



DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Office of the Secretary

HELP Studentships: What Are the Benefits?

■ Government is committed to providing financial assistance to students this year through the innovative and far-reaching HELP program that has been carefully designed with the PNG context in mind.

■ Whilst we wish to reward academic excellence, it should be noted that HELP will fund those students who, for different reasons, may have not met the qualifying criteria for TESAS. To clarify the situation, during this academic year a full awareness raising program will be carried out across all institutions of higher learning and the public at large.

■ The HELP program is inclusive and will also extend to those students who are self-sponsored. In future years the program will embrace students who have 'dropped-out' for whatever reason and wish to return to further their education in either government or private higher education institutions.

Government is firmly committed to the principle of equal value in education, seeing it as a fundamental right, and will ensure that no child or student is left behind.

■ Those seeking access to HELP studentships will download and complete application forms from the DHERST website once they have enrolled with, and been accepted by, an HEI for the 2020 academic year. During the coming year we will register all prospective students through the issue of National Identity Cards.

Rollout of the HELP studentships will commence during the opening of the first semester of academic year 2020.

■ Many people are understandably hesitant to borrow money. Any loan is a serious commitment, and should not be entered into lightly. Having said that, student loans are often necessary to make it possible for a young person to fulfill their university or college dreams.

■ The PNG Higher Education Loan Program (HELP), offers special terms and provisions that make them a more affordable and manageable commitment for young university or college-bound students. Around the world most student loans offer lower

interest rates, but **the PNG HELP is interest free, provides for deferred payment options together with a repayment grace period following graduation.** Under the HELP, student borrowers can also take advantage of more lenient repayment plans and schedules that are exclusive to HELP, unlike the more restrictive terms and conditions of a standard loan.

HELP studentships offer greater flexibility and more manageable terms and conditions than standard non-education loans.

■ For many students, an education loan will be their first major financial transaction. While taking out a studentship may seem a daunting prospect, it is also the perfect opportunity to begin to build a solid credit history. HELP is the beginning of many students' financial history. By keeping up to date on all university or college loan repayments a student can begin to lay the foundation of a good credit score, which will prove greatly beneficial in later life.

One of the many advantages of a HELP studentship is that the student does not need to repay before he or she graduates. The HELP scheme will allow students time to seek a job before repayments commence. Generally speaking, students will begin repayments on their loan about six months after their graduation.

■ There are clearly many benefits of a HELP studentship. Naturally, there will be students who are wealthier than others and who may not need to consider such an offer; however, for most students, a HELP studentship is a mean of allowing them to concentrate on their studies rather than worrying about the source of funding for their tertiary education.

**Professor Fr. Jan Czuba
Secretary DHERST**