YOU MUST READ THIS BOOKLET BEFORE SIGNING THE COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE FORM BELOW.

WHEN YOU SIGN THIS FORM, YOU DECLARE THAT YOU HAVE READ THIS BOOKLET AND THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF YOUR OBLIGATIONS UNDER OS-HELP.

OS-HELP form

USING THIS BOOKLET

- As you read through, you will notice that certain terms are highlighted in purple. These terms are defined in the glossary.
- If you have a specific question after reading this booklet, the contacts list at the end of this booklet will help you.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Department of Education 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.comlaw.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.
WHO IS THIS BOOKLET FOR?

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

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

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 additional information regarding OS-HELP, please visit the Study Assist website at www.studyassist.gov.au.

For information about Commonwealth supported places, see the Information for Commonwealth supported places and HECS-HELP information for 2014 booklet. For information about loans for higher education students enrolled in fee paying places, see the FEE-HELP information for 2014 booklet. For information about loans for higher-level vocational education and training (VET) courses, see the VET FEE-HELP information for 2014 booklet. You can also refer to the CSP and HELP Handbook for 2014.

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

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

Approved provider (provider) – In this booklet, this term means a university or other accredited higher education provider approved to offer CSPs and access to HELP loans to eligible students.

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

ATO – Australian Taxation Office.

Commonwealth supported student – A student who is enrolled in a CSP at an approved provider.

CSP (Commonwealth supported place) – A higher education place at an approved provider that is subsidised by the Australian Government. A student enrolled in a CSP only pays the student contribution amount, set by their approved provider, for their units of study.

CSP and HELP Handbook for 2014 – A comprehensive handbook that contains information about CSPs and the various HELP loans available to assist eligible tertiary students with paying for their study.

EFTSL (equivalent full-time student load) – How your study load is measured. One EFTSL is the load you will have when studying full-time for a year.
HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) – A suite of loans offered by the Australian Government that assists eligible students to pay their overseas study expenses (OS-HELP), student contributions (HECS-HELP), tuition fees (FEE-HELP or VET FEE-HELP) and the student services and amenities fee (SA-HELP). All HELP loans are repaid through the Australian tax system.

Higher Education Support Act 2003 – The Commonwealth legislation that specifies the requirements to access a HELP loan and a CSP.

OS-HELP – An Australian Government loan scheme that assists eligible Commonwealth supported students to undertake a portion of their study overseas.

OS-HELP debt confirmation – The form that you must submit to your approved 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 options for financing your tertiary study, including HELP loans, approved providers and courses, and student income support options.

TFN (tax file number) – Your unique identification number issued by the ATO for everything tax-related, including making repayments on your HELP debt. TFNs have nine digits (eg 123 456 789).
1. THE OS-HELP LOAN SCHEME


1.1 What is OS-HELP?

OS-HELP is a loan scheme that assists eligible students studying in a CSP at an approved provider (provider) to undertake a portion of their studies overseas. These loans help students with a range of expenses, such as air fares and accommodation. Eligible students may also receive a supplementary amount to undertake language study in preparation for overseas study in Asia.

A number of changes to OS-HELP arrangements will come into effect from 1 January 2014. To access the new arrangements, you must be selected for OS-HELP assistance by your provider on or after 1 January 2014. If you intend to submit an application for OS-HELP assistance in late 2013, for study in 2014, please contact your provider for advice on eligibility.

Under the new arrangements, eligibility for the OS-HELP scheme will be expanded to:

- allow postgraduate Commonwealth supported students to access OS-HELP assistance;
- remove the requirement that students be enrolled with an overseas higher education institution or an overseas campus of a higher education institution; and
- reduce the return study requirements from 0.5 EFTSL to 0.125 EFTSL (usually one unit of study).
Students undertaking overseas study in Asia may also be eligible for:

- an increased maximum loan amount of $7,500, which is $1,250 more than for other destinations; and
- a supplementary loan amount of up to $1,000 to assist with the cost of language study, undertaken in preparation for overseas study in Asia.

1.2 Am I eligible for OS-HELP?

To be eligible for OS-HELP assistance for overseas study, you must be enrolled in a CSP at an approved provider (refer to Appendix A of the CSP and HELP Handbook for 2014) and:

- be an Australian citizen OR a permanent humanitarian visa holder (check www.immi.gov.au for the list of humanitarian visa subclasses);
- be enrolled in a course of study as a Commonwealth supported student (i.e. studying in a CSP);
  - have already completed, as a Commonwealth supported student, units to the value of at least one EFTSL (usually one year of full-time study) in Australia that count towards the course you are enrolled in;
- be undertaking full-time study overseas;
- have your overseas study count towards the course requirements for the Australian course you are enrolled in; and
- on return from overseas study, you must have units to the value of at least 0.125 EFTSL (usually one unit of study) to complete in Australia for the course you are enrolled in;
- meet the TFN requirements by giving your provider your TFN (or a completed Certificate of application for a TFN form);
• have been selected by your provider to receive an OS-HELP loan for a six-month period (contact your provider regarding the application process);
• have lodged a completed OS-HELP debt confirmation form with your provider;
• have not received more than one previous OS-HELP loan;
• will not receive a second OS-HELP loan for the same six-month period; and
• have not completed your overseas study before applying for the OS-HELP loan.

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 assistance 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.

Although permanent non-humanitarian visa holders and New Zealand citizens may be eligible for a CSP, they are not eligible for OS-HELP.

1.3 How much can I borrow?

There is a limit of two OS-HELP loans over a student’s lifetime. There is also a limit of one OS-HELP loan per six-month period. Students undertaking overseas study over two consecutive six-month periods may be eligible to access an OS-HELP loan for each of those six-month periods (i.e. for overseas study longer than six-months).
The actual amount you can borrow will be determined by your provider, but it must be within the limits set by the OS-HELP Guidelines and the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (available at www.comlaw.gov.au). The amount of OS-HELP assistance you are entitled to for a six-month period is the sum of the amount determined by your provider for the overseas study, plus any supplementary amount for Asian language study determined by your provider.

In 2014, the maximum OS-HELP loan amount for overseas study for a six-month period is $7,500 for study undertaken in Asia, or $6,250 for study undertaken elsewhere.

The maximum supplementary amount for Asian preparatory language study for a six-month period is $1,000.

These amounts are indexed on 1 January each year.

1.4 Will I be charged interest?
No. There is no interest charged on OS-HELP loans. However, your HELP debt at the ATO will be indexed on 1 June each year to maintain its real value to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index. Current and past indexation rates are available from the ATO website at www.ato.gov.au.

1.5 Is there a loan fee?
No. There is no loan fee or application fee for using OS-HELP.
2. APPLYING FOR AN OS-HELP LOAN


2.1 How do I apply for OS-HELP?

You must apply to your approved provider (provider) for an OS-HELP loan. As each provider runs its own application and selection process, you should contact your provider if you have any questions about this process.

To apply for an OS-HELP loan, you must submit a valid OS-HELP debt confirmation form to your provider. Many providers will allow you to submit a specific electronic version of the form online. Check with the student administration/enrolments office at your provider if you are unsure about whether to submit a paper or electronic form.

If you want to use an OS-HELP loan to pay for your overseas study, you must submit your valid TFN, even if you do not have a job. This is because repayments on your HELP debt are made through the Australian taxation system. If you do not provide your own TFN on the form or you provide an incorrect one, your form will not be valid and you will not be able to use an OS-HELP loan.

If you do not have a TFN, you will need to apply to the ATO for one. When you do so, the ATO will, on request, supply you with a Certificate of application for a TFN. Even before you receive your TFN from the ATO, you can attach your certificate to your OS-HELP debt confirmation form. If your form does not have your TFN or the certificate attached to it, it will not be valid and you will not be eligible for OS-HELP. You must advise your provider of your TFN within 21 days of receiving it.
You must keep your TFN secure. Do not provide your TFN if you are only enquiring about a course. Your TFN should only be provided on the actual OS-HELP debt confirmation form (either paper or electronic) when requesting the loan to pay for your overseas study expenses.

2.2 How is an OS-HELP loan paid?

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 the OS-HELP loan, the loan amount, and the conditions of receiving an OS-HELP loan.
3. KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR OS-HELP LOAN


3.1 Your Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number (CHESSN) and myUniAssist

You will be allocated a CHESSN when you first apply for admission to your approved provider (provider) or Tertiary Admissions Centre. The CHESSN is a unique identification number that remains with you during and after your studies. It helps you, your provider, and the Australian Government keep up to date with information about the Commonwealth assistance for tertiary study that you have used.

You can use your CHESSN (and other personal identifying details) to access myUniAssist at www.studyassist.gov.au. myUniAssist provides information on how much Commonwealth assistance you have received (but it will not display information related to study undertaken before 2005). In myUniAssist, you can refer to the OS-HELP assistance tab for information on your OS-HELP usage, and to the Commonwealth supported units tab for information related to your HECS-HELP usage.

myUniAssist is updated with details about your HELP usage as reported by your provider. It is important you understand that your data must be verified to ensure it is correct before your data is uploaded on myUniAssist and reported to the ATO. Given the time lag, you may need to add any units you have recently enrolled in/are currently enrolled in to the information shown on myUniAssist to determine your entitlements.
myUniAssist will not provide information about the current amount of your HELP debt as repayments are made to the ATO and myUniAssist does not record this information.

3.2 Your HELP account information statement

From 2013, HELP account information statements are no longer automatically sent out. You can phone the ATO at any time during the year to request this statement, confirm the balance of your account or obtain a payout figure. Be sure to have your TFN handy when you call. The ATO will ask you for it for security purposes before they disclose any personal information to you.

3.3 Can I cancel my OS-HELP loan?

Once you have been paid an OS-HELP loan, it cannot be cancelled.

You will have to repay your HELP debt through the Australian taxation system, even if you fail or do not complete your studies (either the Australian or overseas portion of your studies).
4. REPAYING YOUR HELP DEBT


4.1 When do I have to start paying back my loan?

Your OS-HELP debt becomes part of your accumulated HELP debt. The minimum repayment threshold for compulsory repayment is adjusted each year. In the 2013-14 income year, you will be required to make a compulsory repayment if your income is $51,309 or above. Repayments made through the Australian taxation system are called compulsory repayments and continue until you have repaid your whole debt.

4.2 How much will my repayments be?

The amount you repay each year is calculated as a percentage of your repayment income. The repayment percentage increases as your income increases, but 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 2013-14 income year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2013-2014 Repayment income</th>
<th>Repayment % rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below $51,309</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$51,309 - $57,153</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$57,154 - $62,997</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$62,998 - $66,308</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$66,309 - $71,277</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$71,278 - $77,194</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$77,195 - $81,256</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$81,257 - $89,421</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$89,422 - $95,287</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$95,288 and above</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Can I make a voluntary repayment?

There are several ways you can make a voluntary repayment, including via BPAY or a credit card. For more information on making a voluntary repayment, contact the ATO.

At the time this booklet went to print, the Australian Government had announced, but not legislated, changes to the voluntary repayment arrangements (to be in effect from 1 January 2014). Until the relevant legislation is passed, the current arrangements apply.

Current arrangements
Voluntary repayments of $500 or more receive a 5% bonus. This means your account will be credited with an additional 5% of the value of your repayment, not 5% of your outstanding debt. For example, if you make a voluntary repayment of $500, the bonus increases the value of your repayment so your account will be credited with $525.

Proposed arrangements
If the proposed changes were to go through, voluntary repayments would no longer be eligible to receive a bonus. For example, if you made a voluntary repayment of $500, your account would be credited with $500 only.

4.4 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, contact the ATO directly.
CONTACTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

- the eligibility criteria for OS-HELP;
- applying for an OS-HELP loan; and
- its application process.

**Study Assist website**
(www.studyassist.gov.au)
This website provides information about options for financing your tertiary study, including:

- HELP loans available in both the higher education and vocational education and training sectors;
- courses, institutions and other providers that offer Australian Government assistance; and
- student income support and Australian Scholarships and Awards.

The **CSP and HELP Handbook for 2014**
If you are seeking more information about OS-HELP, CSPs or about HELP loans in general, this handbook provides detailed information. It is available from the Publications page under the Helpful Resources section at www.studyassist.gov.au.
Department of Education

The Department can help you with information about:

• OS-HELP;
• other loans available under the HELP scheme; and
• other forms of Australian Government assistance.

Contact details:

• visit www.studyassist.gov.au (you can submit an online query from this website too);
• call the student enquiry line on 1800 020 108 (+61 3 9938 2545 from outside Australia); or
• call the student enquiry line on 1800 554 609 TTY for hearing or speech impaired students.

Australian Taxation Office (ATO)

The ATO can help you with:

• your accumulated HELP debt;
• compulsory repayments; and
• voluntary repayments.

Contact details:

• visit www.ato.gov.au;
• call 1300 720 092 to get the booklet Repaying your HELP debt in 2013-2014;
• call 13 28 61 for information about your HELP account and personal tax topics;
• call 13 36 77 TTY or 1300 555 727 TTY for hearing or speech impaired students; or
• write to PO Box 1032, Albury NSW 2640.

Important note: Do not send voluntary repayments to this address.