

2019



Australian Government

OS-HELP Statement of terms and conditions

This loan can be used
to pay your overseas
study expenses.

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Published December 2018

OS-HELP AT A GLANCE

What is OS-HELP?

OS-HELP is a loan that helps eligible students enrolled in a **Commonwealth supported place (CSP)** to do some of their study overseas.

The amount you can borrow using an OS-HELP loan is determined by your **approved education provider (provider)** in accordance with their OS-HELP policy.

WHO IS THIS BOOKLET FOR?

This booklet is for eligible students enrolled in a CSP who want to access an OS-HELP loan to undertake part of their course overseas. A student enrolled in a CSP is referred to as a **Commonwealth supported student**.

This booklet contains a summary of the key points a person getting an OS-HELP loan needs to know.

USING THIS BOOKLET

As you read through this booklet, you will notice that each page has key words **highlighted**. Refer to the glossary for an explanation of what these words mean.

If, after reading this booklet, you require more information about OS-HELP, you can refer to the *CSP and HELP Handbook*.



The handbook and all HELP student information booklets are available at www.studyassist.gov.au.

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GLOSSARY

Accumulated HELP debt—The total of any HECS-HELP, OS-HELP, FEE-HELP, VET FEE-HELP/VET Student Loans or SA-HELP debts you have incurred (including any Australian Government study loans incurred before 2005).

Approved education provider (provider)—In this booklet, this term means a university or other accredited higher education provider approved by the Australian Government to offer CSPs and/or the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) to eligible students.

Asia—Refers to the following countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

Australian Taxation Office (ATO)—The ATO is the principal revenue collection agency of the Australian Government. The ATO is responsible for managing HELP debt repayments.

Commonwealth supported place (CSP)—A place at a provider that is subsidised by the Australian Government. Students only have to pay the 'student contribution amount' for their study.

Commonwealth supported student—A student who is enrolled in a CSP.

Electronic Commonwealth assistance form (eCAF)—An electronic version of the form you must submit to your provider to request a HELP loan and/or accept an offer of a CSP.

Equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL)—This is how your study 'load' (or intensity of study) is measured. For one year, a full-time student is normally enrolled in one EFTSL of study.

Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)—Australian Government loans that help eligible students pay their student contributions (HECS-HELP), tuition fees (FEE-HELP or VET FEE-HELP/VET Student Loans), overseas study expenses (OS-HELP) or the student services and amenities fee (SA-HELP). HELP loans are repaid through the Australian tax system once people earn above the compulsory repayment threshold.

Higher Education Support Act 2003 (the Act)—The Commonwealth legislation that outlines the requirements for getting a CSP and/or a HELP loan.

New Zealand Special Category Visa (NZ SCV)—If you arrived in Australia using a New Zealand passport, in the absence of another valid Australian visa, you will have automatically received a SCV provided you met certain security, character and health requirements. The SCV is a temporary visa which remains in place for as long as you stay in Australia and expires as soon as you leave Australia.

OS-HELP—Australian Government loan scheme that helps eligible students pay their overseas study expenses.

OS-HELP debt confirmation form—The form you must submit to your provider to apply for an OS-HELP loan.

OS-HELP Guidelines—Guidelines made under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* that specifically relate to the administration of OS-HELP loans and applicable OS-HELP limits.

Study Assist (www.studyassist.gov.au)—A website providing information about how you can pay for your tertiary study including types of HELP loans, a list of providers that offer HELP loans, and student income support options.

Tax file number (TFN)—Your unique identification number from the ATO for everything tax-related, it's needed for obtaining your HELP loan and making HELP debt repayments.

1. THE OS-HELP LOAN SCHEME

1.1 What is OS-HELP?

OS-HELP is a loan available to eligible students enrolled in a Commonwealth supported place (CSP) who want to do some of their study overseas. OS-HELP can be used for a range of expenses, such as air fares, accommodation and other travel or study expenses.

Eligible students may also receive a supplementary amount to undertake language study in preparation for overseas study in Asia.

1.2 Am I eligible for OS-HELP?

You can get an OS-HELP loan if you meet ALL of the following requirements:

- you have been selected by your provider to receive an OS-HELP loan for a six-month period (contact your provider directly to find out about their application process),
- you are an:
 - Australian citizen or permanent humanitarian visa holder, or
 - A New Zealand Special Category Visa (NZ SCV) holder who meets the long-term residency requirements and will be resident in Australia at the time of applying,
- you have not received an OS-HELP loan more than once before, and you will not receive a second OS-HELP loan for the same six-month period,
- your overseas study is undertaken in the relevant six-month period,

- you are enrolled with a provider as a **Commonwealth supported student** and have completed one **EFTSL** of study (usually one year of full-time study), in Australia that counts towards the course you are enrolled in,
- you will be studying full-time overseas and your overseas study will count towards the requirements for the Australian course in which you are enrolled,
- you will have at least 0.125 EFTSL of your course left to complete in Australia once you have finished your overseas study (usually one unit of study),
- you meet the **TFN** requirements (see section 2.1),
- you have lodged a completed **OS-HELP debt confirmation** form with your provider, and
- you have read this booklet.

To be eligible for a supplementary amount for Asian language study in relation to a six-month period you must:

- have been selected for OS-HELP for overseas study in Asia for that six-month period,
- be undertaking language study in preparation for undertaking that overseas study,
- have indicated on your **OS-HELP debt confirmation** form that you would like to receive a supplementary amount for Asian language study,
- have been selected by your provider to receive a supplementary amount for Asian language study, and
- have not yet completed the Asian language study before applying for the supplementary amount.

1.3 New Zealand Special Category Visa residency requirements

If you are a New Zealand citizen and hold a SCV you may be able to access a CSP and HELP loans, providing you meet all of the following requirements:

- you first began to be usually resident in Australia at least 10 years before the test day*;
- at that time, you were a dependent child** under the age of 18 with no spouse or de facto partner; and
- you have been in Australia for at least:
 - a total of 8 out of the last 10 years immediately before the test day; and
 - a total of 18 months out of the last 2 years immediately before the test day.
- you are otherwise eligible for a HELP loan.

You must provide evidence to your provider, on or before the census date, that you first began residing in Australia as a minor at least 10 years before the test day.

You can do this by requesting your International Movement Record from the Department of Home Affairs.

*‘test day’ means the first day you successfully applied for a HELP loan as an eligible NZ SCV holder for a unit that formed part of the same course of study. If you have not previously applied for a HELP loan for a unit that forms part of your course of study then the ‘test day’ is the date you submit your form.

**Under the Act, a ‘dependent child’ is someone who is aged under 18 and does not have a spouse or de facto partner.

1.4 How much can I borrow?

In 2019, the maximum you can borrow for a six-month study period is:

- \$6,791 if you will be studying outside of Asia, or
- \$8,149 if you will be studying in Asia.

You can borrow an additional \$1,085 if you will be undertaking Asian language study in preparation for study in Asia.

These amounts are indexed on 1 January each year.

The amount you can borrow using an OS-HELP loan is determined by your provider in accordance with their OS-HELP policy, the *OS-HELP Guidelines* and the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

You are limited to two OS-HELP loans over your lifetime and there is a limit of one OS-HELP loan per six-month period. If you are studying overseas for two consecutive six-month periods, you may be able to access an OS-HELP loan for each of those six-month periods. Your period of overseas study must take place within the relevant six-month period.

1.5 Will I be charged interest?

There is no interest charged on HELP debts. However, after your debt is more than 11 months old it is subject to indexation which is applied on 1 June each year. HELP debts are indexed to maintain the real value of the debt by adjusting it in line with changes in the cost of living as measured by the Consumer Price Index. Indexation rates are published on the *ATO* website, visit www.ato.gov.au/indexation.

2. APPLYING FOR AN OS-HELP LOAN

2.1 How do I apply for OS-HELP?

To apply for an OS-HELP loan, you must submit a valid *OS-HELP debt confirmation* form to your provider.

If you want to use an OS-HELP loan to pay for your overseas study, you must meet the TFN requirements:

- you must give your provider your valid TFN, name, date of birth and address information by the date required as part of your application. Your details must match the information held with the ATO, if there is a mismatch between the information on your application and ATO records, you will not be able to access a loan until you correct the error.
- if you do not have a TFN, you can give your provider a *Certificate of Application for a TFN* (certificate). This certificate is available from the ATO after you have applied for a TFN. You must advise your provider of your TFN within 21 days of receiving it.



You have to provide your TFN because repayments on your HELP debt are made through the Australian taxation system. For information on correcting a TFN mismatch see the student fact sheet called Tax File Number (TFN) Mismatch at www.heimshelp.education.gov.au.



2.2 How is my loan amount paid to me?

If you are selected for an OS-HELP loan, your provider will pay the loan amount directly to you. You will have a HELP debt immediately following this payment.

Your provider will notify you in writing that you have been selected for an OS-HELP loan, the loan amount and the conditions of receiving the loan.

2.3 Is there a loan or application fee?

No. There is no loan or application fee for accessing OS-HELP.

3. KEEPING TRACK OF MY HELP LOAN

3.1 My Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number (CHESSN)

You will be allocated a CHESSN when you first apply for admission to your provider or Tertiary Admissions Centre. Your CHESSN is a unique identification number that remains with you for the whole of your student life. Your CHESSN is NOT your student ID number (which is issued by individual providers).

Your CHESSN helps providers and the Government identify you, so you can be given important information about your HELP loan(s). If you don't know your CHESSN, you can contact your provider to get it.

There is a section at the beginning of this booklet where you can record your CHESSN for future use.

3.2 Keeping track of what I borrow

You can use the myUniAssist website to keep track of what you have borrowed and what your remaining entitlements are.

myUniAssist

This website helps you keep track of how much you have borrowed under the various HELP loans from 2005 onwards. It also provides information on how much Commonwealth assistance you have received. When you log on to myUniAssist, you can see an itemised account of each HELP loan that you have used.

Please note the following about myUniAssist:

- the information is displayed on a per-unit basis,
- there is a time lag to update your information on myUniAssist so bear this in mind when calculating your loan totals,
- myUniAssist will not show any details about SA-HELP loans or any loans used for pre-2005 study (including former HECS, OLDPS, PELS and BOTPLS loans).

You will need your CHESSN and other personal identifying details to access myUniAssist via the [Study Assist](#) website at www.studyassist.gov.au.



myUniAssist does not show the indexation that has been applied to your debt, any repayments you have made, or what you have left owing to the Government—see section 4.4 for instructions on how to get your current HELP debt information.

3.3 Can I cancel my OS-HELP loan?

Once you have received an OS-HELP loan, it cannot be cancelled. You will have a HELP debt immediately after the payment.

You have to repay your HELP debt through the Australian taxation system, even if you fail or do not complete either the Australian or overseas portion/s of your study/Asian language study.

4. REPAYING MY HELP DEBT

4.1 When do I start paying back my loan?

Your OS-HELP debt becomes part of your **accumulated HELP debt**. You must start repaying your HELP debt through the tax system once your income is above the compulsory repayment threshold, even if you are still studying.

The threshold is adjusted each year and for the 2018–19 income year, it is \$51,957 or above. Repayments made through the Australian taxation system are called ‘compulsory repayments’ and continue until you have repaid your whole debt.

Your compulsory repayment is calculated from the amounts given on your income tax return, including:

- your taxable income,
- reportable fringe benefits (reported on your payment summary),
- total net investment loss (including net rental loss),
- reportable super contributions, and
- exempt foreign employment income amounts.

4.2 Overseas debt repayments

If you go overseas and have a HELP debt, you may be required to notify the ATO and make repayments against your HELP debt in the same way as if you were living in Australia.

If you already live or intend to move overseas for a total of 183 days or more in any 12 month period, you will be required to notify the ATO of your intention to remain outside of Australia by completing an Overseas Travel Notification, and updating your contact details through ATO online services within seven days of leaving Australia.

You may also need to either report your world-wide income or complete a non-lodgement advice annually, depending on your tax residency status and the amount of world-wide income you have earned for the year.



For more information visit www.ato.gov.au/overseasrepayments.

4.3 How much will my repayments be?

The amount you repay each year is calculated as a percentage of your world-wide income. The repayment percentage increases as your income increases, so the more you earn, the higher your repayment will be, but it is capped at 8% of your income.

The ATO will calculate your compulsory repayment for the year and include it on your income tax notice of assessment.

Table 1: Repayment rates for the 2018–19 income year

Repayment income	Repayment % rate
Below \$51,957	Nil
\$51,957 - \$57,729	2.0%
\$57,730 - \$64,306	4.0%
\$64,307 - \$70,881	4.5%
\$70,882 - \$74,607	5.0%
\$74,608 - \$80,197	5.5%
\$80,198 - \$88,855	6.0%
\$88,856 - \$91,425	6.5%
\$91,426 - \$100,613	7.0%
\$100,614 - \$107,213	7.5%
\$107,214 and above	8.0%

4.4 myGov

Logging on to ATO's online services via myGov will show you a running total of your current HELP debt that is left to repay, including:

- your current HELP debt (which includes HECS-HELP, OS-HELP, SA-HELP, FEE-HELP and VET FEE-HELP/ VET Student Loans as a consolidated amount),
- any indexation that has been applied to your debt, and
- any repayments you have made, so you can see how much of your HELP debt you have left owing to the Government.

To access the ATO's online services, you need to create a myGov account and link to the ATO. Find out how at www.ato.gov.au/OnlineLoanBalance.

If you already have a myGov account linked to the ATO, you can log in at any time.

4.5 Can I make a voluntary repayment?

Yes. You can make a voluntary repayment of any amount to help reduce the balance of your account faster at any time. Any voluntary repayments you make are in addition to the compulsory repayments made through your tax return.

There are several ways you can make a voluntary repayment, including through ATO online services (via myGov), via BPAY and credit card.



For more information about voluntary repayments visit www.ato.gov.au/voluntaryrepay.

4.6 Are repayments tax deductible?

Compulsory repayments are not tax deductible. Voluntary repayments made by you or someone other than your employer are not tax deductible. Your employer may be able to claim a tax deduction for voluntary repayments it makes on your behalf, but it may also be liable for fringe benefits tax on the repayments. For more information, visit www.ato.gov.au/voluntaryrepay.

4.7 Are there other repayment options if I am facing financial hardship?

If you are struggling to make your compulsory HELP repayment or repayment of your overseas levy, there may be some options to relieve the stress. Depending on your situation, you may be eligible to apply for a payment plan or a deferral of your repayment obligations for the year. Find out more by visiting www.studyassist.gov.au.

5. CONTACTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Other student mobility grants for international study

In addition to OS-HELP, there are other student mobility grants to support eligible students to undertake overseas study:

- **The Endeavour Leadership Program** provides life changing opportunities for Australian and international students, and professionals, to access global learning research and professional development opportunities. Australian and international students may apply for Individual Endeavour Leader Awards. Institutional Endeavour Leadership Activities are available for higher education providers and registered training organisations to provide funding for mobility experiences for Australian and international students from partner institutions. Students should direct their enquiries to their institution's International Liaison Officer. More information is available at internationaleducation.gov.au.
- **The New Colombo Plan** is a signature initiative of the Government which aims to lift knowledge of the Indo-Pacific in Australia by supporting Australian undergraduates to study and undertake work placements in the region. Information on the New Colombo Plan is available from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade at DFAT.gov.au.

My provider

The student administration/enrolments office at your provider will be able to help you with:

- your eligibility for OS-HELP,
- applying for an OS-HELP loan, and
- the application process.

Study Assist website www.studyassist.gov.au

This website provides information about options for financing tertiary study, including:

- HELP loans available in both the higher education and vocational education and training sectors,
- a list of providers that offer HELP loans, and
- student income support options and available scholarships.

Australian Taxation Office (ATO)

The ATO can help you with your HELP debt, compulsory repayments, voluntary repayments and overseas levy repayments, visit www.ato.gov.au/getloaninfo. Call 13 28 61 (or call 13 36 77 TTY or 1300 555 727 TTY for hearing or speech impaired students). Write to PO BOX 1032, ALBURY NSW 2640. NOTE: **Do not** send voluntary repayments to this address.

Department of Human Services

The Department of Human Services can help you with Youth Allowance, Austudy, ABSTUDY and other payments and services, visit humanservices.gov.au/students.

You can also get information and ask questions at [Facebook.com/StudentUpdate](https://www.facebook.com/StudentUpdate) or [@StudentUpdateAU](https://twitter.com/StudentUpdateAU) on Twitter.

Department of Home Affairs

The Department of Home Affairs can help you with visas for overseas travel. Visit www.homeaffairs.gov.au or call 13 18 81.



My CHESSN: _____

My provider: _____



You must read this booklet before submitting the *OS-HELP debt confirmation* form.

When you submit your form, you are declaring that you have read this booklet and that you are aware of your obligations as a Commonwealth supported student and under OS-HELP.



The Department of Education and Training has endeavoured to ensure that the information in this publication is consistent with the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (the Act) and guidelines made under the Act, available at www.legislation.gov.au. However, there may be differences between this publication and the Act or guidelines. If there is any inconsistency the Act will take precedence.

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