



Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19

All current Bonded Medical Places (BMP) and Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) scheme participants are still required to comply with your contractual obligations.

If you have opted in to the new arrangement, you are bounded by Part VD of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (Act) and must abide by the *Health Insurance (Bonded Medical Program) Rule 2020* (Rule).

I have an urgent request because of how COVID 19 is impacting my professional and personal life. Can you assist?

Yes. Please email BRoSS@health.gov.au to advise the Department of Health of your current situation, and how COVID-19 is impacting your professional and personal life. Please use COVID-19 in the subject line and provide as much detail as possible and the best contact email and phone number.

New Arrangement

On 1 January 2020, the Bonded Medical Program new arrangement (the Program) came into effect.

Who is eligible to apply for the Program?

The Program is open to all Australian citizens and permanent visa holders through participating universities offering the Bonded Medical Program places.

I sent you an email – how long before I get a response?

The Program is very popular with around 15,000 participants. The Department of Health receives a huge number of emails and will try its best to respond as soon as possible, and in the order the emails are received. An immediate email will be sent to you which include links to where you can find information – such as the department's [website](#) where we have fact sheets on the Program.

How do I benefit if I participate in the Program?

The Program provides students a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) at an Australian university in return for a commitment to work in eligible regional, rural and remote areas for a specified period once you have completed your medical degree. HECS-HELP applies.

Do bonded doctors have the same salary expectations as non-bonded doctors?

The department does not provide advice on salary and terms of employment. Information on employment conditions is available in your state's relevant award.

If I agree to the new arrangement, to the statutory scheme and rules, is there any possibility that the rules will change without my knowledge?

Participants who opt in to the new arrangement are accepting terms and conditions of the statutory scheme. For your information links to Part VD of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* can be found at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2019A00070> and the *Health Insurance (Bonded Medical Program) Rule 2020* can be found at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2019L01513>.

In the future, any changes proposed by the department will be subject to consultation with stakeholders before being enacted and published.

New Applicants

From 1 January 2020, all new applicants entering the Program will do so under the new arrangement.

How do I apply for the Program?

Please liaise with the participating university and advise them you are interested in applying for a place in the Program. After you submit your application to study medicine, the application and selection process for a bonded CSP in a medical course is determined by the participating university. If you require further information on the application processes, please refer to the Student Information Booklet available on the department's website.

You must meet the same entrance requirements as any other student applying for a medical place.

The opportunity to receive a bonded CSP under the Program is available to all eligible students accepted by a university into a medical course.

If an applicant is offered a placement via a participating university, but does not commence study until after 2020, what arrangement do they enter under?

Applicants who have received an offer for the Program from their university and accept the conditions and requirements of the Program through the Bonded Return of Service System (BRoSS), the department's web portal, are considered to be bonded participants. Participating universities manage

applications and bonded offers, however, the applicant does not enter the scheme until they have agreed to participate in the Program directly through BRoSS.

All applicants who receive a CSP from 2020 will be entering the Program under the new arrangement, which includes 3 years of Return of Service Obligation (RoSO).

How do I know if I am successful in my application?

Your university will be able to advise you the outcome of your application. If the university offers you a bonded CSP, you will automatically receive an email from the department providing your applicant sign in details to BRoSS. You will be requested to sign in to BRoSS to learn more about the Program and accept your offer. Once you accept, you will become a participant in the Program.

Students must agree to participate in the Program via BRoSS to maintain enrolment in a first year bonded CSP in a medical course. Registration into the Program commences a participant's bonded student phase of the Program.

Is fellowship (medical specialisation) compulsory under the new arrangement to complete your RoSO?

Fellowship (medical specialisation) is not compulsory under the new arrangement. If fellowship is not obtained by the end of the 12th year after completion of the medical course, all RoSO can be completed without completion of fellowship within the remaining 6 years of the 18-year time frame.

What if I change my mind and do not want to participate in the Program?

Should you not wish to participate, please contact your university and advise them that you will not be participating in the Program. This means that you may lose your bonded Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) in medicine.

How do I know my information is being kept private?

All department staff are required to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* to ensure your information is kept private. Information about your privacy can be found at: <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2019C00241>

Opt In

There are two existing schemes: the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) and the Bonded Medical Places (BMP) schemes. From 1 January 2020, eligible existing scheme participants can choose to opt in to the Program. MRBS scheme students will be able to opt in on completion of their medical course.

What if my obligations are not up-to-date? Will this affect my ability to opt in?

You will not be accepted into the new arrangement if your obligations under your current contract or Deed of Agreement (DoA) are not up-to-date. You should contact the department via BRoSS@health.gov.au to discuss options available.

Is it compulsory to opt in?

It is not compulsory to opt in. Existing participants may choose to opt in to the new arrangement. Participants who choose not to opt in to the new arrangement will keep their existing arrangements as listed in their signed contract or DoA.

What is the monetary value on breach under the Program?

Existing calculations can be found in contracts and DoAs. For participants who have entered the new arrangement, the calculation is in the Rule [100% of cost of CSP less any RoSO completed plus interest].

For your information the *Health Insurance (Bonded Medical Program) Rule 2020* can be found at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2019L01513>.

Do I need approval/permission as to where I work?

If you opt in to the new arrangement, you no longer need permission to work in RoSO ineligible areas as long as you complete your 3 years of RoSO within 18 years from the day you complete your medical course.

Return of Service Obligation (RoSO)

The Bonded Medical Program provides students with a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) in a medical course at an Australian university, in return for a commitment to work in eligible regional, rural or remote areas for a specified period after completion of their medical course. This commitment is referred to as RoSO.

Is accommodation included for participants working in rural, regional or remote locations?

The department does not provide any accommodation or employment opportunities for bonded participants. Rural Workforce Agencies (RWAs) may be able to provide assistance with relocation advice and local specific information in your state or the Northern Territory. For more information on RWAs, please go to: <http://www.rhwa.org.au/ruralworkforceagencies>

Can I carry over my RoSO completed under my existing contract if I opt in to the new arrangement?

Yes. All participants who opt in can reduce their RoSO by 1:1 credit for all RoSO worked under previous arrangements. Existing BMP Scheme participants (cohorts 2015 and earlier) who opt in will have 3 years of RoSO. Existing BMP Scheme participants (cohorts 2016 – 2019) who opt in will retain a full time 12 months of RoSO. Existing MRBS Scheme participants who opt in have 3 year RoSO and reduction in Medicare ban from 12 years to 6 years under a breach of conditions.

What is an eligible location?

The Program applies one or more of the following geographic and workforce classifications to determine locations which are eligible for you to complete your RoSO:

- Modified Monash Model (MMM)
- Distribution Priority Areas (DPA) for General Practitioners
- Districts of Workforce Shortage (DWS) for Specialists other than General Practitioners

What are some faster ways I can complete my RoSO?

If you work full time for the first 24 months of your RoSO in locations classified as Modified Monash Model 4-7 (MM 4-7), you will receive a scaling benefit under the scaling rule. This means, if you continue to work full time in locations classified as MM 4-7, from the beginning of your 25th month of RoSO, every month you work will be taken as completing 2 months of RoSO. This equates to a 6 months reduction to the 3 year RoSO.

What is Eligible work?

Work which you would like to count towards your RoSO must be categorised as ‘eligible work’.

‘Eligible work’ must meet certain requirements such as the type of professional service, the length of time you work in a location, and location eligibility.

There are no restrictions on the work that you undertake which you do not wish to count towards your RoSO during the 18-year period.

Will contribute to your ROSO	Will not contribute to your RoSO
Salaried professional service positions	Clinical research positions
Medicare billed service positions	Academic teaching positions
After hours and deputising services	Medical, hospital or organisational administrative positions
On call positions	Paramedicine
Outreach positions delivering fly-in/fly-out services	
Aeromedical services which provide aeromedical evacuation/retrieval services to patients in eligible locations	
Services delivered in an eligible location that are billed to a Medical Provider Number linked to a “Health Office” in either an eligible or non-eligible location	
Telehealth services from an eligible location and delivered to an eligible location	
Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators Fellowship	

I am undertaking a fellowship to be a Medical Administrator at the Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA). Does my fellowship training count towards my RoSO?

If you are undertaking the RACMA fellowship in a RoSO eligible location, this training can contribute to your RoSO. If you practice as a qualified Medical Administrator in a RoSO eligible location, this work counts towards your RoSO. A qualified medical administrator utilises “their medical and clinical knowledge, skill, and judgement as a registered medical practitioner, and is capable of affecting the health and safety of the public or any person. This may include administering or managing a hospital or other health service, or developing health operational policy, or planning or purchasing health services.”
Source: AMA Website

Does being a GP Superintendent or GP Administrator count toward my RoSO?

If you are working as a GP Superintendent or GP Administrator in Queensland in a RoSO eligible location this contributes to your RoSO. If you are in this position pre-Fellowship, you can count up to 18 months to contribute to your RoSO.

How long is one RoSO week and what constitutes a working day for RoSO?

There is no definition of a “week” in the *Health Insurance (Bonded Medical Program) Rule 2020* (the Rule). Instead, the Rule focuses on the amount of hours a participant works in a week. The Rule provides that a participant may complete their RoSO by working on either a full-time, part-time or per-day basis with definitions as follow:

- Full-time basis: A bonded participant completes 1 week of their return of service obligation on a full-time basis, if they are employed in eligible work for at least 35 hours or more in that week.
- Part-time basis: A bonded participant completes 1 week of their return of service obligation on a part-time basis, if they are employed in eligible work for at least 20 hours, but less than 35 hours, in a week.
- Per-day basis: A bonded participant completes 1 week of their return of service obligation on a per-day basis, if they are employed in eligible work on several different days:
 - On each of which the participant works for at least 7.5 hours; and
 - With a total of at least 20 hours accumulated in a period of greater than a week.

Note that if a participant is completing RoSO on a ‘per-day basis’ but reaches 20 hours in a single week, then that week will be assessed as 1 week of eligible work on a ‘part-time basis’ (where the participant is employed in eligible work for at least 20 hours, but less than 35 hours, in a week).

I work a fortnightly shift with varying hours across my roster including on weekends. How will my hours worked be counted towards my RoSO?

Your employment agreement or arrangement will be used to determine whether your RoSO is completed on a full-time, part-time or per-day basis. Hours may be worked across any day of the week including weekends. Pending the progressive rollout of BRoSS, participants will be able to record, plan and track their work hours and RoSO in the web portal. However, in the meantime copies of work evidence, as per the return of service obligation plan table in Section 16 of the Rule, should be sent by participants by email to: bross@health.gov.au

Can I get an extension on my RoSO?

The 18-year period may be extended by approval of the department’s Secretary and only as a result of a medical condition that you or a member of your family may have which prevents you from completing your RoSO within the Program’s required 18-year period.

Periods of leave such as maternity and long service leave do not count as reasons for extension. 18 years is considered sufficient to complete your 3 years of RoSO.

What if I cannot finish my RoSO?

If you do not complete your 3 years of RoSO within the required time frame of 18 years, you will be in breach of the Program conditions and will be bound by all obligations under this Program. You will be required to repay the cost of your bonded CSP in the medical course less a proportional amount for any RoSO you have completed.

Do I have to complete my RoSO during specialist training?

No. You can complete it either in pre-vocation phase (up to 18 months) or post-vocation – fellowship (up to 18 months).

Can I delay my RoSO during maternity, long service or annual leave?

No. You have a total of 18 years to complete 3 years of RoSO.

Can I complete RoSO working at an Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS)?

Yes. You can complete your RoSO at an AMS if it is located in an eligible location.

What is Paramedicine?

Paramedic Practice is “associated with the provision of emergency or unscheduled care to acutely ill or injured persons, predominantly in an out of hospital or primary care environment. This may involve autonomous practice, complex patient assessments and delivery of treatment which may include the administration of scheduled medicines.” Source: [Paramedicine Board of Australia website](#)

Bonded Return of Service System (BRoSS)

BRoSS is the Department of Health online web portal to support the Bonded Medical Program new arrangement.

What is the transition period?

As BRoSS is not yet fully functional, there will be a period where you cannot meet your obligations to provide information and upload evidence. The transition period is from 1 January 2020 until BRoSS is fully functional.

The department will advise you when BRoSS is fully functional and will nominate a date from which all the time frames for providing information and evidence will commence.

I have opted in to the new arrangement, but I do not have access to BRoSS yet to fulfill my responsibilities as a participant. Will I receive an administrative penalty?

The Department has implemented a transition period where the participant's obligations to provide information and upload evidence will be delayed until BRoSS is fully functional. The Rule has been amended to formally establish this transition period, which means current participants of the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) and Bonded Medical Places (BMP) schemes who are opting in to the Program cannot be liable for any administrative penalty arising out of not complying with time frames set out in the Rule. The amendment, [Health Insurance \(Bonded Medical Program\) Amendment Rule 2020](#), is available at the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments for your information.

The Department will advise the participants when BRoSS is fully functional and will nominate a date from which all the time frames for providing information and evidence will commence.