

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Northern Territory Medical Bonded Scheme (NTMBS) – Return of Service Obligation (RoSO)

#### What is a Return of Service Obligation?

A Return of Service Obligation (RoSO) in this context is where an individual is bound through a legal document to return a 'service' provided by another party, which is seen as an 'obligation' for that individual and is returned in this case through employment for a period designated within the signed deed of agreement. The 'service' provided in this case being the Medical Degree (MD) course payment made by the Northern Territory Government (NTG) through the NT Health on your behalf to the education provider.

#### What are the requirements for the completion of the Return of Service Obligation?

The NTBMS Deed of Agreement is between NT Health and the prospective student where the student agrees on successful completion of the MD course and as a graduate to complete the RoSO employed in a NT designated area. This is for a consecutive period as outlined in the individual's deed of agreement or an alternative equivalent period as agreed to by NT Health on the basis of what is outlined under 'Your Obligations' in your NTBMS Deed of Agreement.

#### What is a Designated Area?

A Designated Area refers to any work location (e.g. a NT Health service or Primary Health Organisation) in the NT, which is designated by the NT Health to be an acceptable location for completing Your RoSo.

By agreeing to accept a place in the NTBMS, you are committing to work in a designated area in the NT. This may be at a location in any of the NT Regional Health Services or within a Primary Health Organisation. The designated areas available during a RoSO period will offer acute care and primary health opportunities within the NT and is likely to be in a workforce area of need.

#### What are the NT Health obligations and who employs me during my RoSO period?

After successful completion of the NT Medical Program Medical Degree course, NT Health will ensure that as a medical graduate you are employed as an intern (PGY1) to work as directed by NT Health. This will be in a designated area within the NT Health System in an accredited post to fulfil your first year of your RoSO requirements.

After you have achieved general registration with the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) at the end of your internship year, NT Health will provide employment in a designated area having regard to your training and experience and areas of workforce need within the NT Health System. As needed and approved you could be employed within a Primary Health Organisation so that you can continue your employment and learning experience and still meet your RoSO period.

#### What happens if I fail to meet my obligations or only finish part of my RoSO?

Failing to meet the obligations outlined in the NTBMS Deed of Agreement may result in a breach of your agreement. The reason or need to withdraw or defer from the medical course will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Consequences may apply if you are in breach at any time. Particularly during your RoSO period specifically the clause summarising the- Recovery of Course Costs, outlining that NT Health may claim from you as debt due to NTG.

For avoidance of doubt, please refer to your NTBMS Deed of Agreement which outlines what constitutes a breach within this Agreement. Please contact NT Health at any time for further clarification regarding any issues or concerns regarding your capacity or ability to meet your RoSO.

#### Am I entitled to have annual/personal/parental leave during the Return of Service period?

As with normal working conditions and arrangements agreed and negotiated with your employer, you are able to request various types of leave during the Return of Service period. This will be subject to you meeting your service period obligations under the Deed of Agreement and the MBA general registration requirements for the Internship year (minimum 47 weeks). In the case of parental/maternity and extended sick/medical leave you will need to

notify NT Health of the period you anticipate you will be away from your employment at the time of requesting this leave from your regional health service. You will need to provide supporting documentation for these requests if extended periods of leave outside of the normal periods of allocated leave are required e.g. Leave With Out Pay (LWOP); Maternity or parental leave, extended periods of sick leave. These periods away from rostered duties **will not count** towards fulfilment of your RoSO period.

### **Is there flexibility in my working hours during the return of service period?**

You are required to work the first postgraduate year as per the MBA general registration standard requirement (Internship – 47 weeks). Your working hours will be as rostered and required by the regional health service or other designated area where you are employed.

For each of the following postgraduate years, no less than a full calendar year with a minimum of 38 hours per week as determined by the current Medical Officers Northern Territory Public Service Enterprise Agreement and the Public Sector Employment and Management Act (NT).

### **Can I seek employment in another state/territory during my RoSO period?**

During your prevocational training (PGY1 and/or PGY2), you **will not be able to enter** any other prevocational training programs or seek employment with another organisation within or outside of the Northern Territory. If you have any concerns for your PGY2 regarding this please contact NT Health to discuss your reasons for your concern.

For enrolling in Specialist College Training programs and securing training placements in your prevocational years, approval from NT Health is required **prior to seeking any employment** outside of the NT. To request approval from NT Health to undertake this training and/or placement all relevant information and supporting documentation will need to be supplied **prior to you seeking** enrolment or commencing your fellowship training.

### **Can I defer my return of service obligations?**

Deferral of all or part of your RoSO period is subject to approval from NT Health, in consultation with NT Regional Health Services and their relevant departments/divisions. With the exception of parental leave entitlements, approval to defer the RoSO will generally only be given for the purposes of completing further training such as specialist training (fellowship training) that **cannot** be completed in the NT. It is **most unlikely** that a deferral will be given for the first postgraduate year (Internship). Any period of deferral **will not count** towards fulfilment of your RoSO. The RoSO will resume on completion of the period for which the deferral was granted.

As outlined in your NTBMS Deed of Agreement, any request for deferral must be made to NT Health in writing no later than 30 days prior to commencement of the period of deferral you are requesting. Along with supporting documentation i.e. letter of deferral, deferral request form and any medical certificates and/or other relevant documentation related to the request.

The sooner your deferral request is received by NT Health the sooner the administrative process to get a request outcome can be commenced. Leaving your request to the last minute may cause you to not be able to commence your period of deferral when requested if your request is granted.

If you are commencing training towards your fellowship, you **must** provide NT Health with information relating to your specialist training, including but not limited to the location, specialist field and any other information as reasonably requested by NT Health. A letter from the NT Regional Health Service Specialist Head of Department confirming and outlining the reasons that this specialist training program **cannot** be undertaken anywhere in the NT is to also be included with your request for deferment.

It is suggested that if you need to defer your return of service obligation for any of the outlined reasons within the NT Bonded Medical Scheme Deed of Agreement that you contact NT Health immediately to discuss your options prior to submitting your request so they can assist you in submitting your request.

### **Can I extend the period of my deferral after it has been granted?**

Extension of a deferral period will need to be made in writing to NT Health at least 6 months prior to the expiry of the deferral period if it is a 12 month deferral and 3 months prior to the expiry if a 6 month deferral. Further evidence supporting the need for the extension will be required for a decision.

### **What happens after I successfully complete my RoSO?**

After successfully completing your RoSO as outlined in your signed Agreement you will have no further obligation to the NTG under the NTBMS Deed of Agreement. You will receive formal written notification advising you of your completion of your obligations to the NTG.

### **Where can I receive further information?**

For further information about the NTMP and/or RoSO requirements please contact the Prevocational Medical Assurance Services (PMAS) via email – [METC.DoH@nt.gov.au](mailto:METC.DoH@nt.gov.au) or by phone on 08 8999 2832.