

## Introduction

The document you are reading, the ICS Student Info Pack, provides an overview of how ICS Scholarships are administered by CareerTrackers.

Our purpose at CareerTrackers is to *Create Opportunities that Inspire Excellence*, which means developing our students into future industry and community leaders so they can become role models for future generations of Indigenous students. We believe that by creating a strong community of role models, we will see more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders gain degrees at university and pursue their career passions.

Our partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency enables us to provide financial support to approved students by administering ICS Scholarships. Through this added layer of support, we are further enabling students to excel in our 3 pillars: university, internship, and community.

## About ICS

ICS Scholarships (ICS) is a Commonwealth Government-funded program administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). ICS aims to provide financial support for Indigenous university students undertaking internships during their studies to gain professional qualifications and experience and to move into employment upon completion of their studies.

We at CareerTrackers administer ICS on behalf of NIAA for a limited number of scholarship placements.

### Financially Supporting you

ICS provides financial support in the form of fortnightly payments during the academic calendar year to assist you in covering your living expenses. For each full semester, you may receive up to \$7,116.2. This consists of:

- Ten fortnightly payments of \$661.62 as a taxable study allowance (this equates to \$562 after tax)
- \$500 tax-free book allowance (provided at the start of each semester)

If you are approved partway through the semester, your payments may not include back-pay for any previous payments made in that semester. Once you are approved, we will let you know.

### **Who is eligible to apply for ICS?**

As this is a Commonwealth Government program, there are certain eligibility criteria that you must meet if you wish to apply for ICS. These include:

- Be of Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent;
- Identify as an Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander;
- Be accepted as an Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in the community in which you live, or have lived;
- Be enrolled in full-time study occurring on campus at a university located in Australia;
- Be enrolled in your first undergraduate degree course;
- Be an Australian resident; and
- Have signed an employment contract for a minimum of 12 weeks' work per annum.

In addition to the criteria listed above, to be eligible for ICS through CareerTrackers, you must:

- Maintain a grade average of at least a Pass;
- Attend Program Days;
- Attend all Monthly Meetings with your Advisor;
- Attend the Leadership Development Institute (LDI) each year;
- Complete a minimum of 12 weeks of employment in your internship each year;
- Complete all internship requirements, including Weekly Updates, Learning Contract, Internship Experience Task and End of Internship Presentation.
- Intend to intern during the next internship period; and
- Update your Advisor immediately of any changes that may impact your ability to participate in CareerTrackers and/or ICS.

Your Advisor will be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the eligibility criteria.

## Applying ICS

Here at CareerTrackers, we have broken the application process into four stages:

1. Online Expression of Interest (EOI)
2. The 'Waiting List'
3. Commencement Advice / Proof of Enrolment
4. Final Approval

The time required to complete all four stages can vary considerably. To help ensure the process doesn't have too many hitches, we recommend you regularly check your email (as this is how we most often contact you) and have all the required information on hand when called upon.

Throughout the process, you will occasionally receive automated emails to update you on the status of your application. These are intended to keep you in the loop at all times. If you have further questions, you can always email us at [ics@careertrackers.org.au](mailto:ics@careertrackers.org.au).

## Completing the Online Application

We have simplified the ICS application process by introducing an online Expression of Interest (EOI) form. You can find the form on our website at [www.careertrackers.org.au/intern-resources](http://www.careertrackers.org.au/intern-resources).

You will need to fill out the information required in the form before submitting. As with any contract, ensure you read all the information carefully, as you will need to sign the declaration at the end of the form to confirm that you understand and agree to the terms and conditions for receiving ICS.

We suggest you inform your Advisor when you have applied for ICS so they can help track your application's progress.

To complete the online form, you will need your:

- Bank account and TFN details; and
- Confirmation of Indigenous Status.

You will also be asked to provide your Proof of Enrolment for the semester you wish your ICS payments to commence. You may still submit your EOI without your enrolment; you will be asked to provide it before any payments can commence.

*Note: A Confirmation of Indigenous Status is not a requirement of the CareerTrackers program, but rather a requirement of ICS by NIAA. At times, NIAA may request information about our students receiving ICS scholarships, including your Confirmation of Indigenous Status.*

The information that you provide in 'Item 2 - Cadetship Plan' of the online form will help determine the Commencement and Cessation Dates of your scholarship payments. Please ensure that you complete this section accurately so that your scholarship payments cover the entire duration of your undergraduate degree.

*Note: ICS is only provided to students for the 'Allowable Time' of their specific degree. Allowable time is the minimum time required to complete a degree while studying a standard full-time study load. Full-time study is defined as at least 75% of the standard Full-time study load (FTSL), however, if you only study 75% of the FTSL, you may run out of allowable time.*

After you have submitted your online application, we will review it and either progress you to the 'Waiting List' or contact you to clarify any questions we might have. Whatever the outcome, we will contact you to ensure you are always kept in the loop.

### **The "Waiting List"**

As there is a limited number of scholarship placements available, there may not always be an available placement when you apply. If this is the case, you will be added to the 'Waiting List'.

As the name suggests, the 'Waiting List' is the pool of students wishing to receive ICS who are in a queue waiting for scholarship placements to become available. Once all of the scholarship placements have been filled, new placements will only become available when a current recipient graduates or opts out of ICS.

This means that there will naturally be peaks and troughs as to when the majority of new scholarship placements become available. e.g. You could expect a high number of placements to become available at the end of the year when many students graduate from university.

We understand that waiting can be stressful, so to ease your stress, we will endeavour to keep you in the loop as to your progress in the queue. However, you are always welcome to email us if you have any questions or would like an update.

### **Commencement Advice / Proof of Enrolment**

When a placement becomes available, you will receive an email from us asking you to complete two final tasks:

1. Sign and return the Commencement Advice Form
2. Send us a copy of your Enrolment (if you have not already done so)

It is important that you return the signed form and enrolment to us within 5 business days. This allows us time to ensure we can progress your application promptly and commence your payments. It is also important that scholarship placements don't go unfilled due to unresponsive students.

*Note: If we do not hear back from you within 5 business days, your placement may be offered to the next student on the 'Waiting List'.*

### **Final Approval**

Upon receiving your signed Commencement Advice Form and enrolment, we will send you an Approval Letter. Your Approval Letter will confirm the following details:

- Approved Commencement and Cessation Dates for your ICS payments
- Payment schedule for the current semester
- A reminder to notify Centrelink of your recent approval for ICS
- Date of your first payment

## Frequently Asked Questions

To provide you with additional information, we have listed some of the more commonly asked questions below. As always, if you have any further questions, you are always welcome to email us at [ics@careertrackers.org.au](mailto:ics@careertrackers.org.au).

### What are my obligations once approved for ICS?

In addition to the eligibility criteria provided by NIAA, you also have added responsibilities as part of your commitment to the CareerTrackers program. These include:

- Attending CareerTrackers events (including LDI);
- Attending all Monthly Meetings with your Advisor;
- Providing your enrolment and transcript to your Advisor each semester;
- Responding to your Advisor in a timely manner;
- Completing all of the internship requirements (i.e., Weekly Updates, Learning Contracts and the End of Summer Presentations); and
- Updating your Advisor immediately of any changes that may impact your ability to participate in CareerTrackers and/or ICS.

As part of our internal checks, your Advisor must confirm every fortnight that you continue to meet all requirements outlined above. If they are unable to truthfully confirm you meet all requirements, then your payments will be paused until the ICS Team is satisfied that all requirements are being upheld.

If you are not able to meet the requirements within a timely manner, the ICS Team reserve the right to cease your payments and reallocate your scholarship placement to another student on the 'Waiting List'.

### **What happens if I defer from university?**

In the case that you decide to defer university (regardless of the duration), your ICS payments will cease from the moment that you defer. This allows your scholarship placement not to go unused and instead be reallocated to another student waiting to receive ICS.

Upon your return to university and your internship, you may reapply by completing the Expression of Interest form. Once processed, you will be placed back onto the 'Waiting List' until a scholarship placement becomes available.

### **What happens if I am studying beyond my Cessation Date?**

We understand that, at times, events beyond your control may require you to extend your graduation date. If your graduation date exceeds your ICS Cessation Date, and you would like to continue receiving ICS, you will need to submit an Extension Request to [ics@careertrackers.org.au](mailto:ics@careertrackers.org.au).

NIAA allows students to receive a one-off extension of up to one year to the Allowable Time. This is provided on the basis that you will graduate from university within the additional 12-months requested.

Extension Requests should be in the form of a letter addressed to our ICS Team and outline the following:

- Your new expected graduation date.
- The number of units/subjects you have completed, are required to complete as part of your degree and the number that you have remaining;
- A detailed description explaining why you are graduating later than originally anticipated; and
- What plan is now in place to ensure you complete your degree by the new expected graduation date.

Your letter will be used to determine the merits of your request, so it is important that you put time and effort into it. As a guide, Extension Requests should roughly be one page in length. Don't forget that your Advisor is always available to help you.

We understand that your letter may contain very personal information; as such, all Extension Request letters are treated as confidential and will be viewed only by the ICS Team and your Advisor.

*Note: Extension requests are not guaranteed and are dependent on position availability and are at the discretion of the ICS team. It is advisable to explore alternatives while your extension request is being processed.*

### **Will I receive a payslip and/or PAYG Summary?**

The Study Allowance component of ICS is taxable. As such, after each payment, you will receive an email payslip (as you would in your internship). As required by the ATO, at the end of the financial year, you will be able to access your PAYG Summary by yourself through the myGov website. So that we always have your most up-to-date details, be sure to notify your Advisor if you change your contact details (email, phone, address, etc.).

### **Is ICS optional?**

It is optional to receive ICS, so do your research before you apply to ensure it is right for you.

As part of the CareerTrackers program, you may need to relocate for an internship opportunity. If this is the case, to receive subsidised travel assistance from us, you must be receiving ICS. Please talk to your Advisor immediately if you are seeking subsidised travel but receiving ICS would conflict with your financial situation (e.g., you are better off continuing to receive ABSTUDY).

### **Is ICS paid during the university breaks?**

ICS is designed to help cover your living expenses during the semester, allowing you to focus more on your studies. With this in mind, ICS payments commence at the start of Semester 1 and continue until the end of Semester 2. Yes, ICS continues over the Winter university break.

Although ICS payments cease at the end of Semester 2, this marks the beginning of the Summer internship period, where you will be earning an income from your employer.

*Note: Depending on the timing, there may be a gap between the last ICS payment for the year and the date of your first payment from your employer. We suggest factoring this in when budgeting.*

### **What should I do if I don't have a Confirmation of Indigenous Status?**

Confirmations of Indigenous Status are not required for the CareerTrackers program; upon request, we can provide your Confirmation of Indigenous Status to NIAA. For this reason, we require you to provide a copy with your ICS Expression of Interest.

NIAA requires that a Confirmation of Indigenous Status must be a signed document provided by an authorised representative of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander incorporated organisation (on letterhead or under a common seal) verifying that you:

- Are of Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent;
- Identify as an Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; and
- Are accepted as such by the community in which you live or have lived.

You should let your Advisor know if you don't already have a confirmation that meets NIAA's requirements. Your Advisor will be able to guide you through any alternative options.

We also suggest that you reach out to the Indigenous Support Unit at your university. The staff in the ISU are a great resource who can provide you with information about local Indigenous community organisations that can confirm.