



New Colombo Plan Mobility Program 2025 Round Advice to applicants

This document provides information to assist applicants for the 2025 round of the New Colombo Plan (NCP) Mobility Program. The Guidelines (available on [GrantConnect](#)) outline eligibility requirements, assessment criteria and how funding is allocated and administered.

Key changes in the 2025 Round

Before applying please ensure that you read the Guidelines in full. Updates to the 2025 Guidelines aim to ensure consistency with the Australian Government's policy priorities. Key updates include:

Change	Rationale
<p>Priority in selection will be accorded to projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• whose main focus is for the study of a language, other than English (to create a language stream of mobility students)• with long-term immersive experiences in the Indo-Pacific (full semester or longer)• that have been developed in partnership with Indo-Pacific hosts institutions, particularly those that include collaborative research, Pacific engagement and other Australian Government priority areas.	<p>Building more substantial, long-lasting Australian ties with the Indo-Pacific</p> <p>Creating an NCP language stream targeted at intensive language learning</p>
<p>Amendment of minimum duration for projects to four weeks (previously two weeks). Clear reference to a priority in selection for long-term immersive experiences (full semester duration or longer).</p>	<p>Building more substantial, long-lasting Australian ties with the Indo-Pacific as per Government priorities</p>
<p>Removal of options to select various length activities within the one project application</p>	<p>To enable clearer assessment of projects</p>
<p>Requirement to provide a letter from the proposed host organisation/s indicating approval in principle to hosting the project. Alternatively, an exchange agreement may be uploaded where it indicates that students of this project will be able to secure places at the host university.</p>	<p>To ensure host organisations are aware and supportive of application.</p>

1. Before applying

Applicants should consider:

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

- Will your university have unused NCP funds from previous rounds at hand which could be used to undertake the proposed activities?
- Will your university be able to recruit students to fill all places in a new project during the project term (1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026), in addition to unused funds from previous rounds?
- Will your host institutions be able to support the additional numbers of students?

Applicants must have secured agreement from host partners that they can host all students during the project term, before applying.

International Liaison Officers (ILOs) can access information in ISEO about NCP funds their university is holding but, if necessary, may seek clarification from ncp.secretariat@dfat.gov.au.

b) Priority themes

Priority will be accorded to:

- projects whose main focus is the study of a language of the Indo-Pacific, other than English
- projects that are for a full semester or longer, to build a cohort of students with long-term immersive experiences in the Indo-Pacific.

Australian universities are also 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. Applicants should carry out due diligence before nominating a partner or third-party provider.

e) Applying for funding for existing projects

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 they could recruit to participate in those projects, DFAT may take this into account in the awarding of any new funding.

2. Applying for NCP Mobility Program funding

a) Project title

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

b) Project description

While the project description does not contribute to the assessment score, a clear 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), to enable assessment of value for money.

c) Mobility project grant value

- While there is no maximum project grant value, 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
- Section 5.2.1 of the grant guidelines provides indicative student grant amounts. Applicants should determine the appropriate value student grant amounts that reflect actual in-country costs and ensure value for money. As per Guidelines, the student grant is intended to contribute, in the first instance, to the cost of a student's international travel and in-country living expenses during the project.

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 and risk management will be assured and how lasting relationships will be established between the Australian university and overseas partners. Australian universities must carry out due diligence on third-party providers before including them in applications.

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) 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 i.e. no virtual components should be included.

f) Student grant numbers

Applicants should only seek mobility grants for the number of students they confidently expect to recruit (based on past demand) and send offshore during the mobility program term (1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026).

If applicants hold unused funding from previous rounds that they propose to use in 2025, they should only apply for funding in the 2025 round if this additional funding can be used for projects commencing by 31 January 2026.

Universities’ past performance in using all NCP student grants accepted may be considered in the allocation of 2025 funding.

g) 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. Applicants should explain in the application how they propose to address this.

h) Budget

In the project description, the applicant must provide a budget, including:

- the number of students participating in the project
- the average cost per student, including breakdown of transport/living costs

i) 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 should provide a letter from the proposed host organisation indicating approval in principle to hosting the project. Alternatively, an exchange agreement may be uploaded where it indicates that students of this project will be able to secure places at the host university.

Applicants must exercise due diligence in their choice of partners, including investigating partners' capacity to comply with NCP Guidelines (for example, by having appropriate policies and risk management processes 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 (as per section 2.2.1) 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 **longer duration** offshore experiences in host location/s e.g. semester-length projects, which will result in deep, 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 language courses prior to and/or concurrent with study or placements.

b) 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 Australian 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, well-defined 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 and the applicant's systems 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
- Did not explain the rationale for including multiple host locations.