



DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEW YEAR AHEAD AND NEW STUDENT HELP STUDENTSHIP.

We welcome the New Year 2020 and the changes and challenges the new decade brings. In addition to personal change for each one of us, we will together witness the transformation of Higher Education in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

In 2020 our students will receive greater assistance with the introduction of the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) and the phasing out of Tertiary Education Study Assistance Scheme (TESAS).

The Prime Minister Hon. James Marape MP and the Hon. Nick Kuman MP, Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology have instructed the Department to introduce the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) commencing second semester 2020.

- The second semester commencement of HELP provides time for students, parents and sponsors to learn more about the support available through HELP assistance.
- Second semester timing also provides students with enough time to obtain their National Identification (NID) Card and Tax Identification Number. These are important pre-requisite requirements when submitting Applications for HELP.

Hence, during the period January to May 2020, there will be a transition from TESAS to HELP. We will be working very closely with all Higher Education Institutions over the transition period to ensure that all students are well informed about HELP.

The objective of HELP is to assist as many students as possible to gain entry to universities or colleges; to offer high quality education; and most importantly, help students to succeed once they have enrolled. The fundamental reorientation in the financing and quality higher education is profound and will enable students to meet their educational goals, whether they are pursuing a degree or striving towards some other educational objective.

The most significant immediate impact will come from the financing of renewable HELP Studentships. HELP will provide student support for multiple years of study as long as students continue to meet the required academic and non-academic criteria. HELP will offer a new state-of-the-art loan servicing system – a system that creates incentives and guidelines that support a more user-friendly single online loan management platform. This relieves the heavy up-front debt burden on students and their families to cover the increasing costs of higher education. Combining this support under one HELP umbrella makes it simpler for Students, Parents, Sponsors and the Government.

HELP will also be available for PhD, Doctoral, Masters and other postgraduate programs, meeting the Government's goal in providing a full range of quality education at the post-secondary level and beyond.

What will happen between now and May 2020:

- As of May 2020, TESAS awards will cease for good and HELP financing will commence. HELP will be the only

available Studentship for all students for years to come.

- Students interested in making an application for HELP financing have time to obtain their National Identification (NID) Card and the Tax Identification Number - important pre-requisites for making a HELP application.
- HELP applications will open from 27 April 2020, online via the DHERST web-site and as notified in press and media advertising.
- Existing TESAS awardees will have the opportunity to elect to transfer to HELP under new student contract conditions, currently being developed.
- DHERST, together with other Government Agencies and the Higher Education Institutions, will finalize legislation to establish and operate the PNG-HELP FUND financing renewable studentships into the long term.
- We will finalize policy positions, terms, and conditions on such matters as eligibility criteria, application and assessment processes, loan agreements, lending guidelines and other matters made in accordance with regulations under the Higher Education (General Provisions) Act.
- We will develop the full operational requirements of PNG-HELP in accordance with the Public Finance (Management) Act in readiness for the commencement of loan applications and the issuing of loans for the commencement of the second semester of 2020 academic year.
- We will finalize medium-term funding agreements with the participating Higher Education Institutions based on student fee enrolments and the 5-Year Higher Education Sector Plan and Budget.
- We will regularly update our students, Higher Education Institutions and the public on progress.

Under DHERST's 5-Year Sector Planning for financing the Higher Education, HELP will become a significant source of funding for the Higher Education Institutions.

On behalf of the Department, I take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to our Government, the Higher Education Institutions, Parents, Sponsors and Students for your support during the academic year 2019.

The Ministry and the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology wish you many God's blessings, peace and happiness for the 2020 New Year. We look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor Fr Jan Czuba
Secretary