OS-HELP Policy and Guidelines for Students

OS-HELP is a loan available to eligible undergraduate students enrolled in a Commonwealth supported place who want to undertake some of their study overseas.

OS-HELP can be used for a range of expenses such as airfares, accommodation, and other travel or study expenses.

Students may receive one loan per six-month study period and can access a total of two OS-HELP loans over their lifetime.

You are eligible for OS-HELP you they meet ALL of the below criteria:

- You are an Australian citizen or permanent humanitarian visa holder.
- You have not received an OS-HELP loan on more than one other occasion.
- You are enrolled in an undergraduate course with an Australian provider as a Commonwealth supported student and have completed one equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL) - which is usually one year of full-time study.
- You are enrolled full-time with an overseas higher education institution* or an overseas campus of an Australian higher education provider (note: you must be outside Australia while undertaking this study. The overseas study cannot be completed by distance or online).
- Your overseas study counts towards the course requirements for the Australian undergraduate course of study in which you are enrolled.
- You will have at least 0.5 EFTSL of your course of study left to complete once you have finished your overseas study (usually one semester full-time).
- You meet the tax file number (TFN) requirements.
- You must give your provider your valid TFN OR if you don’t have a TFN you can give your provider a Certificate of application for a TFN. This certificate is available from the Australian Taxation Office after you have applied for a TFN.

*If you will undertaking work experience or a training placement at a hospital, then the hospital must be recognised as an educational provider for you to access an OS-HELP loan.

If you are completing a 3 year degree, as an exchange student, you may receive and travel with an OS-HELP loan in the first or second semester of your second year and the first semester only of the third year.

If you intend to commence the exchange in the first semester of the third (or final) year you will only be eligible for one six month loan period and must return to ACU to complete 0.5 EFTSL of study. NOT returning to complete 0.5 EFTSL of study renders any applicant ineligible to apply for any loan amount.

Double degrees allow students to take an OS-HELP loan in the middle years of the degree provided students are in Australia for the first EFSTL and last 0.5 EFSTL.

**Loan Details**

Students may borrow an amount of up to $6,051 (indexed maximum 2013). ACU will administer these funds in the amounts of $1,500, $3,000 and $6,051 only.

**OS-HELP Loan Fee**

There is no loan fee on any OS-HELP loans with a debt incurred date on or after 1 January 2010.
**Second Loans**

Students studying overseas for two six month periods (that is, two semesters) may apply for a second loan. Students can do this at the time they apply for the first loan, or in a later round. This second loan can only be paid, however, when it is confirmed in the six weeks prior to the beginning of the second semester that they are eligible to continue the approved exchange and still eligible, by OS-HELP guidelines, to receive a second OS-HELP loan.

Students may apply for a second loan of any offered amount up to the current maximum indexed loan amount.

**Applying for the OS-HELP Loan**

Students must indicate that they wish to apply for an OS-HELP Loan on the ACU Outbound Exchange Program Application Form.

Students will then be forwarded the OS-HELP form, brochure, and terms and conditions of the loan. Students are required to fill out the form accurately and return to the ACU Exchange Office.

**Application Deadline**

For students wishing to travel during Semester 1 of any year, applications for Exchange are due 15 June.

For students wishing to travel during Semester 2 of any year, applications for Exchange are due 15 December.

**Selection Criteria**

Where there are more applications than funding available, loans will be allocated firstly on the basis of order of receipt of application. Then subsequently, on acceptance by the overseas institution they have applied to.

**Notification of Loan Outcome**

Students are notified by the ACU Fees section (via their ACU student e-mail address) of loan approval. Students are requested to check their CAN to ensure that the payment has been processed.

**Payment of Loan**

To receive an OS-HELP loan students must:

1. Have been accepted to take part in an approved Exchange program at an approved overseas institution.
2. Have the study plan approved by the Course Coordinator.
3. Submit an OS-HELP Debt Confirmation Form and return to ACU International within one month of the date on the offer letter.

Students are determined to have incurred an OS-HELP debt on the day that ACU deposits money into the nominated bank account, or draws a cheque in the student’s name. The money will be paid either by direct deposit into a nominated bank account or by cheque, which will be sent to the student by express mail within ten working days of the submission of the OS-HELP Debt Confirmation Form.

NB: The OS-HELP Debt Confirmation Form will not be processed until:

1. The student accepts their ACU Outbound Exchange Offer letter.
2. The exchange enrolment (via the CE form) has been approved by the Course Coordinator and processed by the ACU Enrolments section.

**Withdrawal of Loan**

**Before being paid**

If students are approved for an OS-HELP loan and their circumstances change so that they no longer meet the eligibility criteria or it is determined that they have provided false or
misleading information but have not been paid the loan, the University is obliged to withdraw the offer of a loan.

**After being paid**
If the loan has already been paid to the student and their circumstances change so that they are no longer eligible or able to study overseas, the debt has already been incurred and students can only repay the debt through the Australian Taxation Office.

If it is discovered or there is reason to believe that students provided false or misleading information as part of the application process and students have already incurred an OS-HELP debt, the University must notify DIISRT immediately of the suspected offence.

**Student Complaints**
If a student is dissatisfied with decisions that ACU has made with respect to their OS-HELP application, students have the right to lodge a formal complaint via the ACU Student Complaint Management Policy. The policy is available at:

**Further Information**
Further information is available on the Higher Education website at:

Contact the Exchange & Study Abroad Office:

**ACU International**
PO Box 968
North Sydney NSW 2059
02 9739 2074
studyabroad@acu.edu.au