

MINISTRY OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS SCHOLARSHIP
SCHEME
STUDENT HANDBOOK



ABBREVIATIONS

AAT	Advance Aviation Training
APTECH	Applied Technology
CCTC	Corpus Christi Teachers College
IASS	Indigenous Affairs Scholarship Scheme
IASU	Indigenous Affairs Scholarship Unit
IEAG	Indigenous Education Advisory Group
IEC	Indigenous Education Committee
FIT	Fiji Institute of Technology
FSM	Fiji School of Medicine
GPA	Grade Point Average
MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery
MIA	Ministry of Indigenous Affairs
NZPTC	New Zealand Pacific Training Centre
PFS	Pacific Flying School
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
TPAF	Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji
USP	University of the South Pacific
UoF	University of Fiji

Welcome

Welcome to this Student Handbook. Its aim is to provide you with a clear, accurate and user friendly guide to the Indigenous Affairs Scholarship Scheme (IASS). It seeks to achieve this by providing detailed guidance on matters of relevance to you as a scholar.

While the handbook aims to cater for all students, at appropriate times, it seeks to recognize the different information needs of specific types of students. For example different information is provided for overseas students. Equally, information is more relevant to you according to your institution of study, so specific information is provided for USP, FSM, FIT and others.

You should use this handbook as a reference source throughout your period of study in your institution. It is not intended to be read at the start of the programme and then forgotten; you should therefore make sure you are familiar with its contents, and look to it to provide the answers to many of the questions you are likely to have during your time as a student. Inevitably, some of the details of what is contained in it will change over time, but you will be advised when these changes affect you.

If you have any queries about the information contained in the handbook, you should contact the Indigenous Affairs Scholarship Unit. We are committed to working with you to help make your study enjoyable and productive.

Lastly, we wish you every success with your studies and trust that you will be able to apply what you have learnt in a constructive and useful way to Fiji.



Meli Bainimarama

Permanent Secretary for Indigenous Affairs

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1.0 **Introduction**

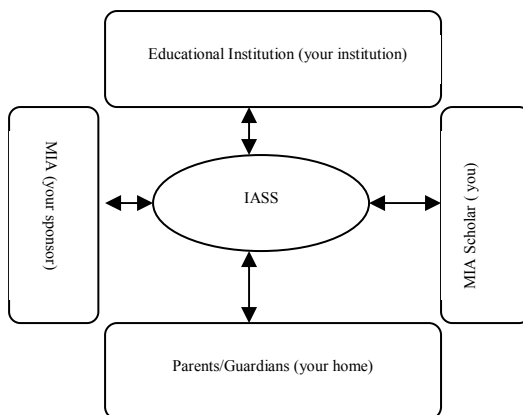
Education is of critical importance and for this reason the Fiji Government provides scholarship to Indigenous and Rotumans to undertake post-secondary study in local and overseas institutions. Funding for this is provided through the Indigenous Affairs Scholarship Scheme (IASS) with the guiding principles that they should:

- help meet the short-term human resource needs of the country;
- strive to maximize the long-term development impact of a harmonious Fiji;
- place national development needs ahead of the professional development of the individual awardees- the scholarship is not a personal gift to you, but rather, an agreement between yourself and the Fiji Government;
- have regard to principles of transparency, access and equity, including those that relate to ethnicity and gender; and
- be delivered in the most cost effective way possible.

In support of the IASS principles, you are:

- encouraged and assisted through academic tuition to acquire skills, knowledge and a qualification;
- expected to complete your studies in the minimum time possible; and
- required to work in Fiji to serve your bond on completion of your studies and, to apply your newly acquired skills and knowledge towards our development.

2.0 IASS Partnership



2.1 Our Shared Responsibilities

IASS represents a shared responsibility between four partners: i) The Fiji Government which is represented by the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs (MIA); ii) Your institution of study; iii) Your parents; and iv) You. The success of your study hinges on the effectiveness of this partnership.

2.2 MIA

The MIA sets the policies that govern the selection of programmes to be sponsored and the criteria to be adopted in the award of scholarships and the standards you must meet to continue to receive your scholarship each semester. The Ministry is assisted in this regard by the Indigenous Education Advisory Group (IEAG) which sets the policies and the Indigenous Education Committee (IEC) which is responsible for the selection of scholarship recipients. Both committees are commissioned by the Government and work very closely with the Indigenous Affairs Scholarship Unit (IASU), which will be your contact point for all matters concerning your scholarship.

In more specific terms, IASU will be responsible for:

- Paying your fees and allowances,
- Interpreting and implementing scholarship policies and procedures,
- Monitoring your academic progress,
- Determining if you are eligible for continued funding based on your academic performance, and
- Informing your parents on the progress of your study.

2.3 **Educational Institutions**

The institution where you will be studying is responsible for your day-to-day support. It will:

- Determine whether you meet its criteria for admission to the course you have requested and if you do, confirm your offer of place with IASU,
- Assist you with matters related to your student permit (if you are studying overseas),
- Enroll you and assist with hostel or home-stay accommodation if needed,
- Provide you with tuition, academic and welfare counseling and student support,
- Communicate directly with IASU if you are suspended, expelled, abandon your studies or are granted a residency permit (if you study overseas),
- Provide IASU with monitoring reports at mid-year and at year's end regarding your academic progress, and
- Liaise with IASU on broad policy issues and individual cases requiring specific policy interpretation.

2.4 **Parents/Guardians (Your Home)**

Your parents'/guardians' support is important and you should regularly update them on matters affecting your

study. Please listen to their advice and counsel. The best gift you can give to honour them is completing your study.

2.5 **The MIA Scholar (You)**

2.5.1 **Criteria**

The following criteria govern your award and the continuation of scholarship:

Full award	:	B average or equivalent GPA 3.0 and above
Partial award	:	C+ average or equivalent GPA 2.5- 2.99
Tuition award	:	C average or equivalent GPA 2.0-2.49
Termination	:	below GPA 2.0 or equivalent

If you are an overseas student, you will be assessed on your Annual GPA (2 semesters). If you are a local student, you will be assessed on your Semester GPA (1 semester) unless your programme is assessed on a yearly basis like MBBS (FSM) or Masters and PhD programmes.

2.5.2 **The Scholarship Award Package**

Below is the different scholarship packages provided by the Ministry. Depending on your institution of study one of these packages will be relevant to you.

2.5.2.1 **Overseas Award**

An overseas award covers payments of:

Full Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees and other compulsory fees,
- ii) Establishment Allowance (paid once only),
- iii) Living allowance (paid quarterly),
- iv) Research allowance (paid only to Masters and PhD students doing their thesis),
- v) Excess baggage allowance (paid in the final year),
- vi) Air passage (from Fiji to country of award in the first year and return in the final year),
- vii) COLA (paid per annum to continuing students).

Partial Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees and other compulsory fees,
- ii) Book Allowance,
- iii) Excess baggage allowance (paid in the final year),
- iv) Air passage (from Fiji to country of award in the first year and return in the final year).

Tuition Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees and other compulsory fees,
- ii) Excess baggage allowance (paid in the final year),
- iii) Air passage (from Fiji to country of award in the first year and return in the final year).

2.5.2.2 **Local Awards**

A. USP

Laucala Campus

Full Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees & other compulsory fees levied by the university,
- ii) Book allowance,
- iii) Research Allowance (paid only to Masters and PhD pursuing thesis research), and
- iv) Pocket Allowance.

Partial Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees & other compulsory fees levied by the university,
- ii) Book allowance.

Tuition Only Scholarship

- i) Tuition Only.

Emalus Campus

Full Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees & other compulsory fees levied by the university,
- ii) Book and Printing allowance,
- iii) Accommodation,
- iv) Pocket Allowance,
- v) Excess Baggage,
- vi) Return air passage.

Partial Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees & other compulsory fees levied by the university,
- ii) Book and Printing allowances,
- iii) Excess baggage allowance (for those initially sent to Vanuatu on full award),
- iv) Return air passage (for those initially sent to Vanuatu on full award).

Tuition Only Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees,

- ii) Excess baggage allowance (for those initially sent to Vanuatu on full award),
- iii) Return air passage (for those initially sent to Vanuatu on full award).

Alafua Campus

Full Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees & other compulsory fees levied by the university,
- ii) Book/printing/photocopying allowance,
- iii) Practical allowance,
- iv) Accommodation,
- v) Pocket Allowance,
- vi) Excess Baggage,
- vii) Return air passage.

Partial Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees & other compulsory fees levied by the university,
- ii) Book/printing/photocopying allowance,
- iii) Excess baggage allowance (for those initially sent to Western Samoa on full award),
- iv) Return air passage (for those initially sent to Western Samoa on full award).

Tuition Only Scholarship

- i) Tuition fees,
- ii) Excess baggage allowance (for those initially sent to Western Samoa on full award),
- iii) Return air passage (for those initially sent to Western Samoa on full award).

B. FIT

- i) Full Award - consists of payment of tuition and all other compulsory fees levied by the institution.
- ii) Partial Award - covers payment of Tuition and Trust fees.
- ii) Tuition Award - payment of tuition fees only.

C. Form 7

Assistance is provided for payment of hostel and book deposit. These are paid directly to schools.

D. USP Foundation Award

Tuition fees paid directly to USP.

E. FSM Award

- i) Full Award - Tuition fees, accommodation (for MBBS students only), Equipment, FSMSA, pocket allowance, text books and electives.
- ii) Partial Award - covers tuition fees and textbooks only.
- iii) Tuition Award - tuition only

F. University of Fiji (UoF)

Tuition fees only, paid directly to UoF.

G. TPAF, NZPTC, APTECH, Labasa Nursing School, CCTC, Fulton College, and other local institutions

Assistance towards tuition fees for selected courses.

2.5.3 **Acceptance**

By accepting the MIA scholarship you are entering into a binding legal agreement with the following responsibilities:

- To undertake your approved course of study full time (or part time, depending on your award),
- To comply with the rules of your educational institution,
- To make every effort to achieve satisfactory progress in your studies,
- To ensure that your student permit and passport are kept current for the duration of your study (if you are studying overseas), and
- To return to Fiji at the end of your studies (if studying overseas).

3.0 **Monitoring of Academic Progress**

The IASU will monitor your performance and other general progress while you are on scholarship. This is done through constant liaison with your institution of study, which will provide periodical updates on your performance. This is necessary as the scholarship criteria do not allow you to play 'catch up'. As such, it is very important that you work very hard from the very beginning.

An early warning system is in place to alert you midway through every semester if you are not doing well and in danger of losing your scholarship. You will be counselled and a report of your performance will also be forwarded to your parents to keep them informed.

It is important that you discuss your academic performance with your Academic Counsellor throughout the academic year. When planning your studies for the following semester or academic year, make sure that you confirm with your institution the exact papers or subjects you are required to take, including any compulsory papers, in order to complete your qualification within the agreed time and meet the institution's completion regulations.

If you do not meet the IASS continuation criteria your scholarship will be terminated.

For your scholarship to continue, you must

- satisfy your institution's performance criteria and completion regulations;
- demonstrate commitment to your studies;
- meet the IASS continuation criteria; and
- at all times be on schedule to complete your study within the original scholarship offer duration (unless given an approved extension).

Commitment to your study is shown when you:

- remain enrolled in the study programme for which your scholarship was offered (or for which prior approval for a scholarship variation has been given);

- make full use of available institutional academic and support facilities; and
- study a full course load, attend classes regularly and participate in all course-related activities (e.g. tutorials, assessments, examinations, etc) necessary to successfully complete the course requirements.

You must not change your programme of study without the prior approval of the IEC.

3.1 **Continuation Criteria**

The MIA scholarship is assessed on your GPA; therefore, you must pass all your units in one semester (or year). If you are a Certificate, Diploma or Undergraduate student, you must pass all major or core subjects/prerequisites in any academic year (for overseas students), or semester (for students studying locally). You must be academically assessed as being capable of completing within the agreed timeframe. Continuation will be assessed on a full course load (this is to include papers that have been dropped during the semester/year).

If you are a Postgraduate student, you must be academically assessed as being capable of completing the scheduled course of study by the agreed completion date.

At the end of each year (for overseas students) or semester (for local students), the IEC assesses all awards, and a decision is made on the continuation of your award, based on academic progress. For a full award to continue, you must score a B average or equivalent in any semester (or annual) exam. If you score a C+ or C average or equivalent, the award will change to partial

award or tuition award. A below C average or equivalent will lead to termination of scholarship.

If you are on tuition only and you score a C+ or B average, your award will be upgraded to partial or full award unless you are affected by the 'one per family policy'.

3.2 **Help with Coursework**

You may, for various reasons struggle with your course work. The work may be too difficult, you may have difficulty understanding accents, or you may be homesick and find it difficult to adjust to your new environment. If you experience these difficulties, you should seek help as soon as possible. In the first instance you should approach your course lecturer or International Student's Office (if studying overseas). They will also be able to assist you or refer you to someone else who can give specific help or offer tutoring.

4.0 **Scholarship Termination**

At the end of each semester/year, IASU will assess your performance for a decision on the continuation of your scholarship. It will be terminated if you:

- do not meet the minimum requirement of the IASS criteria;
- have serious or potentially serious conduct problems as reported by your institution;
- are convicted in a court which results in discontinuation of study;

- have attitude or behavioural problems detrimental to your studies or fellow students or which are disruptive to the community;
- show lack of regular attendance which has resulted in failure to complete or meet course requirement; and
- apply for or are granted a residency permit in a foreign country.

4.1 **Scholarship Readmission**

- If you are studying locally and your award is terminated for any reason other than discipline, you may reapply for renewal of your award after passing 4 units in 2 semesters (or one year) on your own private funding.
- If you are studying abroad and your award is terminated for any reason other than discipline, you may reapply for renewal of your award after completing 2 semesters of full course loading on your own private funding.
- If your award was terminated on disciplinary grounds, you can only reapply after 5 years.
- If your award was suspended on disciplinary grounds, you may reapply after 3 years.
- You should reapply through the normal process using the appropriate form.

5.0 **Scholarship Deferral**

After commencing your study programme, you may request to have your scholarship deferred if you:

- have a medical condition that is affecting academic performance,

- are unable to continue your study due to pregnancy,
- are hospitalized for more than 3 weeks,
- have the endorsement of your institution of study for deferral, and
- have to resume work (if working) due to exigencies of your organization.

You should contact IASU if you are contemplating applying for a deferral. Deferrals require the prior written approval of IEC. If your request for scholarship deferral is not approved, you have the option to continue or to withdraw from your scholarship.

6.0 **Scholarship Upgrade**

Your scholarship has been approved for a specific qualification, as detailed in your offer letter and accepted by you when you signed it.

There is no provision under the IASS for you or your institution to initiate an upgrade of your study programme, like upgrading from an undergraduate to postgraduate level, from Masters to PhD. Such requests will not be approved.

7.0 **Scholarship Extension**

If you are not able to complete your qualification by the expected completion date, you may apply for an extension to your scholarship that will allow you to successfully complete your original programme.

Extensions are granted in exceptional circumstances only and must be approved by the IEC.

Cases need to be put forward by you and your institution to the IEC at least three months prior to the scheduled end of the scholarship. Assistance for extension of scholarship will be granted on tuition only and subject to:

- whether it is the only option that will allow you to complete your approved study programme;
- consideration of the reasons why the extension is needed (supported by a statement from your institution);
- your attitude, commitment and academic progress to date;
- the additional cost of the extension and funds being available;
- the length of the required extension; and,
- institution confirmation that you will be able to complete your qualification within the extended scholarship duration.

Extensions are generally approved for an additional period of one semester only for coursework students. A one-year extension will only be approved if the degree comprises full year papers.

A second request for an extension will not be approved unless the request has resulted from institution or other factors outside your control. If the qualification is not completed by the extended completion date, then the scholarship will be terminated.

8.0 **Completion by Part Time/Distance Flexible Learning Mode/Internet Mode**

If you are studying in a local institution and have one or two papers remaining to complete after the original completion date, you may be required to complete the programme on a part-time basis. However, if you are studying overseas and have a couple of papers left to complete after the original duration of your studies, you may be required to return home and complete the programme through distance learning if the option is available.

9.0 **Repeat Units**

If you failed a unit before you were given a scholarship and are required to repeat it, the MIA will pay for the unit. However, if, after you were given a scholarship, fail a unit and are required to repeat it, the MIA will not pay for it.

10.0 **Code of Conduct**

The MIA affirms that the central purpose of a scholarship is to assist a student in the pursuit of higher learning, the discovery of new knowledge through scholarly research, and the transmission of knowledge and learning to Fiji's development at large. This is dependent on maintaining an appropriate sense of order that allows a student to develop in an environment that is both safe and free of disruption. Your conduct should at all times be in line with and supportive of your institution's central purpose and core values, rules and regulations and the MIA scholarship policies.

By accepting the MIA scholarship, you have entered into a binding agreement that also regulates your conduct.

You will be required to:

- abide by the terms and conditions of the scholarship;
- abide by your institution's rules and regulations;
- refrain from behaviours that will bring disrepute to the MIA and all the values it espouses, as stipulated in the Public Service Act 1999;
- abide by the Public Service Code of Conduct, as stipulated in the Public Service Act 1999, if you are a civil servant student;
- act in a manner that will not bring disrepute to you and your family; and,
- obey the laws of the country you are studying in.

The MIA is dedicated and committed to a scholarship culture that upholds the highest standards of personal conduct and academic achievements. In addition, MIA has a zero tolerance policy on behaviour that contravenes the above, both on and off campus.

Therefore, MIA reserves the right to terminate your scholarship if a report is received from your institution, or from a law enforcement agency in your country of study concerning a breach of regulations.

If you are a civil servant, you will also be disciplined under the provisions of the Public Service Act 1999.

11.0 **Mentoring**

Mentoring is an important component of a person's development be it personal, social, professional, academic and so on. The MIA believes that mentoring will greatly contribute to your success and boost your performance. A Mentoring Programme is currently being piloted at the USP and focusing only on a selected programme with the hope that it will evolve to cover other programmes at a later stage. You should make yourself available for this programme.

12.0 **Student Welfare**

Adjusting to life in a new environment

Life in a new study environment can sometimes be frustrating because of differences in language, food, climate, pace of life and social customs. These differences can sometimes be difficult to adjust to; it is this difficulty to adjust that is sometimes called "culture shock".

The symptoms of culture shock appear in various ways: boredom, homesickness, indifference to food, inability to mix with others, physical problems such as stomach pains, headaches and insomnia. There is no instant cure for culture shock. It will go away on its own as you begin to feel more comfortable in your new environment. Talk to others, try to get out and about, and generally try to stay busy.

Students

Meeting students from around Fiji and other countries can be a very enriching experience.

Attending a regional tertiary institution will not only make a major contribution to your educational development but also to your social and cultural development. We hope you will make the most of all these opportunities.

Student Counselling

Educational institutions are equipped to help you overcome problems you may experience while studying. These may be study problems, homesickness, culture shock and difficulties with socializing (either too much or too little). If you are experiencing any of these problems, seek help immediately from your institution's counseling service.

13.0 **IASS Declaration**

By accepting the scholarship offer, you signed a declaration that set out the terms and conditions of the scholarship and the main conditions, summarized below, are that you:

- will take up the scholarship for the academic year for which it is offered;
- agree that the scholarship offered is for the appropriate field and level of study;
- acknowledge that no additional study under the scholarship will be considered;
- agree to follow your approved study programme and agree not to change the study programme or education institution without the prior agreement of IEC;
- agree to achieve satisfactory academic progress and meet all course requirements set out by the education institution;
- agree to comply with the regulations of the education institution;
- agree to the disclosure of information regarding your progress;
- agree to uphold the Code of Conduct;
- agree your passport and student permit are kept current for the duration of your study or training (overseas students);
- acknowledge that you are required to return to work in Fiji at the completion of your study and utilize the skills gained from your study;
- agree not to submit an application for a work permit or permanent residence in your overseas country of study and acknowledge that if you do, it will result in the scholarship being immediately terminated;
- agree to obey the laws of the country that you are studying in; and,
- agree to return home at the end of your scholarship, regardless of the time remaining on your visa.

14.0 **Conclusion**

If you have any queries on any of the matters raised in this guide or any other issue related to your studies, you can visit our website at www.fijianaffairs.gov.fj for our contact details and all the latest information on scholarship matters.

We wish you all the best in your studies and that you will make a positive contribution to the development and progress of our beloved nation.