Australian Government
Department of Social Services

V1.0

Application Guide for ABSTUDY Approval of Scholarship Programs

Application guide for third-party Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship programs for secondary school students

About this Guide

The Guide outlines the criteria the Department of Social Services uses to assess whether a third-party scholarship will be approved under section 35.2 of the ABSTUDY Policy Manual.

Benefits for students

Students who are offered a scholarship from a third-party program specifically approved for ABSTUDY can be automatically approved for ABSTUDY Away From Home benefits (subject to eligibility for means-tested payments), including funding for interstate travel if the scholarship school is not located in the student's home state.

Scholarships not approved for ABSTUDY

Students who receive a third-party scholarship that is not specifically approved for ABSTUDY will not necessarily be disadvantaged. A student may be eligible for ABSTUDY Away From Home benefits based on other factors such as living in a remote area – if this is the case (and subject to eligibility for means-tested payments) ABSTUDY will provide support, including for travel within the student's home state. Interstate travel is not generally funded for secondary school students.

What is considered a third-party scholarship program?

For the purposes of ABSTUDY, a third-party scholarship program is a program that offers scholarships, including accommodation support, for Indigenous secondary school students and is independent of a student's school and family.

Scholarships offered by boarding schools directly to students are not covered by this Guide. Boarding Scholarships offered by a boarding school are assessed for ABSTUDY eligibility under section 35.1 of the ABSTUDY Policy Manual by the Department of Human Services – Centrelink.

Note: Organisations funded by the Australian Government through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy's Children and Schooling Programme to establish an Indigenous scholarship program may be automatically eligible for ABSTUDY approval under section 35.2 of the ABSTUDY Policy Manual.

Scholarship program assessment criteria

Each of the following selection criteria must be assessed before the scholarship can be approved for ABSTUDY. The 'required' criteria are mandatory and must be met before approval for ABSTUDY can be granted. Each selection sub-criterion will then be graded on a scale of:

- Highly suitable
- Suitable, or
- Not suitable

Any scholarship program that receives a 'not suitable' grading in any sub-criterion will not be approved.

To assess an application, information will be considered from a range of sources including:

- responses provided in the application template (attached),
- other information provided by the scholarship program or the partner school(s),
- the school's website,
- the Australian Government MySchool website, or
- the relevant state education department.

Criterion 1 - Program objectives

Required:

The scholarship must be available to support students through to the completion of Year 12.

Selection sub-criteria:

The scholarship may be offered at any point in the student's secondary education.

The main purpose of the scholarship program must be to support Indigenous secondary school students to access educational opportunities not otherwise available to them.

The educational program must be academically and culturally appropriate.

Criterion 2 - Program partner schools

Required:

The program offers a scholarship that can be taken up by at least two partner secondary schools, or a school system, such as a group of affiliated schools.

The program has written partnership agreements in place with the schools, school systems, or education departments.

Selection sub-criterion:

The partner secondary schools are well-resourced and high performing, taking into account:

- the level of support provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including financial, academic and social and emotional wellbeing,

- the schools financial information available from the school's website or the MySchool website,
- any specialist programs the school offers, for example sports, drama, or languages, and
- the school's academic results.

Criterion 3 - Student selection

Required:

The selection panel includes male and female Indigenous representatives.

Selection sub-criterion:

The program has a clear and transparent student selection process.

Criterion 4 - Supporting student choice

Selection sub-criterion:

The program supports students and their families to make informed decisions about their education, including selecting a school that aligns with the student's personal and academic interests (this could include a selective or specialist public school).

Criterion 5 - Student travel and placement

Required:

The program representative understands their obligations to develop individual Safe Travel Plans for students who require one (see Safe Travel Plan Guidelines Appendix to ABSTUDY Policy Manual). This will include the provision of appropriate supervision during travel, where required.

The program representative will develop Safe Travel Plans in consultation with the student, the student's family or community and the school.

Selection sub-criteria:

The program provides information and guidance for students and their families about living away from home and the supports available to them, including links with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support networks at their study location.

The program encourages and facilitates family visits to the school.

Criterion 6 - Student accommodation

Required:

The scholarship program includes accommodation arrangements for students.

Selection sub-criteria:

The scholarship program includes accommodation either:

- at a boarding facility provided by the partner school that is culturally appropriate, supervised and supported; or
- other culturally appropriate, supervised and supported accommodation arrangements organised by the scholarship program.

Accommodation staff are appropriately screened and qualified. The accommodation may include access to medical services or other supports for students.

Criterion 7 - Student Support

Selection sub-criteria:

The program provides individual student support for orientation, personal development, academic and homework support, and extracurricular activities.

The program provides regular and ongoing engagement with the student's family and community about academic and social progress.

Criterion 8 - Financial support

Selection sub-criterion:

There is no minimum scholarship value or amount for the program to be approved for ABSTUDY.

The Department will consider value for money, including:

- that the scholarship value is substantial relative to the tuition and boarding costs, and will not leave parents substantially out of pocket, and
- the total cost to the Government, scholarship program and family for the child's education.

How to apply

To request a third-party scholarship program be considered for approval for ABSTUDY, please email a submission to ABSTUDY@dss.gov.au

or write to: Branch Manager
Work and Study Payments
Department of Social Services
GPO Box 9820
Canberra ACT 2601

For approvals to be in place before the start of the school year, submissions need to be lodged by no later than 30 June of the preceding year.

The submission should include:

- the completed template for assessment of criteria (below),
- information about your organisation and its structure,
- any additional information about the scholarship program and how the program meets the assessment criteria,
- any relevant published material about the scholarship program such as brochures or flyers (or links to online material), and
- contact details (name, email and telephone) of someone who will be available to respond to questions about the program.

If the Department is considering a rating of 'not suitable,' the applicant will be given an opportunity to provide additional information, to support their application.

Once a decision is made, if the scholarship program is not approved, the third party can request a review of the decision. If a review is requested, a different officer in the Department will review the decision and seek additional information from the third party as needed.

Template for responses to assessment criteria

This template must be completed and included with your submission. Your submission will be assessed based on your responses provided in the template, along with any other information attached to your submission or publicly available.

ABSTUDY Scholarship program – assessment criteria	
Name of scholarship program	
Contact details	Name: Phone: Email:
Criterion 1 – Program objectives	Is the scholarship available to support students through to the completion of Year 12? Yes / No
	Provide details about the main purpose of the scholarship program and explain how the educational program is academically and culturally appropriate.
Criterion 2 – Program partner schools	Will the scholarships be taken up by at least two partner secondary schools? Yes / No Name of each partner school or school system: _____ Does the program have written partnership agreements in place with either the partner schools, school systems or education departments? Yes / No List who the partnership agreements are with, and provide a copy of the agreement(s):
	Provide any supporting information that demonstrates the partner schools are well-resourced and high performing, including: • the level of support provided to students (including financial, academic and social and emotional wellbeing),

ABSTUDY Scholarship program – assessment criteria	
	• the school's financial information (or provide links to publicly available information), • details of any specialist programs the school offers, and • the school's academic results (or provide links to publicly available information).
Criterion 3 – Student selection	Does the selection panel for the student selection process include both male and female Indigenous representatives? Yes / No
	Provide details about the student selection process and explain how it is clear and transparent.
Criterion 4 – Supporting Student Choice	Outline how the program supports students and their families to make informed decisions about their education. Include how the program supports students to select a school that aligns with their personal and academic interests (including selective or specialist public schools).

ABSTUDY Scholarship program – assessment criteria	
Criterion 5 – Student travel and placement	Have you read and understood the Safe Travel Plan Guidelines, in the ABSTUDY Policy Manual? Yes / No Do you understand your obligations to develop individual Safe Travel Plans for students who require one, including the provision of appropriate supervision during travel where required? Yes / No Do you agree to develop Safe Travel Plans in consultation with the student, the student's family or community and the school? Yes / No
	Outline how the program provides information and guidance for students and their families about living away from home and the supports available to them. Include whether the student and family are provided with links to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support networks at their study location. Also include details of how the program encourages and facilitates family visits to the school.
Criterion 6 – Student accommodation	Does the scholarship program include accommodation arrangements for students? Yes / No
	Outline the type of accommodation that is included in the scholarship program, including whether it is at a boarding facility provided by the partner school or other accommodation arrangement organised through the program. Explain how the accommodation is culturally appropriate, supervised and supported. Include details of whether the accommodation staff are appropriately screened and qualified and whether the accommodation includes access to medical services or other supports for students.

ABSTUDY Scholarship program – assessment criteria	
Criterion 7 – Student Support	Outline how the program provides individual student support for orientation, personal development, academic and homework support, and extracurricular activities. Include how the program provides regular and ongoing engagement with the student's family and community about academic and social progress.
Criterion 8 – Financial Support	What is the value of the scholarship being offered? How much will parents be required to contribute, if applicable?
	Outline how much of the tuition and boarding costs will be covered by the scholarship.