

ASSISTANCE WITH TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHEME GUIDELINES, ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND TERMS AND CONDITIONS

ASSISTANCE WITH TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHEME (ATES)

ATES is a competitively assessed scholarship program established by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) to assist Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people from the Torres Strait Region (including the communities of Bamaga and Seisia) to participate in higher education.

Eligible students who have not previously completed a bachelor's degree can receive a one-year ATES scholarship valued up to \$6,000 per year. Applications for ATES scholarships are called for at the end of each year via newspaper advertisements, the TSRA website and the TSRA Facebook page. Eligible students can reapply for the ATES scholarship for each subsequent year of study until they have completed their first bachelor's degree.

PURPOSE

The ATES Scholarship is targeted at supporting Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal people (of any age) from the Torres Strait Region to participate in higher education.

NUMBER OF ATES SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED AND APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

The number of ATES Scholarships offered by the TSRA may vary from year to year and applications are ranked against the eligibility criteria and competitively assessed against the other applicants.

Applications are ranked by the assessment panel and scholarships will be offered by order of their ranking.

While continuing students will receive preference, their ranking will depend upon the number of units completed in prior years, with preference given to those progressing through their degree with the highest marks in the previous year.

STUDY MODES

Applicants can be studying on campus, online, or via mixed-mode. A 'mixed mode' course is a course delivered through a combination of online, distance education and intensive residential blocks with periods of face-to-face teaching. Mixed-mode courses are sometimes also referred to as 'block release' courses.

ATES SCHOLARSHIP VALUE AND PAYMENTS

The value of each scholarship is dependent on a recipient's enrolment type (see below). Payments are made on TSRA's receipt of evidence of full-time enrolment after the census date for the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) for each semester. Second semester payments also require TSRA's receipt of evidence of satisfactory academic results from the prior semester. Payments will be deposited directly into the applicant's nominated bank account.

Students studying **full-time on campus** will receive \$6,000 per annum, paid on a pro-rata basis each semester. Students applying for this scholarship must be living away from the Torres Strait during the university semester to undertake their studies in person and on campus.

Students studying **full-time via mixed-mode** or **full-time externally** will receive \$3,000 per annum, paid on a pro-rata basis each semester.

Eligible continuing students may reapply for the ATES scholarship but will become ineligible once they have completed their first bachelor's degree.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Specific eligibility requirement for the ATES Scholarship are outlined below:

a. Must be an Indigenous person living within the Torres Strait Region

Applicants must provide evidence of their Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal heritage. Examples of acceptable forms of evidence include:

- A letter signed and executed by the Chairperson of an incorporated Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation, confirming that you are recognised as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- A confirmation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent form, executed by a delegated officer from a Local Government Authority, or a registered Native Title Prescribed Body Corporate; or

For online or mixed-mode courses, applicants must be current residents of the Torres Strait Region, which includes the communities of Bamaga and Seisia in the Northern Peninsula Area. Applicants living away from the Torres Strait whilst undertaking online studies are not eligible.

For applicants who are moving away from the Torres Strait Region to study at a university campus, they must have been residents of the Torres Strait Region within the year prior to the commencement of study. Evidence of residence in the Torres Strait Region (including the communities of Bamaga and Seisia) prior to undertaking study will be required as part of the application process.

b. Must not have previously completed a Bachelor's degree

Applicants can be either commencing, or be part-way through, their first undergraduate qualification, but cannot receive the scholarship if they have previously completed a bachelor's degree.

c. Must be enrolled and studying full time at a recognised tertiary institution

Applicants must:

- be studying for their undergraduate degree at a recognised tertiary institution; and
- must be studying full time.

Full time is defined as a minimum of 9 credit points per half calendar year (equivalent to 0.375 equivalent full-time Student Load (EFTSL), or at least three quarters of the standard full-time load for students as defined by their tertiary institution. If you count Summer/Winter Semester credit points to achieve full time study your scholarships payments can only be after the relevant Census date for Summer/Winter System.

A scholarship may be terminated if the applicant's enrolment status falls below a full-time threshold.

d. Must be motivated to undertake and be committed to the program of studies

This is assessed against the claims made in the applicant's written statement. Applicants must outline their motivation for their chosen course, their career aspirations, personal achievements and development. The selection panel may ask applicants to provide additional information on their written statement.

e. Must be committed to returning to work in Torres Strait

This is also assessed against the claims made in the applicant's written statement. Applicants must outline their commitment to returning to work in the Torres Strait in the future within their written statement, such as their career aspirations as they relate to the development of the Torres Strait Region. The selection panel may ask applicants to provide additional information on their written statement.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If you are not eligible by the above eligibility criteria but believe that exceptional circumstances apply to your situation, your application may still be considered by the TSRA delegate. Please contact the TSRA on gntlteammbx@tsra.gov.au outlining your situation and seeking advice prior to making an application.

If you are advised by the TSRA that you can still make an application, your exceptional circumstances must be included in your written statement.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

New ATES Applicants:

1. Complete the Scholarship application form.
2. Your resume. This should include details of your secondary education, other qualifications or achievements and any work history (including volunteer work). The resume should also include contact details for two referees (teacher, employer, coach etc.).
3. Evidence of your Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal heritage.
4. A written statement from one referee (i.e. Teacher, employer, or community organisation etc.) – this could be one of the referees listed in your resume but does not have to be.
5. Your written statement of up to 500 words outlining your motivation and aspirations for undertaking this course and commitment to return to work in the Torres Strait Region in future.
6. Proof of enrolment in a full-time study load in the upcoming year.
7. Financial support documents (e.g. details of any other scholarships or letters of offer).

Ongoing ATES Recipients:

1. Proof of enrolment in a full-time course for the upcoming year
2. Your transcript of academic record from the previous year.

Applications and supporting documents must be received by:

Close of business, 20 February 2026.

Applications must be sent to:

The Torres Strait Regional Authority Scholarships
Torres Strait Regional Authority
P.O. Box 261
THURSDAY ISLAND Qld 4875
Or by email on gntlteammbx@tsra.gov.au

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Late applications will not be accepted unless exceptional circumstances exist. A request to submit a late application may be considered by the TSRA delegate if it is made prior to the application closing date.

ACCEPTING AN ATES SCHOLARSHIP

Successful applicants will receive a scholarship offer pack containing a letter of offer and the terms and conditions of the scholarship. Applicants will be advised how to accept or decline the scholarship in the letter of offer. If applicants do not complete the acceptance as instructed, the scholarship may be withdrawn.

PRIVACY

The TSRA is bound by the *Privacy Act 1988*. All information and documentation provided to the TSRA will be treated as confidential. Applicant's personal details and information will not be disclosed to any person outside those people who are involved in the scholarship selection process, which may include authorised officers at the relevant tertiary institution.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Applicants should read these terms and conditions carefully before the scholarship offer is accepted. Continued payment of the scholarship is conditional upon satisfactory progress throughout the course of study. Semester 1 results must be forwarded to the TSRA as soon as they are available. Provided satisfactory progress is being made, the semester 2 payment will be released immediately after evidence of enrolment is received following the census date for the higher education contribution scheme (HECS) for each semester.

The TSRA reserves the right to withhold or cancel the second semester payment where a student is unable to continue studying on a full-time basis due to the failure of pre-requisite subjects. The TSRA delegate may consider payment where special circumstances are deemed to apply and supporting information is presented.

The TSRA will consult with the university prior to making the decision to discontinue or defer an individual's scholarship payments.

Students experiencing difficulties with studies or contemplating withdrawing or deferring must consult with the TSRA in a timely manner and in advance of making a final decision regarding withdrawal or deferral. If a student receives an ATEs scholarship payment and withdraws before the commencement of their studies, they will be required to return the scholarship amount that has been paid for that study period.

Students are advised that scholarship payments may be discontinued if academic progress is found to be unsatisfactory.

Deferment of a scholarship for a period of one year will only be considered by the TSRA delegate where for reasons of personal or family illness or bereavement, or other exceptional circumstances.