



BONDED MEDICAL PROGRAM – Bonded Participant obligations

Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) Scheme participants, that have completed their course of study in medicine, are able to opt into the Bonded Medical Program (the Program), and access:

- a reduction in the RoSO required compared to the MRBS Scheme;
- a more flexible approach for completion of Return of Service Obligation (RoSO), which can be non-continuous, full-time or part-time work, and fly in/fly out work in eligible locations; and
- clear and consistent processes to assist participants in managing their obligations using an online web portal to facilitate easier self-management of RoSO.

If you opt in and become a Bonded Participant under the Program, you have obligations under the *Health Insurance Act 1973*¹ (*the Act*), and your MRBS Scheme Contract ceases.

This fact sheet outlines key obligations for *former MRBS Scheme participants*. It summarises the conditions of participation and the consequences of a breach of condition.

Opt in considerations for existing participants

Opt in is voluntary. Eligible existing participants of the MRBS Scheme can choose to opt in to the Program provided they have completed their course of study in medicine and are not subject to s19ABA of the Act (i.e. a Medicare Ban). The decision to opt in will depend on the participant's assessment of the benefits of the Program compared to their existing contract.

Participants are encouraged to seek independent legal advice prior to making a decision to opt in.

Participants who choose not to opt in will remain in the MRBS Scheme and subject to the requirements of their existing Contract.

Return of Service Obligation (RoSO)²

Condition	Breach of condition ³
<p>If you opt in to the Program – having received a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) and scholarship under your former MRBS Scheme – you are required to complete the RoSO in eligible regional, rural or remote areas for a period of three (3) years (less any RoSO served under your former MRBS Scheme Contract).</p> <p>You are required to complete your RoSO within 18 years from the day you complete your course of study in medicine at an Australian university.</p>	<p>If you do not complete your RoSO within the 18 year timeframe (or an extended period), you will be liable to pay 100% of the scholarship amount paid to you during your course of study in medicine, less a pro-rata amount based on any proportion of RoSO completed, plus interest.</p> <p>You will also be subject to a period – of up to 6 years – during which a Medicare benefit is not payable in respect of professional services rendered (i.e. a Medicare Ban).⁴</p> <p>Any amounts owing will be recoverable as a debt due to the Commonwealth.</p>

¹ [Health Insurance Act 1973](#) [Part VD] and [Health Insurance \(Bonded Medical Program\) Rule 2020](#)

² 124ZG(1)(c) Return of Service Obligations

³ 124ZH Breach of condition of Bonded Medical Program—repayment of education costs

⁴ 124ZJ Breach of condition of Bonded Medical Program – Medicare benefits not payable



Reporting⁵

Condition	Breach of condition ⁶
<p>As a Bonded Participant, you have reporting requirements – as detailed in Division 3 of the Rule – which commence in the final three months of your course of study in medicine.</p> <p>You must report the specified notifiable events and satisfy the RoSO reporting requirements by entering the required information and evidence into the Bonded Return of Service System (BRoSS).</p> <p>The requirements are described in Attachment A.</p>	<p>You may be liable for an administrative penalty of \$1,000 if you fail to comply with a condition to provide the Department with information or documents within required timeframes.</p> <p>The administrative penalty is considered a debt due to the Commonwealth and may be recovered by the Commonwealth.</p>

Withdrawing from the Program⁷

Condition	Breach of condition ⁸
<p>As a Bonded Participant, you will be able to withdraw from the Program at any time by notifying the Department using the web portal – BRoSS – maintained by the Department.</p>	<p>If you withdraw from the Program, you will be liable to repay the former MRBS scholarship amount paid to you during your course of study in medicine, less a pro-rata proportion based on any RoSO completed, plus interest.</p> <p>You will also be subject to a period – of up to 6 years – during which a Medicare benefit is not payable in respect of professional services rendered (i.e. a Medicare Ban).</p> <p>Any amounts owing will be recoverable as a debt due to the Commonwealth.</p>

Key features of the Program

Return of Service Obligation (RoSO)

- 3 year RoSO – reduced from 6 years under the *MRBS Scheme*
- eligible locations for bonded participants are classified using any of the following: Modified Monash Model (MMM) 2-7; Distribution Priority Areas (DPA) for General Practitioners; and Outer Metropolitan District of Workforce Shortage (DWS) for all other specialities
- RoSO will be reduced by 1:1 credit for eligible work completed under previous arrangements
 - Full-time work in MM 4-7 locations may attract scaling discounts of up to 6 months
- Attainment of Fellowship is not essential to complete RoSO

Time frame to complete RoSO

- 3 years of RoSO to be completed within 18 years of completing the course of study in medicine.
- 18 months RoSO can be worked pre-fellowship and 18 months post-fellowship;

⁵ Division 3 – Reporting Obligations [Health Insurance \(Bonded Medical Program\) Rule 2020](#)

⁶ 124ZK Breach of condition of Bonded Medical Program—administrative penalty

⁷ 124ZP Withdrawal from Bonded Medical Program

⁸ 124ZQ Consequences of withdrawal



- However, if Fellowship is not attained by the end of the 12th year after completing the course of study in medicine, all remaining RoSO must be completed within the remaining 6 years of the 18-year time frame.
- If the Bonded Participant – or a member of their family – has a medical condition that prevents them from completing their RoSO, they can apply for an extension.

Note: There is no other provision for a deferral to be approved under the Program.

Administration

- clear processes for consideration of exceptional circumstances for medical reasons which, if approved, will extend the time frame to complete RoSO
- consistent management of withdrawals
- self-service for all reporting requirements and RoSO via an online web portal (BRoSS)

Bonded Return of Service System (BRoSS)

BRoSS is being progressively released throughout 2022. The reporting requirements for a bonded participant are detailed in Sections 15 and 16 of the Rule.

Section 19 of the Rule outlines a ‘transitional provision’ in relation to reporting obligations. The purpose of this transitional provision was to ensure that bonded participants would not be subject to an administrative penalty until “the elements of the Department’s web portal [BRoSS] required for a bonded participant to comply with the relevant provision are functional.”

The transitional provision will cease to operate on 30 June 2022. This means that, from that date, you will be required to comply with reporting obligations outlined in the Rule. Should you not comply with a relevant provision, you will be subject to an administrative penalty of \$1,000 on each occasion of non-compliance.

The Department has provided detailed guidance material on its [website](#) to support you to understand and remain compliant with your obligations.

In addition, once bonded, you will receive automatic notifications and messages from BRoSS to remind you of your upcoming obligations.

Support

Rural Workforce Agencies in each State and the Northern Territory are able to provide support to Bonded Participants throughout each phase of the Program

Further information

For general enquiries, go to the Department’s website at: [Bonded Medical Program | Australian Government Department of Health](#)

If you are an MRBS Scheme participant with a general Program enquiry, contact the Department’s Call Centre on 1800 987 104 (Monday–Friday 8:30am–5:00pm AEST).

Enquiries requiring consideration of a Participant’s personal circumstances will require an email to: BondedMedicalProgram@health.gov.au

Please use ‘[Scheme/Program] – [Participant name] – [Request type]’ as the subject heading format to assist us to manage your enquiry.



Attachment A

Health Insurance (Bonded Medical Program) Rule 2020

Division 3 – Reporting Obligations – 15 Notifiable events & 16 Return of service obligation plan

Notifiable Event Obligations	
<p>Section 15(1): within 6 months of the following events, participants must upload the following information and evidence to BRoSS.</p> <p>Section 15(2): if a participant is unable to provide the evidence or information, they must upload a statutory declaration to BRoSS that:</p> <p>(a) explains why the relevant evidence or information cannot be obtained; and (b) attests the relevant information.</p>	
Notifiable Event	
Item 1 – Name change	
Item 2 – Any change in the primary or secondary contact details, including phone number, email address or postal address	
Item 3 – Any change which impacts upon completion time of study in medicine	
Item 4 – Completion of study in medicine (i.e. graduation)	
Item 5 – Provisional registration with AHPRA	
Item 6 – Commencement of internship	
Item 7 – Completion of internship	
Item 8 – General registration with AHPRA	
Item 9 – Commencement of vocational training	
Item 10 – Attainment of medical specialisation	
RoSO Reporting Obligations	
<p>Section 16(1): a participant must, within the timeframes outlined below, upload the following information and evidence to BRoSS.</p> <p>Section 16(2): if a participant is unable to provide the evidence or information, they must upload a statutory declaration to BRoSS that:</p> <p>(a) explains why the relevant evidence or information cannot be obtained; and (b) attests the relevant information.</p>	
Required information	Reporting timeframes
Item 1 – Participant must: Register a RoSO plan in BRoSS that proposes one or more eligible locations where the participant can complete their RoSO.	(a) For students: no later than the study completion date (b) For participants: within 3 months of opting into the new Program
Item 2 – Participant must: Provide evidence to confirm completed work in accordance with registered RoSO plan.	No later than 3 months after a participant has completed work at an eligible location
Item 3 – Participant must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update their RoSO plan • update expected completion date • upload evidence verifying any changes to terms of work 	No later than 3 months after participant changes the expected completion date of work in eligible location
Item 4 – Participant must: Confirm or update the details of their RoSO plan.	(a) For students: every 6 months from the completion date of the participant's course of study in medicine. (b) For participants: every 6 months from the participant's date of opt in to the new Program.

Comparison Factsheet: Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship Scheme & Bonded Medical Program (June 2022)

	Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship Scheme	Bonded Medical Program
What does it do?	<p>The MRBS Scheme provided a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) in medicine each year at participating Australian universities with an attached scholarship for up to 100 commencing medical students. Participants signed a contract requiring them to work as a doctor in a rural or remote area for six (6) years once they have attained fellowship (less any credit obtained through scaling incentives).</p> <p>The eligibility of locations uses the RRMA (1991) 3-7; RA (2006/2011/2016) 2-5.</p> <p>The MRBS Scheme was closed to new entrants after the 2015 academic year. The 100 places reserved for the MRBS Scheme were added to the yearly cohort of the Bonded Medical Places Scheme from 2016 (without the accompanying scholarship).</p>	<p>The Bonded Medical Program offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 year RoSO completed within 18 years of completing the course of study in medicine; • eligible locations for RoSO include MM 2-7 DPA for GPs and also Outer Metropolitan DWS for all other specialities; • 18 months of RoSO can be worked pre-fellowship and 18 months post-fellowship; • if fellowship is not attained within 12 years of completion of the course of study in medicine, all RoSO must be completed within the next (and final) 6 years of the 18 year timeframe; and • access to the Bonded Return of Service System (BRoSS) to self-manage RoSO.
Terms and Conditions (Milestone obligations)	<p>Participants agreed to the following milestone obligations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to become a medical practitioner within 10 years of commencing the medical course; • to obtain a Fellowship within 16 years of commencing the medical course; • to commence RoSO within 12 months of obtaining first Fellowship; • RoSO period is 20 hours per week (or 80 hours over the month) for 9 months of the calendar year. Working no less than 3 months in any 6 month period; and • must not work outside eligible locations between the date of Fellowship and the date they complete the RoSO. <p>*RoSO length = 6 years continuous (minus scaling discounts if applicable).</p> <p>** RoSO must be continuous unless a deferral is put in place. Deferrals can be put in place to account for post-Fellowship study, parental leave and life circumstances.</p> <p>***RoSO does not commence until Fellowship is obtained.</p>	<p>Bonded Participants agree to the following obligations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • up to 18 months of RoSO can be completed pre-Fellowship; • if a participant reaches the 12th year marker and has not obtained Fellowship all remaining RoSO can be completed as a non-Fellowed medical practitioner; • RoSO can be started in the intern phase and completed non-continuously on a per day basis (a total of 20 hours over two or more days), part-time (a minimum of 20 hours per week) or full-time (35 hours or more a week); • once a participant reaches 20 hours the RoSO will be reduced by 1 week; • additional hours worked above 35 hours in a week do not accrue; and • eligible full-time RoSO work for 24 months in MM4-7 locations may attract scaling discounts from the 25th month – to a maximum of 6 months.
Timeframes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no timeframe specified for MRBS Scheme participants to complete the RoSO. Completion of the RoSO can be delayed by obtaining deferrals of milestone obligations. • Deferrals can be granted to account for post-Fellowship study, parental leave and life circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonded Participants must complete the RoSO within 18 years of completing their course of study in medicine; • There are no deferrals of the RoSO to accommodate post-Fellowship study, parental leave and life circumstances; and • Any extension (up to two years) under exceptional medical circumstances only.
Breach of Condition	<p>If a participant breaches the above terms and conditions of their contract they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liable for the repayment of the scholarship amount in accordance with the terms of the Contract; and • subject to s19ABA of the Act and a 12-year Medicare ban and liable for any legislative debts that accrue as a result of Medicare benefits paid during the ban period. <p>Under the MRBS Contract the delegate has the capacity to reduce the value of the scholarship repayment to zero and reduce the length of the Medicare ban.</p> <p>There is no capacity to reduce the legislative debt as a result of receiving Medicare benefits during the Medicare ban period.</p>	<p>If you do not complete your RoSO within the 18 year timeframe (or an extended period), you will be liable to pay 100% of the scholarship amount paid to you during your course of study in medicine, less a pro rata amount based on any proportion of RoSO completed, plus interest.</p> <p>You will also be subject to a period – of up to 6 years – during which a Medicare benefit is not payable in respect of professional services rendered (i.e. a Medicare Ban).</p> <p>Any amounts owing will be recoverable as a debt due to the Commonwealth.</p>