Australian Government
Department of Education

Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships

Exemption Policy

1. Purpose

The Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships (CTS) Program Exemption Policy (the policy) sets out the process that applies to requests by CTS recipients for exemptions from their Scholarship Agreement obligations, including their repayment obligations, which ***may*** be granted by the Department of Education (the Department).

Requests for exemptions will be considered during both stages of the CTS Program:

- during the period of undertaking an accredited initial teacher education (ITE) program
- during the 10-year period in which a CTS recipient is required to complete the commitment to teach obligation (CTT).

Exemption requests submitted outside of the ITE or CTT timeframes will not be considered.

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

An approved exemption will remove the recipient from the CTS Program with no obligation to repay any amount of the scholarship payments received to date.

2. Background

Sections 3 and 5 of the Scholarship Guidelines outline withdrawal from the program during ITE and the CTT.

3. Exemption Requirements

To be considered for an exemption, individuals must be a CTS recipient who has decided to withdraw from the CTS Program or who is no longer meeting, or capable of meeting, the obligations set out in the individual's Scholarship Agreement.

The Department ***may*** grant an exemption if the CTS recipient's request demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the Department, extenuating circumstances that significantly impact the CTS recipient's ability to fulfil their obligations under the Scholarship Agreement.

Extenuating circumstances are circumstances that:

- prevent the CTS recipient from fulfilling their obligation to complete their ITE program or their CTT obligations under the Scholarship Agreement;

<u>and</u>

- which significantly impact the CTS recipient's ability to repay the scholarship funding received under the Scholarship Agreement.

Extenuating circumstances may include (noting this list is not exhaustive):

- medical: e.g. new 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; sudden, unavoidable caring responsibilities (e.g. becoming a permanent guardian for a minor)
- compassionate: e.g. death/sudden serious illness of immediate family member (e.g. which results in becoming a full-time carer)
- significant/demonstrated inability to obtain eligible employment
- death of the recipient (evidence to be provided by next of kin).

The Department will not grant an exemption where the request is based on the following circumstances (noting this list is not exhaustive):

- Criminal conviction which prevents a CTS recipient from completing their ITE program, meeting registration requirements or gaining employment
- Withdrawal due to change of mind
- Inadequate time management
- Personal travel plans unrelated to an extenuating circumstance
- Choosing to study part-time, or taking an unapproved leave from their ITE program
- Recipients who choose to withdraw from an accredited Master of Teaching program and take an early exit point with an alternate teaching qualification.

4. Seeking an Exemption

If a CTS recipient considers they may be eligible for an exemption, they must request the Exemption Request Form in writing by emailing the relevant CTS round recipient email address. The CTS recipient must complete the online form and include the required information, including relevant official evidence to support their exemption request.

Submitting an exemption request **does not guarantee an exemption** will be granted. **All requests for consideration of an exemption** must include:

- Full name of recipient
- CTS ID
- Email address
- Reason for request
- Relevant evidence to fully support and prove the extenuating circumstances for the exemption request.

5. Consideration of Exemption and Decision

The Department will consider the request for an exemption, as submitted in the Exemption form, to determine if the exemption can be granted. If additional evidence is requested, the CTS recipient will have 14 days to respond with supplementary evidence. Should additional time be required to obtain evidence, the CTS recipient must request additional time in writing before the 14 days has been reached.

If the CTS recipient does not submit the requested additional evidence by the final deadline, the exemption request will be referred to the delegate for consideration based on the evidence available at that time.

CTS recipients will generally 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.

6. Outcome of Exemption Decision

If an exemption is approved and applied, the CTS recipient will be advised of this outcome and the Scholarship Agreement between the Department and the CTS recipient will be terminated.

If an exemption is rejected, the recipient will be advised of the outcome in writing. The recipient will be required to repay the scholarship funding received to date in accordance with their Scholarship Agreement.

There is no appeal mechanism in relation to any exemption decision.

7. Complaints

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