



What is the Bonded Medical Program?

The Bonded Medical Program was established in 2001. There are two schemes; the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) and the Bonded Medical Places (BMP) Scheme. The MRBS Scheme closed to new participants after the 2015 academic year.

The Bonded Medical Program provides students a Commonwealth supported place in a medical course at an Australian university in return for a commitment to work in a regional, rural or remote area for a specified period.

Under the Department of Health's Stronger Rural Health Strategy, a more flexible Bonded Medical Program is being established to encourage and support more doctors to work and stay in rural and remote areas.

From 1 January 2020, all applicants to the Bonded Medical Program will enter under the new arrangements. New arrangements will create a modern, flexible administrative system with greater capacity to support bonded students and doctors to work and stay in regional, rural and remote areas. The new arrangements aim to move towards a single bonded medical scheme in future years.

Participants of the existing Bonded Medical Places (BMP) and Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) Schemes will be able to choose to opt in to the new arrangements from 1 January 2020.

A new IT system, the Bonded Return of Service System (BRoSS) will support the new arrangements. BRoSS will support participants through each phase of their medical career until all return of service obligations (RoSO) are completed. It will be easy to use and have in-built guidance to support users.

Key features of the new arrangements:

Return of Service Obligations (RoSO)

- 3 years RoSO
- Eligible locations for bonded participants are classified using any of the following:
 - Modified Monash Model 2-7
 - Distribution Priority areas (DPA) for General Practitioners
 - Outer Metropolitan District of Workforce Shortage for all other specialities
- RoSO may be non-continuous, full/part-time or fly in/fly out work
- fellowship (medical specialisation) is not essential.

Timeframes

- completion of all RoSO within 18 years from completion of the medical course
- 18 months RoSO can be worked pre-fellowship
- if fellowship is not attained by the end of the 12th year after completion of the medical course, all RoSO

must be completed within the remaining 6 years of the 18 year timeframe.

Administration

- clear processes for consideration of exceptional circumstance to extend the time frame to complete RoSO for medical reasons
- clear consistent management of withdrawals
- breach is triggered by a failure to:
 - complete the medical course within university requirements and timeframe
 - complete all RoSO obligations within 18 years of completing the medical course.

Support

- access to BRoSS web portal and mobile phone application to log on and update personal details and plan, track and self-manage RoSO
- BRoSS will directly link participants with the Rural Workforce Agency in their state/territory to receive support throughout each phase of the program.

Different features apply to opt in:

Additional features for existing BMP Scheme participants who opt in (cohorts 2015 and earlier)

- the 3 year RoSO can be reduced by 1:1 credit for all RoSO worked under previous arrangements.

Additional features for existing BMP Scheme participants who opt in (cohorts 2016 -2019)

- retention of a full time 12 month RoSO
- the 12 month RoSO can be reduced by 1:1 credit for all RoSO worked under previous arrangements.

Specific features just for existing MRBS Scheme participants who opt in:

- the 3 year RoSO can be reduced by 1:1 credit for all RoSO worked under previous arrangements
- reduction in Medicare ban from 12 years to 6 years under a breach of conditions.

Considerations for current participants:

The decision to opt in will depend on the benefits the new arrangements offer the participant and what phase or stage they are at under their existing arrangement.

The opt in period is open ended. All participants are encouraged to keep their current contractual obligations up to date in preparation for opt in. Participants who choose not to opt in keep their existing arrangements.

Further information:

For more information on the new arrangements for the Bonded Medical Program please see the Department of Health website:

<http://www.health.gov.au/new-arrangements-bonded-medical-program>.



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