New Colombo Plan Mobility Program

2024 Round

Advice to applicants

This document provides explanatory information to assist applicants for the 2024 round of the New Colombo Plan (NCP) Mobility Program. The Guidelines for the program (available on GrantConnect) outline eligibility requirements, assessment criteria and how funding is allocated and administered.

1. **Before applying**

Applicants should consider:

a) NCP mobility funds their university currently holds from past rounds of the program.

- does your university already have sufficient NCP funds at hand to undertake the planned activities?
- will your university be able to recruit students to fill all places in a new project during the project term (1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025)?
- are offshore host institutions able to support the additional students?

ILOs can access information in ISEO about NCP funds their university is holding from previous rounds of the NCP Mobility Program but, if necessary, may seek clarification from ncp.secretariat@dfat.gov.au.

b) Priority themes

While NCP mobility projects may focus on any subject, applicants are encouraged to consider how their projects align with Australian Government priorities, for example by embedding First Nations perspectives, supporting participation and inclusion of students from a diverse range of backgrounds, addressing climate change and supporting learning of Indo-Pacific languages.

c) Host locations

Travel cannot proceed to locations for which Smartraveller advice is 'Do not travel' or 'Reconsider your need to travel' at the time of departure (see Guidelines Section 2.4 (h)).

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

d) Partner and Third-Party Providers' ability to comply with DFAT policies

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that their partners and any third-party providers have in place adequate policies and systems to comply with DFAT policies (as outlined in the Guidelines), manage risks and actively minimise adverse incidents.

<u>e) Applying for further funding for existing projects</u>

Applications for further funding for projects funded in previous rounds will be assessed on their merits alongside applications for new projects. Projects which have previously received NCP funding to send students offshore should be well-placed to demonstrate the connections they have been able to develop and maintain as result of past NCP funding.

Where a university has received past funding but have overestimated the number of students who would participate in those projects, DFAT may take this into account in the awarding of new funding.

<u>f) Changes from 2023 Guidelines</u>

Changes	Rationale
Expanded eligible courses to all undergraduate courses. (Previous eligible courses: Bachelor, Bachelor Honours, and concurrent diplomas only)	To increase student diversity and participation in the NCP
Suggested grant amounts increased	To reflect increased in cost of participating in an international mobility project
Project implementation term extended to 24 months	To enable more immersive student engagement and deepen institutional linkages
Maximum program duration increased to two consecutive semesters	To incentivise long-term immersive study
Weighting of assessment criteria updated	To focus more strongly on achieving the objectives of the NCP

2. Applying for NCP Mobility Program funding

<u>a) Project title</u>

The project title should be succinct and include the host location, discipline/subject and type of educational activity. For example:
- Taiwan Business Internships
- Fiji Marine Science Fieldwork
- Vanuatu Nursing Practicum
- Korea Engineering Semester Study

<u>b) Project description</u>
While the project description does not contribute to the assessment score, a clear project description will help assessors understand the project's objectives, rationale and approach to implementation, including
- if (and how) the project supports one or more of the NCP Mobility Program's priority themes, this should be explained in the project description
- activities students will undertake offshore, including details of any language study (provider and duration)
- any use of third-party providers in the implementation of the project should be explained
- project budget (see section 2(i) below)

c) Mobility project grant value

- Minimum grant: $3,000
- While there is no maximum grant, applicants should consider
    - their ability (considering past performance) to recruit students and utilise all mobility grants within the project term
    - the capacity of host organisation/s to receive/support additional students
    - the amount of mobility funds the applicant is holding for that host location
    - value for money for the Australian taxpayer

d) Use of third-party providers

Universities may choose to outsource all or part of project implementation to third party providers. Where this is the case, that relationship must be outlined in the Project Description. The Australian university remains responsible for the project, including adherence to policies outlined in the Guidelines.

Where a third-party provider implements all or part of the project, the Australian university must outline how quality will be assured, how lasting relationships will be established between the Australian university and overseas partners.

Third-party providers are not considered to be NCP partners as they receive payment for their participation. Nor are third-party providers able to be host organisations. If a third-party provider is used to implement the project, a host institution in the host location must still be identified. ISEO now allows for the recording of Third-party providers separately from project partners in funding applications.

e) Duration of mobility experiences

A project may include a variety of offshore experiences of different durations. It is not necessary for all students participating in a mobility project to travel for the same length of time. The minimum mobility experience duration of 14 days continues to apply.

f) Host locations

You may not nominate "virtual" as host location (primary or secondary). All funding sought in the application (entered in the Finances tab in ISEO) must be for in-person offshore costs.

g) Student grant numbers

Applicants should only seek mobility grants for the number of students they reasonably expect to send offshore during the mobility program term (1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025).

Universities' past performance in using all student grants offered may be considered in the allocation of 2024 funding.

h) Student grant amounts

Within a project, a university may choose to provide grants of different amounts to different students where their costs to participate differ (see Section 5.2 of the Guidelines). For example, a rural student may incur additional costs to travel to the point of departure for international travel.

Such scenarios require robust record keeping and explanation in completion reports, and it is recommended to explain in the application how the university proposes to address this.

i) Budget

In the project description, the applicant must provide a budget, including:
- the number of students participating in the project
- the cost per student, including breakdown of transport/living costs
- the average grant amount per student participating in the project (where there are different lengths of experience within the project). The university should outline in the Project Description the number of students to participate in each mode/length of experience.

j) Project partners

Applicants must list the local host institutions, based in the host locations, who will be their project partners. Please note that third-party providers are not considered to be NCP project partners as they are paid for their participation.

Applicants must exercise due diligence in their choice of partners, including investigating partners' capacity to comply with NCP Guidelines (for example, by having an appropriate risk management process in place).

Applicants should consider how their projects impact local communities. For example, paying to volunteer can lead to demand-driven activities in disadvantaged communities. Applicants whose projects include volunteering overseas should read Smartraveller advice on responsible volunteering.

3. **Assessment and selection**

Applications are assessed on their merits. A satisfactory score must be achieved on each selection criterion.

a) Priority for funding will be given to:

- projects that demonstrate practical measures to develop and maintain direct, deep and lasting relationships between Australian universities and institutions in the Indo-Pacific and lasting connections between Australian students and academics and their Indo-Pacific counterparts
- projects that focus on offshore student experiences with longer periods in host location/s e.g. semester-length projects, which may be better able to deepen lasting people-to-people and institutional links with the region (noting that some practicums, for example, are necessarily of short duration)
- projects that provide immersive offshore experiences, partnering directly with offshore institutions supporting direct interaction with students/academics/businesses from the region (rather than studying alongside students from their own university and/or being hosted by institutions based in Australia or outside the Indo-Pacific region)
- projects that include an Indo-Pacific language as a major component, either as a field of study and/or through quality offshore courses prior to and/or concurrent with study or placements

b) The final selection of projects will consider the degree to which proposals advance the NCP's objectives, including:

- Australian foreign policy considerations
- the range and diversity of host locations across the program
- likely impact, with preference given to a longer duration in-country (particularly semester-length) projects
- relative value for money, particularly comparing applications to similar destinations
- the university's past performance in using student grants from previous rounds, meeting reporting requirements and accurately estimating student numbers

4. **Lessons from previous rounds**

Assessors look for evidence to support applicants' claims against the requirements for each criterion.

a) Applications that scored highly in previous rounds:

- clearly and concisely addressed all elements of each assessment criterion
- provided practical examples that demonstrated how the project would advance the NCP strategic objective and outcomes
- demonstrated direct links that would be established and/or supported between Australian institutions and host institutions in the Indo-Pacific, and how relationships would be sustained beyond NCP funding (for example, through joint projects, reciprocal student/staff mobility, joint delivery of academic programs, joint research/innovation and/or alumni engagement)
- explained the choice of host location and demonstrated an understanding of the local context (for example, explaining what Australian students will gain by studying/interning in a particular country/location/institution)
- provided specific, practical examples of how the project would support participation across a diverse range of students (not just referring to university or government policies)

b) Unsuccessful applications in previous rounds often:

- lacked specific details about project activities: what will students be doing offshore?
- did not clearly identify local host institutions with whom the project would partner.
- lacked detail on how links with the Indo-Pacific (institutional and people-to-people) would be sustained beyond the life of the project.
- lacked details of how the project would practically support participation of students from a diverse range of backgrounds. Practical examples provide evidence to support claims.
- were unclear about how the use of third-party providers would help build lasting linkages between Australian and Indo-Pacific institutions, and how these linkages would be sustained beyond NCP funding.
- contained duplication/repetition across different applications from the same university, or other universities, and/or factual errors.
- sought to support multiple ill-defined student experiences in one or more host locations.