



Australia Awards

Australia Awards Papua New Guinea

Guidelines for Higher
Education Professional
Linkages Program

2026-2027



Introduction

Australia Awards PNG supports PNG university academics and professional staff to present at conferences and symposiums in Australia in their area of specialisation. This engagement aims to enhance skills and knowledge of PNG university academics & professional staff and strengthen linkages between PNG and Australian universities.

Strong applications will provide a well-structured justification for participation - clearly outlining how the opportunity will improve quality of academic programs or research; improve administrative systems and practices; strengthen staff capability at their institution; and contribute to participant's professional development goals.

Guiding Principles

- For academics, the proposed conference or symposium must be directly related to one of the following:
 - Directly related to the applicant's academic specialisation
 - Related to the program the applicant delivers in PNG
 - Related to general teaching, learning and assessment, including content development and research skills
 - Directly related to a research project under development or implementation.
- For professional staff, the proposed conference or symposium must be related to improved university administration. This may include, process digitisation, financial management, student services and inclusion, HR management, etc.
- Applications with a genuine interest in addressing climate change are strongly encouraged to apply.
- Applicants will only be eligible for one Professional Linkages opportunity in a 12-month period.
- Travel will be restricted to the intended purpose of attending the conference or symposium only. Extended stays in Australia for any other purposes are not permitted.
- The Australian Government is committed to promoting gender equity, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) and encourages women, people with disability and people from rural and remote locations to apply for the professional linkages program.

Eligibility Criteria

The Professional Linkages Program is open to PNG university staff who meet the following criteria:

- is a citizen of PNG
- is an academic or a professional staff employed full time at a recognised university in PNG

- has a paper or discussion panel or symposium accepted to present at a conference in Australia
- holds a valid PNG passport (valid for at least six months after proposed dates of travel)
- provides written approval and endorsement from the Head of Department and either Pro Vice Chancellor Academic or Vice Chancellor (or equivalents of these roles)

Required Supporting Documents

Applicants must upload the following supporting documents on the SmarterSelect as part of application:

- proof of conference or symposium acceptance (for example, abstract acceptance letter or an invitation letter)
- valid passport bio page
- copy of one of the following: NID card or photo ID such as driver license or employment ID
- a letter or an email of recommendation from their institution (either from the Head of Department, Pro Vice Chancellor Academic, Vice Chancellor or equivalents of these roles)

Conference/ Symposium Eligibility

The proposed conference or symposium must:

- be held in Australia for a maximum of five working days
- be directly related to the applicant's academic specialisation or duties; or
- be directly related to the program the applicant delivers in PNG; or
- be related to general teaching, learning and assessment at university level, including content development and research skills; or
- be directly related to a research project currently under development/ implementation (Evidence must be provided through a letter by the research committee or evidence of accepted research or thesis proposal in case of Masters and PhD research).

Application Submission & Selection

Opening of Applications

Applications open on **1st of July 2026** and close on **31st of July 2026** for attendance at conferences and symposiums held in Australia between September 2026 to February 2027.

Application Process

Applicants must complete and submit the application form by 11:59pm on Friday, 31st July 2026, through the SmarterSelect portal using the link: <https://smr.to/p110286>

Applicants can create, save, and return to a draft application (it does not need to be completed in one session). It is recommended applicants first complete the assessment questions in a Word document and ensure they are of a high standard before copying and pasting into the SmarterSelect online application.

Before submitting the application, applicants are encouraged to:

- carefully review the conference or activity website to check for authenticity and quality.
- check with colleagues or other contacts in the subject area to ensure the conference and symposium applied for is credible and legitimate

Selection Criteria

Eligible applications will be assessed by the Higher Education Professional Linkages Program panel using the following criteria:

Criteria	Details
Endorsement	Is the application endorsed by Head of Department and either Pro Vice Chancellor Academic or Vice Chancellor (or equivalents of these roles)?
Presenter/Panel member	Has the applicant been accepted to present in a conference/symposium or to participate as a panel member?
Improved knowledge and skills	Does the application clearly demonstrate how participation in the conference/symposium will contribute to improve knowledge and skills?
Application of skills and knowledge	Does the application clearly demonstrate how the participant will use his/her skills and knowledge upon returning?
Relevant	Does the application demonstrate relevance to the participant's role?

As part of eligibility and selection assessment, Australia Awards PNG will review the proposed conference or symposium to ensure the program and themes correlate to the intended professional development outcomes stated on the application forms.

Entitlements

What costs are covered

The Professional Linkages Program will cover the following costs up to a maximum of AUD7,000:

- Conference registration fees
- Economy airfares (international and domestic) between PNG and the Australian city hosting the conference (travel by the most direct route)

- Visa application costs including biometrics (if required), reimbursable
- International travel insurance
- Airport Transfer costs from and to the Australian airport and Australian accommodation, reimbursable upon provision of valid receipts
- Hotel accommodation in a standard room, based on the rates arranged by the event organisers or determined by Australia Awards PNG for the host city.
 - Accommodation commences the evening prior to the conference opening and ceases the evening of the last day of the conference (depending on departing flight availability)
 - Transit accommodation in Port Moresby or Australia (if required).
- Per diem for the duration of the travel. Per diem will be calculated pro rata as per the following:
 - Per diems will be paid in Kina (PGK), based on current exchange rate using approved rates.
 - Per diem calculation commences from the departure time of the first flight, and ceases at the departure time of the last flight
 - Per diems will not be paid if already covered through a co-funding arrangement
 - Per diems will not be paid for meals provided at the conference

What costs are not covered

The following costs will not be covered by Professional Linkages Support:

- Passport and National Identification Card (NID) applications
- Local transport to and from the applicant's nearest domestic airport
- Excess baggage or cargo costs
- Any changes to travel arrangements without prior written approval of Australia Awards PNG or due to participant's negligence such as missing a flight due to late check in
- Personal local transport costs in Australia, apart from airport transfers
- Health care costs in Australia which are excess to the costs covered by the international travel insurance (including pharmaceuticals or upfront payments which are reimbursable via the insurance provider)
- Personal items such as equipment, clothing, luggage or similar
- Communication costs such as a temporary Australian SIM card or international roaming costs for a PNG SIM
- Replacement of per diem lost or stolen during the travel

- Additional services at the Australian or PNG accommodation provider such as laundry, room service, mini bar etc. These costs are the responsibility of the individual.
- Excursions, community donations and charity events

Implementation Arrangements

Funding Agreement

Australia Awards PNG will enter into an agreement with selected recipients outlining the total funding, agreed arrangements, and code of conduct. Australia Awards PNG will not provide additional funding or cover additional expenses above what is stated in the agreement.

Co-funding

If participation in the event is being subsidised by another organisation or applicant is receiving a payment such as an honorarium or professional fees for service, it must be declared. On a case-by-case basis Australia Awards PNG may agree to a co-funding arrangement where other sponsorship is in place or there is a professional service arrangement. Failure to disclose such arrangements is considered a conflict of interest and fraud.

Important Information

Conflict of Interest

Australia Awards PNG has strict conflict of interest expectations. Professional Linkages Program recipients should declare any direct financial, professional or personal interest in any organisation delivering a conference or workshop or where a professional fee is being paid for services provided by the recipient. Where an un-declared conflict of interest is discovered, this will be regarded as fraud. In these cases, the Professional Linkages Program agreement will be terminated, and the recipient will be asked to return funds to Australia Awards PNG.

Pre-existing Medical Conditions

Applicants must declare any pre-existing medical conditions and should consider if travel to Australia is appropriate for them. International health insurance will not cover treatment for pre-existing medical conditions.

In the event of an emergency, and medical treatment is required, health cover will be on a reimbursable basis. Australia Awards PNG will **not** cover upfront medical expenses or pharmaceuticals, even if these are later reimbursable by the insurance company.

People with Disability

Where a recipient is a person with disability, Australia Awards PNG will support reasonable adjustment, and may incur additional expenses to those outlined.

Pregnancy & Health Disclosure

Applicants who are pregnant or have health conditions that may affect their ability to travel and participate fully in the program must disclose this in their application to allow for appropriate support and planning. Participants in their final trimester of pregnancy at the expected date of travel are advised to consult their healthcare provider and the program team to determine suitable arrangements.

Reporting Requirements

Recipients will be required to submit a Participant Activity Completion Report five days after completion of their travel.

Australia Awards PNG will undertake follow up surveys within 12 months of travel to collect further evidence on how the visit to Australia has contributed to professional development and improved academic program quality or university systems, procedures and processes.

Termination of funding agreement

Australia Awards PNG may immediately withdraw the funding agreement if it reasonably believes the recipient has:

- Breached the terms and conditions of the Recipient Agreement
- Provided false or misleading statements in their application or correspondence
- Engaged in serious misconduct including acting illegally, negligently, or fraudulently
- Acted in a manner that brings bring disrepute to You, Your home country or the Australian Government
- Not applied for an appropriate visa to Australia as per the date stipulated in the Agreement
- Not complied with all visa requirements of the Australian Department of Home Affairs (DHA), as set out on the DHA website and which may change during the course of the Award:
www.homeaffairs.gov.au;

The funding agreement may also be terminated if the recipient:

- Has their visa application denied
- Returns the signed agreement after the specified due date

Compliance with Laws, Guidelines and Policies

- Recipient must have regard to and comply with, relevant and applicable laws, guidelines, regulations and policies, including those in Australia and in PNG.
- Recipient must **comply** with DFAT and Commonwealth Government policies and guidelines applicable to the Services, including where relevant:
 - (a) *Child Protection Policy* and in particular, the child protection compliance standards at Attachment 1 of DFAT's *Child Protection Policy*, accessible on the DFAT website at <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/pages/child-protection-policy>; Recipients must sign a Child Protection and PSEAH Code of Conduct
 - (b) *Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy*, accessible on the DFAT website at: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/preventing-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment>
 - (c) *Disability Inclusive Development Guidance Note*, accessible on the DFAT website at: [Disability Inclusive Development Guidance Note \(dfat.gov.au\)](https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/accessibility-design-guide-universal-design-principles-for-australia-s-aid-program), and the Accessibility Design Guide: Universal Design Principles for Australia's Aid Program, accessible on the DFAT website at: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/accessibility-design-guide-universal-design-principles-for-australia-s-aid-program>. Note that this requires where applicable, the involvement of people with disabilities, increasing inclusion related to a range of disabilities, and ensuring universal accommodation and accessible information.
 - (d) *Fraud Control Policy and Fraud Control Toolkit for Funding Recipients*, accessible on the DFAT website at: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/fraud-control-toolkit-for-funding-recipients>
 - (e) *Foreign Bribery Guidelines*, accessible online on the Attorney General's website at: <https://www.ag.gov.au/crime/foreign-bribery>

Contact Information

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SmarterSelect: Login or Register <https://smr.to/p110286>