

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2006-2007 SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.4 - Funding for Higher Education

DEST Question No. E650_07

Senator Stephens provided in writing.

Question:

On 18 April 2006 Minister Bishop announced that applications for 4,420 new Commonwealth supported higher education places will be open to all eligible providers nationally, with no pre-determined allocation between the States and Territories. Bids will be assessed and approved on the basis of workforce needs, capacity to deliver and potential demand from eligible students.

- a. How will this process operate?
- b. Are there public guidelines?
- c. What makes a university eligible to bid?
- d. What is the administrative cost of the bid process?

Answer:

Commonwealth Supported Places

- a. The Minister sought proposals from higher education providers for the new places and consulted with State and Territory governments on their priorities. The proposals were assessed by the Department and recommendations were made to the Minister. The Minister's decision on the allocations was announced publicly in July 2006.
- b. Application guidelines were provided to all eligible higher education providers. A copy is attached.
- c. Higher education providers listed as Table A providers under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* were eligible to apply for all places. Non-Table A providers were eligible to apply for places in the national priority areas of teaching and nursing.
- d. The bid process was accommodated within the ongoing resources of the relevant area of the Department and costs were not recorded separately.

ADDITIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION PLACES TO COMMENCE IN 2007

Guide for Applications

Note: the DEST Application Form should be read in conjunction with this guide

Introduction

In May 2003, the Australian Government announced the *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* (BAF) higher education reform package.

A component of the BAF package is funding through the Commonwealth Grants Scheme (CGS) for growth places, 2,800 of which are available to commence in 2007.

In addition to the growth places, on 5 April 2006 the Prime Minister announced a package of initiatives as part of the process to reform the mental health system in Australia that is under way with State and Territory governments through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The Prime Minister announced a major expansion of clinical and health services, including an expanded role for psychologists and mental health nurses. The Australian Government will provide funding for additional mental health nursing and psychology higher education places commencing in 2007. There will be 420 new places in undergraduate nursing degrees with a mental health major and an additional 200 postgraduate clinical psychology Masters degree (2 year programme) places.

On 8 April 2006, the Prime Minister announced further initiatives as part of the Australian Government's contribution to the COAG package to reform Australia's health workforce. These included funding for an extra 1,000 higher education nursing places from 2007 as well as an extra 400 medical places. The Prime Minister also announced an increase in the CGS funding rate for units of study in the nursing cluster to raise the component for clinical training from \$688 to \$1,000 (per EFTSL, in 2006 prices). This will apply to all nursing EFTSL in 2007 including new places. The 1,000 nursing places are available as part of this process and the additional medical places will be allocated as a separate process in conjunction with the COAG process.

Eligibility

Higher Education Providers (HEPs) listed as Table A providers in section 16-15 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) are able to bid for all places. HEPs listed in Table B (section 16-20) and HEPs approved under section 16-25 of HESA may bid only for places in the National Priority areas of teaching and nursing, including the mental health nursing places.

Funding

All places will be funded at the relevant funding cluster rate specified in HESA (noting that the rate for nursing will be increased).

Funding for places will be ongoing and the standard pipeline will apply (original intake plus 75 per cent continuation into each subsequent year for a total of four years). Different

pipeline arrangements may also be negotiated with non-Table A providers with small numbers of National Priority places. Different pipeline arrangements may also apply to the 200 postgraduate clinical psychology Masters degree places. Further advice will be provided shortly.

Priorities

The Australian Government's priorities for the allocation of the 2,800 growth places were identified by the Minister in her letter of 13 April 2006.

Bids for postgraduate places (excluding the Master's level clinical psychology places) must provide evidence that they are for qualifications which would lead to entry to an occupation in an area of workforce shortage.

Applications

Applications must be submitted on the Application Form provided with supporting evidence attached and the form must be completed according to the instructions.

A separate application form is required for each field of education/programme for which places are sought.

The Australian Government will take into account the priorities identified by State/Territory Governments (as advised in the Minister's letter of 13 April 2006) when assessing applications and may consult State/Territory Governments during the assessment process, including by providing any or all of the information in applications.

Applicants should note that they will be considered responsible for any failure to draw to the Australian Government's attention any relevant evidence that would affect the assessment of the application.

Application Spreadsheet

An example of a completed application spreadsheet is attached. A blank version will be emailed to the Vice-Chancellor's office and further copies can be requested from DEST.

The spreadsheet consists of 4 worksheets:

Instructions

For assistance in completing the spreadsheet.

Details of Places

Information about the places being requested. This spreadsheet will link to the DEST database and must not be altered to change formulae or insert any lines or columns. This worksheet must be returned electronically as well as in hard copy.

Supporting Material

Details of the material that must be provided as evidence to support the bid.

Disciplines for Reference

A list of discipline groups (ASCED codes) to be used to fill in box 3 on the *Details of Places* sheet.

Role of the Department of Education, Science and Training

DEST is responsible for assessing bids against the priorities identified in the Minister's letter of 13 April 2006 and assessing whether the bid provides satisfactory supporting evidence. The Department will assess all application received by the closing date. DEST will make recommendations, based on its assessments, to the Minister for Education, Science and Training for consideration.

Decisions regarding the allocation of the places will be taken by the Minister. The Minister will take account of, but will not be bound by the Department of Education, Science and Training's recommendations. The Minister may consider, among other things, the distribution of places across States/Territories, regions and institutions in determining the allocation. The Minister's decision will be final.

It is anticipated that decisions will be made within two months of the closing of applications and that notification will follow shortly after these decisions.

Submission of Applications

Closing date for submitting applications is 5pm Eastern Standard Time, 19 May 2006.

One original hard copy of the application under cover of a letter signed by the Vice-Chancellor/Chief Executive Officer must be provided by the closing date. **No late applications will be accepted after this date.**

The spreadsheet component of the Application Form must also be submitted electronically to CGS@dest.gov.au by the closing date.

Hard copy application forms should be addressed to:

BY COURIER
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