

17 MARCH 2022

ABSTUDY Assistance for Tertiary Students



Australian Government



Services
Australia

LIVING ALLOWANCE

- A fortnightly payment intended for assistance in meeting the day-to-day living costs of the student
- Living Allowance is *means tested* – Student income, Partner income, Parent income (where a dependent student)
- The rate of Living Allowance is *dependent* on the *student's circumstances* – this includes things such as age, living at home, living away from home, independent, partnered, with child.
- See [Living Allowance rates](#)



RENT ASSISTANCE

- *Assistance with rent* for students living away from home in a private rental arrangement or board and lodging.
- Paid *with* fortnightly *Living Allowance*
- See [Rent Assistance rates 2021](#)



INCIDENTALS ALLOWANCE

- A *one-off payment* at the *beginning* of *each year* of study to assist with costs associated with starting study in that year (books, equipment etc)
- Paid automatically. Non-means tested.
- See [Incidental Allowance rates 2021](#).



FARES ALLOWANCE

Assistance for students, who need to *live away from home* to study, to keep contact with their family and community.

Fares Allowance assistance includes:

- *Travel between home* and the place of *study* at the beginning and end of each study year
- *Return travel* during the year if studying a course greater than 1 semester
- Travel for students who completed secondary studies in the previous year and will start tertiary studies, to undertake an orientation exercise on campus.
- Travel for *compassionate reasons* to return to the home community for circumstances such as a funeral, illness of the student or family member or a the student needs to attend a community event under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander lore or kinship obligations
- Travel to complete *Graduation*.
- In some circumstances a person can travel with a student (e.g. parent accompany an ill student home)
- If the journey requires overnight stop mid-journey, meals and accommodation costs are covered.
- Fares Allowance assistance



RELOCATION SCHOLARSHIP

- The purpose of the Relocation Scholarship is to provide *lump sum assistance* to *students* who have to *live away* from home to study, to assist with the cost of establishing *new accommodation* at the *study location*.
- Regional and remote students relocating to any area, and metropolitan students relocating to study at a regional location are eligible.
- To be eligible, a student must be *approved* to *live away from home*, or for one of certain types of *Independent status*
- Paid *automatically* upon approval of ABSTUDY claim. Different rates are payable for the first year away from home, and then in the second and subsequent years away from home.
- A student cannot access both an Indigenous CAS under the Indigenous Student Success Program and a Relocation Scholarship for the same period.
- See [Relocation Scholarship rates](#)



START-UP LOAN

- The purpose of the Student Start-up Loan (SSL) is to provide a *lump sum assistance* to university students in *approved scholarship courses* to assist with the upfront cost of *text books* and *specialised equipment*.
- The loan is *optional*, and eligible students are sent an offer for the loan
- SSL must be *repaid* through the *tax system* once the recipient's taxable income reaches a threshold determined by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). (A similar repayment arrangement currently applies to HECS-HELP loans).
- A student cannot access both an Indigenous CECS under the Indigenous Student Success Program and a SSL for the same period.
- See [Student Start-up Loan rates](#)



RESIDENTIAL COST OPTION



- Residential Cost Option (RCO) is a *choice* for *how to receive ABSTUDY payments* for accommodation and meals when staying in a residential college or hostel
- The residential accommodation can be *on-campus*, or *off campus* if linked with the university, or in a hostel
- *Available* for students who qualify for at least \$1 of *Living Allowance*
- For the period that the student is in the residential college, the residential fees are paid to the College, and the student receives *\$41.60 per fortnight*.
- For periods the student is not in residence (at home over vacation), the student's normal rate of Living Allowance is payable to the student.
- If a student spends the vacation period in residence – those costs can also be paid for by RCO
- Scholarships – *Other government scholarships* paid for the purpose of accommodation support do *exclude access* to *RCO*. This includes the Indigenous CAS and the Relocation Scholarship.
- See [Residential Cost Option](#)

RESIDENTIAL COST OPTION CONTINUED

The total value of a residential cost option can add up to value worth much more than the 52 weeks of the Living Allowance and Rent Assistance. Anything up to a value of \$40,000 in value – dependent on the student and college circumstances. Full Liv Allowance, Rent Assistance and a Relocation Scholarship for an 18yo is approximately \$22,000 in value.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Can be a *great arrangement* for the student:

- Residential fees can be between \$300-\$900 a week depending on the accommodation package and inclusion of meals. That can add up to between \$15-\$35,000 per year of residential costs that can be payable by ABSTUDY.
- Plus a student is paid \$41.60 during the period in residence, and is paid Living Allowance for periods out of residence.



Key things to consider:

- Consider whether RCO is the best option for a student. RCO may not be the best option for a low fee residential college which do not provide any meals. See [Comparison](#) to help determine best options.

There are some things RCO does not pay for:

- Insurances, bonds, or refundable fees
- A student cannot access both an Indigenous CAS or Relocation Scholarship and RCO for same period. Student has to choose.



OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT

EARNINGS:

- A student can earn up to **\$437 per fortnight** in personal income *without any reduction* to ABSTUDY Living Allowance. 
- Any fortnight a student earns less than \$437, the unused amount up to \$437 is banked as a credit in the Student Income Bank. Credits accumulate so other periods of high income (above \$437) will reduce the credits before impacting Living Allowance.
- See [Personal Income test](#) and [Income Bank](#).

SCHOLARSHIPS:

- Various non-government scholarships are available for students through the university and benevolent organisations. This supports study and living costs.
- These scholarships are usually called Equity and Merit scholarships (E&M). 
- Scholarship income is taken into account as part of the student Personal Income test.
- But the first \$8355 (annually) of an E&M Scholarship is exempt from the Personal Income Test and does not affect the rate of Living Allowance.



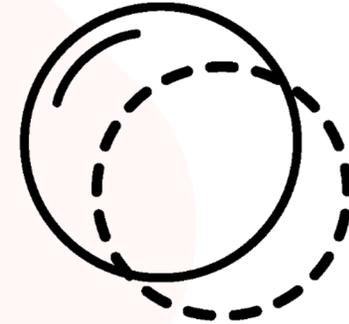
Simple



Helpful



Respectful



Transparent