# Deferral Policy

## 1. Purpose

The Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships (CTS) Program Deferral Policy (the policy) defines the allowable deferrals for individuals who are in receipt of a Commonwealth Teaching Scholarship.

This policy should be considered in conjunction with the CTS Grant Opportunity Guidelines (Scholarship Guidelines) for the relevant round and the Scholarship Agreement, available on the Scholarships website.

For the purposes of this policy, a deferral from study also includes any approved leave of absence or intermission of studies.

## 2. Background

The Scholarship Guidelines relevant to each scholarship round and the Scholarship Agreement outline the requirements which apply to deferral of the scholarship during the initial teacher education (ITE) program.

## 3. Deferral criteria

A CTS recipient who has an approved deferral from their higher education provider (HEP) must also seek approval from the Department of Education (the Department) to defer the scholarship.

Approval of a scholarship deferral is at the discretion of the Department and a HEP approved deferral of studies does not guarantee approval of a scholarship deferral.

A CTS recipient cannot defer the commencement of their ITE program.

The Department will not grant more than one deferral for a recipient. Any approved deferral under the CTS Program cannot exceed 12 months and must not exceed the period of leave approved by the

recipient's HEP. A 12-month deferral is defined as a full calendar year of leave from study, which typically equates to two (2) standard semesters or three (3) trimesters, depending on the academic calendar of the HEP and course structure.

Deferrals are only considered where the recipient intends to return to full-time study in the accredited ITE program following the deferral period.

### First year of study

CTS recipients will not be granted a deferral of their scholarship obligations in their first year of study unless there are medical-related extenuating circumstances. These circumstances must **significantly** impact a recipient's ability to fulfill their obligations under the Scholarship Agreement and must be supported by evidence satisfactory to the Department.

If a CTS recipient chooses to take a HEP approved deferral in the first year of study without extenuating medical circumstances, they will no longer be eligible for a scholarship and may have to repay any scholarship funding received (see CTS Payments Policy).

### Subsequent years of study

Deferral requests after the first year of study will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will only be approved where the request is based on extenuating circumstances that **significantly** impact a recipient's ability to fulfill their obligations under the Scholarship Agreement to complete their ITE program, including (noting this list is not exhaustive):

- Medical: e.g. significant physical or mental illness/injury; significant exacerbation of existing condition
- Hardship: e.g. victim of significant crime including family and domestic violence; financial hardship
- Compassionate: e.g. death/sudden serious illness of immediate family member
- Duties (where participation is compulsory): e.g. military service, emergency service deployments, or volunteer emergency service duties undertaken in response to an official direction or request.
- Disaster: e.g. significant natural disaster/geo-political event
- Official cultural or religious observance.

The Department will not provide this approval where the request is based on the following circumstances (noting this list is not exhaustive):

- Criminal conviction during the ITE program
- Taking a leave of absence from study for their ITE program for reasons that are not considered extenuating circumstances
- Personal travel plans unrelated to one of the extenuating circumstances
- Undertaking employment opportunities.

## 4. Seeking a deferral

It is recommended that CTS recipients contact the Department via email to outline their deferral plans **before** they seek approval from their HEP to ensure they will not be breaching any Scholarship Agreement obligations.

Individuals must submit a formal request for deferral via the form provided by the Department, which is available upon request or via the Scholarships website. Submitted forms must include all required official supporting evidence to substantiate the claim.

Scholarship deferral requests must include:

- Reason for the request
- Official evidence of approved deferral from the recipient's HEP
- Satisfactory evidence of extenuating circumstances in the first year, or in subsequent years, if requested by the Department.

# 5. Consideration of deferral application and decision

The Department will consider the request, and all relevant evidence provided to determine if the deferral can be granted. If additional evidence is required by the Department, the CTS recipient will have 14 days to respond with the required supplementary evidence. Should additional time be required to obtain evidence, the recipient must request additional time in writing before the 14 days have been reached.

CTS recipients will be advised of the decision outcome in writing within 30 days of the initial request or where additional evidence is required, within 30 days of the receipt of supplementary evidence.

If a deferral is approved at the beginning of an academic year, any annual scholarship instalment will be withheld, as per the Scholarship Agreement, until the recipient provides evidence that they have re-commenced full-time study at the end of their deferral period. This may result in subsequent scholarship instalments being made outside the original scholarship funding period set out in their Scholarship Agreement.

If evidence of re-enrolment only demonstrates full-time enrolment in half of the academic year, then the recipient will only receive a half year payment of $5,000 (refer to CTS Payments Policy). If a recipient overloads[1] their enrolment after returning from an approved deferral period, this may affect the total amount of scholarship funding payable to the recipient (see CTS Payments Policy).

Any approved scholarship deferral will impact the period to complete the Commitment to Teach. If a recipient's ITE program continues beyond the period of the original scholarship funding, this will reduce the time available to complete the Commitment to Teach.

The Department may only grant one scholarship deferral for a recipient and that scholarship deferral will be for a period of up to 12 months. The Department will not approve any deferral of the scholarship in excess of 12 months, regardless of whether the HEP extends it. If a recipient's deferral is extended beyond 12 months, or they do not meet the terms of the Scholarship Agreement upon recommencement of their ITE program, they will no longer be eligible for a scholarship and may be required to repay any scholarship funding received.

If an approved deferral means a recipient will not finish their ITE program by the scholarship funding completion date outlined in the Scholarship Agreement, the Scholarship Agreement may be varied to

[1] See section 6 of CTS Recognition of Prior Learning and Accelerated ITE Course Policy.

reflect the amended scholarship funding period. It is a condition of the scholarship that recipients meet all the requirements of, and complete, an accredited ITE program.

If a recipient does not return to full-time study in the accredited ITE program after the deferral period, the scholarship may be withdrawn, and the recipient may be required to repay any scholarship funding received to date.

The Department's decisions to approve or reject deferrals are final and there is no mechanism to appeal these decisions.

# 6. Complaints

Any complaint about a decision made by the Department will be handled in accordance with the CTS Complaints Handling Policy.