Payments Policy

1. Purpose

The Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships (CTS) Program Payments Policy (the policy) sets out the processes and procedures for making payments to recipients and repayment of funding by recipients who withdraw or are withdrawn from the CTS Program.

This policy should be considered in conjunction with the CTS Grant Opportunity Guidelines (Scholarship Guidelines) for the relevant round and the Scholarship Agreement. It should also be considered in conjunction with the following policies in place at the relevant time, available on the Scholarships website:

- Withdrawal Policy
- Exemption Policy
- Additional Payment for Remote Professional Experience Placements Policy (Remote Placement Payment)
- Recognition of Prior Learning and Accelerated ITE Course Policy.

2. Background

The Scholarship Guidelines and Scholarship Agreement outline:

- the schedule of payments for scholarship funding
- the requirements for receiving the Remote Placement Payment
- the requirements for repayment of scholarship funding if a CTS recipient withdraws from, or is withdrawn from the CTS Program.

3. Payment of scholarship instalments

First instalment

The Scholarship Agreement includes the payment schedule for the scholarship funding the CTS recipient will receive. Scholarship funding is paid in annual instalments of up to $10,000, subject to

providing evidence of continued full-time enrolment for the full academic year in an accredited initial teacher education (ITE) program.

Scholarship funding is determined by the ITE program selected by the applicant when accepting a conditional offer (see CTS Assessment and Selection Policy). Scholarship funding is capped at $40,000 for undergraduate recipients and $20,000 for postgraduate recipients. The length of the ITE program is based on the standard course structure published on HEP websites.

If a recipient is enrolled in an accelerated ITE program offered by a provider, scholarship funding will be reduced (e.g. a recipient enrolled in a 1.5-year accelerated Master of Teaching will receive a total of $15,000 in scholarship funding).

If a recipient is enrolled in an accredited ITE program that is longer than a standard 2-year postgraduate or 4-year undergraduate (e.g. a recipient enrolled in an accredited undergraduate double degree with a course length of 4.5 years will receive a total of $40,000 in scholarship funding).

If a recipient's Scholarship Agreement reflects an accelerated course length, no further funding will be provided if a recipient later decides to extend their ITE program studies or if they do not complete their ITE program by their expected ITE program completion date (e.g. as a result of failing course units/subjects).

When returning a signed Scholarship Agreement to the Department of Education (Department), the recipient must also provide bank details for the first scholarship instalment to be paid into. It is the recipient's responsibility to ensure the correct details are provided.

As set out in the Scholarship Guidelines, recipients must have a personal bank account, in their own name, with an authorised deposit-taking Australian financial institution. The scholarship instalment, as outlined in the Scholarship Agreement, will be paid into the bank account supplied by the recipient.

Subsequent instalments

It is a condition of the scholarship that recipients report annually to the Department on their continued full-time enrolment for the full academic year in an accredited ITE program. The Department will advise recipients when they are to provide their enrolment evidence.

The requirements for enrolment evidence are the same as those required for conditional offers (see section 6.7 of the CTS Assessment and Selection Policy).

If a recipient makes changes to their ITE program that affect their expected completion date, the Department will advise of any implications for their scholarship.

The length of an ITE program is determined by the standard course structure published on the HEP's website, and by the session in which the credit for an individual unit is awarded, not by when the unit requirements are completed. This may impact scholarship funding when the ITE program is nearing completion. For example, if a recipient is enrolled in a professional experience unit credited in Semester 1, but the placement in a school continues into Semester 2, the unit is still considered to be part of Semester 1. In this instance, no additional funding would be provided for the time spent

completing the unit requirements in Semester 2. Any individualised course plans outside the standard structure may impact scholarship funding.

Once the Department has assessed the evidence submitted as meeting the scholarship obligations, payment of the scholarship instalment, as outlined in the Scholarship Agreement, will be processed.

It is the responsibility of recipients to advise the Department of any change to the bank account details held by the Department by submitting a Notifiable Events form within 28 days of the change in details.

Definition of full-time study

For the purposes of the CTS Program, full-time study is either:

- as defined by the relevant HEP; or
- as per the full-time study load definition set by Services Australia.

Payments where half-year evidence is provided

If an applicant or recipient submits enrolment evidence that only covers the first half of the academic year, the Department will follow up via email and request evidence for the full year.

Where a recipient can only provide evidence from their HEP of full-time enrolment in an accredited ITE program for half of the academic year because the HEP is unable to provide evidence for the full-year enrolment, the recipient will receive an instalment of $5,000 in respect of that period.

The Department will contact the recipient to request evidence of full-time enrolment for the other half of the academic year. Once the Department has assessed the evidence submitted as meeting the scholarship obligations, payment of the remaining annual instalment, as outlined in the Scholarship Agreement, will be processed.

This process applies to both the first and subsequent instalments.

Payments after deferral

If a recipient returns to full-time study after an approved deferral period (see CTS Deferral Policy) and is only able to provide evidence of full-time enrolment for half of the academic year, the recipient will only be entitled to receive a $5,000 instalment. The Department will consider whether the recipient is entitled to receive the remaining $5,000 from that annual instalment on a case-by-case basis in line with the full-time study requirements of the CTS Program. 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.

Communication with recipients

CTS recipients will be advised by the Department when a payment has been processed. Recipients will also receive a copy of a remittance advice confirming the payment has been made.

In the event that a bank transfer fails, the Department will notify the recipient and check the accuracy of the provided bank details.

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

4. Repayment of scholarship funding

If a CTS recipient has been advised that, in accordance with the terms of the Scholarship Agreement, they must repay scholarship funding they have received to date, they will be emailed an invoice that includes the amount owing and details of how to repay.

The terms of the invoice require payment within 30 days unless an instalment plan is established (see section 5 below).

The recipient will be notified once the amount owing has been received by the Department.

5. Instalment Plan

A CTS recipient who has received an invoice for repayment of scholarship funding may request an instalment plan. In exceptional cases, instalment plans can be requested and agreed between the Department and the debtor to assist in the recovery of debt.

If a recipient wishes to claim financial hardship and seek an instalment plan, evidence may be required to support the claim. A recipient will be advised how to proceed if they indicate they would like to pursue this option.

The instalment plan process is managed by the Department's Accounts Receivable area.

6. Withholding payments

CTS recipients must meet scholarship obligations as set out in the Scholarship Agreement.

As per the Scholarship Agreement, the Department may withhold a scholarship payment if a recipient has not met a requirement of the Scholarship Agreement.

This may include (but is not limited to):

- Not meeting the required standard for the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education, which prevents enrolment in required units.
- Failure to pass prerequisite units/subjects, resulting in an inability to maintain the expected study load for the semester.
- Failure to complete or pass a significant number of units/subjects for their ITE program in an academic year (e.g. 50% or more).
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), which may reduce the number of units required and prevent the recipient from maintaining a full-time study load (refer to the CTS Recognition of Prior Learning and Accelerated ITE Course Policy for more information).

Where a CTS recipient advises the Department of a circumstance that indicates a non-compliance with the scholarship obligations, the recipient may be required to provide further information about that matter.

The Department will assess the information provided and, if appropriate, will withhold the relevant payment until the recipient can meet their obligations.

Withholding payments will not be considered where the circumstances arise from a decision voluntarily made by the recipient, for example choosing to move to a part-time study load.

If deferral or withdrawal is more appropriate, the Department will advise the recipient and the Deferral, Withdrawal and/or Exemption policies will apply as appropriate.

7. Complaints

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