

OS-HELP Loan Student Eligibility Requirements

OS-HELP is a loan that assists eligible students who are based in Australia, to undertake some of their studies overseas. Students may receive one loan up to \$6,500.00 (more for students studying in an approved Asian country) per six-month study period for one or two non-overlapping overseas study periods, to assist with a range of expenses such as airfares and accommodation.

The total funds available by the Department of Education for OS-HELP loans are limited each year, so loans may not be available to all students who apply.

If there are insufficient loans for all eligible applicants, FedUni will select the students to receive loans by applying one or more of the following criteria:

- Loans may be awarded to students with the highest GPA;
- Loans may be declined to students who are receiving scholarships, grants or other forms of financial assistance towards their overseas study;
- Preference may be granted to students who have not previously received an OS-HELP loan;
- Preference may be given to students who have previously applied and been assessed as eligible, but could not be granted loans because insufficient funds were available.

NOTE: Notwithstanding anything in this document, the University must refuse a loan to an otherwise eligible recipient if funds are not available for the loan.

1. Student Eligibility Requirements

1.1 Basic Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for an OS-HELP loan at Federation University Australia a student must:

- be an Australian citizen or the holder of a permanent humanitarian visa;
- be a Commonwealth supported student;
- have already completed the equivalent of at least one year of full time study (120 credit points / 1 EFTSL) as a Commonwealth supported student in their current program and will have at least the equivalent of one course (15 credit points / 0.125 EFTSL) remaining to complete their program after their return from overseas. (Please note the remaining course to be studied is exclusive of any credit that will be granted for studies undertaken whilst overseas);
- be undertaking full time study overseas;
- have not received more than one previous OS-HELP loan;
- have not completed your overseas study before applying for the OS-HELP loan.
- must have their overseas study count as credit towards their current program at this University;
- complete and sign a request for Commonwealth assistance in relation to their current program of study and provide their Tax File Number;
- have been selected by the University for the award of an OS-HELP loan in accordance with the selection policy set out in Section 2.3.

1.2 Supplementary Loan for Asian Language Study Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for a supplementary OS-HELP loan for Asian language study, in addition to the Basic Eligibility Requirements as set out in 1.1, a student must:

- have been selected by the University for the award of an OS-HELP for overseas study in Asia;
- have been selected by the University for the award of a supplementary loan for Asian language study;
- undertake language study in preparation for undertaking their overseas study;
- have not yet completed the Asian language study before applying for the supplementary amount

1.3 Other Eligibility Factors – Period of Study

OS-HELP is available for a six month period of study which commences on the first day that a student begins their study overseas. The OS-HELP loan is provided for the 6 month period regardless of the actual duration on the study, which may vary.

A student cannot receive more than two OS-HELP loans within their Student Learning Entitlement (SLE).

A student can however apply for two consecutive OS-HELP loans but educational providers need to re-assess eligibility for the second loan no more than 6 weeks prior to the student commencing the second study period. The student is only eligible for a second loan if the second study period commences more than 6 months after the first study period has commenced. That means for students proposing to undertake 2 semesters of study overseas, they will only be eligible for consecutive OS-HELP loans if the second period of study commences 6 months after the first has commenced. It is not permitted for the study periods to overlap.

2. Application, Selection and Offer Processes

2.1 Application Process

- Completed application forms must be lodged by the due date stated on the application form;
- Applications must be completed in full and signed prior to lodgement. Applications that are not signed will not be processed.

2.2 Annual Application Round

The University will have three OS-HELP rounds each year. Applications for each round will not be assessed prior to the application due date stated on the application form.

2.3 Federation University Australia Selection Policies

2.3.1 Compliance with Commonwealth Guidelines

A student will not be selected for an OS-HELP loan unless the University is satisfied that the student meets the eligibility criteria for the loan as set out in Section 1 of these Guidelines.

2.3.2 Preference for Students on Approved Exchanges

At Federation University Australia preference for the award of OS-HELP loans will be given to otherwise eligible students who are proceeding on overseas study under an approved exchange arrangements between this University and an overseas higher education institution partner, or other approved overseas study arrangements.

2.3.3 Determining Merit

All applicants who meet the basic eligibility criteria will be ranked on the basis of their Federation University Australia Grade Point Average (GPA). As the University may need to place limits on the number of OS-HELP loans provided to students attending specific exchange institutions, students may not necessarily be offered a

loan at their most preferred institution. Loans will be offered in descending order of GPA, provided that places remain open at any of the preferred exchange institutions nominated by the applicant.

2.3.3 Determining the Amount of the Loan

The University will determine the amount of the loan to be awarded to each successful application for each respective six month study period up to the maximum allowed limit per study period.

Loan amounts will be awarded in increments of \$1,000.00, \$250.00 and \$500.00 with the minimum loan being \$1,000.00.

The University will abide by requests made by applicants to elect to receive a lesser amount than the maximum for any OS-HELP loan.

The University does not guarantee to award the maximum amount to all applicants selected to receive an OS-HELP loan.

2.4 Offer Process

OS-HELP loans will be offered to successful applicants within 2 weeks of the OS-HELP application deadline passing. Offers will be made in writing and will include the terms and conditions of the loan.

Students must complete and submit to the University an OS-HELP debt confirmation form at the time of accepting an offer of an OS-HELP loan. This form will be required to be submitted no later than the due date set out in the written offer with that date usually being set four weeks from the date of offer for the OS-HELP loan. Failure to return the form within that time frame may result in the offer of the OS-HELP loan being withdrawn.

3. Payment to Students

3.1 Value of OS-HELP Loan

For any six month study period, a student can apply for an OS-HELP loan of no less than \$1,000.00 and no greater than \$7,500.00 for students studying in an approved Asian country, no greater than \$6,500.00 for other countries and no greater than \$1,000.00 for students applying for the supplementary Asian language study loan.

3.2 Amount of OS-HELP Loan

The amount of OS-HELP debt is the amount of the loan.

3.3 Payment Arrangements

OS-HELP payments to students will be made by the University electronically into the bank account designated by the student at the time they accept the terms and conditions of the loan.

3.4 Repayment of OS-HELP Debts

- The OS-HELP debt will be incurred as soon as the loan amount is paid to the student.
- The student's OS-HELP debt is incurred as part of their accumulated HECS-HELP debt recorded by the ATO. Students repay their accumulated HECS-HELP debt through the taxation system once their income is the above minimum threshold for compulsory repayments.

4. Conditions of Loan

Students are required to inform the University of circumstances which will affect their continued eligibility for the OS-HELP loan.

If the University determines that the student is no longer eligible for OS-HELP and:

- if the loan payment has not been made, the University will withdraw its offer of OS-HELP assistance; or
- if the loan payment has been made, the student will have incurred the debt and can only repay this debt through the ATO.

If the University knows or has reason to believe that a student who has been offered OS-HELP assistance has applied on the basis of false or misleading information and:

- if the loan payment has not been made, the University must withdraw its offer for OS-HELP assistance;
or
- if the loan payment has been made, the University must notify immediately the Department of Education of the suspect offence and provide the Department of Education with a copy of the application and other information that they may request.

5. Appeals Process

Where a student considers that a decision made in relation to their application for an OS-HELP loan has an unreasonable negative impact in relation to their studies, the student may lodge a grievance in accordance with the University's Student Grievance Procedure.