

Holistic support across the scholarship life cycle: focusing on mental health and wellbeing

Alison White

Associate Director – International Education, Tetra Tech International Development

Convenor, Scholarships and Fellowships Network, International Education Association of Australia (IEAA)

Dr Gretchen Dobson

Associate Director – Scholarships, Tetra Tech International Development

ISANA Conference, December 2024

About Tetra Tech International Development



Thriving people, thriving communities, thriving planet

30,000

ASSOCIATES
WORLDWIDE

WORKING ON
100,000

PROJECTS
ANNUALLY

550

OFFICES
WORLDWIDE

WORKING IN MORE THAN 100
COUNTRIES ON 7 CONTINENTS



Tetra Tech's scholarships and fellowships portfolio (as of Dec 24)

Region	Program / Project name	Contract period
Southeast Asia	Australia Awards Indonesia (AAI)	2022-2030
	Australia Awards Indonesia Nusantara scholarships	2024-2030
	Vietnam-Australia Partnership on Human Resource Development (Aus4Skills)	2016-2026
	Australia Awards Alumni Engagement Program in the Philippines (AAAEP)	2017-2025
	Laos Australia Institute (LAI)	2021-2029
	Australia Awards Cambodia (AAC)	2018-2026
Pacific	Australia Awards PNG (AAPNG)	2023-2033
	Australia Awards Fiji (Fiji Program Support Facility (FPSF))	2017-2025
	Australia Awards Tuvalu (Fiji Program Support Facility (FPSF))	2017-2025
	Australia Awards Nauru (AAN)	2019-2027
	Australia Awards in Vanuatu (AAV) – (Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP))	2017-2025
PLUS...	Mekong Australia Partnership (including 48 Masters scholarships)	2021-2024
	Australia for ASEAN Scholarships (including 100 scholarships, short courses)	2022-2024
	ACIAR Meryl Williams Fellowship (6 cohorts Indo-Pacific, and Africa)	2024-2029
	John Dillon Fellowship (sub-contractor to ACIAR through UNE)	2021-2024
	G20 Scholarships Indonesia	2022-2024

The annual scale of Tetra Tech's scholarships management across 10 country programs



PROMOTION >

Multi media, outreach and public diplomacy attracting diverse and inclusive applicants



SELECTION >

10,000
Applications processed in 2022



PRE-DEPARTURE >

800
New attendees annually prepared for their study



ON-AWARD >

1500
Scholars supported in-country



REINTEGRATION >

Between 500 and 700 new graduates supported annually to resume careers



ALUMNI

30,000
Alumni engaged

Our shared concern for scholar welfare and success on-award



Prior to the pandemic our scholar engagement was 'light touch'

Post COVID, scholars must cope with more extreme challenges

- Low vacancy rates and high rental costs
- Inflationary pressure and rising cost of living
- Changes at universities (e.g., limited on-campus accommodation)

This is increasing the risk profile for scholars

- Poor academic performance adding time, cost and potential terminations
- Stress and welfare concerns; eroding self esteem and motivation to succeed
- Sub-optimal living arrangements and exploitation
- Pressure to take on additional paid work
- Damaging Australia's reputation and capacity to build enduring positive, relationships

Achieving the Australia Awards goal and outcomes requires Tetra Tech to be active in our partnerships with universities to understand and manage our shared concern

How we support scholar welfare and success on-award

- By preparing scholars well through pre-departure training before they commence
- Through strong partnership and communication with university contact officers when issues or critical incidents occur
- By being a reliable and trusted partner for DFAT decision making about scholarship variations and incidents
- Monitoring scholar experience – such as through our survey – and sharing the findings for awareness and advocacy
- Increasing access to quality enrichment activities on-award

Increasing access to enrichment activities on-award

- Benefits of well targeted enrichment activities that complement study programs
- Tetra Tech's corporate initiative offers activities to scholars with a focus on inclusion, access, and quality

Professional Networking and Communication	Networking and how to nurture professional networks, problem solving, communicating research to decision makers (translating knowledge to diplomacy), effective media communication skills, managing a social media presence
Mental Health and Wellness	Practical strategies, knowledge, and skills to help scholars maintain personal wellness and study/work-life balance
Inclusive Leadership	Targeting the intersectionality of multiple identities, lived experiences and distinctions in language, and teaching practical strategies to mainstream inclusive practice.
Special Events	E.g. Film screening – in partnership with Tetra Tech's Australian Consulting Practice we brought scholars and members of all Australia Awards communities together in celebration of NAIDOC Week 2024.

Creating a Community of Peer-to-Peer Support

Scholar to Scholar & Scholar Yoga

- *Scholar to Scholar* and *Scholar Yoga* are part of the Tetra Tech Corporate On-Award Initiative. The Corporate On-Award Initiative is a partnership with Australia Awards programs managed by Tetra Tech to support effective scholar engagement and deliver the best foundational learning outcomes.
- These online synchronous sessions are held weekdays to offer scholars targeting strategies, knowledge, and practical skills to maintain personal wellness and work-life balance.

What makes Scholar to Scholar & Scholar Yoga unique?

- Creating an alternative way for scholars to connect beyond traditional forms that cross state boundaries, country origins, and academic disciplines.
- Inclusive to all through remote delivery.
- Scholar Yoga made accessible to all through its delivery mode and modifications.

Scholar to Scholar


- *Scholar to Scholar* is an informal facilitated online session for scholars to share their on-award experiences and to support each other during times of transition throughout the scholar lifecycle.
- Breakout rooms are created for small group sharing.
- Facilitators include Australia Awards program advisors, AA alumni professionals working in the mental health/wellness fields, Australian University mental health specialists, Australian RTOs and licensed therapists.
- Developing support systems and stress management for scholars are examples of recent topics.

Scholar Yoga: impact on overall mental health and wellness



- ✓ reducing stress
- ✓ increasing focus
- ✓ boosting immunity
- ✓ improving posture
- ✓ increasing confidence
- ✓ boosting morale
- ✓ improving digestion
- ✓ increasing energy
- ✓ improving breathing, and
- ✓ increasing flexibility

Scholar Yoga: impact on overall mental health and wellness



“What I learned in the first session was indeed basic and useful techniques that produce relaxation ... and clearer mind to make decisions.

Just two hours before the session, I had an argument with a colleague. I was still upset when I joined the session, and afterwards I was able to think it through and made a fair decision to move forward.”

- Anna, Indonesia

“Scholar yoga provided me with an opportunity to disengage from the many pressures around me, even if only for a very short time, and learn basic techniques

It forced me to stop, and just be present. Being able to switch off is so important and happens so rarely!

The class was accessible (it didn't matter that I am not fit or flexible), and I didn't have to make the effort to leave the house.

The recordings meant that even if I wasn't able to attend, I could watch later.”

Supporting our teams – it's not only about the students!

Communities of Practice

- Scholarships Effectiveness Group
- Working Groups
 - Alumni and on-award engagement
 - Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)
 - Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
 - Short courses and transformational education

Desk Yoga

- 15 minutes every two weeks
- Supported by Tt leadership
- Accessible to all – just like Scholar Yoga

ACTIVITY!



Thank you - please stay in touch!



Alison White

Associate Director, International Education

alison.white@tetrattech.com

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/alison-white-ieaa-sf/>



Dr. Gretchen Dobson

Associate Director, Scholarships

gretchen.dobson@tetrattech.com

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/gretchendobson>



Questions?