



SMART
SCIENCE, MATHEMATICS,
AND RESEARCH FOR
TRANSFORMATION
PART OF THE NATIONAL
DEFENSE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Scholar Handbook

2026

20 YEARS
OF **STEM**
EXCELLENCE

- 1. APPLICABILITY.....6
- 2. SMART SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ORGANIZATION6
 - 2.1 SMART Program Office6
 - 2.2 Sponsoring Components6
 - 2.3 Sponsoring Facilities.....7
 - 2.4 SMART Program Support Team7
 - 2.4.1 Scholar Coordinator7
 - 2.4.2 Component Liaisons.....7
 - 2.5 SMART Scholars7
 - 2.5.1 Scholar Types7
 - 2.5.2 Scholar Phases8
 - 2.6 SMART Program Portals and Contacts8
- 3. GENERAL PROGRAM PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS9
 - 3.1 SMART Program Commitments9
 - 3.1.1 Award Length9
 - 3.1.2 Degree Funding9
 - 3.1.3 Follow-on Funding.....9
 - 3.1.4 Completion of Degree in Compliance with the SMART Service Agreement (SSA)..... 10
 - 3.1.5 Code of Conduct10
 - 3.1.6 Current Contact Information11
 - 3.1.7 Communication11
 - 3.1.8 SF Sponsorship.....12
 - 3.1.8.1 Loss of Sponsorship.....13
 - 3.1.8.2 Alternative Sponsorship Agreement (ASA).....13
 - 3.1.9 Relocation Requirements14
 - 3.1.10 Security Clearance Requirement.....14
 - 3.1.11 Length of Service Commitment15
 - 3.1.12 Non-compliance.....16
 - 3.2 Modifying Commitments16
 - 3.2.1 Service Agreement Amendment Requests (SAARs).....16
 - 3.2.2 Leave of Absence16
 - 3.2.3 Award Length Change.....17
 - 3.2.4 Withdrawal from the SMART Program18
 - 3.2.5 SF Transfer SAARs.....18
 - 3.3 Default Cases19
 - 3.3.1 Dismissal from the SMART Program19
 - 3.3.2 Withdrawal from the SMART Program19
 - 3.3.3 SSA Default and Debt Repayment.....19

3.3.3.1 Default Overview 19

3.3.3.2 The Debt Establishment Process 19

4. PHASE 0 – PRE-AWARD PROCEDURES 21

4.1 SF Assignment 21

4.2 Award Deferral..... 21

4.3 Grade Point Average Requirement..... 21

4.4 Required Documentation 21

4.5 Orientation 22

4.6 Awardee Background Check..... 23

5 PHASE 1 – ACADEMIC PURSUIT 23

5.1 Phase 1 Funding 23

5.1.1 Phase 1 Funding Overview 23

5.1.2 Recruitment Scholar Funding 23

5.1.3 Retention Scholar Funding 24

5.1.4 Tuition and Approved Educational Expenses 25

5.1.5 Additional Tuition and Enrollment 25

5.1.6 Scholar Phase 1 Tax Responsibilities 26

5.2 Phase 1 Compliance Requirements and Procedures..... 26

5.2.1 Outside Funding 26

5.2.2 Outside Employment 26

5.2.2.1 SMART Awardee Participation in Other DoW Programs 27

5.2.3 Pursuit of Degrees Outside of SMART Program 27

5.2.4 Completion of Degree Requirements during Phase 1 27

5.2.5 Minimum GPA Requirement..... 28

5.2.6 Failure to Complete Degree with Required GPA 28

5.2.7 Incomplete Coursework..... 28

5.2.8 Failure to Earn Course Credit..... 28

5.2.9 Full-Time Status 29

5.2.10 Failure to Make Satisfactory Academic Progress 29

5.2.11 Participation in Study Abroad Programs..... 29

5.2.12 Participation in Fieldwork, Conferences, Meetings, or Training 29

5.2.13 Retention Scholar Return to SF During Phase 1 30

5.2.14 Phase 1 Service Agreement Amendment Requests 30

5.2.15 Patents 30

5.3 Phase 1 Reporting Requirements 31

5.3.1 Reporting Requirements Overview..... 31

5.3.2 Official Transcript 31

5.3.3 Scholar Foreign Travel 31

5.3.4 Phase 1 Annual Report31

5.3.5 Recruitment Internship Report.....32

5.3.6 Phase 1 Hiring Reporting Requirements32

5.4 Phase 1 Recruitment Internships33

5.4.1 Internship Requirement33

5.4.2 Credentialing and Badging33

5.4.3 Internship Length and Timing33

5.4.4 Internship Funding.....33

5.4.5 Internship Waiver34

5.4.6 Internship Preparation Procedures34

5.4.7 Internship Procedures35

5.5 Phase 1 Retention Summer Work Periods.....36

5.6 Phase 1 Recruitment Service Commitment Hiring Process37

5.6.1 Service Commitment Hiring Process Overview37

5.6.2 Security Clearance and Start of Service Commitment.....37

6 PHASE 2 – SERVICE COMMITMENT37

6.1 Phase 2 General Procedures37

6.1.1 Start of Phase 2.....37

6.1.2 Phase 2 Letter37

6.1.3 Completion of Service Commitment with Approved SF38

6.1.4 Full-time Federal Civilian Employment38

6.1.5 Phase 2 Salary and Benefits38

6.1.6 Failure to Complete the Service Commitment.....38

6.1.7 Phase 2 Service Agreement Amendment Requests38

6.2 Phase 2 Reporting Requirements39

6.2.1 Phase 2 Service Commitment Reporting Requirements Overview39

6.2.2 Phase 2 Current Contact Information39

6.2.3 Phase 2 Annual Report39

6.2.4 Phase 2 Employment Verification.....39

6.2.5 Change in Security Clearance Eligibility40

7 PHASE 3 – POST-SERVICE COMMITMENT40

7.1 Phase 3 General Procedures40

7.1.1 Transition to Phase 3 and Phase 3 Letter40

7.1.2 Phase 3 Engagement Opportunities40

7.2 Phase 3 Reporting Requirements40

7.2.1 Reporting Requirements Overview.....40

7.2.2 Phase 3 Current Contact Information41

7.2.3 Phase 3 Annual Report41

8 SMART SCHOLAR OPPORTUNITIES41

 8.1 Ambassador Program.....41

 8.2 International Internships.....41

 8.3 Scholar Highlights.....41

 8.4 SEED Award.....41

9 ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS43

10 GLOSSARY.....44

11 Appendix A – SMART Organizational Stakeholders.....47

12 Appendix B – Program Cycle Calendar.....48

13 Appendix C – Service Agreement Amendment Request List.....49

14 Appendix D – Non-Compliance Matrix54

15 Appendix E – Reporting Requirement Matrix60

1. APPLICABILITY

The Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholarship-for-Service Program (herein SMART Program) is established pursuant to Title 10 USC § 4093, as amended, and is funded through the National Defense Education Program. Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1025.09 provides further policies and assigns responsibilities for executing the SMART Program. The SMART Program provides academic funding in exchange for completing a period of full-time civilian employment with the Department of War (DoW). The SMART Service Agreement (SSA) is the formal, binding written agreement between the SMART Scholarship Program Scholar (herein scholar) and the DoW. By signing the SSA, the scholar agrees to comply with all program policies and procedures, including the SMART Scholar Handbook (herein handbook). If an SSA is signed while the scholar is a minor, it must also be co-signed by a parent or legal guardian. Upon reaching the age of 18, the scholar is required to sign the SSA again to reaffirm their understanding of the terms. In return, the DoW funds the scholar’s academic pursuit and provides full-time employment upon the scholar’s graduation. This handbook applies to all scholars regardless of the cohort year. Unless scholar type or subtype is specified, then a policy or procedure applies to all scholars. Scholar types and subtypes include recruitment, retention, or Ronald V. Dellums. Scholar types are further defined in [section 2.5.1](#).



The SMART Program provides academic funding in exchange for completing a period of full-time civilian employment with the DoW. The SSA is a binding agreement between the SMART Scholarship Program and the scholar.



The scholar is required to sign the SSA in exchange for the DoW funding the scholar’s academic pursuit.



This handbook applies to all scholars, and unless scholar type is specified, policies and procedures apply to all scholars.

This handbook undergoes annual updates to incorporate the latest policies and procedures. Scholars are required to adhere to the policies outlined in the most recent edition of the handbook. Scholars will be informed of any changes or updates.

2. SMART SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

2.1 SMART Program Office

The SMART Program is sponsored by the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering (USW(R&E)), with delegated authorities to the Assistant Secretary of War for Science and Technology ASD(S&T), the DoW Basic Research Office, and the SMART Program Office. The SMART Program Office is responsible for program policy and oversight. See [Appendix A](#) for a graphical depiction of the SMART Program organizational structure.

2.2 Sponsoring Components

A sponsoring component is a DoW Component that participates in the SMART Program. There are four sponsoring component designations in the SMART Program: Army, Navy, Air Force, and Other DoW Agencies. Each DoW Component has a SMART Component Execution Lead (CEL) who serves as the Component’s representative to the SMART Program. The CEL is the representative, designated by the Component or Agency, to represent the interests of said Component or Agency and execute the SMART Program on its behalf. CELs are responsible for approving component selection lists, signing

SSAs, approving any changes to the SSA, and making final decisions regarding the establishment of debt against a scholar who has defaulted on their SSA.

2.3 Sponsoring Facilities

The Sponsoring Facility (SF) is a laboratory, agency, or organization within a DoW Component that participates in the SMART Program. The SF is the location at which a scholar completes all internships and the service commitment. Each SF has a designated point of contact (POC) to coordinate the execution of SMART at the SF. The facility POC may coordinate and supervise SF participation in SMART across the facility, including scholar selections, internship preparation and logistics, scholar mentoring and mentor assignment, and scholar hiring logistics. The facility POC may facilitate resolution of scholar issues in coordination with the SMART program support team.

2.4 SMART Program Support Team

2.4.1 Scholar Coordinator

Each scholar is assigned a Scholar Coordinator (SC) while participating in the SMART Program. SCs are the first point of contact for scholars during degree pursuit. The SMART Program provides scholars their SC's name upon award acceptance. For all questions, email: SMARTScholar@smartscholarship.org, phone: 571-633-7940. When emailing your SC, utilize the following subject line: Component - Last Name – Subject.

2.4.2 Component Liaisons

Each DoW Component has a designated Component Liaison (CL) within the SMART Program. The CL is the main point of contact between the SMART Program, the sponsoring DoW Component, the SFs and phase 2 and 3 scholars. The SMART Program provides scholars with their CL's name and contact information upon entering DoW employment. For all questions, email SMARTCL@smartscholarship.org. When emailing your CL, utilize the following subject line: Component - Last Name – Subject.

2.5 SMART Scholars

A scholar is an individual who received and accepted a SMART award by signing an SSA. An individual remains a scholar throughout all SMART Program phases, defined below.

2.5.1 Scholar Types

A recruitment scholar is a scholar who is not employed full-time in either a permanent or renewable term civilian position by the SF at the time of their SMART award. Scholars who are employed by the SF in temporary or internship positions at the time of award are recruitment scholars.

A retention scholar is a scholar who is employed full-time in either a permanent or renewable term civilian STEM position by the SF at the time of their SMART award.

A Ronald V. Dellums scholar (Dellums scholar) is a SMART scholar awarded during Program Years 2023 or 2024, whose funding began in their first college term and who had no prior college or university experience. Starting with Program Year 2025, the Dellums SMART Scholarship has been absorbed into the traditional SMART Scholarship.

2.5.2 Scholar Phases

Scholars matriculate through four phases of participation in the SMART Program:

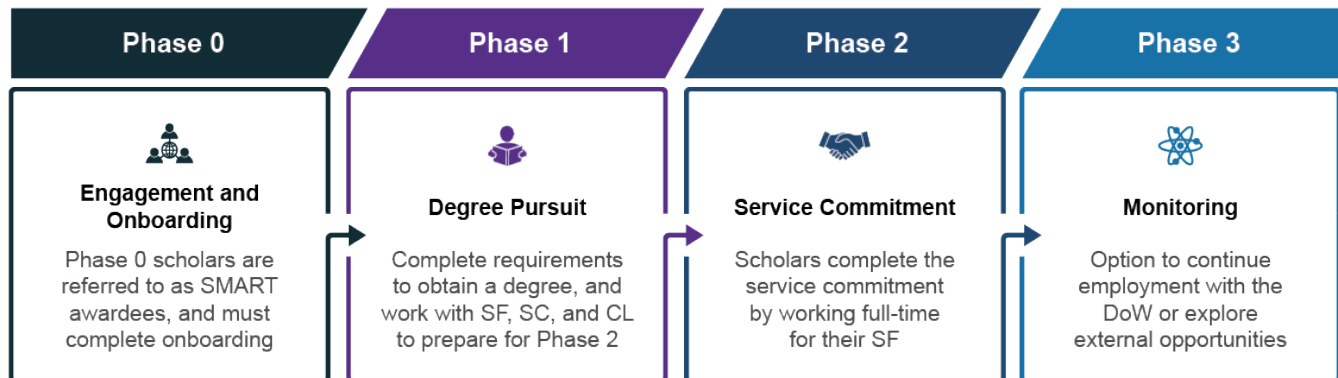
Phase 0 - Engagement and Onboarding: During Phase 0, potential SMART scholars are referred to as SMART awardees. Awardees complete onboarding with the SMART Program prior to matriculating into Phase 1.

Phase 1 - Degree Pursuit: Phase 1 begins on August 1st of each award year. During Phase 1, scholars complete requirements to obtain the degree funded by the SMART Program. As scholars near completion of Phase 1, they work with the SF, SC, and CL to prepare for the service commitment.

Phase 2 - Service Commitment: Phase 2 begins upon the work start date and ends upon completion of the required service commitment. The work start date is the day on which a scholar begins full-time employment with the SF after verified completion of all Phase 1 requirements. During Phase 2, scholars complete the service commitment by working full-time for their SF.

Phase 3 - Monitoring: Following the fulfillment of the Phase 2 service commitment, scholars enter Phase 3. In this phase, scholars may opt to continue their employment with the DoW or explore external opportunities. The SMART Program monitors scholars' career development and retention during Phase 3.

In Phases 1-3, scholars may participate in outreach activities to build future SMART cohorts.



2.6 SMART Program Portals and Contacts

The Awardee Portal: During Phase 0, awardees accept and complete all onboarding tasks via the SMART Awardee Portal. The Awardee Portal is located at <https://www.smartscholarship.org/awardee>.

The SMART Scholar Portal: For program documents and information, visit the SMART Scholar Portal. The SMART Scholar Portal is located at <https://www.smartscholarship.org/scholar>.

Scholar Coordinator: Each scholar has a designated SC within the SMART Program. SCs are the first point of contact for scholars during degree pursuit. The SMART Program provides scholars their SC's name. For all questions, email: SMARTScholar@smartscholarship.org, phone: 571- 633-7940. When emailing your SC, utilize the following subject line: Component - Last Name – Subject.

Component Liaison: Each DoW Component has a designated Component Liaison (CL) within the SMART Program. The CL is the main point of contact between the SMART Program, the sponsoring DoW, Component, and SFs. The SMART Program provides scholars with their CL's name and contact information upon entering DoW employment. For all questions, email SMARTCL@smartscholarship.org. When emailing your CL, utilize the following subject line: Component - Last Name – Subject.

SMART Technical Help Desk: For technical assistance with the SMART scholar, awardee, or application portal; navigate to the "Get Technical Help" button on each portal to submit a help desk ticket to the SMART IT team; phone: 571-633-7940. If you are unable to log in to one of the above portals, navigate to the "Get Technical Help" button on the log in page.

SMART Outreach: For information on SMART events, scholar highlights, or how to get involved in outreach, email outreach@smartscholarship.org.

3. GENERAL PROGRAM PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

3.1 SMART Program Commitments

3.1.1 Award Length

The award length is the total amount of time for which the scholar receives Phase 1 funding and benefits. The award length determines the length of the scholar's service commitment. Each academic year funded obligates the scholar to a full calendar year of service. Funding that extends beyond the confines of a typical academic year may be included in the scholar's award length in 0.5 calendar year increments.

Scholars have a minimum award length of 1.0 academic year (with a minimum service commitment of 1.0 year) and a maximum award length of 5.0 years based on the SMART funded degree level.

Degree Level	Minimum Award Funding	Maximum Award Funding
Bachelor (BS) scholars	1.0 year	5.0 years
Master (MS) scholars	1.0 year	3.0 years
Dual BS/MS scholars	1.0 year	5.0 years
Ph.D. scholars	1.0 year	5.0 years

Award lengths are defined on the scholar's SSA. Any requests to amend award length and/or requests for leaves of absence (LOAs) are subject to handbook [section 3.2.2](#), LOA and [section 3.2.3](#) Award Length Change, respectively.

3.1.2 Degree Funding

Scholars enrolled in a single degree program receive SMART funding for that degree only. Scholars funded for a dual BS/MS degree may receive funding throughout the completion of both degrees, not to exceed a total of 5.0 years. For scholars pursuing a dual BS/MS degree, both BS and MS degrees must be in a SMART approved STEM Discipline. For questions about pursuit of degrees outside of the SMART Program, please refer to [section 5.2.3](#).

3.1.3 Follow-on Funding

SMART scholarships are awarded for one degree program at a time. Follow-on awards require submission of a new SMART application and selection by the scholar's SF. Follow-on awards are treated as new awards, separate from the initial award, and are not guaranteed. The maximum award length is 5.0 calendar years per award. If a scholar does not receive follow-on funding, the scholar is expected to begin their service commitment after completion of their SMART-funded degree as determined in their SSA. Scholars who had received a SMART award for a BS/MS or MS degree will be required to apply for a follow-on award if they intend to pursue Ph.D. Pursuit of a Ph.D. will require a separate award.

Phase 1 Follow-on Awards

If a Phase 1 scholar is awarded a follow-on award, they will immediately reenter Phase 1 for completion of the follow-on degree. Once the follow-on degree is completed, the scholar will enter Phase 2 and complete the service commitment for both the initial award and the follow-on award consecutively.

Phase 2 Follow-on Awards

If a Phase 2 scholar is awarded a follow-on award, they will immediately reenter Phase 1 for completion of the follow-on degree. Once the follow-on degree is completed, the scholar will reenter Phase 2 and complete the service commitment for both awards, the remaining service commitment for the initial award and the follow-on award.

Phase 3 Follow-on Awards

If a Phase 3 scholar is awarded a follow-on award, they will immediately reenter Phase 1 for completion of the follow-on degree. Once the follow-on degree is completed, the scholar will reenter Phase 2 and complete the service commitment for the follow-on award.

Compliance Requirements

Scholars comply with all SMART Program policies and procedures, including the requirements set forth in the SSA and in this handbook. Compliance with all SMART Program policies and procedures, as agreed to in the SSA, is required for continued participation and funding under the SMART Program.

3.1.4 Completion of Degree in Compliance with the SMART Service Agreement (SSA)

Scholars complete the degree funded by SMART as set forth in the SSA. Scholars complete all degree requirements during Phase 1, including, but not limited to, thesis/dissertation writing, edits, defense, etc.

Degree Completion

Includes all degree requirements during Phase 1, including, but not limited to, thesis/dissertation writing, edits, defense, etc.

Requests to amend the SSA can be made by submitting the Service Agreement Amendment Request (SAAR), and appropriate supporting documents, via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). If the request is approved, the SSA will be amended. If the request is denied and the scholar fails to complete the degree in compliance with the SSA, the scholar may be placed in a status of non-compliance and/or dismissed from the program. See [Appendix D](#) for Non-compliance Matrix. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

3.1.5 Code of Conduct

The SMART Program is committed to the professional development of scholars, securing the program's reputation of excellence, and safeguarding the public's investment in the program.

Violations to the code of conduct may result in a status of non-compliance, loss of sponsorship, or dismissal from the SMART Program.

- a) Academic Excellence: Scholars meet SMART academic requirements, attend all classes/laboratories, are respectful to instructors, and complete coursework to the best of their ability.
- b) Professionalism: Scholars are expected to be courteous, respectful, honest, and responsible in their communications and interactions with the SMART Program, Sponsoring Facility and academic institution. Scholars are timely in attendance and completion of duties. Scholars strive to achieve a level of excellence that exceeds minimum requirements.
- c) Leadership: Scholars take the initiative to advance their knowledge and share their experience with others.

- d) **Integrity:** Scholars adhere to the highest ethical standards and comply with applicable laws, rules, and regulations including those of the SMART Program, Sponsoring Facility and academic institution.
- e) **Public Service:** Scholars are mindful of the public investment made in their SMART awards and act in a manner that is worthy of that investment. Scholars are dedicated to and uphold the principles and national interests of the United States.
- f) **Social Media:** Publicly available social media information can be used as part of security clearance investigations. Do not publish material that is obscene, racist, sexist, pornographic, sexually exploitative, or in any other way discriminatory, threatening or harassing, personally offensive, defamatory, or illegal.

3.1.6 Current Contact Information

Scholars must provide and maintain current contact information to the SMART Program. This includes accurate email address(es), mailing address, telephone, and residency status (the residency status claimed by the scholar for tax purposes). It is important to ensure that at least one of the email addresses you've provided to SMART is a personal email, rather than a .edu or .mil address. If any of the above changes, scholars update their contact and/or residency status information immediately via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). To update a primary email address scholars must submit a Help Desk ticket utilizing the "Get Technical Help" button in the [SMART Scholar Portal](#).

3.1.7 Communication

Open and clear communication between the scholar, SMART personnel, and SF personnel is a shared expectation of all parties involved in the success of the SMART Program.

The SMART Program uses email as the primary form of communication, however other methods of communication may be utilized including text messages, phone calls, and mail. Scholars must check their email regularly and designate SMART-related emails as non-SPAM material. Scholars also regularly check SPAM folders for SMART-related emails. Scholars shall respond to SMART Program emails in a courteous, respectful, professional, and timely manner. Failure to communicate will result in non-compliance. Furthermore, scholars are automatically subscribed to receive important program communications through text messages on their personal mobile phone number provided during application or updated thereafter. Should scholars prefer not to receive text messages, they can opt out at any time by updating their profile on the scholar portal.

Scholars' main POCs for all SMART Program-related inquiries are dependent on their phase within the program.

- a) **Phase 1:** The Scholar Coordinator is the main POC. Scholars should also regularly communicate in Phase 1 with their SF POC, mentor, and supervisor. It is strongly encouraged that scholars develop clearly articulated and mutually agreeable communication expectations with SF personnel, however, SFs do not have the authority to approve or modify program policies. If a Phase 1 scholar has any questions or concerns related to their ability to comply with their SSA and relevant policies, the SMART Program expects that they contact their SC as soon as possible.
- b) **Phase 2 and Phase 3:** The Component Liaison is the main POC. The CL works closely with the SF POC and other SF personnel, on matters related to clearances, internships, hiring, and service commitment phases. If a Phase 2 scholar has any questions or concerns related to their ability to comply with their SSA and relevant policies, the SMART Program expects that will they contact their CL as soon as possible.

POC	POC Responsibility	How to Contact	Scholar Phase
Scholar Coordinator	Every scholar is assigned a scholar coordinator. Scholar coordinators are the first point of contact for scholars during degree pursuit.	Email: SMARTScholar@smartscholarship.org Use the following subject line: Component – Last Name – Subject Call: 571-633-7940	Phase 0-1: Awardees & academic pursuit
Component Liaison	Every Component has a designated Component Liaison (CL) who is the main point of contact between the SMART Program, the sponsoring DoW Component, and the SF.	Email: SMARTCL@smartscholarship.org Use the following subject line: Component – Last Name – Subject	Phase 2: Service Commitment Phase 3: Post Service Commitment
Technical Help Desk	For technical assistance with the SMART scholar, awardee, or application portal.	"Get Technical Help" button on each portal Call: 571-633-7940	All awardees & scholars
SMART Outreach	Information on events, scholar highlights, materials and promotional items requests, how to get involved with SMART outreach	Email outreach@smartscholarship.org . To request promotional materials: https://www.smartscholarship.org/smart?id=request_materials_form	All scholars

3.1.8 SF Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a mutual relationship between an SF and scholar. Sponsorship includes the SF and scholar’s commitment to the SSA and its provision of internship(s), mentorship, and post-graduation employment. Continued sponsorship by the approved SF is a requirement to maintain participation in and funding under the SMART Program. Award offers, and acceptance of the award are considered a hiring decision.

It is unusual for the SMART Program to assign a scholar to a new SF for the completion of their service commitment. Any change of SF is considered on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the SMART Program. If the SMART Program determines that the match between the SF and scholar is not viable, the SMART Program may establish an Alternative Sponsorship Agreement defining the parameters in which the SMART Program may attempt to find alternative placement for the scholar. The terms of the Alternative Sponsorship Agreement are established by the SMART Program and require scholar signature.

Sponsorship is defined as the commitment made by the SF to support the scholar throughout their participation in the SMART Program.

Sponsorship includes: the SF’s commitment to the award length outlined in the SSA and its provision of internship(s), mentorship, and post-graduation employment to the sponsored scholar.

Only the SMART Program may reassign a scholar to a new SF. A scholar may not initiate an SF transfer without prior support and involvement of both their current SF and the SMART Program. In the rare occasion where a scholar has questions or concerns with their SF assignment, they should first take and document the following steps to mitigate their concerns with their SF:

1. Contact their scholar coordinator if in Phase 1 or component liaison if in Phase 2 to notify the SMART Program of the issue.
2. Contact their SF POC to address their questions or concerns.
3. If necessary, continue conversations with their SF POC to identify another department within the current SF to which the scholar can transfer.

4. If after progressing through steps 2 and 3, the scholar still has concerns with their assignment, the CL will notify the CEL and SMART Program Office prior to the scholar engaging with other SF POCs or facilities.
5. The Scholar will work with the SF POC to identify another location within the SF and/or command to which the scholar can transfer. If another location is identified, the submission of an SF Transfer SAAR will be required to make the change.
6. If steps 2-5 are not successful, the scholar may identify a new SF within the SMART program and obtain written support from their current SF POC and second level supervisor, along with written support from the proposed new SF, as documentation for an SF Transfer SAAR. Note: If a scholar is unable to find a new SF within the SMART Program, their current SF, as outlined in their SMART Service Agreement and any previously approved amendments, will remain in effect.

3.1.8.1 Loss of Sponsorship

Loss of sponsorship occurs in rare situations, including but not limited to:

- The SF is unable to provide long-term employment (as determined by the SF)
- Documented misaligned academic goals
- The scholar is unable to meet the SF's security clearance eligibility requirements (either interim or final determinations)
- Derogatory information is found on the scholar's SF-86, resulting in an inability to obtain a security clearance.
- The scholar makes changes to their approved degree plan without SMART Program approval.
- The scholar violates the SMART code of conduct or any SMART policies or procedures.
- The scholar's actions or performance during Phase 1 or 2 results in the SF requesting to end sponsorship.

Any scholar communication or actions with the assigned SF that result in loss of sponsorship from the assigned SF (at the sole discretion of the SF) may result in the scholar's dismissal from the program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA and may be subject to debt repayment.

3.1.8.2 Alternative Sponsorship Agreement (ASA)

SMART scholars who have lost sponsorship from their SF may be immediately dismissed from the program. Under an Alternative Sponsorship Agreement, SMART allows an eligible scholar to continue participation in SMART for 90 days, while the scholar and the SMART Program attempt to secure sponsorship with another SMART SF. Not all scholars who lose sponsorship or request an SF transfer are eligible for an Alternate Sponsorship Agreement.

Eligibility depends on the reason for loss of sponsorship or scholar requested SF change. If the scholar successfully secures new sponsorship within the given timeframe, they must submit a SAAR for an SF Transfer, to the SMART Program to continue their participation. Failure to secure new sponsorship by the deadline will result in dismissal from the SMART program.

Eligibility for an ASA

A scholar meets the conditions for an ASA in the following cases wherein the scholar **is not at fault**:

- The SF experiences hiring delays beyond 6 months after degree completion.
- The SF has limited billets and is unable to hire the scholar within six months of degree completion.
- The SF billet intended for the scholar is no longer available or commensurate with the scholar's degree, as assessed by the SMART program, through no fault of the scholar.

- The work originally intended for the scholar is defunded or relocated to a different location and the scholar cannot accommodate the change.
- The SF determines the scholar’s skills and academic pursuits are not a match, has documented the mismatch, and supports a scholar’s transfer.
- The scholar or a family member has a documented medical issue and needs to remain in a specific location to continue care.
- The scholar experiences a documented threat or personal event that directly impacts their safety or well-being, requiring relocation to a different location from their assigned SF.
- The scholar is able to obtain a clearance but does not meet the required level for their SF (e.g., eligible for a secret clearance but not for a top-secret clearance).

Ineligibility for an ASA

A scholar is not eligible for an ASA and will be dismissed from the program in the following cases:

- The scholar made changes to their award without SF and SMART Program approval.
- The scholar is unable to obtain a security clearance.
- Derogatory information is found on scholar’s SF-86, resulting in an inability to obtain a clearance.
- The scholar violates the code of conduct or any SMART policies or procedures.
- The scholar’s actions or performance during Phase 1 or 2 results in SF requesting to end service agreement and scholar’s sponsorship.

*The SMART Program reserves the right to allow an ASA in highly nuanced situations.

3.1.9 Relocation Requirements

If a scholar is re-assigned by the SMART Program to an SF that was not the original SF, scholars must be willing to relocate within the U.S. to complete the internship periods and the service commitment with a new SF.

Scholars must be able to relocate to SFs for internships and service commitment, if required.

3.1.10 Security Clearance Requirement

Scholars complete the following security clearance requirements:

- a) Provide complete and timely information and documentation as requested;
- b) Be eligible to **obtain and maintain** the level of security clearance required by the SF (both interim and final); and
- c) Notify the SF prior to traveling to a foreign country.

The SF determines the level of clearance that the scholar is required to obtain, initiates the collection of required paperwork (for example, the SF 86 – Questionnaire for National Security), and holds the authority to make interim eligibility decisions (per Department of Defense Manual (DoDM) 5200.02).

All SMART scholarship participants undergo an initial prescreening with their SF to determine their suitability for employment and/or to make an interim national security eligibility determination. If the prescreening is performed during Phase 0 and the awardee is not recommended for an interim security clearance, then the awardee’s SMART scholarship award may be rescinded. If the prescreening is performed during Phase 1 and the scholar is not recommended for an interim security clearance, then the SF, at their discretion, may withdraw their sponsorship of the scholar. If a scholar loses sponsorship of their SF, the scholar may be dismissed from the SMART Program ([section 3.3.1](#)). If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)). DoD Manual 5200.02 does not provide individuals with a right to due process or appeal to DoW facilities

making *interim* eligibility determinations. However, scholars losing sponsorship may seek due process through the SMART Program's own debt dispute or waiver application process if a debt is established ([section 3.3.3.2](#) for more information).

Scholars who are recommended for interim national security eligibility progress to full background investigations and adjudication for a final national security eligibility determination. For non- Intelligence agency SFs, the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) Consolidated Adjudication Services (CAS) has the sole authority to determine final security clearance eligibility. If, near the end of the full adjudication process, the CAS renders a **tentative unfavorable determination** regarding the scholar's eligibility, the CAS will provide the scholar with an official notice and the opportunity to respond to potential concerns (this notice may come in the form of a "Statement of Reasons" (SOR) or other similar document). Upon review of the scholar's response, the CAS will make a final determination. If the CAS issues a **final unfavorable determination**, then the scholar will be dismissed from the SMART Program for failure to obtain a security clearance. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

In the event of a **final unfavorable determination**, scholars may submit an appeal to an appropriate review authority (provided in a letter by the CAS). However, the SMART Program is not obligated to await the outcome of an appeal as the CAS has, in practice, already made a final determination. Scholars who are successful in their appeal after their dismissal from the SMART Program may provide this outcome for consideration through the SMART Program's debt dispute or waiver application process if a debt is established ([section 3.3.3.2](#) for more information).

If a security clearance (interim or final) is revoked at any time prior to completion of the service commitment, the scholar will be dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

Some SMART SFs in the Intelligence Community may have other authorized investigative and adjudication entities and procedures. Please consult with your SF's security manager to understand how the process may differ.

Notify the SF immediately of any actions or events that may affect eligibility to obtain or maintain the security clearance. For a list of activities that may result in the denial or revocation of a security clearance, visit <https://www.opm.gov> or the adjudicated guidelines at <https://www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/Regulations/SEAD-4-Adjudicative-Guidelines-U.pdf>. For more information on the investigation and adjudication process, visit <https://www.dcsa.mil/mc/pv>. Please contact the SF with any security clearance requirement questions. For additional instructions on completing the SF-86, please refer to SF-86 guidance in the [Awardee Portal](#) or [SMART Scholar Portal](#).

3.1.11 Length of Service Commitment

Scholars perform post-graduation employment with the SF at the rate of 1.0 calendar year of service for each full academic year. Financial support for an academic term (quarter, semester) that is less than a full academic year requires an additional six (6) months of post-graduation employment. For example, an award for 2.0 academic years requires 24 months of service. An award for 1.5 academic years requires 18 months of service. The SMART Program year begins on August 1st and ends on July 31st. If an award length change crosses from one program year to the next, the award and service commitment will increase by 0.5 years. For example, if a scholar requests to change their graduation date from May to August, then an additional 0.5 years will be added to their award and service commitment due to crossing from one program year to the next.

The SMART service commitment is in addition to any other period for which the scholar is obligated to serve in the civil service of the United States. For example, if a scholar accrued a service commitment through another DoW civilian internship program such as STEM Student Employment Program (SSEP) or Pathways prior to accepting SMART.

Time spent working at the SF during Phase 1 is not applied toward fulfillment of the service commitment. Accordingly, recruitment scholar time spent during internships is not applied toward the service commitment. Similarly, retention scholar time spent at the SF during the academic year, or summer months is not applied toward the service commitment.

3.1.12 Non-compliance

If a scholar is found non-compliant, the SMART Program will provide the scholar with a non-compliance notice or a dismissal notice, depending on the nature of the non-compliance. Scholars will acknowledge receipt of the non-compliance notice. A non-compliance notice specifies the scholar is in a status of non-compliance and provides the next steps. If the scholar does not return to compliance or is beyond the ability to return to compliance, the SMART Program may provide the scholar with a dismissal notice. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)). See [Appendix D](#) for Non- Compliance Matrix.

3.2 Modifying Commitments

3.2.1 Service Agreement Amendment Requests (SAARs)

SMART scholars requesting to amend their existing SSA must submit a SAAR as soon as a need is identified and in advance of taking any actions. Multiple parties review each SAAR, but the SMART Program holds the authority to approve or deny the request. Any changes approved pursuant to a given SAAR modify only the specific terms of the SSA amended; the rest of the SSA remains in full force and effect. After approval, all SAARs amend the initial SSA. If a SAAR is denied, the scholar must comply with the terms of the existing SSA or may be dismissed from the program.

Scholars may request a SAAR by submitting an electronic form via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#).

The list of approved terms of an SSA that may be amended through a SAAR is outlined in [section 5.2.14](#), Phase 1 Service Agreement Amendment Requests, and [section 6.1.7](#), Phase 2 Service Agreement Amendment Requests. Please contact your scholar coordinator at Smartscholar@smartscholarship.org for more details.

3.2.2 Leave of Absence

Scholars are expected to participate in the program and pursue their approved degree on a full-time basis. If a scholar is unable to participate in the SMART Program, including full-time academic enrollment, for more than four weeks, the scholar must either submit a leave of absence (LOA) SAAR or withdraw from the program. Justification will be required for all LOA requests. The LOA SAAR must go through a review process based on the SF's ability to support and SMART Program policy guidelines and procedures. Approval from the SMART Program is required prior to the LOA taking effect. Only the SMART Program may decide if an LOA SAAR is approved or denied.

Leave of Absences must begin at the start of a month and end at the close of a month to align with monthly scholar stipend payments.

Parental leave while in Phase 1 will require a LOA if the scholar is unable to complete Phase 1 activities for 4 consecutive weeks or longer. Maternity/Paternity leave while in Phase 2 will not require a LOA unless the scholar is on a Leave Without Pay status and the service commitment will be adjusted accordingly. Phase 1 and Phase 2 scholars on an LOA are required to maintain regular communication with the SMART Program and Sponsoring Facility points of contact throughout the duration of the LOA. All SMART Program funding ceases during an LOA. While in Phase 1 or Phase 2, a scholar may not exceed a cumulative total of 2.0 years on LOA. During an LOA, scholars continue to comply with reporting requirements, as applicable.

Scholars may submit a SAAR for an LOA in the following circumstances:

- a) The scholar or an immediate family member, as defined by the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, has a medical condition requiring the scholar to take an LOA.
- b) The scholar may request an LOA in other emergencies.
- c) The scholar is activated for military service.
- d) The scholar becomes part time or takes a leave from employment exceeding 4 weeks during Phase 2.

Additionally, the SMART Program may direct a scholar to take an LOA in the following circumstances:

- a) The scholar fails to obtain the SMART-funded degree on time and in accordance with the SSA, due to personal reasons.
- b) The scholar fails to obtain the SMART-funded degree within the SMART Program 5-year funding cap. All SMART Program funding is suspended during an LOA.

In rare circumstances, LOAs may be requested retroactively. For example, a scholar requests an LOA to account for an absence that has already occurred because they were unable to submit the LOA proactively. If approved, the SMART Program may recoup funding provided during the retroactively approved LOA period (including stipends and tuition). Scholars may repay funding through a check, mailed to LMI – SMART, 7940 Jones Branch Drive, Suite T45, Tysons, VA 22102. Additionally, scholars may choose to have future stipends and tuition withheld, commensurate with the retroactive LOA duration, if applicable. If the scholar completes Phase 1 without having refunded outstanding LOA payments and commensurate funding has not been withheld, the scholar’s service commitment will be revised in accordance with the LOA duration owed.

3.2.3 Award Length Change

Scholars in Phase 1 continually pursue their approved degree on a full-time basis. SMART scholarships range from a minimum of 1.0 year to a total of 5.0 years per award, depending on degree level. Acceptable award length by degree level is as follows:

Degree Level	Minimum Award Funding	Maximum Award Funding
Bachelor (BS) scholars	1.0 year	5.0 years
Master (MS) scholars	1.0 year	3.0 years
Dual BS/MS scholars	1.0 year	5.0 years
Ph.D. scholars	1.0 year	5.0 years

If the scholar needs to increase or decrease the length of the award, due to circumstances outside of the scholar’s control, the scholar may submit a request for an award length change. Scholars must provide justification for the award length change and have validation of the new graduation date from the scholar’s university or college. It must be submitted at least 60 days before the current graduation date on record with SMART. The award length change SAAR must go through a review process based on the availability of funds, SF ability to support, and SMART Program policy guidelines and procedures. If an award length change crosses from one program year to the next, the award and service commitment will increase by 0.5 years. For example, if a scholar requests to change graduation date from May to August, then an additional 0.5 years will be added to award and service commitment due to crossing from one program year to the next.

The SMART Program determines if the award length change SAAR is approved or denied. If the SMART Program approves an award length change, the scholar’s service commitment will be revised in accordance with the approved change. If a scholar is in a status of non-compliance their award length change may be denied.

3.2.4 Withdrawal from the SMART Program

Scholars notify the SMART Program if they wish to withdraw from the program. A scholar may withdraw from the SMART Program by submitting the SAAR for a withdrawal, via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). If a scholar withdraws from the program after 1 August of the first award year, the scholar will be subject to debt repayment procedures and may be responsible for repaying all funds expended on their behalf.

- Phase 1, contact your Scholar Coordinator at SMARTScholar@smartscholarship.org to discuss your intent to withdraw from the SMART Program, before submitting the SAAR.
- Phase 2, contact your Component Liaison at SMARTCL@smartscholarship.org to discuss your intent to withdraw from the SMART Program, before submitting the SAAR.

3.2.5 SF Transfer SAARs

Continued sponsorship by the approved SF is a requirement to maintain participation in and funding under the SMART Program. See [section 3.1.8](#) SF Sponsorship prior to submitting an SF Transfer SAAR.

SF Transfer SAARs are approved if the reason for the transfer falls under the below listed circumstances, includes all required documentation, and the scholar has followed all the necessary steps outlined below. If an SF Transfer SAAR is denied, the scholar is at risk of loss of sponsorship and dismissal, with the potential for debt repayment.

Scholars may submit an SF Transfer SAAR that includes justification/rational documenting misalignment of skills, academics or expertise with SF mission in the following circumstances:

- A new SF has agreed to sponsor the scholar as a result of an ASA.
- The scholar believes their academic pursuits do not align with the SF's mission.
- The scholar believes the SF mission does not or will not effectively use their skills and expertise.

Note: SF Transfer SAARs submitted due to any circumstance making the scholar ineligible for an ASA will not be approved.

Before submitting an SF Transfer SAAR, scholars must follow and document these due diligence steps:

1. Contact their scholar coordinator if in Phase 1 or component liaison if in Phase 2 to notify the SMART Program of the issue.
2. Contact their SF POC to address their questions or concerns.
3. If necessary, continue conversations with their SF POC to identify another department within the current SF to which the scholar can transfer.
4. If after progressing through steps 2 and 3, the scholar still has concerns with their assignment, the CL will notify the CEL and SPO prior to the scholar engaging with other SF POCs or facilities.
5. The scholar will then work with the SF POC to identify another location within the SF and/or command to which the scholar can transfer to. If another location is identified, the submission of an SF Transfer SAAR will be required to make the change.
6. If steps 2-5 are not successful, the scholar may identify a new SF within the SMART program and obtain written support from their current SF POC and second level supervisor, along with written support from the proposed new SF, as documentation for an SF Transfer SAAR.

Note: If a scholar is unable to find a new SF within the SMART Program, their current SF, as outlined in their SMART Service Agreement and any previously approved amendments, will remain in effect.

Please see [Appendix C](#) for the required documentation needed for an SF Transfer SAAR.

3.3 Default Cases

3.3.1 Dismissal from the SMART Program

A scholar may be dismissed from the SMART Program for failure to fulfill any requirement of the SSA, or to comply with any program policy or procedure outlined in the SMART Scholar Handbook. A dismissal notice will be provided to the scholar specifying the date of, and reason for, the dismissal. All SMART Program funding will cease immediately upon the date of dismissal. A scholar dismissed from the program has defaulted on their SSA and may be subject to debt repayment, [section 3.3.3](#).

3.3.2 Withdrawal from the SMART Program

A scholar may voluntarily withdraw from the SMART Program at any time, prior to the completion of their Phase 2 service commitment. Scholars notify the SMART Program if they wish to withdraw from the program and submit a SAAR for withdrawal, via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). A withdrawal acknowledgement letter will be provided to the scholar, specifying the date of withdrawal. All SMART Program funding will cease immediately upon the date of withdrawal. If a scholar withdraws from the program after 1 August of the first award year, the scholar will be in default of their SSA and may be subject to debt repayment, [section 3.3.3](#).

Notify the SMART Program when withdrawing from the Program.
 Phase 1: Contact the Scholar Coordinator
 Phase 2: Contact the Component Liaison

3.3.3 SSA Default and Debt Repayment

3.3.3.1 Default Overview

Any scholar (recruitment or retention) who defaults on their service agreement will be subject to debt establishment procedures. Section 4093 of Title 10, U.S.C. establishes the authority for the United States government to pursue a refund of scholarship benefits from a scholar for any period of unserved obligated.

Section 4093 of Title 10, U.S.C.
 Establishes the authority for the U.S. government to pursue a refund of scholarship benefits from a scholar for any period of unserved obligated service.

Service as outlined in the SSA. An obligation to reimburse the United States for failure to complete the program per the above is, for all purposes, a debt owed to the United States. Scholars subject to debt repayment may be required to refund all amounts expended under the scholar’s SMART award, including those funds expended after graduation and prior to entering Phase 2.

Scholars defaulting on their SSA generally progress through three broad stages. The **debt establishment** stage in [section 3.3.3.2](#) describes the administrative process by which the existence of a valid debt is determined after a scholar separates from the program. Once the existence of a valid debt is established, debtors are notified and afforded **due process** to contest the established debt, as described in [section 3.3.3](#). Once due process has concluded (or if a debtor chooses not to contest the established debt), then the case is referred to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) to initiate the **collection** of debt, as described in [section 3.3.3.2](#).

3.3.3.2 The Debt Establishment Process

There are three (3) entities involved in the establishment of debt cases: the SMART Program Support Team, the SMART Program Office within USD(R&E), and the DoW Components (through the SMART CEL). **Per 10 U.S.C. 4093 and DoD Instruction 1025.09, the DoW Components make final determinations regarding the establishment of debts, not the SMART Program Support Team.** Thus, the SMART Program Support Team (including SC, CL, or any other employee of the Program Support Team) are not able or authorized to project specific outcomes of

The SMART Support Team does not establish debt and are not authorized to project specific outcomes.	debt establishments. Nor are they able to immediately initiate debt repayment procedures on the Government’s behalf. Rather, the establishment and collection of debts follows a well-defined procedure defined by statute and DoW policy.
--	--

When a scholar defaults on their SSA, the SMART Program Support Team creates the administrative record. This administrative record forms the basis for identifying that a valid debt exists, and the amount required for repayment. The Administrative Record includes the scholar's SSA, any modifications to the scholar's SSA, and relevant documentation or correspondence associated with the scholar's dismissal or withdrawal from the SMART Program.

The Administrative Record is provided to the SMART Program Office who makes an initial recommendation, based on SMART Program policies, to the respective SMART CEL. The SMART CEL, on behalf of their DoW Component, makes a final determination to establish a debt upon consideration of the entire Administrative Record and SMART Program policies in accordance with DoD Instruction 1025.09, Volume 5 of DoD 7000.14-R, and provisions of Section 4093 of Title 10, U.S.C.

A debt determination made by a DoW Component typically results in one of three outcomes:

- a) Establishment of Monetary Debt: The DoW Component determines the scholar is obligated to monetarily refund the United States for failure to complete the program under the terms of the SSA. For scholars who have partially completed their service commitments, the amount of the debt is pro-rated according to the amount of time served.
- b) Determination of No Debt: The DoW Component determines the scholar is not obligated to refund the United States under Section 4093 of Title 10, U.S.C.
- c) Service Repayment: In exercising discretion under Section 4093 of Title 10, U.S.C. and DoDI 1025.09 to determine an appropriate amount for a monetary refund, the DoW Component may provide an alternative to monetary repayment if, at the time of debt establishment, the scholar is currently a DoW employee, employee at another Federal agency if the work performed during the employment period has clear benefit to the DoW, or active duty service member, and agrees to perform an obligated period of service commensurate with the years of scholarship or educational benefits initially provided by the SMART Program. **Service repayment cannot be completed through a position as a government contractor, at the discretion of the DoW Component and SMART Program.**

The SMART Program Office will relay the DoW Component's final determination to the scholar via the Debt Establishment Notification Letter. The Debt Establishment Notification Letter is provided by email and certified postal mail. For this reason, it is imperative that the scholar maintain their current contact information in the [SMART Scholar Portal](#).

The SMART Program Support Team is unable to provide a specific timeline for how long after a dismissal or withdrawal that a scholar can expect to have their debt formally established by their DoW Component.

Due-Process: Debt Disputes and Waivers

Upon receipt of the Debt Establishment Notification Letter, an indebted scholar may dispute the validity of the debt or contest the amount established or apply for the debt to be waived under Section 4093 of Title 10, U.S.C. Additional instructions for pursuing due process are provided in the Debt Establishment Notification Letter once the debt is formally established by the DoW Component. Per DoDI 1025.09, SMART debt disputes and waiver applications are reviewed by a Reviewing Official within USD(R&E).

Debt Collection

Absent a request for review or application of a waiver, or upon unsuccessful appeal of either, the SMART Program office will refer debts to DFAS, who will initiate collection on behalf of the respective DoW Component. Upon this referral, DFAS will send the debtor an initial Collection Letter with the terms of repayment.

The SMART Program Office, SMART Program

Support Team, the DoW Components, or SFs have no role in the collection of debts or the terms of repayment and are unable to answer questions regarding

The SMART Program Office and Support Team, DoW Components and Sponsoring Facilities, have **no role in the collection of debts** and are unable to answer questions regarding payment plans or terms.

payment plans or terms of repayment. These details are communicated to debtor by DFAS in the Collection Letter *after* a debt has been established by the DoW Component and *after* the SMART Program Office refers the debt to DFAS to begin collection. Debtors do not incur interest or fees while their default case is being administratively handled prior to establishment of debt (as described in 3.4.3.2). SMART scholars can access certain financial information by navigating to their profile within the Scholar Portal.

You may also visit <https://www.dfas.mil/debtandclaims/paymydebt/Debt-Repayment-Options> to learn more about what to expect upon receipt of the DFAS Collection Letter.

Tax Implications

Debtors are liable for all amounts expended under the scholar's SMART award. Established debts are not adjusted for any income tax withheld in previous years based on the debtor's specific tax situation. However, as your debt is repaid, you may have some recourse with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Consult a tax professional.

The SMART Program cannot provide tax advice.

IRS Publication 525 explains the instances under which a person may seek a credit or deduction on current year taxes as debts are repaid on prior year scholarship benefits. DFAS (not the SMART Program) may provide a debtor with a "tax certificate" showing the amount of repaid scholarship debt and the year(s) of repayment. This tax certificate is not a formal tax document utilized or required by the IRS but is provided as a courtesy from DFAS as a record of the repayment. Debtors should request the DFAS Form 705 tax certificate from DFAS customer service directly, not from the SMART Program. The SMART Program cannot provide tax advice. Debtors should refer to IRS Publication 525 and consult a tax professional to discuss further implications.

4. PHASE 0 – PRE-AWARD PROCEDURES

4.1 SF Assignment

SFs recommend individuals for SMART awards with the expectation that the awardee will join the facility's workforce after completion of Phase 1. At the time of the award, awardees are notified of the name and location of their assigned SF.

Prior to accepting a SMART Scholarship, awardees are responsible for researching the SF, its activities, any additional service obligation requirements, and SF location to ensure that the facility and local area are an appropriate fit. No changes in SF location are considered in Phase 0.

All scholars complete the service commitment and applicable internships at their assigned SF.

4.2 Award Deferral

Commencement of a SMART award may not be deferred. Awardees begin or resume academic work in the term immediately following 1 August of the award year for the degree set forth in the SSA.

4.3 Grade Point Average Requirement

Awardee transcripts are due by 1 July. Awardees enter the first funding year with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, per their most recent official transcript. If, per the most recent official transcript, grades for the degree to be funded by SMART fall below a cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale between the application and award start date, or if the transcripts are not submitted by the 1 July deadline, the award may be immediately rescinded.

4.4 Required Documentation

An award will not be funded until all required documents are received and approved. Failure to provide required documentation or meet any eligibility requirement may result in the award being rescinded.

- a) SMART Service Agreement.
- b) Media Release.

- c) Educational Work Plan (EWP).
- d) Official transcript – If the scholar attended school the previous year, an official transcript from the academic institution attended is required. (This requirement is in addition to the transcript provided with the application and must reflect all coursework and grades during the academic year preceding issuance of the award).
- e) All requested security clearance information and paperwork.
- f) Signed Form W-9;
- g) Official Form 306 – Declaration for Federal Employment, used for initiation of clearance processing (Recruitment only);
- h) SMART Scholarship Authorization for Direct Deposit.
- i) Orientation Travel Allotment Request
- j) Site Visit Request (Recruitment only); and
- k) Federally Funded Internship (Recruitment only)
- l) Official Transcript Task

4.5 Orientation

All awardees are required to complete the mandatory SMART Program orientation. Orientation includes a web-based presentation; in person orientation, site visit, if applicable; and an onboarding call with the SC. Orientation provides an opportunity to learn more about the SMART Program and the SF. Orientation completion is a prerequisite to initial receipt of a SMART award.

- a) Web-based presentation: All awardees complete a web-based presentation covering SMART Program requirements prior to 1 July. A quiz will follow the presentation to verify the completion of the requirement. The quiz is electronically submitted to the SMART Program. The presentation quiz must be successfully completed prior to the site visit.
- b) Site Visit: All recruitment awardees are required to complete the mandatory in-person site visit at their SF prior to the start of the award. Site visits are generally completed by 1 July and consist of 1-2 business days at the SF. Recruitment awardees must submit the Site Visit Request along with the award documents. Recruitment awardees whose regular summer address is 50 miles or more from the SF location are eligible for site visit funding for travel. Retention awardees are not required to complete a site visit.

Recruitment awardees
contact their SF POC
to receive site visit dates.

The site visit is an opportunity for awardees and SFs to ensure suitability prior to the start of the award. Recruitment awardees submit a site visit report to the SMART Program detailing the awardee site visit experience within 5 days of the conclusion of the site visit. After completion of the site visit, awardees who do not feel comfortable with their placement will have the option to withdraw from the SMART Program without penalty, via the Site Visit Report.

Site visits offer SFs an opportunity to orient the awardee with the facility and prepare the awardee for future internships and employment. In doing so, representatives from the SF may discuss aspects of future employment, such as current technical projects ongoing at the SF, or current general practices used by the SF's Human Resources department in determining compensation for new hires. While the SSA commits the SF to hire their selected awardee upon successful completion of their SMART funded degree and all SMART Program requirements, informal discussions held during site visit

(or at any other time during Phase 1) do not constitute the formal offer of employment. A facility may not make any promises or guarantees regarding salary, incentives, benefits, or specific positions/roles to be awarded at a future time. The formal offer of employment

is only made by the SF's Human Resources department, at or near the end of Phase 1, and in accordance with the policies, procedures, and authorities used by that specific SF at that specific moment in time when the offer is tenured. See [section 6.1.1](#) for more information on Phase 2 hiring.

- c) Onboarding session: All awardees complete a 30-minute, one-on-one, onboarding session with their SC upon completion of all awardee tasks. The onboarding session is an opportunity for the awardee to ask questions and to verify award information. The SC will initiate the scheduling for the onboarding call when all requirements have been completed.
- d) In-person orientation: All awardees are required to attend the in-person orientation event in July. The in-person orientation is an opportunity for awardees to hear from DoW leadership and SMART scholars who are current DoW civilians, participate in interactive sessions, and leverage networking sessions. Awardees submit an orientation travel allotment request within 2 weeks of award.

4.6 Awardee Background Check

Sponsoring Facilities typically conduct an initial background check during Phase 0, prior to the award start date. This is an opportunity for the SF security manager to vet the awardee before submitting the full clearance investigation. If the SF security manager determines that the awardee fails this initial vetting, their SMART award may be rescinded.

5 PHASE 1 – ACADEMIC PURSUIT

5.1 Phase 1 Funding

5.1.1 Phase 1 Funding Overview

All SMART Program funding is based on the availability of funds. SMART awards provide the amount of financial assistance determined by Section 4093 of Title 10, U.S.C. and USD(R&E) and outlined in the SSA. SMART funding includes tuition, mandatory fees, miscellaneous supplies, stipends, internship support payments (if eligible) and health insurance allowance (recruitment only). Tuition and mandatory fees do **not** include the cost of material, equipment, training, software, room and board/housing, or other services associated with a scholar's own specific research efforts. Scholars only receive funding for the degree specified in the application to SMART and set forth in the SSA. Additional degree funding requires re-application to SMART for a separate award in accordance with the follow-on funding policy or an approved degree level change SAAR.

5.1.2 Recruitment Scholar Funding

Scholars receive a stipend based on an annual rate as determined by USD(R&E). Scholars who complete fewer than 12 months of Phase 1 activities receive the stipend on a pro-rated basis.

- a) Recruitment Scholar Stipend Timing and Distribution: Recruitment scholar stipend payments are paid directly to the scholar. Recruitment scholars generally receive stipend payments on the **third Friday of each month**, beginning in August of the first award year, provided all award funding prerequisites have been met.
- b) Miscellaneous Allowance: The SMART Program provides an annual miscellaneous supplies allowance. The miscellaneous allowance can be used for books, technology purchases, and other school supplies. Scholars funded for a partial academic year receive the miscellaneous supplies allowance on a pro-rated basis.
- c) Health Insurance Allowance: The SMART Program provides an annual health insurance allowance to recruitment scholars, to help supplement health insurance expenses. Recruitment scholars funded for a partial academic year receive the health insurance allowance on a pro-rated basis.

- d) Internship Support Payments: Eligible recruitment scholars completing internships may receive Internship Support Payments (ISPs) in addition to the monthly stipend. ISPs are intended to offset the cost of travel to the SF and lodging if required while performing the internship.
- e) Final Stipend Payment: Scholars generally continue to receive stipend payments after degree completion until they begin work at their SF unless there is a scholar-driven delay in hiring. Determination of a scholar-driven delay is at the sole discretion of the SMART Program Manager. Once the scholar begins employment with their assigned SF, SMART can no longer provide a stipend to the recruitment scholar. If the scholar is dismissed or withdraws from the SMART Program, all stipends, including those provided after graduation are subject to debt establishment procedures outlined in [section 3.3.3](#).
- f) Stipend Rate Increases: Scholars funded for a dual degree (BS/MS) may request an increase in the stipend rate for additional qualifications earned in the form of a conferred STEM degree funded by SMART. In some cases, scholars are awarded funding for a dual degree whose program does not confer the initial degree. Scholars may establish additional academic qualifications by providing documentation from the academic institution verifying the scholar has completed all requirements for the first degree such that if the scholar left the degree program as of that date, the scholar would be awarded the first degree. Documentation contingent upon the scholar fulfilling additional requirements for the first degree will not support a stipend increase. If eligible, scholars must submit the Stipend Rate Increase task in the SMART Scholar Portal upon conferral of their BS degree to request the stipend rate increase. It is the scholar's responsibility to initiate the request for a stipend rate increase after completing their BS degree. Retroactive stipend rate increases will not be approved. Once the request is submitted and approved, the stipend rate increase will take effect on the next scheduled stipend payment processing date.

5.1.3 Retention Scholar Funding

Scholars receive a stipend based on an annual rate as determined by USD(R&E). Scholars who complete less than 12 months of Phase 1 activities receive the stipend on a pro-rated basis.

Retention Scholar Stipend Timing and Distribution: The SMART Program Office through USD(R&E) provides retention scholar stipends directly to the scholar's SF near the beginning of each academic year. SFs then distribute payments to scholars through the SF's payroll system in accordance with SF practices. The retention scholar stipend is not a bonus in addition to a retention scholar's full-time salary. Rather, the retention scholar stipend is intended to supplement the retention scholar's salary while they pursue the SMART-funded degree. SMART funding is to be utilized only when a scholar is attending school and not as SF labor funds. A SMART SF may, at their sole discretion, provide additional project funding to make up the difference between the retention scholar's current DoW salary and the SMART-provided stipend. Some SFs may choose to fund the scholar's full salary without drawing from the SMART funds. RT scholars must work with their SF to understand the rules and expectations for when and how to utilize SMART funding.

- a) Miscellaneous Allowance: The SMART Program provides an annual miscellaneous allowance. The miscellaneous allowance can be used for books, technology purchases, and other school supplies. Scholars funded for a partial academic year receive the miscellaneous supplies allowance on a pro-rated basis. The miscellaneous supplies allowance for retention scholars is provided directly to the scholar via direct deposit.
- b) Health Insurance: Retention scholars generally continue to receive health insurance through their SF and the federal employee benefits system. The SMART Program provides an additional 30% of the retention scholar stipend to the SF each academic year to help offset the cost of acceleration and benefits. The additional 30% does not go directly to the retention scholar and is not a bonus in addition to the retention scholar stipend.
- c) Retention Travel Funding: Retention scholars whose academic address is 50 miles or more

from the SF are eligible for travel funding. Approved SMART Program- funded travel is for retention scholars to return to their SF for completion of a work period. RT scholars submit this task through the Scholar Portal for each planned trip unless they are an eligible local commuter. Local commuters who travel over 50 miles between their academic address and their SF, consistently on a daily or weekly basis throughout the year, submit this task once per academic term, based on planned travel. Approved travel funding will be distributed directly to the scholar via direct deposit on the third Friday of the month. All scholar submitted RT Travel requests will be verified by the SF. See [section 5.5](#) for additional details on retention travel funding eligibility.

- d) **Stipend Rate Increases:** Scholars funded for a dual degree (BS/MS) may request an increase in the stipend rate for additional qualifications earned in the form of a conferred STEM degree funded by SMART. In some cases, scholars are awarded funding for a dual degree whose program does not confer the initial degree. Scholars may establish additional academic qualifications by providing documentation from the academic institution verifying the scholar has completed all requirements for the first degree such that if the scholar left the degree program as of that date, the scholar would be awarded the first degree. Documentation contingent upon the scholar fulfilling additional requirements for the first degree will not support a stipend increase. If eligible, scholars must submit the Stipend Rate Increase task in the SMART Scholar Portal upon conferral of their BS degree to request the stipend rate increase. It is the scholar's responsibility to initiate the request for a stipend rate increase after completing their BS degree. Retroactive stipend rate increases will not be approved.

5.1.4 Tuition and Approved Educational Expenses

The SMART Program funds the total cost of full-time tuition and approved related educational fees during the standard academic year. Full-time tuition includes fall, winter, and spring standard terms only, as defined by the academic institution. Standard terms may include semesters, trimesters, or quarters, dependent on institutions' academic calendars. Full-time tuition does not include summer terms. To receive tuition and approved educational expenses, scholars must be enrolled in a regionally accredited U.S. college or university program that complies with SF hiring requirements. Sponsoring Facility hiring requirements may include ABET accreditation for applicable STEM disciplines. There is no cap on tuition and the amount of tuition does not affect the length of the service commitment. Approved related educational fees generally include mandatory fees such as student activity and student government fees and does not include room and board or meal plans.

A sponsor letter is uploaded to the [SMART Scholar Portal](#) and provided to all Phase 1 scholars in August of each program year. The Sponsor Letter will cover all standard terms in an academic year. The scholar must provide the letter to their school's bursar's office or third-party billing coordinator for SMART to begin paying tuition. The sponsor letter will provide the school with instructions on where to send the invoice. The SMART Program will process tuition payments for the terms beginning after August 1st of the scholar's first award year. Tuition and fees will be paid upon receipt of an invoice from the academic institution.

5.1.5 Additional Tuition and Enrollment

SMART Program funding does not include tuition paid for summer terms. Courses taken outside the standard academic year without prior approval will not be funded by the SMART Program. Requests for additional tuition and/or enrollment can be made by submitting a SAAR via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#).

Requests to take courses

outside of the standard academic term must be requested and approved in advance.

When considering SAARs for additional tuition and enrollment, the SMART Program will consider availability of SMART Program funds, and approval or disapproval from the SF, whether the proposed coursework fulfills an academic requirement, or other considerations as determined by the SMART Program Office.

Scholars should not submit a SAAR for additional enrollment in non-standard terms with the intention of decreasing future course loads that result in a less than full-time enrollment in the future. Enrollment and/or completion of coursework during summer, whether taken online or at a physical location, requires

prior authorization from the SMART Program even when the academic institution does not assess tuition charges for the additional term/enrollment. If an additional tuition request is approved, a separate sponsor letter will be provided.

5.1.6 Scholar Phase 1 Tax Responsibilities

The SMART Program does not withhold taxes from funds paid to or on behalf of scholars during Phase 1, including but not limited to stipends, allowances, and ISP. It is the responsibility of the scholar to adhere to state and federal regulations regarding tax responsibilities. The SMART Program provides each scholar and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

Consult a tax professional.

The SMART Program cannot provide tax advice.

with the Form 1099-MISC recording the amount paid to the scholar during the tax year. Retention scholars receive stipends as part of their salary through the SF. Taxes are withheld from retention scholar stipends in accordance with the W-4 on file at the SF. However, retention scholars will receive the Form 1099-MISC for their miscellaneous allowance, travel allowance (if applicable) and Orientation Allotment, as they are paid directly to the retention scholar. The SMART Program cannot provide tax advice. It is recommended scholars talk to a tax professional.

5.2 Phase 1 Compliance Requirements and Procedures

5.2.1 Outside Funding

During Phase 1, SMART scholars **may not** concurrently participate in and/or receive funding from certain DoW or Federally sponsored scholarships or grants such as the National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate (NDSEG) Fellowship, the DoW Cyber Scholarship Program (CySP), the Air Force Civilian Service Palace Acquire (PAQ), the Barry Goldwater Scholarship, or the National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship Program (NSF GRFP). Individuals participating in these programs, or any other scholarships or DoW sponsored development programs with a concurrent service commitment at the time they are awarded a SMART scholarship must resign from the other program prior to 1 August of the year in which they are awarded a SMART scholarship. At the time of resignation, participants must resolve any SSEP, Pathways, or PCIP related service commitment or debt, should one exist.

SMART scholars **may** accept any other outside funding, private or Federal, in the form of scholarships, fellowships, or grants concurrent with their SMART scholarship. This includes merit based or need-based financial aid (e.g. – Federal Pell Grants) provided by the scholar’s academic institution. However, SMART scholars are advised to contact their academic institution’s financial aid department immediately upon award of their SMART scholarship, since receiving SMART Program financial benefits may alter the scholar’s original financial situation upon which any previous need-based funding provided by the academic institution was predicated. The SMART scholar’s academic institution has sole discretion and authority to determine the use of the academic institution’s own need-based scholarships (e.g. – Pell Grants) based on Federal and State laws, as well as the institution’s own policies.

SMART scholars **may** concurrently receive outside Federal funding through various Veteran’s Affairs programs such as Montgomery GI Bill, Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act, or the Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance Program, in limited circumstances. For example, the SMART scholar may not have both the GI Bill and the SMART Program pay the SMART scholar’s academic institution for tuition, with the scholar personally retaining excess payments.

There is no monetary limit on the amount of outside funding a scholar may accept. Acceptance of outside funding may in no way impact SSA obligations, including but not limited to expected graduation date and ability to complete internships. Receipt of outside funding does not reduce or eliminate the service commitment.

5.2.2 Outside Employment

During Phase 1, recruitment scholars may accept employment outside of SMART. However, outside employment cannot interfere with the required internship period, adversely affect their ability to complete

their degree in accordance with the SSA, adversely affect their ability to obtain or maintain the required security clearance or present a conflict of interest with the terms of the SSA. While there is no monetary limit on the wages a scholar may earn, full-time employment outside of SMART is not recommended due to demonstrated negative outcomes for some scholars, including delays in progress toward degree completion. Scholars who do not complete their degree in accordance with their service agreement and subsequently are dismissed or withdraw from the program due to outside employment will be in default of their service agreement and may be subject to debt repayment.

SMART does not require retention scholars to continue working full-time for the SF during Phase 1. Retention scholars are expected to work less than full-time prior to completion of all degree requirements, including thesis or dissertation writing. However, retention scholars may retain full-time employment status with their SF if it does not interfere with the retention scholar's ability to complete the degree in accordance with the SSA. Additionally, scholars must adhere to their SF's policy and procedures regarding work and school periods, including expectations for full-time employment and communication. Funding provided by the SMART Program is to be used for academic pursuit pertaining to the SSA, not to fund SF project work. Retention scholars work closely with SF to establish a successful work and school schedule.

SMART scholars cannot participate in or receive funding from other DoW-sponsored development programs, while actively participating in the SMART Scholarship Program. Examples include:

- STEM Student Employment Program (SSEP)
- DoW Pathways program
- Air Force Premiere College Internship Program (PCIP)
- Naval Research Enterprise Program (NREIP)
- Army Education Outreach Program (AEOP) apprenticeships
- Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) Scholars internship

5.2.2.1 SMART Awardee Participation in Other DoW Programs

During Phase 0, SMART awardees may participate in other DoW sponsored programs during the summer before their award starts, but only during that initial summer. Awardees in Phase 0 may continue to participate in one of these and complete their existing commitment to the other program during the summer preceding the beginning of SMART funding (which starts on August 1). Awardees may receive funding for this final summer of participation in the prior program, even if the program's end date overlaps with the SMART funding start date in August.

Important Notes:

- This exception only applies to pre-existing commitments in other programs prior to starting Phase 1.
- Upon completion of the other DoW program during the summer of the initial award year, all subsequent activities (including internships) must adhere to the scholar's SMART Service Agreement.
- Participation in other DoW programs does not count toward satisfaction of the SMART Service Agreement.

5.2.3 Pursuit of Degrees Outside of SMART Program

Scholars may not simultaneously pursue another degree while in Phase 1. The SMART Program only supports the degree listed in the SSA. A scholar initially sponsored for a Bachelor's (BS) degree may submit a SAAR to pursue a Master's (MS) degree or joint Bachelor-Master's (BS/MS) degree. Requests to change to a Ph.D. degree are outside of policy and would require the scholar to apply for a follow-on award. The pursuit of a double major or a minor must not cause a delay in degree completion of the SMART-funded degree.

5.2.4 Completion of Degree Requirements during Phase 1

Scholars complete all degree requirements during Phase 1, including thesis/dissertation writing, edits, defense, etc.

5.2.5 Minimum GPA Requirement

Scholars maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale for their SMART-funded degree, per the most recent official academic transcript provided by their currently funded institution. After a SMART award is funded, GPA compliance is determined according to the most recent official academic transcript from the scholar's currently funded institution for the funded degree as listed on the SSA. These include grades for courses taken prior to the start of the SMART award. Grades from academic institutions attended prior to the scholar's current institution are only considered in the determination of GPA compliance if it is the practice of the current academic institution to do so, as reflected in the most recent official academic transcript. It is noted that if the cumulative GPA is not present on the official transcript, scholar must provide supporting documentation from their university containing cumulative GPA information.

If the scholar fails to maintain the required cumulative GPA, the scholar will be placed in a status of non-compliance, and/or dismissed from the SMART Program. If the scholar is placed in a status of non-compliance ([Appendix D](#)), the scholar will have one academic year of academic probation, to bring their GPA into compliance. The one-year academic probation period encompasses all standard and non-standard academic terms including any summer courses the scholar is approved to take. Scholars desiring to take a summer course must take a course within their degree pursuit and may not allow the course to interfere with their summer internship. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

All course work during the SMART-funded degree pursuit must be taken for a grade in order to determine GPA compliance. While some universities offer flexible course grading systems, including pass/fail credit, SMART policy stipulates that all course work offered for a grade must be taken for a grade. If a scholar fails to receive a grade on SMART-funded degree course work, the scholar may be placed in a status of non-compliance and/or dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

5.2.6 Failure to Complete Degree with Required GPA

Scholars who do not complete the degree funded with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale do not successfully complete Phase 1. If a scholar cannot be hired by the SF based on their failure to meet SMART Program academic requirements, then the scholar will be dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

5.2.7 Incomplete Coursework

Scholars complete all coursework on time and in accordance with the EWP, as reflected on the Phase 1 Annual Report. Incomplete coursework is receiving a grade of incomplete for a registered course and does not constitute adequate progress toward degree completion, as reflected in the EWP. Incomplete coursework also includes failure to earn a passing grade for any coursework taken in a single term, even if the cumulative GPA remains above 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. If a scholar earns an incomplete grade the scholar may be placed in a status of non-compliance and/or dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

5.2.8 Failure to Earn Course Credit

All coursework that is offered for a grade must be taken for a grade. If the scholar takes coursework on a pass/fail basis when the course is offered for a grade, the scholar may be placed in a status of non-compliance and/or dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

If the scholar does not receive credit for coursework due to one or more failing grades, even if the cumulative GPA remains above 3.0, the scholar may be placed in a status of non-compliance and/or dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA (per [section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

5.2.9 Full-Time Status

Scholars maintain full-time enrollment status with their approved academic institution(s), as defined, in writing, by the academic institution's minimum credit requirement for full-time enrollment. During Phase 1, scholars pursue a funded degree on a continuous full-time basis. In the rare occasion that a scholar cannot maintain full time enrollment status due to circumstances outside of their control, such as logistical or course scheduling issues at the academic institution, they must submit a SAAR. Medical hardships resulting in dropping below full-time status require an LOA SAAR. Scholars who do not comply with the full-time status requirements and do not have an approved SAAR may be placed in a status of non-compliance and/or dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

5.2.10 Failure to Make Satisfactory Academic Progress

All scholars must continue to make adequate progress towards degree completion in accordance with their EWP. Specifically, Ph.D. scholars must successfully pass their qualifying examinations within the first 3 years of their Ph.D. pursuit to maintain a status of adequate progress. Scholars who fail to progress academically may be placed in a status of non-compliance and/or dismissed from the SMART program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

5.2.11 Participation in Study Abroad Programs

Scholars may engage in a study abroad program if the following conditions are met:

- a) The study-abroad curriculum must directly contribute to degree requirements for which the scholar receives funding;
- b) Participation in the study-abroad program must not affect the scholar's degree completion, conferral, or the start of service commitment dates;
- c) Participation in the study-abroad program must not affect the ability to complete the internship and service commitment requirements;
- d) The scholar maintains full-time enrollment status in the U.S. academic institution for which he/she receives SMART funding;
- e) Tuition for the study-abroad program is paid directly to the U.S. academic institution for which the scholar receives SMART funding;
- f) Participation in the study-abroad program must not affect the scholar's eligibility to obtain or maintain the security clearance required for internship and/or service commitment requirements; and
- g) Scholars notify their SF within 30 days prior to travel and must adhere to SF's policies and procedures regarding foreign travel. For more information, review policy.

The SMART Program does not provide additional funding for travel or other fees related to study abroad programs beyond the standard tuition and related educational fees during the standard academic term. Scholars may submit a request for additional funding for tuition outside of standard academic terms. Due to potential delays in receiving transcripts for study abroad terms, scholars may be required to provide a letter from their academic institution addressing the study abroad coursework. The letter should confirm that the scholar was enrolled full-time, successfully completed the courses, and that these courses will be applied toward their degree requirements at their academic institution for which the scholar receives SMART funding.

5.2.12 Participation in Fieldwork, Conferences, Meetings, or Training

Scholars may study or engage in research, fieldwork, conferences, meetings, or training external to the academic institution for which they receive funding but are responsible for funding those activities. The SMART Program does not

The SMART Program

does not provide additional funding for fieldwork, conferences, meetings, or training beyond standard tuition.

provide additional funding for activities beyond standard tuition and related educational fees.

5.2.13 Retention Scholar Return to SF During Phase 1

Retention scholars are expected to remain full-time students during Phase 1. In certain circumstances, a retention scholar may return to the SF to conduct research and/or thesis, or dissertation writing based on

Retention scholars work closely with SF to establish a successful work and school schedule.

equipment or facilities available at the SF. Additionally, RT scholars may be directed to work full time during non academic terms. Retention scholars may be eligible for travel funding, [section 5.1.3](#). Time spent at the SF during Phase 1 does not count toward completion of the service commitment.

5.2.14 Phase 1 Service Agreement Amendment Requests

SMART scholars requesting to amend their existing SSA must contact their Scholar Coordinator prior to submitting a SAAR. Multiple parties review each SAAR, but the CEL holds the authority to approve or deny the request. SAARs are generally approved if all supporting documentation is complete and the request is within policy, however, the CEL has the ultimate authority to approve or deny a request. Any changes approved, pursuant to a given SAAR, modify only the specific terms of the SSA amended – the remainder of the SSA remains in full force and effect. After approval, all SAARs amend the initial SSA. If the SAAR is denied, the scholar must fulfill the terms of their Service Agreement.

Scholars submit SAARs via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). The following list outlines the SAAR types that may be requested by scholars during the Phase 1 degree pursuit. For more information on each SAAR type, please refer to [Appendix C](#).

SAAR Types	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Institution Change • Additional Enrollment Request • Additional Tuition Request • Award Length Increase/Decrease Request • Award Type Change • Degree Level Change • Field of Study Change • Full-Time Enrollment Waiver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internship-Waiver or Alternatively Timed Internship Request • Leave of Absence Request • Sponsoring Facility Change • Withdrawal • Other

5.2.15 Patents

During the course of studies, research, and/or other Phase 1 activities, a scholar may make discoveries, creations, inventions, or intellectual property that may be eligible for protection by patent or other means. Scholars are required to notify their SF of the conception of discoveries, inventions, or creations which may be patentable. The SMART Program will not make a claim on a scholar’s patent. However, depending on the situation, the SF and/or academic institution may have a claim on the patent. The pursuit of a patent may not cause a delay in degree completion or conferral or necessitate any other amendment to the SSA.

5.3 Phase 1 Reporting Requirements

Scholar Type	Requirement	Details	Due No Later Than
All Phase 1	Official Transcripts	Preferred method is electronic, sent from the academic institution to SMARTScholar@smartscholarship.org If mailing, mail to: LMI – SMART 7940 Jones Branch Drive, Suite T45, Tysons, VA 22102	NLT 30 Days After Term Ends and Grades Are Posted
All Phase 1	Foreign Travel	Any travel outside of the United States and its Territories must be reported. Email SF POC for SF-Specific Guidance.	NLT 30 days Before Travel, If Known
All Phase 1	Annual Report	SMART Scholar Portal - http://www.smartscholarship.org/scholar	Annually by June 1
All Phase 1	Internship Report	SMART Scholar Portal - http://www.smartscholarship.org/scholar	NLT 14 Days After the Completion of an Internship
All Phase 1	Confirm graduation date	SMART Scholar Portal - http://www.smartscholarship.org/scholar	6-months Prior to Graduation

5.3.1 Reporting Requirements Overview

Scholars submit, at their own expense, documentation and information requested by the SMART Program. Scholar reporting requirement information is available on the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). Failure to timely provide required documentation and/or information may result in the scholar being placed in a status of non-compliance or dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

5.3.2 Official Transcript

Scholars submit official transcripts from the academic institution within 30 days after the end of each academic term **and** once grades have been posted. Scholars who fail to submit official transcripts to the SMART Program as required are placed in a status of non-compliance. Official electronic (preferred) transcripts may be sent directly from the academic institution to SMARTScholar@smartscholarship.org. Official transcripts can also be mailed directly from the academic institution to the SMART Program at:

LMI – SMART, 7940 Jones Branch Drive, Suite T45, Tysons, VA 22102

5.3.3 Scholar Foreign Travel

Foreign travel is any travel outside the United States, its Territories, or Possessions. Foreign travel may affect eligibility to obtain and maintain a security clearance. Scholars must inform their SF POC and relevant security personnel, prior to any foreign travel, in accordance with travel procedures set forth by the SF.

5.3.4 Phase 1 Annual Report

Scholars submit a Phase 1 Annual Report via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#) on or before 1 June each year during Phase 1. The Phase 1 Annual Report tracks and projects completion of degree requirements, projects number of internships, projects work start date, discloses outside funding, discloses outside employment, discloses health insurance information, discloses study abroad activities, reports scholar research, achievements, and other activities. Scholars who fail to submit a fully completed Phase 1 Annual Report to the SMART Scholarship Program, as required, are placed in a status of non-compliance. Scholars on leave of absence from SMART but not requiring a leave of absence from school are required to submit the Phase

Annual Reports due June 1
each year during Phase 1 via
the Scholar Portal.

1 Annual Report. Scholars on leave of absence from SMART and from school are not required to submit the Phase 1 Annual Report. Scholars with a grad date in October of the previous year through June of the reporting year submit a final Phase 1 Annual Report.

5.3.5 Recruitment Internship Report

Scholars submit a Recruitment Internship Report via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#) within 14 days of the conclusion of the internship. The internship report is an opportunity for the scholar to share information with the SMART Program regarding duties performed, insights gained, and other details or concerns regarding the internship. SFs also report to the program regarding duties performed and other details or concerns. Scholars who fail to submit a Recruitment Internship Report to the SMART Program as required are placed in a status of non-compliance.

Internship reports are due 14 days after the internship concludes.

5.3.6 Phase 1 Hiring Reporting Requirements

Prior to degree completion, scholars provide updated degree completion, degree conferral, and work start dates via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). Additionally, the SF may have pre-hiring reporting requirements that the scholar must comply with. Communication with the SF and the SMART Program is vital to the timely hiring of a scholar. Scholars who fail to comply with the below Phase 1 Hiring Reporting requirements by the SMART Program are placed in a status of non-compliance or may be dismissed from the program if failure to comply effects the SFs ability to hire the scholar.

Scholar Type	Requirement	Details	Due No Later Than
All	Updated Completion	Date on which all degree requirements are completed.	6 months prior to graduation
All	Updated Conferral Date	Date on which the degree will be bestowed. This is noted on the official transcript reflecting the degree earned.	6 months prior to graduation
Recruitment	Communication with the SF regarding hiring requirements	Scholars must maintain communication with the SF regarding hiring requirements including but not limited to: fingerprints, renomination of security clearance, final placement discussion with HR, and work start dates.	6 months prior to graduation and as soon as requested
Recruitment	Tentative Job Offer (TJO) and Acceptance	Tentative offer of employment from the SF and scholar acceptance. If the work start date is not reflected on the offer, report the date to the SC. Include any pertinent email messages with the SF.	As soon as received
Recruitment	SF Offer Letter and Acceptance	Official offer of employment from the SF and scholar acceptance. If the work start date is not reflected on the offer, report the date to the SC. Include any pertinent email messages with the SF.	As soon as received
Retention	Retention Work Start Date	Email confirming the date (after degree completion), on which the scholar anticipates returning to work at the SF.	As soon as identified
All	Official Conferral Transcript	Official final transcript from registrar reflecting conferral of the degree funded and date conferred.	As soon as available

5.4 Phase 1 Recruitment Internships

5.4.1 Internship Requirement

Internships:

1. Are completed each year award crosses a summer period
2. Do not count towards service commitment
3. Do not reduce debt payment amount for withdrawals/dismissals

All recruitment scholars in good academic standing complete internships with their SF during Phase 1. Scholars may not participate in other programs that impede their ability to perform summer internships.

If a scholar is in a status of non-compliance, they may not be eligible to perform an internship. Recruitment scholars who are on leave of absence during the standard internship period do not complete internships. SMART

Program internships provide an opportunity for scholars to make a meaningful contribution to the SF mission, establish a positive working relationship with future co-workers and supervisors, and become familiar with the SF and local area.

The SMART Program Office also has international internship opportunities for both recruitment and retention scholars. See [section 8. SMART Scholar Opportunities](#).

5.4.2 Credentialing and Badging

Each DoW Component and/or SF may utilize different types of credentials and badges for access to the SF's physical location and computer networks. Recruitment scholars ensure the required paperwork is completed for facility credentials and badging prior to each internship and before hiring. Scholars are responsible for coordinating with their SF POC prior to each internship or employment to ensure the required paperwork is completed for facility credentials and badging. DoW provided credentials and badges are property of the U.S. government. If a recruitment scholar has been issued credentials and/or badging and withdraws or is dismissed from the Program during Phase 1, the scholar is required to return all credentials and badging to the SF immediately upon the withdrawal or dismissal effective date.

5.4.3 Internship Length and Timing

Internships typically begin the summer after initial funding. Internships are completed each year the award crosses a summer period. Internships are usually completed during summer months and range in duration from 8 to 12 weeks unless the SF requests a different length. Scholars with alternative academic schedules, such as year-round coursework, extended internship/co-op periods, or other special requirements, may request alternative timing or internship lengths by submitting a SAAR via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). The periods spent performing internships at the SF do not count towards fulfillment of the scholar's service commitment, nor do they reduce the amount of funds that may be repaid if the scholar is dismissed or withdraws.

5.4.4 Internship Funding

Eligible recruitment scholars completing internships may receive Internship Support Payments (ISPs) in addition to the monthly stipend. ISPs are intended to offset the cost of travel to the SF and lodging if required while performing the internship.

Eligibility for ISPs is determined based on the scholar's summer address. The summer address is

where the scholar is located prior to traveling to their internship location. In most cases this will be either the scholar's academic address or permanent address. Recruitment scholars who are required to travel 50 miles or more to relocate near their SF/internship location may be eligible for ISPs. Scholars are notified whether they are eligible for ISPs when the SMART Program processes their Recruitment Internship Request.

Internship Funding:

1. Provided if travel exceeds 50 miles
2. Eligibility determined based on permanent summer address
3. Eligibility notification once Recruitment Internship Request processed

If a scholar is eligible for ISPs, the disbursement dates are set forth on the processed Recruitment Internship Request. Eligible scholars receive ISPs for each week the scholar completes the internship, up to a maximum of 12 weeks. Scholars may request to extend their internships longer than 12 weeks; however, additional ISPs for the extended duration **will not** be provided.

Taxes are not withheld from funds paid to, or on behalf of scholars.

A decrease in the duration of the internship results in a corresponding reduction in ISPs. Scholars who are absent from the internship do not receive ISPs for the time they are away from the SF. If the ISPs were processed before the reduction of the internship length, the scholar is required to refund the difference. Scholars who receive ISPs and then do not perform an internship may be responsible for repaying all ISPs expended on their behalf. Scholars may repay funding through a check, mailed to LMI – SMART, 7940 Jones Branch Drive, Suite T45, Tysons, VA 22102.

ISPs are reported to the IRS by the SMART Program on the annual 1099-MISC received by the scholar. Scholars are personally responsible for paying taxes on all funds during Phase 1 as appropriate. The Program does not withhold taxes from funds paid to or on behalf of scholars. For more information, review policy 5.1.6. Scholar Phase 1 Tax Responsibilities.

5.4.5 Internship Waiver

The internship requirement is rarely waived. A waiver of the internship requirement does not reduce the length of the scholar service commitment. Requests for a waiver are considered for a single internship period at a time. If a scholar wishes to request an internship waiver, they must submit a SAAR for an internship waiver, which can only be approved by the SMART Program.

If a scholar is unable to complete an internship for any reason, including the security clearance not being adjudicated by 1 March, the scholar is required to complete appropriate coursework instead of completing the internship. If summer coursework is required, the scholar must submit a SAAR for Additional Tuition or Additional Enrollment via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). Delayed adjudication may be due to a government delay, or because the scholar is not eligible for an interim clearance.

Scholars who are in non-compliance due to their GPA and wish to take a summer course to improve it should ensure that their coursework does not interfere with their summer internship. Consequently, an internship waiver will not be approved in such cases. If an internship waiver is approved, scholars must submit a Communications Log via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#), by 1 September. The Communication Log provides the SMART Program with documentation of their continuous engagement with their SF.

5.4.6 Internship Preparation Procedures

- a) Coordinate Internship Dates with the SF: Scholars coordinate mutually agreeable internship start and end dates directly with their SF via email, by contacting their mentor and/or SF POC, as directed by the SF. Internships typically begin on a Monday and end on a Friday due to SMART funding distribution schedules.
- b) Confirm Facility Access: Scholars discuss facility access requirements with their mentor/facility POC in advance of the internship to avoid problems at the start of the internship regarding access to the facility grounds, computers, email, etc.
- c) Security Clearance: The SF determines the security clearance requirements necessary to complete an internship. If the security clearance requirements are not met by 1 March and the SF cannot host without a clearance, then the scholar is required to complete summer coursework. If summer coursework is required, the scholar must complete a SAAR for Additional Tuition or Additional Enrollment, via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). Scholars discuss SF clearance requirements with their mentor/facility POC in advance of the internship.
- d) Submit Recruitment Internship Request: Recruitment scholars submit the Recruitment Internship Request to the SMART Program annually, as requested. The Recruitment Internship Request provides the SMART Program with proposed internship dates and

ISP eligibility information. Scholars do not finalize their internship travel arrangements until the SMART Program processes the Recruitment Internship Request and funding eligibility is determined.

- e) Booking Travel: ISP funding eligibility is determined by the SMART Program and approved via the Recruitment Internship Request. Scholars should not finalize internship travel arrangements until the ISP eligibility is determined. Scholars are responsible for making their travel and lodging arrangements. Receipts are not required to receive ISPs and are not accepted by the SMART Program. However, scholars are encouraged to save receipts for tax purposes.

5.4.7 Internship Procedures

- a) Required Personal Documents: Scholars coordinate with their SF prior to the internship to obtain facility-specific requirements, such as personal documents to establish identity and citizenship for facility access and badging.
- b) Scholar Internship Time and Attendance Requirement: Scholars work full-time for their SF throughout the internship period and comply with all SF policies and procedures regarding time, attendance, and notification of tardiness or absence. If a scholar is absent from their internship for 3 or more consecutive days, they need to notify their Scholar Coordinator at SMARTScholar@smartscholarship.org.
- c) Internship Vacation and Leave Policy: Scholars work continuously at the SF for the dates of the internship period listed on the approved Recruitment Internship Request. Approval of optional personal leave is at the discretion of the SF and must be reported to the SMART Program. Scholars receiving ISPs during their internship will not receive ISPs during vacation or leave. If the scholar has already received ISPs and does not complete the full approved internship period, the scholar may be required to refund the ISP amount exceeding the internship length.
- d) Internship Sick/Medical Leave Policy: If a scholar is absent from the internship due to an illness or medical condition, the scholar follows SF policy regarding sick/medical leave. The scholar keeps the supervisor, mentor, and the SMART Program informed of the status and expected date of return.
- e) Scholar Internship Professionalism Requirements: Scholars adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards throughout the internship period, including complying with the SMART code of conduct, adhering to SF dress code, being timely in attendance, acting professionally, and satisfactorily completing internship duties and responsibilities. Scholars are encouraged to request guidance and support as needed, as well as accept and learn from instruction and constructive criticism.
- f) Misconduct During the Internship: Personal and/or professional misconduct during the internship may result in the scholar being dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)). For more information, review policy 3.2.3. Code of Conduct.
- g) Internship Related Illnesses and Injuries: Scholars who are injured or become ill as a result of performing internship duties should contact their SF immediately. During an internship, a recruitment scholar is considered an employee for the purposes of Chapter 81 of Title 5 U.S.C., relating to compensation for work injuries, and to be an employee for the purposes of Chapter 171 of Title 28 U.S.C., relating to tort claims. Such scholars who are not otherwise employed by the Federal Government shall not be considered Federal employees for any other purpose. Any illness or injury is reported to the SC as soon as the scholar is able.
- h) Scholar Points of Contact During the Internship:
- Programmatic Issues: All questions related to SMART Program policies and procedures should be directed to the SC via email at

SMARTScholar@smartscholarship.org.

- **Scholar Issues with the SF:** Scholars experiencing problems during the internship related to the SF should contact their mentor and/or internship supervisor, as appropriate. If the scholar cannot resolve the issue with SF members, the scholar should contact the SC via email at SMARTScholar@smartscholarship.org.
 - **Emergencies:** If there is a medical or other emergency during the internship, scholars should proceed as necessary and contact their mentor/facility POC and SC as soon as practical.
- i) **Internship Report:** Scholars submit a Recruitment Internship Report to the SMART Program, via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#), within 14 days of the conclusion of the internship. The internship report is an opportunity for the scholar to share information with the SMART Program regarding duties performed, insights gained, and other details or concerns regarding the internship. Scholars are also encouraged to submit a scholar highlight request via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#) to share their internship accomplishments. SFs also submit an internship report to the program regarding duties performed and other details or concerns.

Submit a Scholar Highlight Request via the Scholar Portal to share your internship accomplishments.

5.5 Phase 1 Retention Summer Work Periods

Retention Travel Guidelines:

1. Local travel not eligible for funding
2. Per Diem/Lodging cannot exceed 12 weeks or 84 days in the FY
3. Initial travel to academic institution or return to SF after graduation is NOT eligible for funding
4. Conferences or other SF travel requirements are not eligible for funding

During the summer months, multi-year retention scholars generally return to work full-time with their SF. The SF may waive a summer work period to enable the scholar to complete coursework or research. Retention scholars may also return to the SF during intervals of time not concurrent with the summer period.

Retention scholars whose academic address is 50 miles or more from the SF may be eligible for travel funding. Retention scholars submit a Retention Travel Expense Request via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). Approved SMART Program-funded travel is for retention scholars to return to

their SF for completion of a work period. The approved funding will be distributed directly to the scholar via direct deposit. Any travel required by the SF that exceeds the standard allowance amount will not be covered by SMART; SFs will need to implement a policy and practice to address these instances.

- Travel less than 50 miles between the SF and the academic address is not eligible for SMART funding
- Approved SMART travel may not exceed 12 weeks within a program year (1 August – 31 July).
- Initial travel to the academic institution or return to SF for or after graduation is NOT eligible for SMART travel funding
- Conferences or other SF travel requirements are not eligible for SMART travel funding

The SMART Program Office has international internship opportunities for both recruitment and retention scholars. See [section 8. SMART SCHOLAR OPPORTUNITIES](#).

5.6 Phase 1 Recruitment Service Commitment Hiring Process

5.6.1 Service Commitment Hiring Process Overview

Sponsoring Facilities hire scholars as full-time federal civilian employees for completion of the service commitment. The hiring process varies among facilities and may include an application process and security clearance renomination. Scholars complete all necessary steps to accept employment with the SF. Scholars may be required to complete application materials and provide supplemental documentation at their expense such as a curriculum vitae (CV), references, and official transcripts. SFs confirm with the SMART Program that the scholar has successfully completed all Phase 1 requirements before hiring the scholar for Phase 2. Time spent awaiting the final hiring action does not contribute to completion of the service commitment. Time spent awaiting the final hiring action does not add to the obligated service commitment in the SSA, however any funding received during this period is subject for repayment should the scholar not complete the terms of the SSA. Scholars should not relocate to their SF location until a work start date is established. The SF hiring process may take several months after degree completion. Scholars requesting a work start date later than the SFs earliest work start date forfeit future monthly stipends. If the scholar is in a non-compliance status and the SF cannot complete the hiring action, the scholar will be dismissed from the SMART Program. If a scholar declines the offer of employment from their SF, the scholar will be dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

Scholars must complete their service commitments with their Sponsoring Facilities.

5.6.2 Security Clearance and Start of Service Commitment

Sponsoring Facilities typically require the security clearance be in place prior to start of the service commitment. Scholars who do not have the adjudicated security clearance level required to be hired at the time of graduation will not be hired. SMART funding continues for up to 12 months. If the scholar receives the required clearance within the 12 months, the hiring process commences, and funding continues until hired. If no clearance has been granted after 12 months, the scholar is dismissed from program and may be subject to debt repayment procedures and may be responsible for repaying all funds expended on their behalf.

6 PHASE 2 – SERVICE COMMITMENT

6.1 Phase 2 General Procedures

6.1.1 Start of Phase 2

The Phase 2 service commitment begins on the first day of full-time employment with the SF after verified degree completion. Requests for a short delay to the commencement of the service commitment require the prior authorization of both the SMART Program and the SF and are rarely approved. Scholars requesting a short delay forfeit future stipends beyond the date in which the SF could earliest hire the scholar. Scholars may not defer or otherwise delay their service commitment.

Sponsoring Facilities hire scholars as full-time federal civilian employees for completion of service commitment.

6.1.2 Phase 2 Letter

Upon verified completion of all Phase 1 requirements, including receipt of the conferral transcript, verification of the work start date, updated contact information, and submission of SF-50 (recruitment scholars only), the SMART Program will issue a Phase 2 Letter to the scholar and the SF. The Phase 2 Letter is provided to the scholar through the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). The Phase 2 Letter serves as written confirmation that the scholar has completed all Phase 1 requirements. The Phase 2 Letter provides degree completion and conferral dates, the name and location of where the scholar will complete the service commitment, basic award information, and service commitment start and end dates.

6.1.3 Completion of Service Commitment with Approved SF

Scholars complete the service commitment with the SF in accordance with the SSA. Scholars may not choose to complete the service commitment with another facility without an approved Sponsoring Facility change SAAR. In the rare case that a change of SF is considered, it is generally initiated by the original SF and is done on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the SMART Program. For more information, review policy 3.2.6. SF Sponsorship.

Scholars may not defer or otherwise delay their service commitment.

6.1.4 Full-time Federal Civilian Employment

Leave without pay, or periods an employee is not in pay status or part time, does not count towards the required service commitment.

Scholars work as full-time federal civilian employees for the SF in Phase 2 until the service commitment is fulfilled. Periods of leave without pay, or other periods during which the employee is not in a pay status or in a part-time status, do not count toward completion of the required service commitment. Thus, the service completion date must be extended by the total amount of time spent in non-pay status. Scholars must inform the SMART Program of any leave without pay or non-pay status during Phase 2 and must request a SAAR LOA if the period exceeds 4 consecutive weeks. Scholars may not complete their service commitment as a government contractor.

6.1.5 Phase 2 Salary and Benefits

Scholars work directly with the SF to obtain information about salary, benefits, and relocation costs. The SMART Program does not set or determine salaries of SMART scholars in Phase 2. All salary and benefit details are determined by the SF according to Office of Personnel Management guidance and policies and procedures of the specific SF. Information regarding federal salary levels may be found at www.OPM.gov.

Informal discussions held at any time during Phase 1 do not constitute the formal offer of employment. Thus, scholars should not read into any promises or guarantees regarding salary, incentives, benefits, or specific positions/roles to be awarded at a future time. The formal offer of employment is only made by the SF's Human Resources department, at or near the end of Phase 1, and in accordance with the policies, procedures, and authorities used by that specific SF at that specific moment in time when the offer is tenured.

6.1.6 Failure to Complete the Service Commitment

Scholars fulfill the service commitment in accordance with the SSA. If a scholar fails to complete the service commitment, the scholar will be dismissed from the SMART Program. If dismissed, the scholar will have defaulted on their SSA ([section 3.3.1](#)) and may be subject to debt repayment ([section 3.3.3](#)).

6.1.7 Phase 2 Service Agreement Amendment Requests

SMART scholars requesting to amend their existing SSA must submit a SAAR. Multiple parties review each SAAR, but the CEL holds the authority to approve or deny the request. Any changes approved pursuant to a given SAAR modify only the specific terms of the SSA amended – the rest remains in full force and effect. After approval, all SAARs amend the initial SSA. If the SAAR is denied, the scholar must fulfill the terms of their SSA, as approved by the SMART Program.

Scholars submit SAARs via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). The following list outlines the SAAR types that may be requested by scholars during Phase 2 service commitment.

- a) Leave of Absence
- b) Sponsoring Facility
- c) Withdrawal
- d) Other

6.2 Phase 2 Reporting Requirements

6.2.1 Phase 2 Service Commitment Reporting Requirements Overview

Shortly after beginning the service commitment with the SF, scholars provide the SMART Program with the employment verification documentation listed in the table below, as well as updated contact information, via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#).

Scholar Type	Requirement	Details	Due No Later Than
All	Updated Contact Information	Confirm or update contact information including mailing address, telephone number(s), email address(es) through the SMART Scholar Portal .	Within 2 weeks of work start date
All	Phase 2 Annual Report	The Phase 2 Annual Report tracks updated contact information, reports scholar achievements, and activities, and indicates if potential problems need a follow up with the SMART Program.	1 June, annually
Recruitment	SF-50 (with birth date & SSN redacted)	Notification of personnel action hiring scholar as a full-time federal civilian employee. Available from the SF human resources office after work start date.	Within 6 weeks of work start date
Retention	Employment Verification	Documentation confirming the scholar is a full-time federal civilian employee of the SF, including work start date. May be provided in an email from the SF and/or a new SF-50.	Within 6 weeks of work start date
All	6.2.5. Change in Security Clearance Eligibility	Scholars notify the SMART Program immediately of any change in their eligibility to maintain the security clearance required by the SF.	Continuous

6.2.2 Phase 2 Current Contact Information

Scholars must provide and maintain current contact information with the SMART Program. This includes accurate email address(es), mailing address, telephone, and residency status (the residency status claimed by the scholar for tax purposes). If any of the above changes, scholars should update their contact and/or residency information immediately via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). To update the primary e-mail address, scholars submit Help Desk Ticket utilizing the Get Technical Help button in the [SMART Scholar Portal](#).

6.2.3 Phase 2 Annual Report

Scholars submit a Phase 2 Annual Report via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#) on or before 1 June each year during Phase 2. The Phase 2 Annual Report tracks updated contact information, reports scholar achievements and activities, and indicates if potential problems need a follow up with the SMART Program.

Annual Reports are due 1 June each year.

6.2.4 Phase 2 Employment Verification

Recruitment Scholars: Scholars submit a notice of personnel action (SF-50), documenting their hiring as a full-time federal civilian employee at the SF, via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). Scholars may obtain an SF-50 from the SF human resources office after the work start date. The SF-50 must be redacted and submitted to the SMART Program within six (6) weeks of the work start date.

Retention Scholars: Scholars submit documentation of their post degree completion return to work date as a full-time federal civilian employee at the SF, via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). Scholars may submit a notice of personnel action (SF-50), or employment verification email from their supervisor. The employment verification email must state the date the scholar returned to work at the SF *after degree completion*. Documentation must be submitted via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#) within six weeks of the work start date.

6.2.5 Change in Security Clearance Eligibility

Scholars notify the SMART Program immediately of any change in their eligibility to maintain the security clearance required by the SF.

7 PHASE 3 – POST-SERVICE COMMITMENT

7.1 Phase 3 General Procedures

7.1.1 Transition to Phase 3 and Phase 3 Letter

Upon verified completion of all Phase 2 requirements, the SMART Program will issue a Phase 3 Letter to the scholar and the SF. The Phase 3 Letter will be provided to the scholar via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). The Phase 3 Letter serves as written confirmation that the scholar has fully completed Phase 2 and outlines Phase 3 requirements.

During Phase 3, the SMART Program tracks scholar employment status to obtain information on scholar retention rates within the DoW.

7.1.2 Phase 3 Engagement Opportunities

During Phase 3, SMART scholars have opportunities to engage with the SMART Program and promote its success. These opportunities include but are not limited to promoting the SMART Program within their community (facility of employment and professional associations), serving as a mentor to a Phase 1 SMART scholar, participating in SMART panel discussions, and other opportunities. Phase 3 SMART scholars are encouraged to communicate with their CL to learn more about Phase 3 engagement opportunities.

7.2 Phase 3 Reporting Requirements

7.2.1 Reporting Requirements Overview

Shortly after completing the service commitment with the SF, scholars provide the SMART Program with completion verification documentation and updated contact information. Scholars provide these documents to the CL.

Scholar Type	Requirement	Details	Due No Later Than
All	Updated Contact Information	Confirm or update contact information, including mailing address, telephone number(s), and email address(es) through the SMART Scholar Portal .	Continuous
All	Phase 3 Annual Report	The Phase 3 Annual Report tracks updated contact information, current employment information, potential additional education, and reports scholar achievements and activities. The Phase 3 Annual Report is optional however the SMART program encourages phase 3 scholars to complete the report to keep the SMART program up to date on their progress.	1 June, annually

7.2.2 Phase 3 Current Contact Information

Scholars always maintain current contact information with the SMART Program, including accurate email address(es), mailing address, and telephone. Scholars update the SMART Program immediately with changes or updates to their contact information via the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). Scholars may be requested to provide the SMART Program with updated employment information.

7.2.3 Phase 3 Annual Report

Scholars submit a Phase 3 Annual Report to the SMART Program on or before 1 June each year during Phase 3. The Phase 3 Annual Report tracks updated contact information, current employment information, potential additional education, and reports scholar achievements and activities. Phase 3 Reporting assists the SMART Program in providing valuable information to the DoW regarding the success of the program.

8 SMART SCHOLAR OPPORTUNITIES

8.1 Ambassador Program

The Ambassador Program is open to all scholars and provides the opportunity for scholars to grow professionally, network and promote the SMART Program within their communities. To become an ambassador scholars may sign up in the [SMART Scholar Portal](#). For more information on becoming an ambassador please contact outreach@smartscholarship.org.

8.2 International Internships

The SMART Program may offer international internship opportunities for SMART scholars, where the scholars spend the summer at internationally renowned research institutes, working alongside international teams of scientists and engineers conducting DoW-relevant research. Participation in this unique research environment will contribute to the scholar's ability to consider their research objectives on a national and global scale. Scholars selected to perform in an international internship will do so in lieu of the summer internship at their SF. SMART will provide funding for roundtrip travel expenses, as well as a living stipend for time spent OCONUS conducting research. Additionally, the international research facility staff will be available to assist with travel and visa logistics.

These opportunities are open to all Phase 1 scholars (Recruitment and Retention) and all majors, particularly those related to participating institutions' research areas. **Recruitment scholars must have completed at least one SMART internship with their SF Scholars must have support from their SF to be considered for an international internship.** To apply, scholars must submit an International Internship Proposal and complete an interview with the international facility. Due to the unique and highly selective nature of this opportunity, scholars are only eligible for one international internship experience.

Information on international internship opportunities and call for proposals are provided annually, in the fall.

8.3 Scholar Highlights

All scholars are encouraged to submit a Scholar Highlight Request Form within the [SMART Scholar Portal](#) to share exciting research and accomplishments. Scholars' accomplishments will be shared on the website and through the SMART social media channels. For more information on scholar highlights please contact outreach@smartscholarship.org.

8.4 SEED Award

The SEED award competitively awards research grants up to \$125k per year for up to a maximum of three years to support SMART scholars establish foundational research in their area of expertise as they transition from the pursuit of their Ph.D. to a DoW professional. PIs can request an additional \$30,000 per

year to support a mentor's time.

Eligibility: Scholars who have obtained their Ph.D. through SMART are eligible to submit proposals as Principal Investigators (PIs) for a SEED award. Prospective PIs are to be in Phase 2 of their SMART Scholarship service commitment as of October 1 annually, and are to be in Phase 2 throughout the SEED award period of performance. Scholars who will complete their Ph.D. degree requirements prior to October 1 but have not yet established a start-date from their Sponsoring Facility are also eligible to apply and encouraged to work with their Sponsoring Facility mentors and management to develop proposals throughout their graduation/onboarding process.

The call for proposals is sent annually in May. For more information on the SEED award please visit the SMART website here: https://www.smartscholarship.org/smart?id=grant_opportunities

9 ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAC	Common Access Card
CEL	Component Execution Lead
CL	Component Liaison
DFAS	Defense Finance and Accounting Service
DoW	Department of War
DTS	Defense Travel System
EWP	Educational Work Plan
FMR	Financial Management Regulation
FY	Fiscal Year
GPA	Grade Point Average
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
ISP	Internship Support Payment
LOA	Leave of Absence
POC	Point of Contact
SC	Scholar Coordinator
SF	Sponsoring Facility
SMART	Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation
SSA	SMART Service Agreement
SAAR	SMART Service Agreement Amendment Request
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
USW(R&E)	Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering

10 GLOSSARY

Academic Address: An academic address is the current address of record for the scholar while enrolled at the academic institution. The academic address is usually a temporary address located near the academic institution. In some cases, the academic address may be the same as the permanent address or the summer address.

Academic Term: An academic term is a division of the academic year. Depending on how the academic institution structures its classes, an academic term may consist of a quarter or a semester.

Academic Year: An academic year in the SMART Program consists of the fall through spring academic terms and is generally nine months in length. An academic year does not include the summer term or condensed winter term.

Alternative Sponsorship Agreement: An agreement drafted by the SMART Program and signed by the scholar in which the SMART Program allows the opportunity for a scholar to locate an alternative SF for sponsorship.

Award: An award in the SMART Program is an offer of scholarship for the completion and conferral of a specific degree in accordance with the SSA in exchange for a period of obligated service. Also referred to as the SMART award.

Awardee: An awardee is an individual that has been offered and accepted a SMART award but has not begun to receive funding yet.

Award Funding: Award funding refers to the amount of funds expended under the scholar's SMART award including all stipend, tuition, approved related educational expenses, travel expenses, health insurance funds, miscellaneous supplies allowance, and all other funds expended by the Federal Government under the scholar's award. Award funding begins 1 August of the first award year.

Award Year: An award year refers to a SMART Program funding year which generally begins 1 August and ends 31 July.

Cohort: A cohort refers to the group of scholars who received a SMART award in a particular year.

Cohort Year: A cohort year refers to the year the scholar begins their SMART award.

Cumulative GPA: A cumulative GPA is determined based on the grades and courses listed on the most-recent official transcript from the SMART-funded institution, for the SMART-funded degree and is calculated on a 4.0 scale.

Debt Establishment: The procedure for determining whether a valid debt to the Federal Government is owed based on scholar withdrawal or dismissal from the SMART Program prior to completion of the service commitment.

Degree Completion: Degree completion refers to the date on which an individual completes all requirements to complete a degree, including thesis/dissertation writing, edits, defense, etc. This date generally occurs prior to degree conferral and is not set forth on official transcripts. The degree completion date may be the same as the degree conferral date.

Degree Conferral: Degree conferral refers to the date on which a degree is bestowed upon an individual. This date is set forth on the official transcript reflecting the degree earned. The degree conferral date may be the same as the degree completion date.

Dismissal: Dismissal is the process to remove a scholar from the SMART Program based on failure to comply with SMART Program policy, procedure, and/or SSA.

DoW Component: Organizational entities in the DoW. There are four DoW component designations in the SMART Program: Department of the Army, Department of the Navy, Department of the Air Force, and other DoW Agencies.

Educational Work Plan: A prerequisite to funding in which awardees list all courses for their SMART funded degree, including all past, current, and future courses and/or research hours completed and planned through degree completion.

Full-Time Employment: Employment that includes regularly scheduled work hours and days required by the administrative workweek for a particular group or class.

Hardship Documentation: Refers to the set of required evidence submissible by a SMART Scholar to substantiate a request for consideration of extenuating personal, academic, or professional circumstances that may affect their ability to fulfill the commitments outlined in the SMART Service Agreement (SSA) and SMART Scholar Handbook.

Incomplete Coursework: Incomplete coursework is receiving a grade of incomplete for a registered course and does not constitute adequate progress toward degree completion as reflected in the EWP.

Internship Support Payment: Internship support payment(s) (ISP) are intended to support travel, lodging, meals, transportation, and incidental expenses for eligible scholars attending an internship.

Mentor: A mentor is an experienced individual who assists and guides another person's professional development. SMART Program mentors may coordinate internship logistics and assist scholars in educational and professional growth. A mentor may be a facility supervisor, or the SMART SF POC.

Other DoW Agencies: Individual DoW agencies that do not belong to the Army, Navy, or Air Force.

Permanent Address: A permanent address is the legal permanent residence of the scholar. In some cases, the permanent address may be the same as the academic or summer address.

Program Phases: Scholars complete four SMART Program Phases: Phase 0 - award, Phase 1 - degree pursuit, Phase 2 - service commitment, and Phase 3 - post-service commitment.

Program year: Program year is another term for award year. Each program year begins on August 1st and ends on July 31st.

Phase 0 – Award: Phase 0, award, begins at the time an awardee accepts a SMART award by signing the SSA and ends 31 July of the award year. A Phase 0 awardee does not receive award funding. Any time spent attending a site visit, completing orientation, or completing an onboarding session does not count towards completion of the service commitment. Prior to funding an award, the Phase 0 awardee must comply with acceptance deadlines, complete orientation, and provide all funding prerequisite documentation.

Phase 1 – Degree Pursuit: Phase 1, degree pursuit, begins 1 August of the award year in accordance with the SSA and ends upon verified completion of all Phase 1 requirements. During Phase 1, scholars complete approved degree requirements and internships. As scholars near completion of Phase 1, they work with the SF, SMART Program, SC, and CL to prepare for the start of the service commitment.

Phase 2 – Service Commitment: Phase 2 begins the service commitment as defined by the work start date. The work start date is defined as the first day of full-time employment with the SF after verified degree completion. Once Phase 1 is verified completed, the SMART Program provides written confirmation of official entry into Phase 2, including service commitment start and end dates. During Phase 2, scholars complete the service commitment by working full-time for their SF.

Phase 3 – Post-Service Commitment: Phase 3, post-service commitment, is an employment status monitoring period that begins upon completion of the service commitment. During Phase 3, the SMART Program tracks scholar employment status to obtain information on scholar retention rates within the DoW.

Recruitment Scholar: A recruitment scholar is a scholar who is not employed in a permanent civilian position by the SF at the time of and throughout the award. Scholars who are employed by the SF in temporary or internship positions at the time of award are recruitment scholars.

Renewable Term Employment: Employment classification that includes defined and renewable terms of full-time civilian employment with a SMART Sponsoring Facility.

Retention Scholar: A retention scholar is a scholar who is employed in a permanent civilian position by the SF at the time of and throughout the award. This does not include term or temporary employees or interns, e.g., Pathways.

Satisfactory Academic Progress: Maintenance of a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale within the criteria defined in the SSA and maintaining adequate progress toward degree completion.

Scholar: A scholar is an individual who has received and accepted a SMART award and has begun receiving SMART funding. An individual remains a scholar throughout phase 1, phase 2, and phase 3 of the program.

Scholarship: A financial award for full-time study leading to a STEM degree.

Scholarship-For-Service: Scholarships-for-service refers to programs that provide scholarship funding in exchange for an agreement to complete a period of employment after degree completion or conferral.

Security Clearance: A security clearance is an authorization issued by the Federal Government permitting an individual access to sensitive and classified information.

Service Commitment: The period of service for a scholar determined by the DoW as being appropriate to obtain adequate service in exchange for financial assistance.

SMART Public Website: The SMART Public Website provides updated information regarding other program events. The SMART Public Website is located at: <https://www.smartscholarship.org/smart>.

SMART Scholar Portal: The SMART Scholar Portal contains scholar submittal documents, posts policies and procedures, and is where scholars update their contact information during all phases. The SMART Scholar Portal is located at: <https://www.smartscholarship.org/scholar>.

SMART Scholarship Program: The SMART Scholarship Program is the Department of War Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation Scholarship for Service Program.

SMART Service Agreement: The SMART Service Agreement is a signed written agreement whereby the DoW funds the academic pursuit of a scholar in exchange for a period of obligated service to the DoW. The SMART Service Agreement is signed by the scholar and the awarding DoW Component.

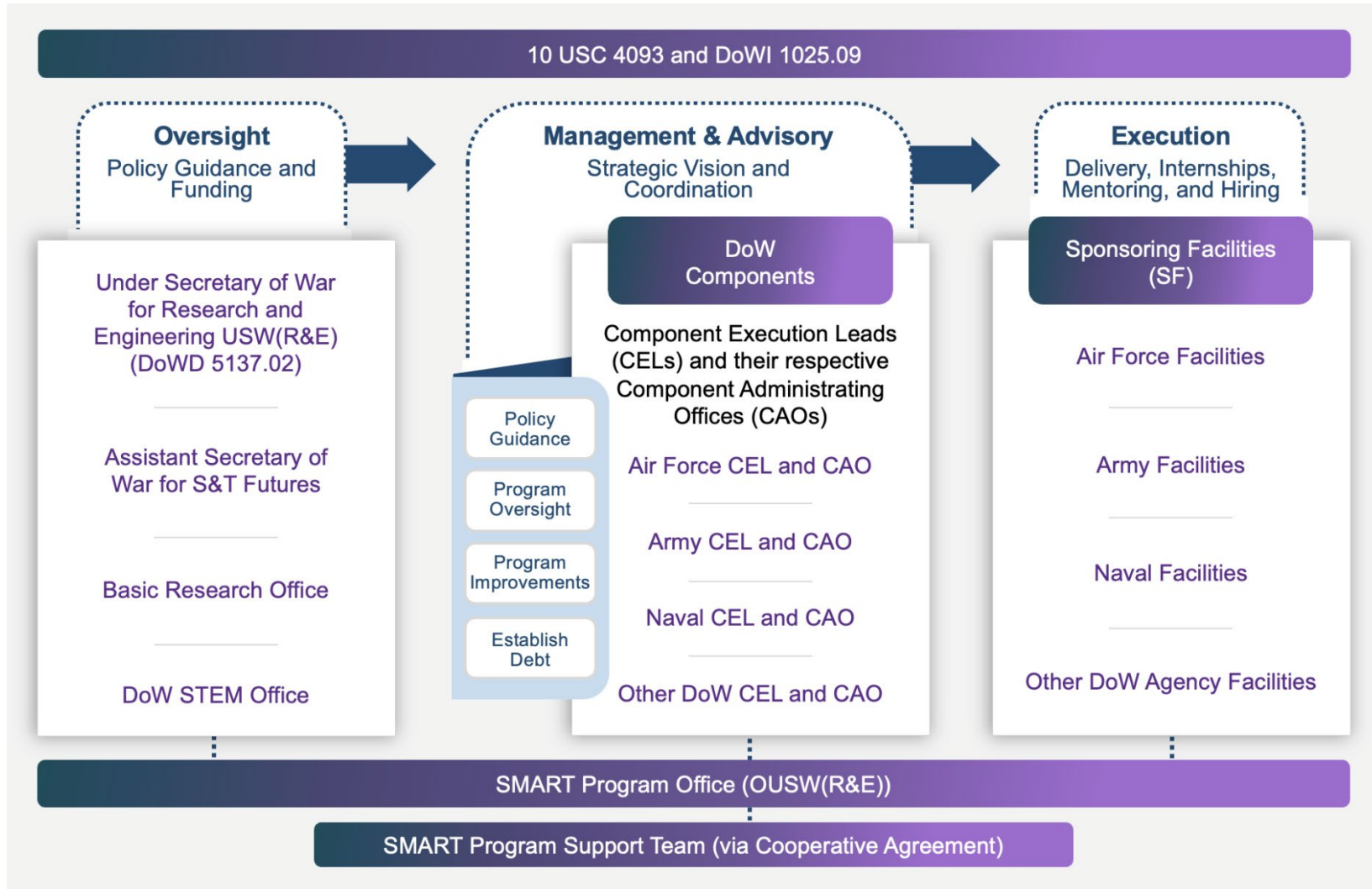
Sponsoring Facility: A Sponsoring Facility is a particular laboratory or agency within the DoW Component that participates in the SMART Program.

Summer Address: The summer address is where the scholar is located prior to traveling to their summer activities, example internship. In most cases this will be either the academic address or permanent address.

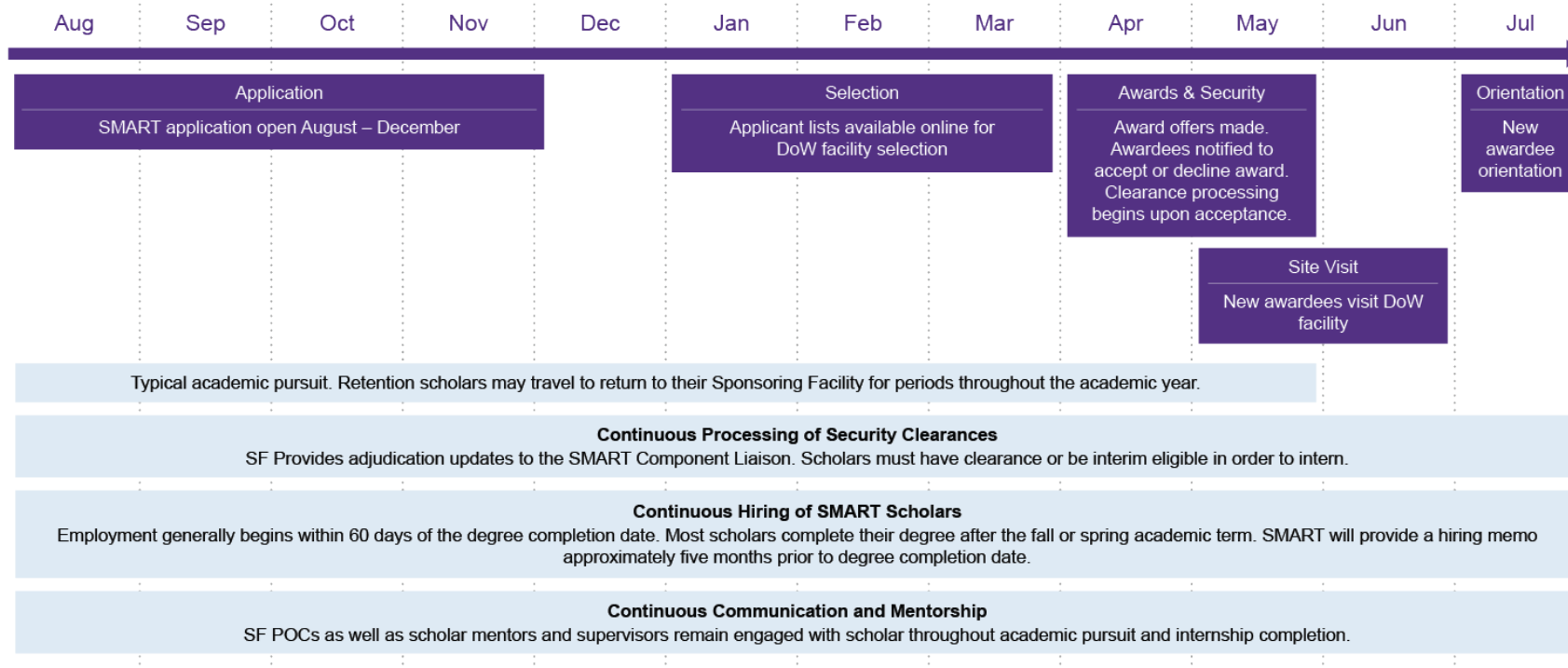
United States Citizen: A United States citizen is an individual who was born or naturalized within the United States and is subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

Work Start Date: The work start date is defined as the first day of full-time employment with SF after verified degree completion.

11 Appendix A – SMART Organizational Stakeholders



12 Appendix B – Program Cycle Calendar



13 Appendix C – Service Agreement Amendment Request List

SAAR Type	Applies to	Required Documentation
Academic Institution	SMART Scholars who request to change their awarded Academic Institution or whose SF requests them to change their academic institution.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signed personal statement detailing the circumstances of the request, including confirmation that all other aspects of the award will not change; 2. Documentation that the new academic institution accepts the scholar into the program; and 3. Signed Revised Degree Completion Plan.
Additional Enrollment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year-round enrollment and/or completion of coursework required by degree program/academic institution. 2. Required coursework during summer or winter terms without tuition. 3. Elective coursework during summer or winter terms without tuition. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If the coursework and/or enrollment is required for degree completion, and cannot be taken another time, provide a letter on official university letterhead from the scholar's research advisor, academic advisor, or appropriate dean of the academic institution confirming the need; 2. If the course can be taken during the Fall/Spring term, provide written statement explaining the extenuating circumstances for this request; and 3. Documentation verifying there is no SMART Scholarship Program funding associated with this request.
Additional Tuition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year-round enrollment and/or completion of coursework required by degree program/academic institution. 2. Required coursework during summer or winter terms. 3. Elective coursework during summer or winter terms. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If the coursework and/or enrollment is required for degree completion, and cannot be taken another time, provide a letter on official university letterhead from the scholar's research advisor, academic advisor, or appropriate dean of the academic institution confirming the need; 2. If the course can be taken during the Fall/Spring term, provide signed personal statement explaining the extenuating circumstances for this request; and 3. Documentation of tuition and fees associated with this request.
Award Length Decrease	SMART Scholars who request to decrease their award length are recommended to do so one term prior to the proposed degree completion date.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Letter on official letterhead from a research advisor, academic advisor, or appropriate dean of the scholar's academic institution: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Confirming the new date when the scholar will have completed all educational requirements for the scholar's degree. b. Confirmation of a new degree conferral date; 2. Signed personal statement detailing the circumstances causing the decrease in degree completion and confirmation that you have discussed the need for the change with the SF POC; 3. Signed Revised Degree Completion Plan
Award Length Increase	SMART Scholars whose degree completion is delayed due to circumstances outside of their control, and who have not exhausted the five- year funding cap are eligible to submit a request for an award length increase.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Letter on official letterhead from a research advisor, academic advisor, or appropriate dean of the scholar's academic institution confirming: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The extenuating circumstance that caused the delay in degree completion including dates and steps taken to mitigate risks; b. Steps remaining prior to degree completion and when those milestones will be met; and confirmation

	<p>If the delay in degree completion is scholar driven, a Leave of absence SAAR must be submitted in lieu of an award length increase request. Award length increase requests must be submitted one term prior to original degree completion date.</p>	<p>that the scholar is capable of completing the degree in accordance with the proposed award length change.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Signed personal statement detailing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Extenuating circumstances causing the delay in degree completion, including revised degree completion and conferral dates; b. Steps taken to mitigate risks and/or manage the issue(s) causing the delay; c. Steps remaining prior to degree completion; d. Confirmation that the scholar has discussed the need for the change with the SF; 3. Signed Revised Degree Completion Plan
Award Type	<p>SMART Scholars who are directed to change their SMART scholarship Program award type from Recruitment to Retention or Retention to Recruitment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signed personal statement detailing the circumstances of the request, including confirmation that all other aspects of the award will not change; 2. Statement of support from Sponsoring Facility, confirming the need for the change; and 3. If changing from recruitment to retention, documentation reflecting that the Scholar's SF POC confirms that they have the capacity and business processes in place to accept a MIPR and disburse SMART funds to the SMART Scholar Scholarship Program, and understands the processes associated with a retention scholar.
Degree Level	<p>SMART Scholars requesting to change their degree level from a BS to a MS or joint BS/MS program, a BS/MS to a BS, or to change from a Ph.D. to a MS. Degrees are required to be within one of SMART's approved STEM Disciplines. SMART will not support a non-STEM degree.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signed personal statement detailing the circumstances of the request, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The details of the request and how it aligns to the SF mission; b. Confirmation that the details of the request have been discussed with the scholar's SF POC, SF supervisor and/or mentor; and c. Confirmation that all other aspects of the award will not change. 2. Statement of support from the SF POC, confirming the need for the change. 3. Statement of support from the academic institution, verifying acceptance into the degree program and/or the academic institution's ability to grant the degree being requested. 4. For degree level changes that are BS to MS or BS to BS/MS scholars must provide an estimated cost of enrollment
Field of Study	<p>SMART Scholars requesting to change their field of study within the SMART- Scholarship Program approved disciplines</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signed personal statement detailing the circumstances of the request, including confirmation that all other aspects of the award will not change; and 2. Statement of support from the SF POC, confirming the need for the change.

Full-Time Enrollment	<p>SMART Scholars who must drop below full-time enrollment status, due to circumstances outside of their control, and are requesting to waive the full-time status policy for one academic term</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signed personal statement detailing the circumstances of the request, including confirmation that all other aspects of the award will not change and confirmation that the request only applies to one term; and 2. Confirmation, on official letterhead, from the academic advisor detailing the need to drop below full-time enrollment status and confirming that dropping below full-time enrollment will not negatively impact the SMART Scholar's ability to complete their degree, per the terms of their SMART Service Agreement.
Internship	<p>Internship Waiver Request: SMART Scholars requesting to waive an internship. Requests for a waiver are considered for a single internship period at a time. A waiver of an internship does not reduce the length of a SMART scholar's service commitment.</p> <p>Alternatively Timed Internship: SMART Scholars requesting an alternatively timed internship. Requests for alternatively timed internships are considered for a single internship period at a time.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signed personal statement detailing the circumstances of the request, including confirmation that all other aspects of the award will not change; and 2. Statement of support from the SF POC, confirming the internship is approved to be waived or alternatively timed. 3. Alternatively Time Internship SAARs will require submission of an Internship Request via the SMART Scholar Portal.
Leave of Absence	<p>SMART Scholars requesting LOAs that require an absence from school for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal or family medical circumstances, as defined by the Family and Medical Leave Act. 2. Military activation 3. Other emergencies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signed personal statement, detailing the need for the request and commitment to continuing to submit the Annual Report each June for the duration of the LOA; and 2. Letter on official letterhead from a research advisor, academic advisor, or appropriate dean of the scholar's academic institution confirming: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Approval of requested LOA and that the academic institution will allow the scholar to re-enroll after the LOA is complete (if applicable); and b. The scholar's degree completion and conferral dates.
	<p>SMART Scholars requesting LOAs that do not require an absence from school:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Award length change denial (if directed) 2. SMART Scholar has exceeded the maximum award length permitted by the SMART Program for their degree level 3. Other emergencies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signed personal statement, detailing the need for the request and commitment to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Submitting transcripts at the close of each term; and b. Continue submitting the Annual Report each June for the duration of the LOA. 2. Letter on official letterhead from a research advisor, academic advisor, or appropriate dean of the scholar's academic institution confirming: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Extenuating circumstance that caused the delay in degree completion including dates and steps taken to mitigate risks; b. Steps remaining prior to degree completion and when those milestones will be met; and c. That the scholar is capable of completing the degree in accordance with the proposed award length change. 3. Signed Revised Degree Completion Plan.

Sponsoring Facility (SF) Transfer	<p>Scholars may submit an SF Transfer SAAR in the following circumstances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A new SF has agreed to sponsor the scholar as a result of an ASA 2. The scholar meets the eligibility criteria for an ASA. 3. The scholar believes their academic pursuits do not align with the SF’s mission. 4. The scholar believes the SF mission does not or will not effectively use their skills and expertise. <p>Note: SF Transfer SAARs submitted due to any circumstance making the scholar ineligible for an ASA will not be approved.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. (For retention scholars only) Statement of support from SF supervisor, to include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Approach to balancing academic commitments with employment; b. If and how the SMART scholar’s academic work is related to their employment; c. Whether the SF is represented on the SMART scholar’s academic committee, if applicable (Ph.Ds. only); and d. What arrangements have been made to ensure timely completion of the SMART-Scholarship Program funded degree. <p>SF Transfer SAARs resulting from a SMART Alternative Sponsorship Agreement, see section 3.1.8.2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scholar signed personal statement detailing the circumstances of the request, including confirmation that all other aspects of the award will not change. 2. A tentative job offer (TJO) from the gaining SMART Sponsoring Facility. If an official TJO cannot be provided, a statement from the gaining SMART SF confirming they will sponsor and therefore hire the scholar. 3. A statement of support from the current SF POC and second level supervisor, confirming their support for the change. <p>All Other SF Transfer SAARs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scholar signed personal statement detailing the circumstances of the request, including confirmation that all other aspects of the award will not change. 2. A TJO from the gaining SMART Sponsoring Facility. If an official TJO cannot be provided, a statement from the gaining SMART SF confirming they will sponsor and therefore hire the scholar. 3. A statement of support from the scholar’s original SF POC, confirming the following due diligence attempts were made yet were unsuccessful in retaining the scholar within the original SF: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collaboration with the scholar to address any concerns and explore possible solutions for remaining at the original SF location. b. Efforts made between the SF and scholar to identify a suitable department within the original SF for potential transfer. c. Initiatives taken with the SF POC to locate an alternative location within the SF and/or command where the scholar could transfer. 4. The original SF’s POC support for the scholar’s request to move to another SF. 5. A statement from the scholar’s original SF second level supervisor stating they agree with the change. <p>Please ensure the documentation provided thoroughly details these efforts and includes any relevant correspondence or summaries of discussions that demonstrate a genuine attempt to resolve the situation within the original SF.</p>
-----------------------------------	---	---

Withdrawal	SMART Scholars who wish to withdraw from the SMART Scholarship Program.	SMART Scholars may provide documentation supporting the reason(s) for their withdrawal, if they choose; however, no additional documentation is required.
Other	SMART Scholars that have general requests not specifically outlined above.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Signed personal statement detailing the circumstances of the request, including confirmation that all other aspects of the award will not change; and2. Any applicable documentation supporting the request.

14 Appendix D – Non-Compliance Matrix

All Non-Compliance notices must be acknowledged within 5 days of the notice.

Sub Process	Policy	Description of Violation	Length to Comply	How to Comply	Failure to comply with terms of the Non-Compliance notice
PHASE 0 – AWARD ONBOARDING NON-COMPLIANCE					
<i>Note: Awardees do not receive non-compliance notices. The SMART Program will notify awardees of any compliance violations via email. Awardees must comply within the specified time as applicable.</i>					
Award Onboarding	Award Acceptance	Failure to accept award by deadline.	N/A	N/A	Will be considered a declination
	Award Tasks	Failure to complete any or all awardee tasks, by their specified deadlines without prior consent from the SMART Program.	Within 5 days of notification	Log into the Awardee Portal and complete all awardee tasks.	Rescind of award
	Site Visit	Failure to attend and/or complete the scheduled RC Site Visit.	Within 5 days of notification	Submit statement for review. If approved attempt to reschedule.	Delay of first stipend until return to compliance, or rescind of award
	Sponsorship	Loss of sponsorship due to lack of professionalism or failure to maintain SMART Code of Conduct	N/A	N/A	Rescind of award
	Starting Cumulative GPA below 3.0	Transcript submitted by 01 July below 3.0	N/A	N/A	Rescind of award
	Security Clearance Initial Suitability	Derogatory information discovered, prior to award start date, as part of SF initial suitability or background check	N/A	N/A	Rescind of award

	Communication	Failure to maintain communication with the SMART Program and or Sponsoring Facility	Within 2 days of notice	Restore satisfactory communication	Rescind of award
PHASE 1 – DEGREE PURSUIT NON-COMPLIANCE					
Degree Pursuit	Maintain Academic Enrollment	Failure to enroll and maintain enrollment throughout academic term	Within 5 days of notice	Submit a completed SAAR for Leave of Absence or to enroll full-time during academic term in accordance with Service Agreement	Possible dismissal
	Minimum GPA Requirement	Cumulative GPA below 3.0	1 academic year	Submit a Get-Well Plan as instructed Bring GPA to 3.0 or above	Possible dismissal
Degree Pursuit	Failure to Receive a Grade	Failure to complete a course for a grade if a grade is offered (e.g., pass/fail coursework)	Within 5 days of notice	Acknowledge notice of non-compliance and confirm all future courses will be taken for a grade if a grade is offered.	Possible dismissal if future courses are taken as pass/fail
	Failure to Receive Course Credit	Failure to receive course credit or a passing grade for any course taken in a single term, even if the cumulative GPA remains above a 3.0	Within 5 days of notice	Acknowledge notice of non-compliance and confirm that credit will be received for all coursework for the duration of the SMART award. If non-compliance was due to receiving a failing grade, complete Get-Well plan within 2 weeks of notice.	Possible dismissal if no credit is received for future courses taken for the duration of the SMART award, without consent from the SMART Program
	Incomplete Coursework	Receiving an incomplete on an official transcript	1 academic term	Complete a Get-Well Plan as instructed, within	Possible dismissal

				2 weeks of non-compliance notice. Complete coursework in the following standard academic term	
Full-Time Status	Failure to maintain full-time status, as defined by the academic institution's minimum credit requirement for full-time enrollment	1 academic term	Confirm that you will return to and maintain full-time enrollment status as defined by the academic institution's minimum credit requirement for full-time enrollment for all remaining terms under SMART award. Provide proof of full-time enrollment during the next standard academic term.	Possible dismissal if full-time status is not maintained for future standard academic terms during the SMART award, without consent from the SMART Program	
Satisfactory Academic Progress	Failure to make progress towards degree completion within the awarded time.	1 academic term	Satisfactory academic progress	Possible stipend and/or tuition suspension or dismissal	
	Failure to meet academic requirements, resulting in dismissal from the academic program.	N/A	N/A	Dismissal	
Transcript Submission	Failure to submit transcripts within 30 days of end of academic term	Within 5 days of notice	Provide verification from school transcripts have been ordered	Possible stipend and/or tuition suspension	
Phase 1 Annual Report	Failure to submit the Annual Report by due date Failure to make requested corrections to Annual Report by due date	Within 10 days of notice	Submit Annual Report to the SMART Program within 10 days of notice.	Possible stipend and/or tuition suspension for Phase 1 scholars or Sponsoring Facility supervisor notification of non-compliance for Phase 2 scholars.	

Degree Pursuit	Completion of Degree as Awarded	Failure to complete degree per the terms of the service agreement	Within 10 days of notice	Submit a completed SAAR* for specific award change or complete degree per the terms of the service agreement	Dismissal if SAAR is not submitted or is denied
	Code of Conduct	Failure to maintain SMART Code of Conduct at school, with the SMART Program and/or Sponsoring Facility.	Within 5 days of notice	Acknowledge notice of non-compliance	Possible dismissal
	Communication	Failure to maintain communication with the SMART Program and or Sponsoring Facility	Within 2 days of notice	Restore satisfactory communication	Possible stipend and/or tuition suspension or dismissal
	Loss of Sponsorship	Failure to maintain sponsorship at the assigned SF per the service agreement	SMART Program directed	Comply with directions provided by the SMART Program	Possible dismissal
Internship	Internship Request	Failure to submit the Internship Request by due date	Within 10 days of notice	Submit document to SMART Program as directed	Possible stipend and/or tuition suspension or dismissal
	Internship Completion	Failure to complete internship as approved on the Internship Request	Within 10 days of notice	Complete the internship as approved or submit a completed SAAR* for approval	Possible stipend and/or tuition suspension or withholding of Internship Support Payments
	Internship Report	Failure to submit Internship Report to the SMART Program	Within 10 days of notice	Submit to SMART Program as directed	Possible stipend and/or tuition suspension
	Communication Log	Failure to submit Communication Log by 1 September, if required to by the SMART Program	Within 5 days of notice	Submit Communication Log to SMART Program as directed	Possible stipend and/or tuition suspension
Security	Security Clearance	Failure to submit required security paperwork and/or documentation	Within 10 days of notice	Submit to SMART Program and/or SF, as directed	Possible stipend and/or tuition suspension or dismissal

	Security Clearance	Failure to obtain/maintain clearance	N/A	N/A	Possible dismissal
Hiring	Completion of hiring actions	Failure to complete hiring actions as directed by SF including but not limited to submission of documentation, fingerprinting, drug tests etc.	Within parameters set by SF HR PoC.	Complete hiring actions as directed by SF	Possible dismissal
	Submit SF50 or verification of return to work	Failure to provide verification of work start; SF50 (RC scholars) or letter from supervisor (RT scholars)	Within 10 days of notice	Submit documents to the SMART Program as directed	Notification of non-compliance provided to facility supervisor, and written confirmation of service commitment commencement withheld until required document is received, or possible dismissal
	Conferral Transcript Submission	Failure to submit conferral transcript within 30 days of degree conferral	Within 5 days of notice	Provide verification from school that transcripts have been ordered	Notification of non-compliance provided to facility supervisor and written confirmation of service commitment commencement withheld until conferral transcript is received, or possible dismissal
	Start of Phase 2	Failure to respond to and accept SF offer of employment by the date indicated on the offer of employment	Immediately upon issuance of notice	Respond to or accept offer of employment, provided by the SF	Possible dismissal

**Note: Return to compliance after submission of SAAR is contingent on SAAR approval.*

PHASE 2 – SERVICE COMMITMENT NON-COMPLIANCE					
Service Commitment	Commencement of service commitment	Failure to commence service commitment according to the	Within parameters set by SF HR POC	Commence service commitment with the date set forth by the SF	Dismissal

		offer of employment letter provided by the SF			
	Completion of service commitment	Failure to complete service commitment with the SF, per the terms of the service agreement	N/A	N/A	Dismissal
	Phase 2 Annual Report	Failure to submit the Annual Report by due date	Within 10 days of notice	Submit the Annual Report to SMART Program as directed	Notification of non-compliance provided to facility supervisor or possible dismissal
PHASE 1 AND 2 GENERAL NON-COMPLIANCE					
	SMART Policies	Failure to adhere to SMART policies listed in the handbook.	SMART program directed.	SMART program directed.	Possible stipend and/or tuition suspension, notification of non-compliance provided to facility supervisor, or dismissal.

15 Appendix E – Reporting Requirement Matrix

Program Phase	Scholar Type	Requirement	Details	Due No Later Than
Phase 1	All	Official Transcript	Scholars submit official transcripts from the academic institution within 30 days after the end of each academic term and once grades are posted.	No later than 30 days after semester end
	All	Phase 1 Annual Report	Scholars submit the Phase 1 Annual Report, via the SMART Scholar Portal . The Phase 1 Annual Report tracks and projects completion of degree requirements, projects number of internships, projects work start date, discloses outside funding, discloses outside employment, discloses health insurance information, discloses study abroad activities, and reports scholar research, achievements, and other activities.	1 June, annually
	Recruitment	Internship Report	Scholars submit the internship report via the SMART Scholar Portal . The internship report is an opportunity for the scholar to share information with the SMART Program regarding duties performed, insights gained, and other details or concerns regarding the internship.	2 weeks after internship end date
	Recruitment	Communication Log	For those SMART scholars who are approved for an internship waiver, SMART requires the scholar to complete regular check-ins (recommended at least monthly) with their supervisor, mentor, and/or Sponsoring Facility (SF) POC. The SMART Program requires verification of these check-ins via this Communication Log. The scholar will be provided with a copy of this log upon approval of an internship waiver, at which time they should begin logging communication with their SF.	1 September, annually
	All	Updated Completion Date	Date on which all degree requirements are completed.	6 months prior to graduation
	All	Updated Conferral Date	Date on which the degree will be bestowed. This is noted on the official transcript reflecting the degree earned.	6 months prior to graduation
	Recruitment	SF Offer Letter and Acceptance	Official offer of employment from the SF and scholar acceptance. If the work start date is not reflected on the offer, report the date to the SC. Include any pertinent email messages with the SF.	As soon as received

	Retention	Retention Work Start Date	Scholars submit email verification from supervisor confirming, the date on which the scholar anticipates returning to work at the SF, via the SMART Scholar Portal .	As soon as identified
	All	Official Conferral Transcript	Official final transcript from registrar reflecting conferral of the degree funded and date conferred.	As soon as available
Phase 2	All	Updated Contact Information	Confirm or update contact information including mailing address, telephone number(s), and email address(es) through the SMART Scholar Portal .	Within 2 weeks of work start date
	All	Phase 2 Annual Report	The Phase 2 Annual Report tracks updated contact information, reports scholar achievements, and activities, and indicates if potential problems need a follow up with the SMART Program.	1 June, annually
	Recruitment	SF-50 (with birth date & SSN redacted)	Notification of personnel action hiring scholar as a full-time federal civilian employee. Available from the SF human resources office after work start date.	Within 6 weeks of work start date
	Retention	Employment Verification	Documentation confirming the scholar is a full-time federal civilian employee of the SF, including work start date. May be provided in an email from the SF and/or a new SF- 50.	Within 6 weeks of work start date
	All	6.2.5. Change in Security Clearance Eligibility	Scholars notify the SMART Program immediately of any change in their eligibility to maintain the security clearance required by the SF.	Continuous
Phase 3	All	Updated Contact Information	Confirm or update contact information including mailing address, telephone number(s), and email address(es) through the SMART Scholar Portal	Continuous
	All	Phase 3 Annual Report	The Phase 3 Annual Report tracks updated contact information, current employment information, potential additional education, and reports scholar achievements and activities.	01 June, annually