



Australian Government
Department of Education

Graduate Program Guidelines



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Purpose

The Department of Education Graduate Program Guidelines sets out the expectations for graduates, supervisors and the People, Culture and Capability Branch throughout the duration of the program. Successful completion of the program is contingent upon graduates meeting the expectations of the Graduate Program as set out in the Letter of Offer.

Program Overview

The Department of Education Graduate Program (the program) is an entry level development program aimed at building the leadership capability of the department and developing graduates' knowledge and skills within the Australian Public Service (APS) environment.

The program consists of a variety of development experiences based around the department's business. These experiences provide graduates with an opportunity to learn and grow while being supported and encouraged by employees at all levels. The program is the first step for graduates to build a successful career in the department and within the APS, and gives graduates the opportunity to develop both personally and professionally.

The program, including recruitment, is coordinated and managed by the People, Culture and Capability Branch.

Roles and Responsibilities

People, Culture and Capability Branch

The People, Culture and Capability Branch is based in the department's National Office in Canberra and is responsible for the management of the program, including the recruitment, design, implementation and the coordination and administration of the program. The Branch is the primary point of contact for graduates and graduate supervisors.

Email: people@education.gov.au

Phone: 02 6121 5000

Graduates

Graduates participating in the program are required to:

- successfully complete a six-month probation period with the department
- engage in the performance management process, including actively seeking and acting upon regular feedback from supervisors, as well as completing a performance agreement in Hub within the agreed timeframe
- achieve a rating of 'meets expectations' for both *Deliverables* and *Work Behaviours* for each placement
- actively participate in all graduate learning and development events
- adhere to the terms and conditions of the *Department of Education and Training Enterprise Agreement 2016-2019*, all departmental policies, procedures and guidelines
- comply with the APS Values, APS Employment Principles and APS Code of Conduct
- understand and comply with the department's IT Security protocols available on the intranet, and
- demonstrate a commitment to supporting the department's culture and objectives.

Graduate Supervisors

Graduate supervisors are required to:

- engage with People, Culture and Capability Branch regarding supervision responsibilities by sharing information and participating in graduate supervisor activities
- provide graduates with an induction experience that includes culture, responsibilities, performance expectations, team expectations, policies and procedures
- liaise with People, Culture and Capability Branch and other relevant stakeholders *early* if problems arise or in the event of any changes to supervisory arrangements
- work with the graduate on compliance with all program requirements including performance agreements, probation reports, and learning and development activities
- provide regular ongoing feedback
- provide graduates with a development-friendly environment by being well prepared, providing meaningful work, creating a safe working environment and via the provision of regular feedback and relevant workplace learning
- provide on-the-job development experiences.

Responsibilities for Graduates Requiring Workplace Adjustments

Workplace adjustments are modifications and alterations in the work environment, which remove barriers for people with disability so that they can perform the inherent requirements of their job.

Please note workplace adjustment is outside the scope of workstation assessments. For more information, please consult People, Culture and Capability Branch.

Graduate responsibilities

There is no obligation for employees to disclose their disability(s) **unless it is likely to affect their ability to meet the inherent requirements of their job**. If this is the case, graduates are required to disclose their disability so that appropriate workplace adjustments can be arranged.

Supervisor responsibilities

Supervisors from within individual work areas are required to fund reasonable workplace adjustments or modifications where appropriate to support an employee in the workplace. Each situation must be considered individually when determining what is considered reasonable.

For further advice please contact People, Culture and Capability Branch at People@education.gov.au or visit the [Disability Portal](#) on the intranet.

Placements

Placements For the generalist program, Graduates will complete two work placements during the program to provide exposure to the work of two different areas. Expressions of interest from business areas to host a generalist graduate will determine the placements.

Career pathway graduates will have two rotations within the same branch to provide exposure to different work within the same discipline.

First Placement

Prior to commencing the program, generalist graduates are selected for positions in groups within the department, based on a combination of their preferences, skills and qualifications, and in line with business requirements. The first placement is considered the graduates' 'home group'. Graduates return to their home group upon successful completion of the program unless otherwise negotiated.

For career pathway graduates, they will be placed with relevant discipline business areas and will be permanently placed within this branch upon successful completion of the program.

Second Placement

For the generalist program, expressions of interest from business areas to host a generalist graduate for the second placement will determine the placements allocations. Generalist graduates are encouraged to embrace placements outside their previous experience and interest areas, so that they can broaden their skills and gain an understanding of the work of different areas of the department.

Graduates should not individually canvas areas for placement outside this process.

Conditions of Engagement

Terms and conditions of employment are provided in the Department of Education and Training Enterprise Agreement 2016-2019 and the Department of Education and Training Determination 2018/10 made under subsection 24(1) of the Public Service Act 1999. Conditions of engagement are outlined in the graduates' Letter of Offer.

It is a condition of graduates' employment that they meet all of the requirements of the program. Failure to meet any of the requirements of the program may mean that they are ineligible for advancement to the Broadband 2 APS 4 classification level and may result in employment being terminated under Section 29(3)(e) of the Public Service Act 1999.

It is a condition of employment that graduates employed in a position requiring a security clearance will meet all the requirements necessary to obtain and maintain their security clearance. Graduates who fail to obtain, or lose, their security clearance may have their employment with the department terminated.

Performance Management

Any concerns about the graduates performance and/or conduct should be raised with the graduate as soon as it is evident to ensure a 'no surprises' approach so that graduates can be clear on where they are not meeting standards and can also be provided with sufficient opportunity to improve.

The manager should also contact the Entry Level Program Team for advice as soon as issues are identified.

If a graduate fails to satisfactorily pass their initial nine (9) week probation report, the People, Culture and Capability Branch will commence formal underperformance procedures in conjunction with the supervisor and graduate, with the objective to:

- provide a structured and supportive approach to provide an opportunity for the graduate to improve their performance and
- ensure that the principles of procedural fairness are applied to the processes and decisions involved in managing underperformance.

Probation

The probationary period provides new employees with a period of time (six months from the date of commencement in the department) to learn the requirements of a position and allows the department to assess the employee's conduct and work performance to determine the suitability of the graduate to continue to be employed by the department. The assessment takes into account the broader requirements at the relevant classification level and the need for all APS employees to uphold the APS Values and APS Employment Principles and to comply with the APS Code of Conduct.

The [Probation Policy](#) applies to graduates who are new to the APS. The Probation Policy provides guidance for the management of probation within the Department of Education (the department).

Although the probation period is six months, managers are required to submit two mandatory probation reports for their graduate, at nine (9) weeks and 18 weeks post commencement, to the People, Culture and Capability Branch for assessment. These reports must be submitted in a timely manner (timeframes will be provided to Managers) to ensure underperformance is addressed within the six month probation period. The manager will assess the graduates' performance to ensure it is consistent with the standard expected at APS3 classification and the overall behaviour and conduct of the graduate.

Performance Agreements

All graduates are required to complete Performance Agreements for **each placement**. Graduates are assessed against *Deliverables* and *Work Behaviours*. These are assessed separately according to a two-point rating scale. **Graduates must be assessed as 'meets expectations' for both to successfully complete the program.**

Key points to remember when preparing a performance agreement:

- the performance agreement must take into account the duration of the placement
- expectations in the performance agreement should be achievable within the duration of the placement
- Graduates and supervisors should arrive at a mutual understanding and agreement of expectations and how they will be assessed.

All performance agreements for graduates are to be set up in the standard template in HUB, noting there is no specific template for the Graduate performance agreements. As the timeframe for ratings do not align with the standard performance reporting cycle, the People, Culture and Capability Branch will assist with the management of graduate performance agreements.

If a supervisor believes their graduate will not achieve a 'meets expectations' rating, they must advise the graduate, and the People, Culture and Capability Branch as early as possible.

Any concerns regarding the performance or conduct of a graduate should be raised with the graduate and discussions about remedial action recorded and commenced. People, Culture and Capability Branch should also be informed of any performance issues including the proposed remedial action.

The Performance Policy, containing information for both employees and supervisors, is available on the [Performance Management page](#) on the intranet.

Handling Complaints

If any issues arise throughout the program, graduates should raise them with their supervisor in the first instance and if the concerns remain unresolved, the graduate should then raise them with the next level manager. Alternatively, People, Culture and Capability Branch should be the next point of contact. These arrangements are consistent with the approach to dispute resolution for all employees, which are detailed in Part L of the *Department of Education and Training Enterprise Agreement 2016-2019*.

Learning and Development

Learning and Development Program

Graduates will participate in the APSC Graduate Development Program (GDP) in addition to learning through relationships (coaching, mentoring and peer learning) and on-the-job work experience. The program aims to develop a graduate's skills, capabilities and experience to work effectively and contribute to a high-performing APS. This program is designed to build on the graduate's existing competencies to enhance their effectiveness within the department.

Graduates may also elect to be allocated a buddy from a previous graduate cohort who will provide support and guidance in the first year.

Learning and development objectives will assist graduates to:

- understand the drivers for and linkages between the work of the department
- understand and practice interpersonal skills to enhance teamwork and leadership capabilities
- apply project management strategies to achieve results, and
- develop self-awareness of their personal style as a team member and a potential leader.

Job specific knowledge and skills are the responsibility of the placement area.

Reflection

At the end of each learning and development session, graduates are encouraged to reflect on and critically evaluate the topics covered and how they apply to their current work practices. Graduates should discuss topics and learning with their supervisor and colleagues to gain a broader understanding and to assist in implementing new practices across the department.

Attendance at Learning Events

While attending a learning and development activity, graduates are obliged to:

- attend all the relevant events and remain present for the duration of the activity
- contact [People, Culture and Capability Branch](#) to advise of lateness or absence
- ensure mobile phones are switched off or on silent, and only answered when absolutely necessary
- ensure breaks are limited to those prescribed by the facilitator (where possible)
- be respectful and considerate of other graduates' views and opinions, including those of the course facilitator.

Please note: Where the facilitator deems a graduates' behaviour to be unacceptable, the facilitator may ask the graduate to leave the room. Failure to complete the mandatory learning and development may result in a graduate not being eligible for advancement.

Non-attendance or rescheduling of Learning Events

It is our preference not to switch sessions when there is mandatory training scheduled as part of the GDP however, where there are genuine circumstances where graduates need to change sessions, graduates will be required to provide additional evidence and justification.

If a graduate fails to attend a scheduled learning event, they are required to provide evidence to support their non-attendance. If such evidence cannot be provided, responsibility for payment of a comparable event lies with the graduate or their placement group.

Additional Learning and Development

Graduates may, if identified by their home group, undertake training programs in addition to those provided as part of the program. Please note any additional learning and development:

- must not interfere with the program
- must have associated costs met by the home group

Given the focus on formal learning and development in the program, any applications for assistance to undertake further study at a tertiary institution under the department's Studies Assistance Guidelines should generally be deferred until after completion of the graduate program. The delegate within People, Culture and Capability Branch will consider applications on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the relevant Branch Manager.

Graduate Social Committees

Graduates are encouraged to participate in social committees throughout the duration of the program.

Graduates must uphold the APS Values, APS Employment Principles and Code of Conduct at all times (including participation in social events outside ordinary business hours).

Graduates must prioritise business needs over participation in social committees.

As graduates will be expected to participate in ongoing committee meetings, suitable times for graduates to be out of the office must be discussed and agreed to by the graduate's supervisor prior to commitments being made.

Note: Participation in corporate social committees may be suitable for inclusion in a graduate's performance agreement as a *Corporate Contribution*.

Completion

Requirements

There are three key requirements which all graduates must meet to successfully complete the program:

➤ Meet probation requirements

Graduates must meet the department's probationary requirements and successfully complete a six-month probation period, engaging in nine and 18 week probation discussions with their supervisor.

➤ Meet required performance standards

Graduates must meet the department's performance management requirements including:

- completing a performance agreement for each placement, and
- achieving a performance assessment rating of 'meets expectations' for both *Deliverables* and *Work Behaviours* in each placement.

➤ Complete all mandatory graduate learning and development events

Graduates must attend all mandatory learning and development events. Graduates must participate in the orientation events and the formal completion ceremony, unless prior approval is granted by People, Culture and Capability Branch.

Advancement

Following successful completion of the program, graduates will be recognised by the APSC/department in a formal completion ceremony.

Graduate advancement will be coordinated by People, Culture and Capability Branch. Graduates will return to their home group the first working day following successful completion of the program. If a graduate is offered an alternative role on completion of the program, the offering area must negotiate release with the Home Group Branch Manager and advise People, Culture and Capability Branch.

On successful completion of the program, Graduates will advance to the APS 4 classification level in the Training Broadband. The salary will be the base point of the APS 4 classification level unless the Secretary determines otherwise. Graduates may then be moved at the APS 4 classification level into the mainstream Level 2 Broadband.

Withdrawal from the Graduate Program

If a graduate accepts a promotion within the department or in another APS Agency they must withdraw from the program. The graduate must advise People, Culture and Capability Branch and their home group manager in writing. The advice should indicate the reasons for withdrawing and the date of effect. Graduates are required to give at least two weeks' notice of their intention to withdraw from the program. Graduates who decide to withdraw from the program prior to its completion will not be eligible to attend future graduate specific training, the completion ceremony or advancement to the APS 4 classification.

If a graduate leaves the department or the program before successful completion or does not meet the conditions of their engagement, the department may recover relocation costs.

Additional Information

Temporary Performance Loading and temporary Positions (EOIs)

Temporary Performance Loading (TPL) may be available to graduates during the course of the program. Graduates seeking to undertake a TPL opportunity, including expressions of interest (EOIs), **must first obtain the approval of their Branch Manager** and notify People, Culture and Capability Branch of their intention.

The delegate within People, Culture and Capability Branch will consider applications on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the relevant Branch Manager.

If approved, the graduate must continue to meet the performance expectations of the Graduate Program. This includes attendance at all mandatory learning and development events and attainment of 'meets expectations' performance ratings.

Applications for Part-Time Work or Extended Leave

Applications for part-time work or extended leave may only be approved in exceptional circumstances. Applications must be submitted to the graduates current Branch Manager for consideration and copied to People, Culture and Capability Branch for information. Approved extended leave may require withdrawal from the program as determined by the delegate within People, Culture and Capability Branch.

Leave to Attend Graduation

Graduates can request leave to attend their university graduation from their delegate, who can approve one days paid leave for local or two days for interstate ceremonies (requests should be made through the Hub (employee self-service system) under 'Personal Leave', 'Spec / Except Circumstances). Any additional leave to attend a graduation must be taken from a graduate's annual leave entitlement or flex if credits are available.

For more information about leave please refer to Part I of the *Department of Education and Training Enterprise Agreement 2016-2019* and the department's Leave Policy.

Funding

Salary

The group the graduate is allocated to for each placement will meet the cost of salary, superannuation and other associated on-costs. The placement group is also responsible for any costs associated with graduate workstation assessments.

Learning and Development

The cost of providing learning and development events provided as part of the program will be funded by People, Culture and Capability Branch.

Payment of any fees or associated costs for seminars, conferences or courses that are not part of the program's learning and development is the responsibility of the graduate's placement group at the time of the event. This includes additional training required for specialist graduates.

Where a graduate misses or is unable to attend a scheduled event and is also unable to attend an alternative session funded by the program, the cost of the graduate's attendance at a comparable course will need to be met by the hosting group.

Travel

Travel costs incurred to attend full day offsite mandatory learning and development events provided as part of the program (which is considered a normal working day), will be the graduates responsibility. Reimbursement for travel costs for part day events will be considered on a case by case basis.

Travel for graduates to attend an interstate event or training course which is not part of the program must be paid for by the graduate's current placement group.

Support Resources/ Contacts

- [People, Culture and Capability Branch](#)

Services include: Recruitment; People Solutions; Workplace Health and Safety; Workforce Planning and HR Metrics; Leadership, Learning & Development; Entry Level Programs; HR Policy and Diversity.

- [Education Pay Team – Shared Delivery Office \(SDO\) Department of Finance](#)

Pay and Conditions advice is provided by the Education Pay team in the Service Delivery Office, Department of Finance. The team provides advice on pay, superannuation and related hub processes.

- [Employee Support Officers \(ESOs\)](#)

Employee Support Officers (ESOs) play a key role in supporting the department's approach to the prevention and elimination of workplace harassment. ESOs are trained employees who are available to discuss options and provide support to employees and managers about harassment or diversity matters.

- [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to all ongoing and non-ongoing employees and their immediate family. It is a free confidential counselling service where you can access professional advice to help cope with life's difficult issues.

Document details

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