



OS-HELP Loan Information for UOW students

OS-HELP:

OS-HELP is an Australian Government loan that assists eligible students, who are based in Australia, to undertake some of their study overseas. Students may receive either a \$2,500 or a \$5,000 loan per six-month period for one or two overseas study periods. These loans will help students with a range of expenses, such as airfares and accommodation.

Eligibility criteria:

To be entitled to an OS-HELP loan through UOW, a student must:

- be an Australian citizen or holder of permanent humanitarian visa;
- not have received OS-HELP on more than one other occasion;
- be enrolled in an undergraduate course of study at the University of Wollongong;
- have already completed at least 1 equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL) of study, or equivalent of 1 EFTSL, that counts towards their course of study, as:
 - o a Commonwealth supported student;
 - o a contributing (i.e. HECS liable) student under the Higher Education Funding Act 1988; or
 - o an exempt student who was exempt on the basis of receiving a merit-based equity scholarship;

(note: 1 EFTSL is normally equivalent to 48 credit points of study but this may vary for some double degrees)
- be enrolled in full-time study with an overseas higher education institution, or the overseas campus of an Australian higher education provider, and be out of Australia while undertaking the study;
- have their overseas study count as credit for the course of study that they are enrolled in at the University of Wollongong;
- still have at least 0.5 EFTSL of study yet to complete in their course of study on return from their overseas study;
- complete, sign and lodge an OS-HELP debt confirmation form with the Study Abroad Office and meet the Tax File Number (TFN) requirements;
- be selected by the Study Abroad Office to receive an OS-HELP loan; and
- not have been granted an OS-HELP loan by another provider for an overlapping six month study period.

Assessment and Selection Criteria

OS-HELP loans will be allocated by the Study Abroad & Exchange Office, in conjunction with the Academic Registrar's office, according to the eligibility criteria listed above. If overall loan numbers are limited, students applying for loans will be ranked in the following priority order:

- (i) Students accepted into the International Exchange Program at a partner institution for one or two academic sessions will receive highest priority for the loans;
- (ii) Students undertaking one or two sessions at an overseas campus of the University of Wollongong;

- (iii) Students undertaking short study tours run by UOW staff to count towards the University of Wollongong degree providing the students are formally enrolled in an overseas host institution or overseas campus of home institution;
- (iv) A student undertaking a short course at an exchange partner institution providing the student is formally enrolled by the host institution in the course;
- (v) A student undertaking a semester program at a non-affiliated partner institution providing the student is formally enrolled by the host institution in the course;
- (vi) A student undertaking a short course at a non-affiliated partner institution providing the student is formally enrolled by the host institution in the course.

All students must maintain satisfactory academic progress in the academic session prior to the commencement of the overseas study.

Students will not be selected for OS-HELP more than six months before the commencement of their overseas study; Students applying for two semesters can be given conditional approval for the second loan but the application will be assessed not more than six weeks before the commencement of the second six-month period. The student is only eligible for the second loan if the second study period commences more than six months after the first study period has commenced. A consecutive loan may not be paid before the first six-month study period has elapsed.

Application process:

Application forms may be obtained from the Study Abroad & Exchange Office. An electronic copy may be downloaded here <http://www.uow.edu.au/student/exchange/forms/index.html>

Applications for OS-HELP loans should be sent to the Study Abroad & Exchange Office by the advertised date each semester. (30 August for programs commencing in the equivalent of UOW Summer session or Autumn session; 30 March for programs commencing in the equivalent of UOW Spring session);

Applications will be assessed after the closing date in order of receipt;

Following the assessment of applications, conditional offers of loans shall be made in writing to successful applicants either within two months of receiving the application or within two months of the application closing date, whichever is later, and shall include rights and responsibilities of loan recipients;

Successful applicants will be required to accept the conditional offer of an OS-HELP loan within one month of the date on the offer letter;

Successful applicants will be required to substantiate claims made in their application before payment is made.

Any questions or appeals about the selection process or amount of funds allocated should be directed in writing to the Manager, Study Abroad & Exchange, Study Abroad Office in the first instance. If the issue is not resolved, the student should refer to the Student Complaints procedures at <http://www.uow.edu.au/student/complaints>.

Amount of OS-HELP Assistance at UOW:

OS-HELP loans will be available in either \$2,500 or \$5,000 amounts. The University of Wollongong reserves the right to determine the number of loans provided at each level of funding. The total amount of OS-HELP assistance that will be granted will be dependent on the total OS-HELP funding available.

OS-HELP loans incur a charge of 20% of the value of the loan. This means that the total amount of a student's OS-HELP debt is the amount of the loan plus a 20% loan fee applied by the Commonwealth.

An OS-HELP loan supplied by the University of Wollongong is not transferable to another University. OS-HELP borrowers must meet and maintain all the eligibility criteria.

Payments to Students

OS-HELP payments towards costs of study overseas can be made after the student has completed the OS-HELP Debt Confirmation Form but not earlier than one month after the release of results.

If a student applies for a second loan for a six-month period that is a continuation of a first six month study period, the second loan may only be tentatively approved prior to the start of the overseas study. No less than six weeks before the start of the second six-month period, the University must reassess the student's eligibility. If the second loan is approved, the payment cannot be made earlier than six weeks before the second six-month study period.

Payments will be administered by the Academic Registrar's Division and will only be made by Electronic Funds Transfer.

Conditions of the Loan

Students are required to notify the University of any change in circumstances which may affect their continued eligibility for an OS-HELP loan.

If a selected student's circumstances changes in such a way that the University determines that the student will not meet the OS-HELP eligibility criteria at the commencement of the student's six month study period, and the student has yet to be paid their OS-HELP assistance, the University is obliged to withdraw the offer of OS-HELP assistance to the student.

A student will be required to pay their OS-HELP debt even if they do not complete their studies, or due to unforeseen circumstances, cannot undertake or complete the overseas study approved by UOW. A student in this situation will have already incurred an OS-HELP debt and can only repay this debt through the ATO. An OS-HELP debt must not be remitted under any circumstances.

If the University has reason to believe that a student who has been offered OS-HELP has applied on the basis of false or misleading information, and :

- The loan payment has not been made, the University must withdraw its offer of OS-HELP: or
- The loan payment has been made, the University must notify DEST immediately of the suspected offence.

Useful links

OS-HELP Application Form

<http://www.uow.edu.au/student/exchange/forms/index.html>

International Exchange Program:

<http://www.uow.edu.au/student/exchange/>

Going to Uni OS-HELP loan information:

<http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/Main/Quickfind/StudyOverseas/OSHELP.htm>

4 September, 2008