



Australian Government

Department of Health

Bonded Medical Places Scheme

Information Booklet for 2015

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Updated August 2014

Disclaimer

This information is published as a guide only. It by no means overrules or diminishes what is stated in individual Bonded Medical Places Scheme Deeds of Agreement with the Commonwealth of Australia.

1 The Bonded Medical Places (BMP) Scheme

The BMP Scheme is an Australian Government initiative to provide more doctors to areas across Australia experiencing the greatest shortages of doctors.

Twenty-five percent of all first-year Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP) are provided to the BMP Scheme each year at participating universities.

In return, following attainment of Fellowship of a specialist college, participants agree to work in a District of Workforce Shortage of their choice for a period equal to the length of their medical degree, referred to as the Return of Service Period. BMP participants can reduce the length of the Return of Service Period with Eligible Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training and Scaling discounts. Both Return of Service Period and Scaling are explained in more detail further in this booklet.

The need for more doctors outside Inner Metropolitan areas is widely recognised and many communities have identified having a local doctor as high on their list of health priorities. Addressing these issues requires a partnership approach between government, universities and particularly doctors who are willing to make a real commitment to providing medical services to communities in areas where medical services are needed most.

Students joining the BMP Scheme will enter into a Deed of Agreement (Agreement) with the Commonwealth in the expectation that they will make a firm undertaking to honour this Agreement. It is vital that BMP participants read and understand their Agreement. Under the Agreement, each participant agrees to provide ongoing information to the Commonwealth each year to enable the Department of Health's BMP Team to manage the contractual arrangements.

1.1 Eligibility

Applications are open to Australian citizens, permanent residents of Australia and New Zealand citizens who held a New Zealand Special Category Visa on or before 26 February 2001. Citizenship and residency status are determined by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

Whether you are an Australian citizen by birth depends on the date of your birth. Most children born in Australia before 20 August 1986 are Australian citizens by birth unless one parent was entitled to diplomatic privileges or was a consular officer of another country. Children born after that date are only Australian citizens if at least one parent was an Australian citizen or permanent resident at the time of their birth.

Children born in Australia to parents who are not Australian citizens or permanent residents automatically acquire Australian citizenship on their 10th birthday if they have lived most of their life in Australia.

Having permanent residency status means you have a current visa that permits you to live in Australia indefinitely. There are many different visas that provide permanent residency for citizenship purposes.

Further information about citizenship, permanent residency status and visas can be obtained by visiting the [Department of Immigration and Border Protection](http://immi.gov.au/Visas/Pages/Find-a-visa.aspx) website at immi.gov.au/Visas/Pages/Find-a-visa.aspx.

1.2 Application Process

The application and selection process for a BMP Scheme place is determined by the university following the submission of an application to study medicine.

BMP Scheme applicants must meet the same entrance requirements as any other student applying for a medical place.

While different universities may seek expressions of interest in a BMP Scheme place in different ways, the opportunity to receive a BMP Scheme place is available to all eligible students accepted by a university into a medical programme.

If you wish to seek further information on the application processes used by one or more universities, you should contact the relevant medical school directly. A list of participating universities, including contact details is in section 8 of this booklet.

1.3 BMP Scheme Agreement

Following acceptance of an offer of a BMP Scheme place from the medical school of your university, you will receive an Agreement containing the terms and conditions to which you will need to comply. The Agreement will be between you and the Commonwealth of Australia.

Joining the BMP Scheme is a legal commitment and you are encouraged to seek legal advice to ensure that you fully understand all the terms and conditions before signing the Agreement. A copy of the standard BMP Scheme Deed of Agreement is available from the [BMP Scheme](http://health.gov.au/bmpscheme) website (health.gov.au/bmpscheme).

1.4 Further Support for BMP Scheme Participants

As a BMP Scheme participant, activities are made available to help you prepare for your future work outside metropolitan areas of Australia. The Department has currently engaged the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) for this purpose.

Under this Bonded Support Program, ACRRM provides a range of support services to BMP Scheme participants that may include online discussions, forums, networking events as well as provision of relevant information via the web, telephone, face to face and newsletters.

As part of the Bonded Support Program, ACRRM offers a conference programme to provide you with information and access to relevant health oriented events.

To enable participation in the Bonded Support Program, participant's personal contact details will be provided to ACRRM after the BMP Deed of Agreement has been signed.

1.5 Return of Service Period

On attainment of your Fellowship, you will be required to work as a specialist doctor (including General Practice) in an eligible District of Workforce Shortage area for a period equivalent to the length of your Medical Course. BMP participants can reduce the length of the Return of Service Period with Eligible Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training and Scaling discounts.

1.6 Geographical Classification and Districts of Workforce Shortage

A District of Workforce Shortage is determined by the ratio of doctors to population or locations where the population's health needs are not being met. This is usually outside Inner Metropolitan areas where there are fewer doctors per head of population.

For the purpose of the BMP Scheme, if the ratio of doctors to population falls below that of the national average, the area is classified as a District of Workforce Shortage. This data is currently updated quarterly so is subject to change over time.

The geographical classification system for the BMP Scheme is based on the Australian

Bureau of Statistics' Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Areas (ASGC-RA) system. The system groups locations into 'Remoteness Areas', which are used to determine eligible areas for BMP Scheme doctors completing their Return of Service Period. The classification system is updated after each census so eligible geographical areas may change over time.

Classifications are separated into Remoteness Areas (RA) 1 - 5 locations, with RA 1 locations further broken down into Inner, Outer and Non Metropolitan.

Generally, General Practitioners can work in any District of Workforce Shortage other than an Inner Metropolitan location. Specialists (other than General Practitioners) can work in any Outer Metropolitan area of an RA 1 location or any RA 2 to RA 5 location. Specialists can also work in an Inner Metropolitan location if the location is classified as a District of Workforce Shortage for their specialty.

Information on a location's RA, Metropolitan or District of Workforce Shortage status can be found by searching the map on the [Rural Health Australia](http://RuralHealthAustralia.gov.au) website. Participants who want to find out the current District of Workforce Shortage status of an Inner Metropolitan location can do this by emailing details of the specialty and location (including postcode) to the BMP Scheme at bmpscheme@health.gov.au.

1.7 More Information

Further information about the BMP Scheme is on the [BMP Scheme](http://BMPScheme.gov.au) website or you may contact the BMP Scheme Team by email at bmpscheme@health.gov.au.

2 Participant Obligations

By agreeing to accept a BMP Scheme place, you are committing to work in a District of Workforce Shortage for a period of time equivalent to the length of your Medical Course (less any Eligible Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training and any credit obtained through Scaling) once you have attained Fellowship as a specialist, including as a General Practitioner.

2.1 BMP Scheme Agreement

If you decide to take up an offer of a BMP Scheme place, you will be required to enter into a legal Agreement with the Department for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australian that specifies your rights and obligations on the one hand and the Commonwealth's on the other.

Joining the BMP Scheme is a legal commitment and it is strongly advised that you seek legal advice to ensure that you fully understand the terms and conditions before signing the Agreement.

In brief, the Agreement requires participants to:

- complete their medical studies and become registered as a medical practitioner within 10 years of the Census date of the first year of their Medical Course, excluding any approved deferrals;
- gain Fellowship, either as a General Practitioner or other specialist within 16 years of the Census date of the first year of their Medical Course, excluding any approved deferrals; and
- work for a period of time equal to the length of their Medical Course (this time can be reduced by up to half with Eligible Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training and even further with Scaling discounts) in their choice of an eligible District of

Workforce Shortage for their specialty. Work during this time is subject to conditions. Please refer to the Agreement for further information.

If you are under 18 years of age at the time of signing the Agreement you must notify the Department within 30 days of turning 18. A Deed of Ratification will then be sent to you by the Department, which you are required to sign and return within 30 days of receipt. By signing the Deed of Ratification, you will unconditionally ratify and adopt in writing the promises made under the Agreement.

2.2 Completing medical training

Once you complete your Medical Course, you will commence training to become a fully qualified doctor, including specialist registration with Fellowship of a recognised medical college. This training is broken into two components: pre-vocational and vocational training.

Pre-Vocational Training – is medical training undertaken after the completion of the medical course and prior to commencing vocational training.

After graduating from an Australian Medical Council (AMC) accredited medical school, Australian medical graduates must undertake a year of supervised training. This year is known as an intern year or Post-Graduate Year 1 (PGY1), and must be completed before gaining unconditional general medical registration.

Most doctors will elect to complete one or more years of pre-vocational training after their Internship in the public hospital system and community health services to gain more clinical experience with greater levels of responsibility.

There is a competitive, state-based, annual application and allocation process for pre-vocational training placements.

Vocational Training - is medical training that is being undertaken in a training programme in pursuit of a specific career option either in General Practice or other specialist practice, such as radiology or obstetrics.

Training is provided through the specialist medical colleges. The training programmes are accredited by the Australian Medical Council (AMC). Most vocational training programmes are between three to seven full time years in duration. Some specialist medical colleges differentiate their vocational training programmes into basic and advanced components.

Participants of the BMP Scheme agree to obtain Fellowship of a recognised specialist medical college within 16 years of the Census Date of the first year of their Medical Course (excluding any period of approved deferral).

During these training years it is a requirement under your Agreement that you keep the Department informed of the location, start and end dates to your Internship, Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training placements. This correspondence will assist the Department to track your progress towards completing your obligations under the Scheme.

You may also wish to apply for recognition of Eligible Pre-Vocational or Vocational Training to count towards your Return of Service Period. You will be required under the Agreement to submit these applications to the Department for assessment **prior** to commencing the placement.

3 Tenure

You can apply to the Department to remain in the location in which you have undertaken Eligible Vocational Training. If you are granted tenure by the Department, you can

remain in the same location to complete your Return of Service Period, even if that location ceases to be a District of Workforce Shortage.

If you have not applied for and been granted tenure prior to commencing your Return of Service Period, you may have to move to an eligible District of Workforce Shortage to complete your Return of Service Period after attaining Fellowship.

4 Return of Service Period

On attainment of your Fellowship, you will be required to work as a specialist doctor (including as a General Practitioner) in an eligible area for a period equivalent to the length of your Medical Course. BMP participants can reduce the length of the Return of Service Period with approved Eligible Pre-vocational and Vocational Training and credit obtained through Scaling.

As a BMP Scheme doctor you can choose where you work, and for whom you work, when undertaking the Return of Service Period. The only requirement is that you work in an eligible District of Workforce Shortage for your specialty, including General Practice.

As long as you gain prior approval from the Department, you may choose to reduce your Return of Service Period by up to half during Pre-Vocational Training and Vocational Training.

If you undertake Pre-Vocational or Vocational Training in an eligible area from your second year (PGY2) and receive written approval from the Department prior to commencing your placement, this training can be counted towards your Return of Service Period, provided you fulfil all required criteria.

You will need to check your specific Agreement to determine the eligible areas where you can undertake training that may count towards your Return of Service Period.

The following table acts as a guide only:

	General Practitioner	Specialist (other than a General Practitioner)
PGY1	n/a	n/a
Pre-vocational Training	Any location other than an Inner Metropolitan area	Any location other than an Inner Metropolitan area
Vocational Training	Any District of Workforce Shortage as identified on the Rural Health Australia website	Any Inner Metropolitan area if a District of Workforce Shortage for that specialty; Any Outer Metropolitan or Non Metropolitan area in RA1; Any RA 2 – 5 area.
Work after attaining Fellowship	Any District of Workforce Shortage as identified on the Rural Health Australia website	Any Inner Metropolitan area if a District of Workforce Shortage for that specialty; Any Outer Metropolitan or Non Metropolitan area in RA1; Any RA 2 – 5 area.

To be counted towards your Return of Service Period, each period of Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training must not be shorter than three consecutive months.

To view locations of eligible areas for BMP doctors to undertake training that can count towards the Return of Service Period you can search the map on the [Rural Health Australia](https://www.health.gov.au/rural-health) website. This website also provides information on the current District of Workforce Shortage status for General Practitioners (ensure that the District of Workforce Shortage layer is selected). Specialists, other than General Practitioners, can find out the District of Workforce Shortage status of an Inner Metropolitan location by contacting the BMP Scheme at bmpscheme@health.gov.au with the location, including postcode, and the particular specialty.

You must attain Fellowship of a recognised specialist college within 16 years of commencing the Medical Course (excluding any period of approved deferral) and commence your Return of Service Period in a District of Workforce Shortage within 12 months of attaining Fellowship (excluding any period of approved deferral).

It is possible to seek permission to defer the Return of Service Period in Exceptional Circumstances. Exceptional Circumstances are those unforeseen circumstances beyond Your control which prevent you from fulfilling your obligations under the Agreement.

BMP Scheme participants are also able to defer their obligations under the BMP Scheme for up to 12 months without prior approval from the Department following either the birth or adoption of a child or to complete additional postgraduate education. You must notify the Department within 30 days of the commencement of this deferral. Deferral periods of longer than 12 months, and any other reason for deferral, require prior approval by the Minister and may be subject to conditions.

5 Specialisation

You are encouraged to carefully consider your choice of specialty having regard to your obligations under the BMP Scheme Agreement.

Working in a District of Workforce Shortage for the Return of Service Period is a requirement only after specialist training (including General Practice) has been completed.

6 Breach of Agreement

If you fail to fulfil your obligations in your Agreement with the Australian Government, you will be in breach of your Agreement.

A BMP Scheme participant will be considered to be in breach of the Agreement if, for example, they:

- discontinue, withdraw or are excluded from the Medical Course after the Census Date of their Second Year of Study;
- do not become registered as a medical practitioner within ten years of the Census Date of their first year of; the Medical Course (unless a deferral for parenting or other reason has been approved);
- fail to obtain Fellowship of a medical college within 16 years of starting the medical course (unless a deferral for parenting or other reason has been approved); and
- do not complete their obligation to work in a District of Workforce Shortage for a period of time equal to the length of their medical course less any approved Eligible Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training and Scaling discounts.

If you breach your Agreement, you may be required to repay a proportion of the total sum

of the Commonwealth Contribution Amount for each year or part year that you held a Bonded Medical Place prior to your breach. The repayment figures are listed on the Department of Health website. You should note that the amount that you need to repay in the event that you breach your Agreement cannot be reduced by Scaling.

For example, if you have worked half of your Return of Service Period in a District of Workforce Shortage before breaching the Agreement, you must repay half of the total of the amounts listed in your Agreement for the years that you were at university.

If you do breach the Agreement you will not have to repay any of the amounts the Commonwealth has paid the University for your Bonded Medical Place if you:

- withdraw from the Medical Course due to illness or injury with supporting evidentiary documentation from a medical practitioner;
- are excluded from the Medical Course after commencing your Second Year of Study provided that you sign a separate deed in favour of the Commonwealth in which you agree that you will not study in an Australian Medical Course within five years of signing the separate deed; or
- withdraw from the Medical Course after commencing your Second Year of Study with no qualification, provided that you sign a separate deed in favour of the Commonwealth in which you agree that you will not study in an Australian Medical Course within five years of signing the separate deed.

Please note: This information is intended only as a summary of the breach conditions in the Agreement. It does not overrule or diminish what is stated in individual Agreements with the Australian Government, which is the legally binding Agreement between you and the Australian Government. It is strongly recommended you read the breach conditions in the Agreement carefully and seek legal advice.

7 Scaling

Scaling is an incentive being applied to a range of Australian Government programmes that have a Return of Service Period, including the BMP Scheme. Scaling increases the attractiveness of working in rural areas by fast tracking your Return of Service Period based on the Remoteness Area (RA) category you are working in. The greatest reward will be for those willing to work in the most remote locations of Australia.

Scaling discounts will be automatically applied once you have attained Fellowship and have commenced work in a District of Workforce Shortage. Discounts will not be applied to any Eligible Pre-Vocational or Vocational Training which the Department has approved as being part of your Return of Service Period.

Scaling discounts will be applied to your Return of Service Period each month if:

- you have attained Fellowship and your Return of Service Period has commenced;
- you have worked in Inner Regional to Very Remote Australia; and
- you have worked a minimum of 20 hours a week or you have met the total value of Medicare claims threshold of \$5,000 for that month.

Discounts will be based on your Medicare claiming activity every month. Medicare Australia will look at your claiming history and determine the RA category in which the highest 'value of claims' occurred and apply the Scaling discount to that RA category. The Scaling discount applicable to the major RA category will be discounted from your Return of Service Period end date.

If you are working in more than one location in a month or for only part of a month, Medicare Australia will calculate the claiming activity in all eligible RA categories, irrespective of the number of services provided in each RA category. If you met the 'threshold', Medicare Australia will apply the discount applicable to the RA category where the major activity occurred.

If you are working in a salaried position, the Department of Health will apply Scaling discounts to your Return of Service Period if:

- you have attained Fellowship and your Return of Service Period has commenced;
- you have worked in Inner Regional Australia to Very Remote Australia; and
- you are working at least 20 hours per week.

The Scaling discount applicable to the major RA category will be discounted from your Return of Service Period end date.

Scaling will be applied monthly at the following rates:

RA Category	Scaling Discount Rate %
RA1 Major cities of Australia	0%
RA2 Inner Regional Australia	10%
RA3 Outer Regional Australia	30%
RA4 Remote Australia	40%
RA5 Very Remote Australia	50%

8 University Medical Schools

This information is published as a Guide only

The University of Adelaide	fhsadmissions@adelaide.edu.au	(08) 8313 4859
Australian National University	medadmissions@anu.edu.au	(02) 6125 1304
Deakin University	medinfo@deakin.edu.au	(03) 5227 2120
Flinders University	medadmissions@flinders.edu.au	(08) 8201 3800
Griffith University	medicine@griffith.edu.au	(07) 5678 0704
James Cook University*	medicine@jcu.edu.au	(07) 4781 6232
The University of Melbourne	sc-mdhs@unimelb.edu.au	(03) 8344 5890
Monash University Clayton and Churchill Campuses	medicineadmissions@monash.edu	(03) 9905 0567
The University of Newcastle	15000-UoN-Enquiries@newcastle.edu.au	(02) 4921 5000

The University of New England	ruralmed@une.edu.au	(02) 6773 3877
The University of Notre Dame Fremantle Campus	fremantle.medicine@nd.edu.au	(08) 9433 0228
The University of Notre Dame Sydney Campus	sydney@nd.edu.au	(02) 8204 4450
The University of New South Wales	medicine.info@unsw.edu.au	(02) 9385 8765
The University of Queensland	admissionsenquiries@admin.uq.edu.au	(07) 3365 2203
The University of Sydney	medicine.info@sydney.edu.au	(02) 9351 3132
The University of Tasmania	course.info@admin.utas.edu.au	1300 363 864
The University of Western Australia	meddentadmissions@uwa.edu.au	(08) 6488 8500
The University of Western Sydney	medstudent@uws.edu.au	1300 897 669
The University of Wollongong	gsm-admissions@uow.edu.au	1300 367 869

9 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

9.1 FAQs from prospective BMP participants

How do I apply for the BMP Scheme?

The application and selection process for the BMP Scheme is the responsibility of the universities and takes place after an application to study medicine has been lodged.

While different universities may seek expressions of interest in a BMP Scheme place in different ways, the opportunity to receive a BMP Scheme place is available to all students accepted into a medical school.

For more information on the application processes used by one or more universities, contact the medical schools directly using the information provided in section 8.

Do I have to sign a Deed of Agreement?

Yes. To accept the offer of a BMP Scheme place you will need to sign the Deed of Agreement sent to you by the Australian Government Department of Health. You will need to sign the Deed of Agreement to ensure your enrolment and return it to the Department by the due date, or the offer may lapse.

Participants who sign the Deed of Agreement before 18 years of age must notify the Department within 30 days of turning 18 years old. On this advice, a Deed of Ratification will be supplied to the participant by the Department. By signing this Deed of Ratification, a participant will give unconditional consent and adopt in writing the promises made under the Deed of Agreement.

Do I have to come from a rural or remote area to be eligible for the BMP Scheme?

No. The BMP Scheme is open to all first year medical students who are Australian citizens, permanent residents of Australia or New Zealand citizens who held a New Zealand Special Category Visa on or before 26 February 2001.

Will I have to pay the HECS-HELP?

Yes. You will be responsible for your HECS-HELP debt. Further advice on your individual income and HELP repayments can be obtained from the Department of Education HELP enquiry line on free call 1800 020 108.

Will I receive a scholarship with my BMP Scheme place?

No. There is no scholarship associated with the BMP Scheme. However, you may apply for other Scholarships. Please see section 9.2 below.

What training is involved in becoming a specialist doctor, including general practitioner?

There are three stages to becoming a fully qualified medical practitioner.

1. Obtaining a degree through a medical school at university

Students complete a medical degree at medical school in an Australian university. The medical degree will take between four to six years to complete depending on whether it is an undergraduate or graduate course.

2. Pre-Vocational training

After successfully completing a medical degree, students work as an 'intern' in the public hospital system. Most doctors will then elect to complete one or more years of pre-vocational training after the internship, in the public hospital system and community health services.

3. Gaining Fellowship of an Australian medical college

Fellowship training is a training programme to become either a General Practitioner or other specialist, such as a surgeon or obstetrician. Training during this period is called vocational training. Most vocational training programmes are between three and six years in duration.

What is the time commitment of the BMP Scheme?

After you have completed your Fellowship training you will be required to complete a Return of Service Period that is equivalent to the length of your Medical Course at university. For a BMP participant who completed a four-year course, the Return of Service Period will be four years minus any reductions for Scaling and Eligible Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training. For a BMP participant who completed a six-year medical course, the Return of Service Period will be six years minus any reductions for Scaling and Eligible Pre-Vocational or Vocational Training.

Broadly speaking, a BMP participant could expect to undertake a four to six year medical course, followed by four to eight years of training prior to commencing their Return of Service Period. A BMP participant may be committed to the BMP Scheme for around nine to sixteen years before commencing their Return of Service Period, or longer if the participant has undergone periods of deferral. Whilst this does seem like a long time, it is important to remember that the time commitment to work in a District of Workforce Shortage is only the length of time equivalent to the length of the medical course.

9.2 FAQs from BMP participants at university

If I receive an offer of a BMP Scheme place from one university, will it be valid at another Australian university?

No. The BMP Scheme place is allocated and linked to the university making the offer of a place at medical school. This means that if you are successful in receiving an offer of a BMP Scheme place from a university, it is only valid for that specific university.

Can I transfer from my BMP Scheme place to a standard entry Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) previously known as a HECS place?

No. Your place at university is tied to the BMP Scheme. Withdrawal from the BMP Scheme after commencement of 2nd year will mean that you forfeit your medical school place and you may not be able to continue in the medical course. However, if the university agrees, you may change to a CSP before the Census date in the first year that you start your course.

Can I defer the start of my medical degree?

Yes, providing your university agrees. Universities may allow you to defer starting your study after you have been offered a place under the BMP Scheme. The Australian Government would not enter into a Deed of Agreement with you in this case. It remains at the university's discretion as to whether a BMP Scheme place would be offered to you when you commence your study in the following year.

Can I take leave of absence while studying for my medical degree?

Yes, providing your university agrees. You can take leave of absence without the Department's (Minister's delegate) approval, however, you will need to meet your obligations under the BMP Scheme, including registering as a medical practitioner within 10 years of the Census Date of the first year of your Medical Course and attaining Fellowship in a specialist college within 16 years.

If your leave of absence is for parental leave of less than 12 months you will need to contact the BMP Scheme Team and provide them with evidence such as your baby's birth certificate. You may defer for the birth or adoption of a child at any time between commencing your medical course and commencing your Return of Service Period, however, if the period of leave is for more than twelve months you must contact the Department for approval. The period of deferral may be added to the time required under the Agreement for you to become a medical practitioner and to gain Fellowship.

If I fail one year of my studies, can I repeat?

Yes, if the university gives approval for you to repeat. You must notify the Department if this occurs.

If I complete an honours year or a research year, will I have to work an extra year in a District of Workforce Shortage?

No. Your Return of Service Period is equal to the length of your Medical Course and does not include any additional elective study.

Are graduates and undergraduates required to commit to the same Return of Service Period?

No, undergraduate and postgraduate courses vary in length. Your Return of Service Period requires you to work for a period of time equivalent to the length of your Medical Course less any credit obtained through Scaling and Eligible Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training.

What information do I need to provide if my circumstances change?

The Department needs to be kept informed as your circumstances change. Clause 3.5 of your Deed of Agreement specifies what information you will need to provide to the Department if your circumstances change whilst you are at university.

This information helps us to track your progress towards completing your obligations under the BMP Scheme and for the most part, proof of changes are not required, just a simple email or phone call will suffice. It also gives participants an opportunity to clarify any concerns or to ask questions. The BMP Scheme Team are always happy to help you ensure you understand your obligations and options.

Is there further support for BMP Scheme participants while studying?

Yes. Currently the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) has been engaged by the Department of Health to provide additional support through the [Bonded Support Program](#).

The Bonded Support Program provides participants with the opportunity to attend national health events/conferences and enables access to ACRRM's online medical education resources as well as communication with peers and mentors via a 'virtual community'.

Can I apply for scholarships while in a BMP Scheme position?

Yes. Students who agree to take up a new medical school place through the BMP Scheme are able to apply for other Australian Government or State Government assistance schemes such as the [Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship \(RAMUS\) Scheme](#). It is your responsibility to ensure that you will be able to meet your obligations under your Deed of Agreement if you accept a scholarship.

What Scholarships are available for medical students?

Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship (RAMUS) Scheme

A scholarship that may interest you is the [Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship \(RAMUS\) Scheme](#).

RAMUS scholarships are targeted at medical students from a rural background who need financial support to assist with their accommodation, travel and living expenses while they are studying medicine.

Successful applicants receive a scholarship of \$10,000 a year during their medical studies subject to satisfactory progress through their course and continuing financial need.

Other scholarships and information for Australian medical students

A variety of other scholarships and funding arrangements may be available to students who are interested in a career in medicine. Some of these are listed below. You can visit relevant websites or contact university scholarship offices for further information.

[My Future](#) – Use the Search Portal to find 'scholarships'.

[The John Flynn Placement Program](#).

[Scholarships targeted at Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health students](#)

[Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarships](#)

Of further interest

[Australian Medical Students Association \(AMSA\)](#)

[National Rural Health Students' Network \(NRHSN\)](#)

[Rural Clinical Schools \(RCS\)](#)

[University Departments of Rural Health \(UDRH\)](#)

9.3 FAQs from BMP participants who have completed their university course

Where can I work as a BMP Scheme participant?

BMP Scheme participants are able to complete Pre-Vocational and Vocational Training placements in any location. Your obligation to complete the Return of Service Period in a District of Workforce Shortage does not commence until you have attained Fellowship of a medical college. Should you wish to complete up to half the Return of Service Period during Eligible Pre-Vocational (resident) or Vocational (registrar) Training then these placements will need to meet the minimum requirements as set out in your Agreement, including obtaining approval from the Department **prior** to commencing the training..

How long is my Return of Service Period?

As a doctor participating in the BMP Scheme you must work in a District of Workforce Shortage in an eligible location for a period of time equal to the length of your Medical Course, less Eligible Pre-Vocational or Vocational Training and any credit obtained through Scaling.

What is a District of Workforce Shortage?

A District of Workforce Shortage is a geographical area of Australia in which the population's need for health care has not been met. A location is deemed to be a District of Workforce Shortage if it falls below the national average for the provision of medical services of the type provided by the BMP participant. Districts of Workforce Shortage are subject to change, as is the name "District of Workforce Shortage" and the methodology for determining them.

I have just completed my Internship, and I want to take advantage of completing some of my Return of Service Period during my pre-vocational and vocational training. Can you tell me more about this?

BMP Scheme participants can complete up to half the total Return of Service Period prior to attaining Fellowship in pre-vocational and / or vocational training.

Eligible Pre-Vocational Training can be completed in any location other than an Inner Metropolitan location. You can find out the status of a location by searching the map on the [Rural Health Australia](#) website. To be eligible, the training placement must be within one location, for a minimum of three consecutive months and you must be working for a minimum of 20 hours per week.

Eligible Vocational Training locations vary, depending on what specialty pathway you choose, when you signed your Deed of Agreement and if you have signed a Deed of Variation since 2010. More information on Eligible Vocational Training can be found on the BMP Scheme website or by emailing BMPScheme@health.gov.au.

To have an Eligible Pre-Vocational or Vocational Training placement count towards your Return of Service Period you must apply to the BMP Scheme **prior to commencing** the placement. You will need to submit an application form and proof of employment. Application forms can be found on the [BMP Scheme](#) website or by emailing BMPScheme@health.gov.au. Proof of employment must confirm the location, start and end dates of the placement you wish to claim for. This can be the letter of offer from your employer, or a purpose written, signed letter confirming the location, start and end dates.

Can I choose where to work and will I be able to practise in more than one District of Workforce Shortage location during my Return of Service Period?

Yes, provided it is a District of Workforce Shortage in eligible locations, you choose where to work. You can fulfil your Return of Service Period by practising in one or more locations.

I am currently doing a vocational training placement in a location that is not classified as a District of Workforce Shortage. I have a lot of patients and although not technically a District of Workforce Shortage, the practice I am working in really needs me to stay. Can I request special consideration to complete my Return of Service Period here after I gain Fellowship?

No. Under the Agreement you must work in a District of Workforce Shortage as defined in the Agreement. Although there are many locations across Australia that require more doctors, the BMP Scheme encourages participants to work where they are needed the most. If you choose to continue to work in a location not classified as a District of Workforce Shortage after you attain Fellowship you will be in breach of your Agreement. Breach provisions may apply, including repayment of a portion of the Commonwealth Contribution Amount.

Is there flexibility in my working hours during the Return of Service Period?

Yes. You are required to work for not less than nine months of each full calendar year at an average of at least 20 hours per week, including no less than three months in any six month period.

Am I entitled to have annual leave/sick leave during the Return of Service Period?

Yes, as with normal working conditions and arrangements agreed with your employer, providing you meet your obligations under the BMP Scheme Deed of Agreement.

Does the Return of Service Period need to be continuous?

Yes. You must commence the Return of Service Period within 12 months of attaining Fellowship (i.e. a recognised specialist or General Practitioner qualification) or within 16 years of commencing your medical course. However, you can reduce your Return of Service Period by up to half of the length of your university course during Eligible Pre-Vocational or Vocational Training or credit from Scaling.

It is possible to defer some of your obligations under the Agreement, including seeking permission to defer your Return of Service Period in Exceptional Circumstances.

Can I specialise in an area of my choice?

Yes, however, you need to be aware that a few highly specialised sub-specialties may only have facilities in Inner Metropolitan areas. Therefore, you need to carefully consider your choice of specialty, having regard to your obligations under the Agreement.

The list of currently recognised medical colleges that lead to a Fellowship can be found under Schedule 4 of the Health Insurance Regulations 1975, (Health Insurance Act 1973). This list is also shown in Attachment A of the Agreement for information only, as it may change over time.

To investigate the types of specialties that you can study, contact details for the specialist medical colleges, including the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners can be found on the Specialist Medical Colleges page of the AMC website.

Further information regarding vocational training places for Fellowship of a medical college is contained in the Medical Training Review Panel (MTRP) reports.

The MTRP reports include data on Australian medical training opportunities such as the number of:

- BMP Scheme places provided each year;
- Pre-vocational training positions for post graduate years one and two; and
- Vocational medical training places.

How do I know if an organisation or service is an Aboriginal Medical Service?

For the purposes of your Return of Service Period, an organisation or service is considered to be an Aboriginal Medical Service if it delivers primary health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and receives its core funding from the Commonwealth. You are welcome to contact the BMP Scheme Team to enquire if an organisation is an Aboriginal Medical Service.

What if I begin to work in a District of Workforce Shortage and it is subsequently reclassified and ceases to be a District of Workforce Shortage? Will I need to move areas?

No. Under the BMP Scheme you can stay in the one location for the whole of your Return of Service Period or you can move. It is your choice.

If I don't complete my work in a District of Workforce Shortage will I still be able to practise as a doctor?

Yes, but you will be in breach of your Deed of Agreement and you may be required to repay a percentage of the Australian Government's contribution to your medical education.

Can BMP Scheme participants undertake vocational training overseas?

Yes, however you must return to Australia and commence your continuous years of Working in a District of Workforce Shortage within 12 months of attaining Fellowship. Vocational training undertaken overseas cannot be used to reduce your Return of Service Period.

When making a decision about studying overseas, the [Australian Medical Council \(AMC\)](#) website has information about the implications for medical registration on your return to Australia.

You may also wish to consult with the relevant Australian specialist medical college(s) to find out whether they allow overseas placements within their Fellowship courses and what process applies in recognising the training you may undertake overseas.

Contact details for the specialist medical colleges, including the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, can be found on the Specialist Medical Colleges page of the AMC website.

If you choose to gain Fellowship qualifications overseas you would then have to seek assessment of your qualifications through the AMC and the relevant Australian medical college before being recognised as a general practitioner or other specialist in Australia.

Although this procedure is administered by the AMC, the relevant specialist medical college undertakes assessment of each applicant's training and experience. The AMC website (address above) also contains information about the recognition of overseas specialist qualifications in Australia.

Can I complete my Return of Service Period overseas?

No. After attaining Fellowship you must work in a District of Workforce Shortage in

Australia for your Return of Service Period.

I have been thinking about my Return of Service Period after Fellowship. I want to do some additional training or maybe do some work in a location that isn't a District of Workforce Shortage. Can I do this before I start my Return of Service Period?

BMP Scheme participants have up to twelve months from the date Fellowship to commence their Return of Service Period in a District of Workforce Shortage. During this 12 month period participants cannot render a Professional Service outside a District of Workforce Shortage without written approval from the Minister. This period of time is intended to allow for participants to take time to find employment in the District of Workforce Shortage location of their choice. You will need to seek approval from the Minister for a longer deferral before commencing your Return of Service Period.

What happens after I complete my Return of Service Period in a District of Workforce Shortage?

After completing your Return of Service Period in a District of Workforce Shortage, you will have no further obligations under the Deed of Agreement.

What happens if I only complete part of the Return of Service Period?

If you work for only a part of the Return of Service Period, you will be in breach of your Deed of Agreement. You may be required to repay a percentage of the Australian Government's contribution to your medical education.

Can I apply for HECS reimbursement if I am a BMP Scheme participant?

BMP Scheme participants may apply for HECS reimbursement if they undertake training in a rural and remote area. However, they are not able to receive HECS reimbursement for any placement that they are using to reduce their Return of Service Period under the BMP Scheme.

For further information, please refer to information on the HECS Reimbursement Scheme Guidelines [Rural Health Australia](#) website at and follow the link to RHWS Incentives - HECS Reimbursement Scheme.

10 Contact details

10.1 Bonded Medical Places Scheme

To make further enquiries please contact the Department of Health:

Email BMPScheme@health.gov.au

Fax (02) 6289 8600
(Attention BMP Scheme)

Mail Bonded Medical Places Scheme
Department of Health
MDP 149
GPO Box 9848
Canberra ACT 2601

10.2 BMP Bonded Support Program

Email bondedsupport@acrrm.org.au

Phone (07) 3105 8200

Fax (07) 3105 8299

Mail Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
GPO Box 2507
Brisbane QLD 4001