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Direction No. 115– Order for considering and disposing of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications

I, JULIAN HILL, Assistant Minister for Citizenship, Customs and Multicultural Affairs, give this Direction under section 499 of the *Migration Act 1958*.

Dated: 7 November 2025

JULIAN HILL

Assistant Minister for Citizenship, Customs and Multicultural Affairs

Part 1 – Preliminary

1 Name of Direction

This Direction is the *Direction 115—Order for considering and disposing of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications* and may be cited as Direction 115.

2 Commencement

This Direction commences on 14 November 2025.

3 Revocation

- (1) Direction No.111 – Order of processing and disposing of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications, dated 18 December 2024, is revoked.
- (2) Despite the revocation of Direction No.111, that direction, as in force immediately before revocation, continues to apply in relation to an offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa application that was made, but not finally determined, before Direction No.111 was revoked.

4 Application

- (1) This Direction applies to delegates of the Minister who consider and dispose of an offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa application made on or after commencement.
- (2) This Direction does not apply with respect to applications where it is readily apparent that the criteria for the grant of the visa would not be satisfied.
- (3) This Direction does not apply to the Administrative Review Tribunal.

5 Preamble

- (1) The Government is working to strengthen the integrity and sustainability of the international Student visa program and the international education sector.
- (2) This Direction provides an order of priorities for considering and disposing of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications in an orderly fashion that aligns with the national interest, recognising:
 - (a) The economic impact on individual education providers including; the importance of regional higher education providers, outer metropolitan suburban universities, and

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TAFE providers in their communities; and the overall economic benefit to Australia of skills development across education sectors in supporting Australia's skills needs;

- (b) Having regard to the management of integrity concerns, there is a need to acknowledge operational flexibility in the allocation of processing resources within the order of priority below to manage surges or unexpected activity relating to increases in integrity concerns. Decision-makers will act to support the integrity of the visa program, which may mean that some applications (including those to which **Priority 1** category applies) may take longer to finalise. That is to say, integrity issues will be acted upon regardless of the assigned priority; and
- (c) As needed, within the allocated priorities, the Department of Home Affairs will balance overall priorities to ensure that visa application decisions are reached both efficiently and accurately.

Note 1: Subsection 51(1) of the Act provides that the Minister can consider and dispose of applications for visas in such order as he or she considers appropriate.

Note 2: Subsection 499(1) of the Act empowers the Minister to give to a person or body having functions or powers under the Act written directions not inconsistent with the Act or the Regulations, in accordance with which the person or body shall perform those functions and exercise those powers. The person or body must comply with the direction.

Note 3: Section 4(1) of the Act provides that the object of the Act is to regulate, in the national interest, the coming into, and presence in, Australia of non-citizens.

6 Interpretation

- (1) In this Direction:

Act means the *Migration Act 1958*.

Defence student has the meaning given in regulation 1.04B of the Regulations.

dependent child has the meaning given by the Regulations.

Foreign Affairs student has the meaning given in subregulation 1.04A(3) of the Regulations.

higher education course has the meaning given in clause 500.111 of Schedule 2 to the Regulations.

indicative allocations refers to indicative allocations of new overseas student commencements for higher education and vocational education and training providers in a particular calendar year developed by the Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and as recorded in the Provider Registration and International Student Management System.

new overseas student commencement is an applicant for, or a holder of, a Subclass 500 (Student) visa, represented as an enrolment in PRISMS, who:

- (a) commences a higher education or vocational education and training course in Australia in a particular calendar year; and
- (b) was not previously enrolled in a higher education or vocational education and training course (that meant that the student met the requirements of a new overseas student commencement) with the same provider in the particular calendar year or the previous calendar year; and
- (c) is not;
 - (i) enrolled in a postgraduate research course;

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- (ii) a Foreign Affairs student, Defence Student or student sponsored by the Commonwealth;
- (iii) a scholarship student;
- (iv) a student affected by a 'provider closure' after 1 January 2026 that meets the criteria published on the Department of Education website as at the date this Direction commenced;
- (v) enrolled in a pilot training course;
- (vi) a transitioning school student who commences, or would commence, a higher education or vocational education and training course in Australia after 1 January 2026;
- (vii) a transitioning student from an affiliated pathway provider and who commences or would commence study after 1 January 2026;
- (viii) a transnational education student;
- (ix) a student from the Pacific or Timor-Leste.

offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa application means an application for a Student (Temporary) (Class TU) visa made by an applicant who:

- (a) is outside Australia at the time of application; and
- (b) seeks to satisfy the criteria for the grant of a Subclass 500 (Student) visa.

pilot training course means a course which leads to one of the following qualifications: Diploma of Aviation (Commercial Pilot Licence – Aeroplane), Diploma of Aviation (Commercial Pilot Licence - Helicopter), Diploma of Aviation (Instrument Rating), and Diploma of Aviation (Flight Instructor).

postgraduate research course has the meaning given in clause 500.111 of Schedule 2 to the Regulations.

primary applicant means a visa applicant seeking to satisfy the primary criteria for the grant of the visa.

primary visa holder means a non-citizen who holds a visa on the basis of satisfying the primary criteria for the grant of the visa.

prioritisation threshold refers to 80 per cent of an individual provider's indicative allocations of new overseas student commencements for a particular year, as determined by enrolments in the Provider Registration and International Student Management System for:

- (a) a new overseas student commencement; or
- (b) a person who:
 - i. would be a new overseas student commencement once he or she commences study; and
 - ii. holds a Subclass 500 (Student) visa or a bridging visa associated with an application for a Subclass 500 (Student) visa.

provider means a provider registered under Part 2 of the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*.

Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS) is a computer system established under section 109 of the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* for the purpose of receiving and storing information about accepted students and former accepted students, and which is owned and maintained by the Department of Education.

Regulations means the *Migration Regulations 1994*.

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scholarship student means a student with a foreign government, Australian Government, or State or Territory scholarship that meets the criteria published on the Department of Education's website as at the date this Direction commenced.

secondary applicant means a visa applicant seeking to satisfy the secondary criteria for the grant of the visa.

small provider means a vocational education and training provider with an indicative allocation of not more than 100 new overseas student commencements in a particular calendar year and which is recorded in PRISMS as a small provider. A provider ceases to be a small provider when 80 or more of its enrolments in PRISMS count towards its prioritisation threshold, or when the prioritisation threshold for all small providers has been met in accordance with subsection 6(2), whichever comes first.

subsequent entrant means a secondary applicant for a Subclass 500 (Student) visa who did not make a combined application with the primary applicant or primary visa holder.

student from the Pacific or Timor-Leste means an offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applicant who is a passport holder and (where noted) resident of the following countries:

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| ▪ Cook Islands (New Zealand passport holders resident in Cook Islands) | ▪ Niue (New Zealand passport holders who are resident in Niue) |
| ▪ Fiji | ▪ Palau |
| ▪ French Polynesia (French passport holders who are resident in French Polynesia) | ▪ Papua New Guinea |
| ▪ Kiribati | ▪ Samoa |
| ▪ Marshall Islands | ▪ Solomon Islands |
| ▪ Micronesia | ▪ Timor-Leste |
| ▪ Nauru | ▪ Tonga |
| ▪ New Caledonia (French passport holders who are resident in New Caledonia) | ▪ Tuvalu |
| | ▪ Vanuatu |

TAFE Provider means a public vocational education and training provider which is a body established to provide vocational education or training under one of the following:

- (a) the *Technical and Further Education Commission Act 1990 (NSW)*;
- (b) the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)*;
- (c) the *TAFE Queensland Act 2013 (Qld)*;
- (d) the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996 (WA)*;
- (e) the *TAFE SA Act 2012 (SA)*;
- (f) the *Training and Workforce Development Act 2013 (Tas.)*;
- (g) the *Canberra Institute of Technology Act 1987 (ACT)*; and
- (h) the *Charles Darwin University Act 2003 (NT)* but only as it applies in relation to the part of the body delivering vocational education and training and not in relation to the part of the body delivering higher education.

transnational education student means a student enrolled in transnational education arrangements, according to criteria published on the Department of Education website for higher education students, and on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website for vocational education and training students, at the date this Direction commenced.

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transitioning school student means a student who:

- (a) holds an enrolment in PRISMS for a VET or higher education course; and
- (b) has completed or is scheduled to complete a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education at a provider in Australia while holding a Subclass 500 (Student) visa in the same or immediately preceding calendar year as the proposed start date of the enrolment in (a), consistent with the criteria as published on the Department of Education website at the date this Direction commenced.

transitioning student from an affiliated pathway provider means a student who:

- (a) holds an enrolment in PRISMS for a VET or higher education course at a Table A provider (within the meaning of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*); and
- (b) has completed or is scheduled to complete an enrolment in PRISMS that meets the definition of a new overseas student commencement in the same or immediately preceding calendar year as the proposed start date of the enrolment in (a), at a provider that meets the criteria published on the Department of Education website at the date this Direction commenced.

upper threshold refers to 115 per cent of an individual provider's indicative allocations of new overseas student commencements for a particular year, as determined by enrolments in the Provider Registration and International Student Management System for:

- (a) a new overseas student commencement; or
- (b) a person who:
 - i. would be a new overseas student commencement once he or she commences study; and
 - ii. holds a Subclass 500 (Student) visa or a bridging visa associated with an application for a Subclass 500 (Student) visa

(2) For the purposes of determining within PRISMS whether the prioritisation threshold under this direction has been met for all small providers, small providers will be treated as if they were one individual provider with an allocation that is the sum of the allocations of all small providers.

Part 2 – Directions

7 Considering and disposing of applications

- (1) Delegates must consider and dispose of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications under section 51 of the Act, in accordance with the priorities set out in this section and section 8.
- (2) The prioritisation process set out in subsections 7(3) to (6) below is to commence on each 15 November of the year before the year to which a provider's prioritisation threshold applies and conclude 12 months later.

Example: For a provider's prioritisation threshold for the calendar year 2026, offshore student visa applications received on or after 15 November 2025 and up to and including 14 November 2026 will be prioritised with respect to the 2026 calendar year.

- (3) Delegates must accord **Priority 1** to offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications associated with providers in the higher education and vocational education and training sectors where the prioritisation threshold for a particular provider for a particular year has not been reached, based on PRISMS information.

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- (4) Delegates must accord **Priority 2** to offshore Subclass 500 (Student) applications associated with providers in the higher education and vocational education and training sectors where the prioritisation threshold for a particular provider for a particular year has been reached, but where the upper threshold has not been reached, based on PRISMS information.
- (5) Delegates must accord **Priority 3** to offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications associated with providers in the higher education and vocational education and training sectors where the upper threshold for the particular provider for a particular year has been reached, based on PRISMS information.
- (6) For the purposes of determining processing priority of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications under subsections 7(3) to 7(5) above, in accordance with paragraph 495A(1)(c) of the Act, delegates having functions in relation to establishing the order of considering and disposing of visa applications are directed to do the following:
 - a. establish what priority level of processing is available for a particular provider in a particular calendar year, based on PRISMS information; and
 - b. apply to that visa application the level of priority processing for the particular provider in the particular calendar year that is set out in PRISMS information.
- (7) Certain visa applications are not subject to the arrangements in section 7(3) to 7(6) above and they are to be processed as either **Priority 1** or **Priority 2** as outlined in section 8.
- (8) The prioritisation of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications in line with the annual indicative allocations of new overseas student commencements is not to be taken as a limit or cap upon the total number of visas that may be granted to students associated with any provider, nor is it to be taken as a suspension of visa processing. The indicative allocation for providers is a number used solely for the purposes of determining the number of visa applications to be processed in accordance with **Priority 1, Priority 2 and Priority 3**.

8 Order for considering and disposing of offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa applications

- (1) Delegates must consider and dispose of applications in accordance with the following sequence of priorities:

Priority 1

- (a) an offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa application associated with a provider in the higher education and vocational education and training sectors (excluding applications identified in section 8(1)(b)) where new overseas student commencements constitute less than a provider's prioritisation threshold for a particular year, as indicated in PRISMS;

Note: Once the prioritisation threshold for a provider has been reached, applications made in relation to the above sectors which are not otherwise in an exempt category as outlined below will be considered and disposed of in line with **Priority 2 or Priority 3** processing.

- (b) an offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa application made by:
 - (i) a school student;
 - (ii) a non-award sector student, including short term exchange students;
 - (iii) a standalone ELICOS student;
 - (iv) a student enrolled with a TAFE Provider;
 - (v) a student enrolled in a pilot training course;
 - (vi) a student enrolled in a postgraduate research course;

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- (vii) a Foreign Affairs Student, Defence Student or student sponsored by the Commonwealth;
- (viii) a scholarship student;
- (ix) a student from the Pacific or Timor-Leste;
- (x) a transnational education student;
- (xi) a subsequent entrant in the circumstances outlined at subsection 8(4) below.

Priority 2

- (2) An offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa application:
 - (a) associated with a provider in the higher education and vocational education and training sectors (excluding the applications identified in section 8(1)(b)), where the number of new overseas student commencements constitute more than the provider's prioritisation threshold but less than their upper threshold in a particular calendar year, as indicated in PRISMS;
 - (b) made by a subsequent entrant in association with a Student visa holder, unless they fall in the category of subsequent entrant as per section 8(4) of this Direction.

Priority 3

- (3) An offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa application associated with a provider in the higher education and vocational education and training sectors (excluding the applications identified in section 8(1)(b)) where the number of new overseas student commencements has reached the provider's upper threshold for a particular calendar year, as indicated in PRISMS.

Subsequent entrants

- (4) An offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa application made by a subsequent entrant who is a minor, and an offshore Subclass 500 (Student) visa application made by a subsequent entrant with whom a minor has made a combined application, if the minor is:
 - (a) unmarried, and has not turned 18 at the time of application; and
 - (b) either:
 - (i) a dependent child of a primary applicant for, or primary visa holder of, a Subclass 500 (Student) visa; or
 - (ii) a dependent child of a spouse or de facto partner of a primary applicant for, or primary visa holder of, a Subclass 500 (Student) visa.