



Pre-interview Information Sheet No 1: Sell yourself at interview.

The Interview

Your interview is an important step in the selection process. It is the only activity now standing between you and an Australia Award Scholarship. The interview is an opportunity for you to convince the Interview Panel that you are a good investment.

Be prepared

To be successful, it is important that you can talk fluently **but** succinctly about yourself, your career, your professional achievements, and your future goals. How will use your master's degree to help you become a leader of developmental change in your country?

If you are successful, this scholarship will provide you with a life-changing experience. It is therefore important for you to appreciate that the Australia Awards Africa program seeks out talented individuals who will drive development in their home countries. How will you convey to the Panel that you are **talented and have a passion for development** and change? Ask yourself...What sets you apart from other interviewees?

In your interview, you must be able to discuss **your course and university** choice. Make sure you understand why your choice is important to your work and your country. The Panel will be interested to hear how your course selection will help you achieve the short- and long-term goals you set out in your Supporting Statement. Ask yourself - what unique skills and knowledge you will learn by studying this course? Research your choices in detail; understand how your chosen subjects will benefit you when you return home.

Interview Tip

Practice answering questions in advance with a friend. Go over all the preparation materials provided to you. Re-read your application.

PREPARE

You must be prepared to discuss:

- cross-cutting issues (For example gender equity and other factors which can potentially leave people marginalised, such as disability). *Refer to Information Sheet No 5 for more information about Social Inclusion.*
- how your studies in Australia will equip you to help address these vitally important issues in the workplace and community, on your return home.
- Why Australia - Why did you choose to apply for an "Australia" Award? What interests you about Australia?

Interview Tip

Make sure you greet the panel as soon as you log onto the interview meeting. Use good manners. **SMILE**

What to expect

- Your interview will take place **ONLINE** and you will be required to turn your camera on.
- The interview will last 30 minutes (35 minutes for candidates from non-English speaking countries).
- There will be three Panel Members.
- If you work in the Public Sector, a representative from your government may be present in the interview. They will not have voting rights but will observe and provide advice to the Panel about your country's development priorities.
- An Australia Awards Officer will also be present on the call to provide secretariat services.
- You will be given the questions 15 minutes before your interview (20 minutes for non-English speaking candidates), and you will be allowed to take notes during this time. You will be allowed to refer to your notes during your interview.
- Request the panel to repeat a question at any point, if necessary.
- Be ready to use examples in answering the questions.
- The Panel will not allow your interview to over-run, you must answer all the questions.
- The Interview Panel will have read your application and will expect you to elaborate on it.

Interview Tip

On the day of your interview, set up your computer station in advance of your interview. **RELAX**

Use examples

Good interview answers include examples that support your claims. A useful approach to answering questions is to use the **STAR** format. This might help you think through your answers.

S – to begin, describe the **Situation**: what was the challenge or objective?

T – and then the **Task**: what was your task?

A – and what **Activity** did you (or your team) do?

R – and what was the **Result**: what happened because of your action?

Interview Tip

Answer each question concisely (remember your time limit). Speak with passion. Make eye contact.

ENJOY





Australia Awards

Pre-interview Information Sheet No 2: Returning Home

As an applicant for an Australia Award, you were asked to provide detailed information about your expectations in undertaking study in Australia and to tell us how you will use the knowledge and connections you gained from your scholarship, when you return home. If you are offered an Australia Award, we will build on these commitments and develop a Reintegration Action Plan (RAP). This plan will become central to your journey as an Australia Awards scholar. On completing your Award, you will return home to implement your RAP. We will use it as a monitoring and evaluation tool to ensure that you implement your acquired knowledge and skills. As an Australia Award recipient this is your contracted obligation.

Expectations

At your interview, you will be expected to discuss in detail how studying in Australia will contribute to your skills and knowledge gap and how you will use these learned skills to make an impact on returning home. You must be able to explain how your plan supports the needs of your organisation or sector; how it relates to your country's development priorities; and how your proposed studies will help actualise these plans. There are three key areas that you should be prepared to defend:

Skills and knowledge you expect to gain from an Award.

Ask yourself:

- What is my objective?
- What is the course content of my proposed course of study, does it include my areas of special interest?
- What skill or knowledge gap do I want to build on? Why?
- What is the problem I want to solve and how will I apply my new skills, knowledge, and experience to this problem?
- What are my long-term career objectives?
- Can I demonstrate coherence in my past, present and future work?
- How does my planned study relate to my career path – past and future (medium – long term)?

Your country's development priorities

Ask yourself:

- What development challenges does my country face?
- What change is needed to advance these developmental challenges?
- What direct knowledge or experience do I have of such development challenges?
- How do they relate to my area of expertise and my proposed area of study?
- How might I help in the future to address these development challenges?

**Refer to Pre-interview Information Sheet No 3: Development Agenda*

1. Improving policy or practice in your current or future job

Ask yourself:

- How will I influence or affect change to policy or practice in my organisation, sector, and country?
- How do I expect to make an impact when I return home?
- How will I disseminate and share the skills and knowledge I gain from the Award in my workplace?
- Who can I influence or whose support will I need when implementing my new skills and knowledge to create change?

**Refer to Pre-interview Information Sheet No 4: Change for Development*

Be inspired...

"The developing world is full of entrepreneurs and visionaries who with access to education, equity, and credit would play a key role in developing the economic situations in their countries".

**Professor Muhammad Yunus
Nobel Laureate**

Remember...

The Australian Government and your government work in partnership to meet your country's development goals. If you are awarded an Australia Award, your RAP is the plan of action that you, in collaboration with your employer, commit to. This is the critical link between your studies and your future contribution to change for development in your country. You must be prepared to sell your ideas at your interview.

By accepting an Australia Award, you agree to:

- Return home on completion of your scholarship to implement your RAP.
- Contribute to the outcomes and objectives - directly or indirectly - linked to your country's vision for development.

Remember to...

- Sell yourself.
- Sell your intentions.
- Show your creativity.
- Sell your vision of the future.





Australia Awards

Pre-interview Information Sheet No 3: The Development Agenda

Understanding context

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) administers the Australia Awards. They contribute to the long-term development needs of Australia's partner countries in line with bilateral and regional agreements.

As an applicant for an Australia Award Scholarship, it is important that you clearly understand how you, your role, and your professional background fit into the big picture of both the Australian Government's and your own Government's national interests and agreed development agenda.

The Australian perspective

Australia's approach to development is closely aligned with its economic diplomacy policy.

Australia's development cooperation with African nations helps to advance stability, growth and prosperity.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) stand central to inclusive development and to the Australian perspective.

Information on Australia's new development policy is available at these web links:

- › [Australian aid: promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability](#)
- › [Australia's new development policy and performance framework: a summary](#)

Know your country's plans

Before your interview, take time to research your own Government's vision for development, strategic policies, and plans, and understand how your own sector of work and the organisation in which you work, fit into these plans.

In recent years, most African countries have developed their "Vision" for development over the long and medium term. Such plans articulate how the country will pull together to achieve its common development goals.

Development Vision 2025 has identified the kind of enabling environment that is essential for the nation to flourish economically, socially, culturally, and politically.
Planning Commission, Tanzania

Questions to ask yourself

- What are the key elements of my government's development agenda?
- What are the key priority areas of my country and how does my organisation fit into this?
- What are the key issues to be addressed for sustainable development?
- How does my work link to the sector priorities and targets through my organisation's mandate and strategic plans?
- How will an Australia Award help me in my work, to contribute to these overarching objectives in the future?
- What are the gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) factors to be considered priorities?

Selling your ideas

During your interview, you must be able to sell yourself and your application in terms of potential future contributions to the development agenda.

The National Development Plan is a plan for the country to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030...

**National Planning Commission,
South Africa**

Be prepared

For your interview, be ready to discuss your ideas – have your own vision for the future that links to your nation's development priorities, your current and future job, and your proposed study in Australia. How will your preferred master's course make this a reality?

We are confident that Africa has the capability to realise her full potential in development, culture, and peace and to establish flourishing, inclusive and prosperous societies.

African Union – Agenda 2063

Visit the DFAT website to learn about Australia's development and economic diplomacy policies:
<http://www.dfat.gov.au>





Australia Awards

Pre-interview Information Sheet No 4: Change for Development

Development and Change

Australia Awards aims to contribute to the sustainable development of Australia's partner countries in Africa and build a new generation of global leaders. This happens by developing capacity and leadership in talented individuals who will drive development in their home countries.

Be inspired...

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

Nelson Mandela

Think about change

In your application, we asked you to tell us how your Award (and the skills and knowledge you expect to gain during your Award) will help you to influence change in your workplace, community, and country on your return.

You have already demonstrated that you have the potential to influence change for development through your application.

This is an important subject for you to think about and prepare to discuss during your interview.

Learn more about change and sustainable development:

<https://www.undp.org> AND
<http://www.afdb.org/>

Capacity for change

To achieve development objectives, capacity development is imperative. Capacity is about growth and change. Capacity development is critical to human development and can be viewed from three distinct but related perspectives:

1. **Individual:** The skills and knowledge vested in people.
2. **Organisational:** The policies, systems, and strategies that enable organizations to operate and achieve their goals.
3. **Enabling environment:** The wider society within which individuals and organisations in a country function.

Be inspired...

Be the change that you wish to see in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi

Questions to ask yourself

- What are the key development challenges or issues in your workplace or community?
- What have you done to solve these challenges?
- How have you led change?
- How do you identify, involve and inform the various stakeholders in the change process?
- How do you overcome resistance to change?
- How do you influence others to work together to drive change?
- What are the social inclusion and gender equality considerations or implications for this change?

Think of examples for each of the above questions.

Don't forget, change is not always big, but often small and incremental.

Leadership and change

Transformational leadership involves a leader who identifies an issue/ problem and has a concrete idea of the change needed. Change can happen through inspiration and execution of change by leading others. It involves being a role model to inspire and challenge others to take ownership of change. Through the strength of their vision and personality, transformational leaders inspire others to change their expectations, perceptions, in working towards a common goal.

Be inspired...

Transformational leaders don't start by describing the world around them; instead they describe the world they want to create.

Seth Godin, Entrepreneur

Be prepared

Be ready to discuss the development challenges in your country, community, sector of work, or organisation. Show that you have thought about how you will contribute to meaningful change now and in the future and how your Australia Awards will assist you to be an agent of change.





Australia Awards

Pre-interview Information Sheet No 5: Social Inclusion – a Development Principle (GEDSI)

What about GEDSI?

Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) (often referred to as just *Social Inclusion*) is about not leaving anyone behind. It is a central theme that underlines the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015.

Social Exclusion vs Inclusion

Social exclusion: These are laws, policies, decisions, institutional behaviours, and structures that systematically exclude entire communities or groups of people from rights, opportunities, and resources that are available to most other people in society. Being poor can lead to exclusion but it is so much more than just being poor.

Social inclusion (GEDSI) entails ensuring that excluded groups and the processes of exclusion - geographic, social, political, and economic - are recognised, understood, and addressed so that all can participate and progress equally and fairly in society.

Why GEDSI?

Inclusive development should be an objective for every organisation and its activities. Inclusion creates a society that upholds fundamental human rights and principles of equality and equity. It supports human rights; and is essential for sustainable economic growth and development¹.

Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Principles:

- Improved access to services, resources, and benefits of development for the most disadvantaged.
- Meaningful participation in decision-making for the most disadvantaged.
- Removal of institutional and social barriers to the above.

Barriers to GEDSI

Some of the causes of exclusion are:

- Institutional and/or organisational barriers-culture and practices
- policy barriers
- attitudinal barriers to those who are perceived as 'different'
- discrimination
- stigma
- environmental and physical barriers
- communication and information barriers.

Linking GEDSI to development

Reflect on your country, workplace, and community context:

- Who do you think is marginalised/ left behind in development, and how?
- Have you considered incorporating inclusion or equal opportunities in your plans for when you return?
- your government's national development goals?

Reflect on your workplace and sector:

- Are there individuals/groups who are excluded from the work process or from the benefits of your work?
- What can you do to promote inclusion in the above scenarios?

Prepare a response that links the above points to your preferred course of study.

Be Inspired...

An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

Martin Luther King Jnr

Linking GEDSI to your professional field and your plans when you return

When reflecting on the development contribution you intend to make think of the social inclusion principles mentioned.

- Are there groups that are excluded from accessing services and resources you provide or from decision-making?
- Are there inherent barriers at your workplace or community?
- What can you do about this that is within our scope of influence or ability?
- How will my new skills, knowledge, and attitudes contribute to gender equality?

Three levels of influence of a change agent:

1. Can you influence policy?

A policy is a course of action adopted or proposed by a government or an organisation on how it intends to conduct business.

2. Can you influence practice? Not everyone develops policy - most people implement policy directives.

3. Are you able to promote a culture that supports inclusion? You can be a change agent who is able to foster positive and inclusive cultures.

Be prepared

Be ready to demonstrate that you have a good understanding of the GEDSI challenges faced at the country, sector/ workplace, and community levels. Reflect on what role or action you can take to overcome barriers to GEDSI.

¹Analysing and Measuring Social Inclusion in a Global Context, UN 2010





Australia Awards

Pre-interview Information Sheet No 6: Managing a virtual interview

Prepare

The key to a virtual interview is proper preparation – from checking that your technology is working to conducting research in advance and sitting poised and ready for any question. Here are some general guidelines for doing good virtual interviews.

Practice, and do not memorise

Prepare well in advance, make notes, and have them ready in the interview so that you appear focused and ready to answer the questions. Avoid memorising each response, but rather write down some high-level thoughts or place them on Post-it Notes and stick them to your computer. It is a good idea to run through a few practice rounds with a colleague, friend, or family member. Be clear and concise – do not give long answers if it is not warranted.

Test Your Technology

Always test your technology to ensure you are set up for success. Check your internet connectivity, and confirm your camera and microphone are working. On the day of, test your equipment and internet connection again.

Interview Tip

Virtual interviews offer the opportunity to speak in a relaxing, familiar environment.

Minimise Distractions

Determine where to take the interview. Find a room with optimal lighting, preferably at a window facing the natural light, or a blank wall.

Make sure you are the focal point of the conversation and that your background is appropriate for a business interview and that it is neat and tidy. Eliminate all distractions such as a TV, family, or pets. Silence your cell phone, and try to eliminate noise from neighbourhood traffic and neighbours. Avoid typing or clicking on your computer during the interview.

Monitor your body language and appear professional

Non-verbal communication clues in online interviews are more difficult to pick up, however, you should monitor your body language and present yourself in a professional manner. Communicate with confidence by sitting up straight, smiling, and keeping the camera at eye level.

Dress professionally

Dress as you would for an in-person interview. Professional clothing will show you are serious about the application and come over as authoritative, trustworthy, and competent.

Make a connection and build rapport

As you are one of several candidates being interviewed, it is important to make a connection. Try to stand out by using personal examples and drawing from your own workplace and home country experience and insights.

Be yourself, be authentic

Although it may be more difficult for the interview panel to pick up on your enthusiasm through the screen, however, virtual interviews offer the rare opportunity to speak in a relaxing, familiar environment and show the panel why you are a good candidate for an award.

Text adapted from Harvard Business School Online

Interview Tip

PREPARE:

- Practice answering questions in advance with a friend.
- Check that your technology works.
- Make notes of your most relevant thoughts.

