NORTHERN TERRITORY PUBLIC SECTOR

GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

POLICY

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1. RATIONALE

The Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) recognises the need for innovative workforce planning and development to ensure it has the capability and capacity to deliver the highest quality of service to all Territorians. One of the greatest challenges facing the NTPS is to attract and retain skilled and experienced workers to counter the impact of an ageing workforce, demographic change, current and projected service demands and the economic environment.

The NTPS offers employment to graduates as a pathway to employment. Graduates have the opportunity to begin their career with the Northern Territory Government (NTG) in an environment that continues their professional development and training within a supervised workplace.

The NTPS Graduate Development Program (GDP) is a one or two year program whereby graduates are employed with a particular Agency and undertake work related to the responsibility of that Agency.

Graduates make an invaluable contribution to the NTPS during this development pathway as they bring with them a range of analytical, contemporary and innovative skills and knowledge which they learned at university. The GDP is designed to enhance these skills while providing an opportunity for graduates to broaden their knowledge and understanding of Government.

2. DEFINITIONS

Graduate: For the purpose of this policy, is any person who has completed a degree at an Australian recognised university.

Australian recognised university: Tertiary education in Australia consists of both government and private institutions. A higher education provider is a body that is established or recognised by or under the law of the Australian Government, a State, the Australian Capital City Territory or the Northern Territory. VET providers, both public and private are registered by State and Territory Governments. A list of Australian recognised universities can be found here.

Degree: For the purpose of this policy, is a minimum 3 year undergraduate degree at an Australian recognised university. Overseas qualifications may be recognised once assessed against Australian standards. Overseas qualifications can be assessed by contacting the Northern Territory Government Department of the Chief Minister’s Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Employment Contract: An employment contract is a legal document in which the employee is offered, and accepts, employment in the NTPS for a specified period. The contract details the designation (level), employment dates (start date / end date) and remuneration package. There may be other unique information relevant to the employment.

Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO): The underlying principles of EEO in the NTPS include:

- the application of the merit principle as defined in Section 5D of the Public Sector Employment and Management Act (PSEMA) to all aspects of selection for promotion or appointment;
- the identification and elimination of all forms of discrimination and harassment in recruitment selection, professional development, personnel practices, job evaluation and conditions of service;
- action necessary to remedy the effects of past discrimination;
- the promotion of fair and equitable treatment for all employees in all operational policies and procedures; and
• Reflecting the diverse nature of the territory community and its needs in the composition of the workforce.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:
• increase the diversity of the NTPS staff profile so that it better reflects the demographics of the community it serves;
• establish pathways into employment;
• develop the capability and increase the capacity of the NTPS to resolve current and future skill shortages;
• address the under representation of EEO groups in the NTPS (Indigenous people, people with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and women in management and non-traditional employment);
• offer the NTPS GDP to people who have completed a degree program including those with relevant industry experience;
• broaden participation in the GDP to all agencies and regions;
• create equity of access to employment for graduates in the regions; and
• attract, develop and retain graduates.

4. POLICY ELEMENTS

4.1 PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

All agencies are strongly encouraged to participate in the NTPS GDP either as a host employer or by sharing a graduate with another agency (or agencies). In the case of sharing the graduate amongst agencies, the employment contract must exist between the graduate and the primary agency only.

Opportunities will exist for smaller agencies that have a similar skill set to another agency to negotiate a three to six month graduate rotation (see clause 4.10).

4.2. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:
• be an Australian citizen, hold Australian permanent residency status or an appropriate visa; and
• be currently completing a degree in one of the specified disciplines (as determined by agencies) and eligible to graduate by the end of the year before intake; or
• have attained a 3 year undergraduate degree as a minimum qualification within the last 3 years in one of the specified disciplines. Post graduate qualifications will also be considered; and
• if holding a qualification attained overseas, produce documented evidence confirming the qualification is recognized in Australia; applicants can obtain certification of overseas qualifications by contacting the Northern Territory Department of the Chief Minister Office of Multicultural Affairs.
4.3. Recruitment Process

The Employment Programs Unit (EPU) within the Department of Corporate and Information Services (DCIS) administers the NTPS GDP and coordinates the graduate recruitment process across the Northern Territory on behalf of the NTPS.

Intakes for the NTPS GDP commence in approximately January each year. Agency nominations open in the preceding May with advertising and recruitment process commencing in July. Agencies need to plan for their graduate intakes so that sufficient budget allocations are made and relevant resources organised.

Agencies are responsible for developing their own appropriate selection process for graduates and are to inform DCIS EPU of their required disciplines in which they want to engage their graduate.

Where agencies determine a business need to recruit graduates outside of this intake, please contact DCIS EPU for the options available and more information.

4.4. Diversity Strategies

Having a workforce that is representative of the community it serves is an important goal for the NTPS. Through the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE) the NTPS has strategies in place for recruiting and supporting graduates from EEO and other diversity groups, these include the EmployAbility Strategy and the Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy. Agencies may also have their own supporting strategies and initiatives.

Increasing employment opportunities for people with disability should be part of an agency’s strategic and business plan to assist in creating a work environment in which access and inclusion for people with disability is routinely taken into account.

The NTPS is committed to providing a supportive and culturally inclusive workplace environment for all public sector employees. In particular, we need to recognise and respect Indigenous people, actively promote the importance of cultural identity, improve cross-cultural understanding and engender mutual respect.

4.5. Duration of the Graduate Development Program

The duration of the GDP will be from one to two years as determined by the agency needs and the complexity of the discipline.

Graduate intakes will occur once a year in July for commencement in January, unless an agency chooses to recruit outside of this time.

4.6. Employment Conditions

The conditions of employment are specified in Determination 3 of 2005\(^1\) and successive determinations. Graduates may be employed on a fixed period contract of 1 to 2 years or on an ongoing basis, as determined by the agency. Graduates appointed on a fixed period basis will be in accordance with Determination 2 of 2012\(^2\) and successive determinations. Graduates appointed on an ongoing basis will be in accordance with the Public Sector Employment and Management Act (PSEMA)\(^3\).

The decision to appoint a graduate on a fixed period or ongoing contract rests with the agency.

4.7. Probation

Probation is a period during which an employee’s conduct and performance are assessed and will apply to the appointment of all ongoing graduates. The assessment determines whether

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the employee's ongoing appointment should be confirmed or terminated. The probationary period will be for six months and consist of two assessments, one at three months and one at five months. At the end of the probationary period the manager/supervisor will provide a report which makes a recommendation as to whether the employee's appointment is to be confirmed, terminated or probationary period extended. If the manager/supervisor considers that a probationer’s performance during the initial period of probation is unsatisfactory, but believes that an extension of time may result in improved performance to the required level, the probationary period may be extended for up to six months. An extension will only occur once. At the end of the extension the manager/supervisor will recommend whether the employee's appointment will be confirmed or terminated.

The amended PSEMA provisions give certainty for probationary employees about how and when probation ends.

- If an employee has not received written advice that their probation will be extended, confirmed or terminated by the end of the initial period, their probation period will be automatically extended for the same period.
- If an employee has not received written advice that their employment will be terminated at least 14 days before the end of their extended probation period, their ongoing employment will be automatically confirmed.
- A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will still be required to notify the employee in writing of their employment status even if the probation is automatically extended.

Agencies need to continue to manage and conduct probation processes efficiently. “Existing employees” who are ongoing will be exempt from the probationary period described above.

4.8. Remuneration

Graduates are employed in accordance with the salary as specified in the schedule of Determination No. 3 of 2005 and successive determinations. A CEO may advance a graduate through the incremental levels of the graduate pay scale at six monthly intervals based on the assessment of performance and achievement of identified outcomes.

Existing ongoing employees who are at a level higher than the graduate pay scale will remain at level at the CEO’s discretion. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and is an appropriate strategy to attract employees to ‘hard to recruit to positions’ or, where an agency has major skills shortages. If an existing employee is at a pay level comparable to a level within the graduate pay scale range, they will be transferred to the closest graduate pay scale point above their current pay point. They will then have the opportunity to advance as described in Determination No 3 of 2005.

4.9. Rotations

It is highly desirable for graduates to be rotated every three to six months to provide them with the opportunity to develop a broad range of skills and knowledge relevant to their discipline, agency and the NTPS. These can be intra or inter agency rotations. Smaller agencies and regional offices are encouraged to share the rotations of a graduate.

There may be rare circumstances where a rotation isn’t possible because of the unique nature of the discipline. Rotations are to be negotiated with the graduate and recorded in their Personal Development Plan (PDP).

4.10. Personal Development Plan (PDP)

A PDP which is developed collaboratively between the supervisor and graduate will be in place for each rotation. Prior to the rotation of a graduate a supervisor will prepare a Training Plan which identifies those development opportunities available to the graduate in their work unit. This will form the basis of the discussion when developing the graduate’s PDP. Progress in relation to the PDP will be evaluated during a performance evaluation at the end of each rotation. As all agencies have a unique approach to the PDP’s, the nominated Early Careers
Coordinator (see clause 4.12) will ensure that a performance evaluation occurs for each rotation to ensure continuous and consistent learning and amend the PDP as learning needs are identified.

4.11. Mentoring

All graduates should have a Mentor, mentoring is critical to the success of the GDP. To ensure the success of the mentoring relationship the agency Early Careers Coordinator and the graduate will identify a mentor with whom the graduate is comfortable. However it is not a requirement for the mentor to be from the host agency. It is highly recommended that all mentors who have not had recent relevant experience as a mentor, consider undertaking appropriate training or coaching funded by the agency.

4.12. Early Careers Coordinator

All agencies will nominate an Early Careers Representative who is responsible for coordinating graduate rotations and arranging the completion of an exit interview for the graduate after each rotation.

Training will be provided by DCIS EPU for Early Careers Coordinators to ensure they understand their role and responsibilities to ensure the success of the placement.

4.13. Supervisors

Every graduate will have a supervisor for each rotation. All supervisors are responsible for ensuring the graduate has a PDP and monitoring progress against the plan.

Training will be provided by DCIS EPU for supervisors to ensure they understand their role and responsibilities to ensure the success of the placement.

4.14. GDP Training and Development

The GDP has two components: Working in the Public Service and Agency Specific Development. The Working in the Public Service component is designed to ensure that graduates develop an understanding of the function and legislative framework of government and their responsibilities as a public sector employee. The Agency Specific Development component is designed to provide graduates with an understanding of the purpose and function of the agency within which they are placed. This is in addition to the development of discipline specific skills and knowledge and is at cost to the agency.

4.14.1 Working in the Public Service

The Working in the Public Service component will consist of:

- Graduate Development Program Induction
- Graduate Forums
  - Seminars
  - Workshops
  - Networking

Although not compulsory, graduates may wish to reflect on the Learning Outcomes from the Certificate III in Government (PSP30112)\(^4\) or choose to consider online enrolment in the following units:

- PSPETHC301B Uphold the values and principles of public service
- PSPLEGN301B Comply with legislation in the public sector
- PSPGOV308B Working effectively with diversity

\(^4\) Australian Government Training: [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)
Additional units can be completed at the graduate’s discretion. The cost associated with a graduate undertaking the three units of competence from the Public Services Training Package will be the responsibility of the agency.

Graduates who have prior knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the units of competence may be able to apply for Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) with a nominated Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

Further information about the Certificate III in Government and RTO’s registered to deliver the course can be found on the Australian Government Training website: www.training.gov.au.

The Working in the Public Service component will offer graduates, engaged in the NTPS, the learning and resources to demonstrate on the job skills which are recognised NTPS Government requirements. These include:

- the ability to apply ethical practices into the workplace to achieve the agencies expectations and deal with problems appropriately;
- the ability to recognise and value individual differences by working effectively with diversity; and
- the ability to follow legislative requirements and guidelines at all times.

4.14.2 Agency Specific Development

The Agency Specific Development component consists of:

- agency and work unit induction;
- remote location induction (if relevant); and
- relevant discipline specific training.

4.15. Program Management

4.15.1 Agency Responsibilities

- select graduates in partnership with DCIS EPU;
- provide an induction into the workplace;
- manage the graduate, including all personnel matters (as the graduate is an agency employee);
- appoint an agency early careers coordinator;
- provide interesting, stimulating and challenging work for graduates that is relevant and appropriate;
- arrange regular work placement rotations;
- support and supervise the graduate;
- create and review PDP’s in partnership with the graduate;
- monitor and assess the graduate’s performance and progress in the workplace in relation to the PDP;
- provide career development support and assistance during the program;
- provide appropriate facilities and experienced people to facilitate any training required;
- work with the graduate to identify an appropriate mentor;
- provide constructive feedback to the graduate;
• provide exit interviews at the end of each rotation;
• reporting on the GDP to DCIS EPU on numbers and progress;
• meet legal obligations including WHS, wages and conditions of employment as outlined under relevant departmental legislation; and
• liaise with DCIS EPU concerning the day to day management of the program.

4.15.2 Graduate Responsibilities
• create a PDP in partnership with the supervisor;
• communicate with the supervisor about progress against the PDP;
• actively participate in all development activities;
• adhere to agency policies and procedures and observing the NTPS Code of Conduct;
• participate in an exit interview with the early careers coordinator at the completion of all rotations;
• work with an agency representative to identify an appropriate mentor if appropriate;
• actively participate in the mentoring program if appropriate;
• communicate with the supervisor and/or HR Services;
• actively take part in all graduate training and events;
• ensure the supervisor is aware of attendance at all training and events, including any changes to dates and times; and
• achieve satisfactory results in both academic and work placement components of the program.

4.15.3 OCPE Responsibilities
• establish and maintain the policy framework for the GDP in partnership with agencies;
• set employment conditions; and
• evaluate the effectiveness of the policy in consultation with agencies.

4.15.4 DCIS EPU Responsibilities
• promote and manage graduate recruitment and induction;
• coordinate application process in partnership with agencies and applicants;
• process administration for placements, i.e. nominations, approval to fill and commencement paperwork;
• provide guidance to agency Early Career Coordinators; and
• work in partnership with OCPE regarding policy development.

5 COMPLETION

Although there is no guarantee of ongoing employment upon successful completion for graduates on a fixed period contract, agencies are encouraged to offer further employment where possible.

Having a career plan in place for graduates may assist with agencies being in a position to offer ongoing employment or to assist with the transition into the private sector or another agency.

6 RECORDS AND REPORTING
All agencies will maintain records and data relating to engagement and progress of graduates. Reports will be provided to DCIS EPU on a quarterly basis, and DCIS EPU will provide bi-annual progress reports to OCPE for workforce planning purposes. Information to be reported is as follows:

- number of graduates and disciplines;
- employment status of graduates - ongoing v fixed period;
- number of rotations;
- number of graduates rotated to the regions (if agency is represented in the regions);
- number of graduates from EEO groups;
- number of graduate resignations;
- number of promotions inside or outside the sector;
- destination if promoted outside the sector (if available); and
- a summary of feedback gained through exit interviews, which would serve to improve the program.

7 REVIEW

DCIS EPU will continue to monitor and review the operation and effectiveness of the GDP and OCPE will continue to review and amend the GDP policy as required.

8 FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the NTPS Graduate Development Program, please visit the DCIS intranet website: http://uluru.nt.gov.au/dbe/hr/graduate_info.shtml

For further information on Pay and Conditions in the NTPS, please visit the OCPE website: http://www.ocpe.nt.gov.au/ntps_careers/working_in_ntps/pay_and_conditions

For further information on the Public Sector Determinations, please visit the OCPE website: http://www.ocpe.nt.gov.au/legislation/psema/determinations

For further information on recognising overseas qualifications, please visit the Department of the Chief Minister Office of Multicultural Affairs website: http://www.dcm.nt.gov.au/strong_community/multicultural_affairs

For further information on the Certificate III in Government please visit the Australian Government Training website: www.training.gov.au

For further information on the NTPS EmployAbility Strategy, please visit the OCPE website: http://www.ocpe.nt.gov.au/building_capability/equity_and_diversity/disability_in_the_workplace/willing_and_able_strategy

For further information on the NTPS Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy, please visit the OCPE website: http://www.ocpe.nt.gov.au/building_capability/indigenous_employment