



# Return to service guidance



## WHAT IS RETURN TO SERVICE?

'Return to service' is defined as the period covering the last year on scholarship and the first year back in the agency post-scholarship. For research students, this period applies regardless of whether they have submitted their dissertation.



## WHY IS RETURN TO SERVICE IMPORTANT?

A successful return to service supports the scholar and their agency to realise the most value from their investment in the Sir Roland Wilson and Pat Turner scholarships, harnessing returning scholars' new-found skills and knowledge for policy and program impact.

This includes enabling and supporting them to make a meaningful contribution to the Australian Public Service (APS) and their agency after study.



## WHAT MAKES A GOOD RETURN TO SERVICE?

Successful return to service includes:

- timely completion of study requirements
- smooth and productive transition to a suitable work placement which uses scholars' skills and knowledge meaningfully
- strong ongoing connections with academia, the Foundation and the alumni network.

If these elements are in place, returning scholars will be well placed to make strong contributions to their agencies and the Australian Public Service (APS).



## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Return to service is a shared responsibility of scholars and their agencies. Agencies need to provide senior and operational-level oversight to support scholars. The Foundation will work with key stakeholders to forecast and facilitate the process and troubleshoot emerging issues.

APS mentors, Learning and Development teams, the Foundation, and agency teams with direct links to a scholar's field of study all play a role in enabling return to service.

While responsibility is shared, scholars should take initiative and drive the process – this takes time and energy.



## PLAN FROM THE OUTSET

It's never too early to plan for a successful return to service. Questions to consider include:

- What are your academic and personal goals for your time on scholarship?
- During your scholarship, how will you remain connected to your agency and the APS?
- What do you want your return to look like and where do you want to be?
- What opportunities for professional development might you address on scholarship (including through the Foundation's Professional Development Fund)?



## FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit [srwfoundation.anu.edu.au](http://srwfoundation.anu.edu.au)  
Email: [srw.foundation@anu.edu.au](mailto:srw.foundation@anu.edu.au)  
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## INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS

Foster relationships within your agency and across the APS as a long-term investment in your return and career post-scholarship, to access feedback, advice and learn about opportunities. Key stakeholders include:

- APS mentor
- Agency senior executives
- Foundation alumni
- Foundation Board members
- Agency learning and development teams.
- Experts internal and external to the APS who have an interest in the issue.

Allow time while you are on scholarship and approaching return to invest in these networks by:

- booking in a networking coffee with a different contact once a fortnight
- heading back into the office regularly
- presenting your work to your agency.



## DEVELOP YOUR 'BRAND' AND SUPPORTING COLLATERAL

Ahead of your return, prepare your 'personal narrative':

- update your CV and social media presence, considering agency guidance
- develop your 'elevator pitch' – practice describing succinctly what you have done and achieved whilst on scholarship
- refresh your understanding of key policy and practice changes in your agency that have happened in your absence.



## SET REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS AND MANAGE COMMON PITFALLS

- expect and respond to change: your team, direct manager, and senior executives could all change while you're on scholarship
- return to service pathways will differ between scholars – what works for one person may not be so for another
- be prepared to move or try different roles over time before you land your ideal role
- the ideal role may not be available or exist when you return to service, it can be something to work towards – it pays to be patient
- remember that the scholarship is not a fast-track for promotion – if you are seeking a promotion, you should plan your approach and consider applying before your return
- while you may be keen to see your research translated to practice, consider how you might give back more broadly and help others, for example, building APS-academic partnerships, teaching, showcasing others' research and expertise through hosting webinars, or mentoring new scholars.



## PRIORITISE WELLBEING AND SELF-CARE

Just as transitioning from work to full-time study can take several months, the same goes for transitioning back to work post-scholarship:

- draw on your support networks
- consider taking leave before you commence your new APS role to decompress
- speak to Foundation alumni to learn from their experiences – including at Foundation networking events
- plan to re-establish your self-care and wellbeing routines on your return to service.