.

Post-Managed programs are also expected to report against global mandatory Core Indicators in accordance with the indicator guidance. Where country programs lack the resources required to meet the measurement standards, a justification for the divergence and explanation of how the indicator has been measured should be submitted.

### Other Evaluation Studies

Some aspects of the outcomes of Australia Awards may not be fully captured with the routine activities outlined above, and will need further investigation through specific evaluation studies. The Global Tracer Facility may be tasked to undertake evaluation studies, but separate evaluation commissions may be more appropriate. DFAT may also propose a survey of relevant staff to seek feedback on the extent to which they see Australia Awards alumni and other activities such as short courses contributing to broader bilateral or regional relationships.

## Capture and use of evidence generated by M&E in relation to the program logic

| **Logic Reference** | **Data Source** | **Responsibility** | | **M&E Use** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Long-term Outcomes** | | | | |
| 1.Alumni use their skills, knowledge and networks to contribute to sustainable development | Tracer Studies  Case Studies  Evaluation/Tracer Study | | Global Tracer Facility | DFAT report outcomes of Australia Awards at global and country levels as well as by sector  Well-informed management decisions at global and country levels  DFAT and contractors build understanding of what enables and constrains achievement of outcomes  Public communication about Australia Awards  Corporate/aid program reporting requirements e.g., IMRs |
| Case Studies, ADIS, other Outcomes Evaluations | | Posts and/or Managing Contractors |
| Media Monitoring | | Posts |
| 2. Alumni contribute to cooperation between Australia and partner countries | Tracer Studies  Case Studies  Evaluation/Tracer Study | | Global Tracer Facility |
| ADIS, other Outcomes Evaluations | | Posts and/or Managing Contractors |
| Media Monitoring | | Posts, Global Education and Scholarships Section |
| Post Staff Survey | | Global Education and Scholarships Section |
| **Intermediate Outcomes** | | | | |
| (i) Alumni view Australia, Australians and Australian expertise positively | Tracer Studies  Case Studies  Evaluation/ Tracer Study | Global Tracer Facility | |  |
| Case Studies, ADIS other Outcomes Evaluations | Post and/or Managing Contractors | |
| (i) Alumni have necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to development | Tracer Studies  Case Studies  Evaluation/ Tracer Study | Global Tracer Facility | | Public communication about Australia Awards  DFAT and contractors build understanding of what enables and constrains achievement of outcomes – and use that understanding to continually improve program implementation  Aid program reporting on the outcomes of Australia Awards  Corporate/aid program reporting requirements e.g., IMRs |
| Case Studies ADIS, other Outcomes Evaluations | Post and/or Managing Contractors | |
| (ii) Alumni have relevant and useful networks and relationships | Tracer Studies  Case Studies  Evaluation/ Tracer Study | Global Tracer Facility | |
| Case Studies, ADIS, other Outcomes Evaluations | Post and/or Managing Contractors | |
| **Outputs** | | | | |
| A. Awardees and their families have a positive experience of life in Australia | On Award Surveys | Survey Contractor | | DFAT and contractors adjust pre-departure preparation as required  Academic institutions and DFAT adjust the support and engagement activities they provide on award |
| B. Awardees complete good quality, relevant education, training, other professional development and research activities | OASIS | Academic Institutions | | Global Education and Scholarships Section monitoring of academic institution performance in supporting awardees (i.e., DFAT contract management) |
| On Award Surveys (Arrival and Ongoing) | Survey Contractor/ Global Education and Scholarships Section | |
| Australian Government Staff Survey | Global Education and Scholarships Section | | DFAT monitoring of extent to which Australia Awards are aligning with broader bilateral and regional priorities (relevance) |
| Monitoring and Activity Completion Report | Host organisations | | Global Education and Scholarships Section monitoring of host institutions support for Awardees |
| C. Awardees build relationships with Australians, other awardees, and Australian organisations and businesses | Academic institutions’ and host organisations’ records of activities | Academic institutions | | Global Education and Scholarships Section monitoring of academic institution performance in supporting awardees (i.e., DFAT contract management) |
| Contractor M\*E of on-award engagement (If provided) through feedback evaluations | Managing Contractors | | Program monitoring of any additional on award support provided by contractors |
| On Award Surveys (Arrival and Ongoing) | Survey Contractor/ Australia Awards Section | |
| DFAT records of DFAT-led on-award engagement/ facilitation of networking for awardees (both DFAT Canberra and State Offices) | Global Education and Scholarships Section  DFAT State Offices | | DFAT monitoring of on award engagement |
| **Enabling Outcomes** | | | | |
| (a) Employers deploy alumni so they can use their skills, knowledge and networks | Tracer Studies  Case Studies | Global Tracer Facility | |  |
| (b) Employers remain engaged with Awardees | Managing Contractor M&E | Managing Contractors  Host organisations | |  |

## Responsibilities and Timeframes for Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

| **Organisation** | **Pre Award** | **On Award** | **Post Award (0-3 years)** | **Long term Post Award (3 years+)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country and regional programs – Posts and/or their Managing Contractors** | Ensure OASIS is up to date  Maintain and monitor records of promotion, targeting, selection activities  Monitor trends in application and selection data | Ensure OASIS is up to date  Maintain records of on award engagement (if applicable)  Media monitoring | Maintain records of alumni engagement  Media monitoring  Undertake Post-Award Evaluations, ADIS, Case Studies and other evaluative exercises – copies of all evaluations and studies are to be provided to Global Education and Scholarships Section. | Ensure Australia Global Alumni network is up to date.  Maintain records of alumni engagement  Assist Global Tracer Facility with tracer studies as required.  Maintain records of alumni engagement  Media monitoring |
| **Global Education and Scholarships Section** | Monitor trends in application and selection data  Monitor global trends in scholarships application and selection data. | On Award Surveys (via Contractor)  Maintain records of on award engagement (if applicable)  Analysis and distribution of OASIS data as required | Monitor automatic migration of OASIS data into Australia Global Alumni network  Add additional alumni details into Australia Global Alumni network as required  Activity Completion Report  Commission evaluation studies e.g. Periodic Linkages Evaluation  Monitor alumni engagement plans | Commission evaluation studies – such as Periodic Linkages Evaluation  Direct the activities of the Global Tracer Facility |
| **Global Tracer Facility** |  |  |  | Tracer Studies, Impact Studies and Case Studies  Evaluation Studies |
| **Academic Institutions** |  | Ensure OASIS is up to date  Monitor activities related to output C (support for awardees) | Share updated alumni details with DFAT (if agreed)  Share result of activities with output C with DFAT, | Share updated alumni details with DFAT (if agreed) |
| **Host organisations** |  | Monitoring | Completion reports shared with DFAT | Completion reports shared with DFAT |
| **DFAT State Offices** |  | Maintain records of on award engagement (if applicable) |  |  |

## Language and Terminology

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Evaluation** | An assessment of a planned, ongoing or completed intervention to determine its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The intent is to make judgements about the merit or worth of an intervention, and to inform program improvements (management) as well as accountability. |
| **Monitoring** | The regular collection and analysis of information to provide indicators of progress towards objectives. Includes monitoring inputs, processes (activities), outputs and progress towards outcomes. |
| **Outcome** | The changes that are expected to occur after the delivery of an output or several outputs. They describe an end state – how things are – not *how* they are achieved.  Outcomes are sometimes broken down as follows:  *Immediate outcome* – may occur immediately after an output has been produced (for example, literacy training completed for a district);  *Intermediate outcome* – sometimes these are included to show outcomes to be achieved in the interim, during implementation  *Long-term outcome* – an outcome achieved in the medium term that contribute towards achievement of a goal or long term outcome (for example, full literacy achieved in the 10 poorest areas of Fiji)  We are accountable for outcomes, but don’t necessarily control their achievement (unlike outputs – see below). |
| **Outputs** | The tangible (easily measurable, practical), immediate and intended products of an intervention. This could be goods, services or infrastructure produced, or events resulting directly from an intervention, such as adults completing literacy courses, or new businesses established. Generally outputs are within the control of the program to deliver. |
| **Indicators** | Specific evidence that shows progress (or not) towards objectives. Evidence can be quantitative (a number) or qualitative (not a number). In order for the indicators to be useful for monitoring and evaluation, it is important to identify indicators that are relevant, objective, practical and adequate, and to regularly update them. |
| **Results** | Specific data against an indicator describing either an intended result (i.e. a target) or the result actually achieved |

1. Short course M&E must be in place to support reporting against mandatory Core Indicators. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Not all country programs use OASIS for the application process, mainly due to concerns about limiting the participation of potential applicants with limited internet access. For M&E purposes it would be best if all programs moved to OASIS over time, or at least they need to maintain statistics on the characteristics of the applicant cohort, and not just those who are successful. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)