



# Australia Awards Scholarships

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is committed to ensuring equal opportunity for all Australia Awards Scholarship awardees.

DFAT does not discriminate against pregnant awardees. DFAT, however, understands that pregnancy has the potential to affect awardees' capacity to study and/or successfully complete their Australia Awards Scholarship. To assist pregnant awardees making an informed decision, relevant information for their consideration is provided in this fact sheet.

## Pregnancy - Frequently Asked Questions

### *I am pregnant, what does this mean for my Australia Awards Scholarship?*

As you and your baby's welfare are a priority, if you fall pregnant **we strongly advise you to consider deferring or suspending your study in Australia** for the following reasons:

- A pregnancy can have a major impact on your ability to successfully complete your studies.
- Deferring or suspending allows you time to focus on your pregnancy, to recover, to put in place any necessary adjustments or care arrangements, and to organise dependent visas if required.
- Being pregnant and having a baby in Australia may be very costly for you depending on the terms and conditions of your Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC).
- DFAT does **not** provide any additional funding for you or the baby.

If you fall pregnant *prior* to mobilisation you are encouraged to notify your DFAT Post to discuss your options; including deferral as soon as possible. If you fall pregnant *in Australia*, you are encouraged to contact your Student Contact Officer and consider suspending your award.

### *I wish to defer or suspend my course because of a pregnancy, what happens to my Australia Awards Scholarship?*

If you defer or suspend your scholarship due to a pregnancy, you can resume your studies after the birth of your baby.

A scholarship can be suspended for a maximum of 12 months. If a suspension is approved, no scholarship entitlements (including contribution to living expenses and OSHC) will be paid during the suspension period, and you must return home. All entitlements will be reinstated when you return to Australia and resume your course. See section 13.4 of the *Australia Awards Scholarships Policy Handbook (February 2014)* for more information.

A scholarships can also be deferred until the following academic year. See section 6.4 of the *Australia Awards Scholarships Policy Handbook (February 2014)* for more information.



***If I decide to suspend and return home to deliver the baby, will the cost of the travel be covered by my Scholarship?***

You can use your reunion travel entitlement in advance to return home. In the absence of a reunion travel entitlement DFAT will fund your return home trip.

***I don't want to defer or suspend my Australia Awards Scholarship, can I remain on award?***

DFAT does not discriminate against pregnant women and you are entitled to continue your study in Australia.

If a pregnant awardee chooses not to defer or suspend her scholarship, DFAT will not provide any financial assistance beyond the standard scholarship entitlements, or after the scholarship end date. This includes:

- i. on-scholarship awardees
- ii. completing awardees
- iii. awardees waiting to give birth, and
- iv. awardees waiting for their child to obtain a passport and visa.

***What support can I expect during the course of my pregnancy?***

Pregnancy has the potential to affect your capacity to study, and has implications for your DFAT Student Visa (subclass 576). Therefore, if you are pregnant while in Australia, you should consider speaking with the Student Contact Officer at your institution and keep them informed throughout.

Your Student Contact Officer can provide you with guidance and advice on how to access medical and counselling facilities close to campus and will assist with the appropriate management of your scholarship and welfare.

No additional funds or entitlements are provided to awardees as a result of a pregnancy and you will be responsible for any costs (not covered by your OSHC) associated with the delivery of the baby and any post natal care.

***If I decide to continue to study during the course of my pregnancy, can I bring a relative out to Australia for support?***

Yes. You can bring a family member or a friend from home to support you during the course of your pregnancy.

If the family member was included in your initial visa application as a dependent, they can apply for a DFAT Student Dependent Visa (subclass 576). If the family member/friend was not listed as a dependent, they can apply for a short-term, temporary visitor's visa. The DFAT office in your country of citizenship can provide a no-objection-letter to support their visa application. All costs associated with the visa application, travel, accommodation and medical insurance must be met by you or the relative/friend.

You will need to make this request via your Student Contact Officer.

***What happens if I suffer from medical complications during the final stage of pregnancy and am unable to travel home and need to suspend my study?***

If medical complications arise for you and/or the baby in the final stages of a pregnancy and you are unfit to travel home, you may suspend your study and remain in Australia to have the baby (subject to visa approval). This request to suspend must be supported by a medical certificate.

DFAT will then issue a no-objection-letter to support your visa application for a transfer onto an appropriate visa. Final visa approval is subject to you meeting the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's visa requirements.

Once the suspension is approved, all Australia Awards financial entitlements and support, (including OSHC) will cease and you will be liable for all costs including medical cost and living expenses. Your award entitlements will resume once you return to your studies.



(Please note that a medical certificate indicating that you are fit to resume your studies will be required.)

***If my estimated delivery date is close to my Australia Awards Scholarship end date, what happens if any pregnancy related complications have an impact on my ability to return home?***

If you are due to deliver close to your Australia Awards Scholarship end date and you are unfit to travel, it is your responsibility to first obtain a doctor's certificate outlining the relevant medical issues.

You must also contact the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to obtain the necessary visa to remain in Australia beyond the scholarship end date as you will no longer be on a visa supported by DFAT. DFAT can provide you with a no-objection letter to accompany your visa application.

Once the baby is born, you are responsible for obtaining a visa for the baby. You will also need to organise a passport for the baby before you depart Australia in order to return home. You will be required to meet all associated costs.

Please note that even if you are unable to travel home, your scholarship entitlements will cease as per your original end date.

***If I return home on suspension to have the baby and then return to Australia to resume my studies, what kind of support can DFAT provide for the baby?***

If you go home on suspension to have a baby and then return to Australia to resume your studies, the baby can accompany you as a dependent subject to meeting the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's visa requirements.

DFAT does not provide any additional funds to support dependents. We can only provide a no-objection-letter for a dependent's visa during the scholarship period.

***If I decide to have the baby in Australia, will my child be an Australian citizen?***

Children born in Australia are only considered to be Australian citizens if at least one parent was an Australian citizen or permanent resident at the time of their birth.

***Is there any counselling or support available to me to help me with a decision about my pregnancy?***

DFAT understands that decisions about pregnancy can be complicated by a range of cultural, religious, emotional or financial factors.

You can talk confidentially to a number of professionals to help you make an informed decision about your pregnancy. Your Student Contact Officer can provide you with details of local services in your area to assist you in arriving at the best decision for you.

