

## Program Overview

Nursing and Midwifery Policy, Department of Health (DH), offers scholarships for registered nurses and midwives working in the Victorian public health sector to support postgraduate study in areas of clinical practice where additional postgraduate studies are considered an important workforce requirement. Supporting nurses and midwives to enhance their knowledge and learn new skills is also a factor in improving retention.

Quotas of scholarships for nurses/midwives are allocated annually to eligible public health services (or in the case of rural health services to the five DH rural regions) based on the nursing/midwifery FTE.

Health services and regions are responsible for selection of scholarship recipients, funds dispersal and monitoring the impact of their quota of scholarships in accordance with these guidelines. The guidelines cover the roles and responsibilities for the program.

*\* These guidelines do not relate to Postgraduate Nurse Scholarships Mental Health or Victorian Nurse Practitioner Project (NNPP) Scholarships.*

### 1. Amount and Purpose

In 2011-12, postgraduate nursing & midwifery funding is to the value of **\$3500** per scholarship.

Scholarships benefit individuals and employing organisations/health service. For the individual, scholarships contribute to achieving career progression by reducing some of the financial burden of undertaking postgraduate studies. At the organisational/regional level scholarships contribute to workforce and service delivery by ensuring staff have the necessary skills and formal knowledge beyond that delivered at undergraduate level.

This program assumes a shared cost model; the individual, DH and the employers all contribute to the cost of undertaking the studies.

- The individual is required to contribute to the cost of their further learning.
- DH provides scholarships to offset the costs, which can include tuition fees and student contributions (HECS), study loans, books and equipment, travel required to attend lectures and clinical placements, child care and other related study costs.
- Employers have a responsibility to ensure they facilitate staff in successfully completing their postgraduate qualification by; the provision of study leave requirements in accordance with industrial provisions, fair and equitable rostering, access to learning opportunities in the clinical environment as well as through access to library and e-learning opportunities. Health services may contribute further monetary funds to DH scholarships.

Health services are to use their scholarships allocation to address their local or sector wide workforce shortages, projected demand in targeted areas of clinical practice, or to align with workforce requirements for capital projects currently occurring or planned.

## 2. Eligibility

Eligibility for the Postgraduate Nursing & Midwifery Scholarship Program incorporates the following:

### 1. Health service eligibility

All public hospitals, metropolitan health services and multipurpose services identified in schedules 1,2,3,4 and 5 of the *Health Services Act 1998*.

### 2. Scholarship recipients eligibility

To be eligible to apply for a postgraduate scholarship the nurse/midwife must;

- be currently a registered nurse or registered midwife with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.
- be an Australian citizen or permanent resident or New Zealand citizen
- reside in Victoria (at time of application)
- be employed (or seeking employment) in an eligible Victorian public health service.
- enrolled in Semester 1 2012 in an eligible postgraduate program that leads to a tertiary qualification in one of the targeted practice areas identified by the health service / DH region
- not already hold an award qualification in the area for which the scholarship is sought, and
- have not previously received a department scholarship to study in the practice area.

### 3. Course eligibility

To be eligible, postgraduate courses must:

- Be delivered by a university or accredited higher education provider (HEP)
- Lead to an award qualification (or exit point) at postgraduate certificate or diploma level, and
- Include clinical nursing practice related to area of study.

## 3. Determining local priorities for scholarships

Health services are accountable for determining the areas of practice in which they wish to provide scholarships. This must be informed by local demand and aligned to the service/growth priorities referred to in:

- The health service's Statement of Priorities (SOPs) <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/yourhospitals/sops.htm>
- The Victorian Health Services Policy and Funding Guidelines 2011 – 12 <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/pfg/>
- Current capital projects <http://www.capital.health.vic.gov.au/FundedProjects/CurrentProjects/>
- Organisational workforce plans (where these exist)

Health services may choose to have rolling programs of targeted areas over several years.

## 4. Quota allocation and acceptance

NMP will allocate a quota of general scholarships to health services on an annual basis. In addition, other program areas within the DH (eg Mental Health) and Department of Health and Ageing (Commonwealth) may periodically offer targeted scholarships to contribute to nursing and midwifery education. These may not be managed by NMP.

Health services/ regions will receive their allocation by **21 October 2011** and are required to accept these by **21 November 2011**, by submitting the signed Executive Director of Nursing (EDON) allocation acceptance form along with the scholarship allocation plan.

Health services can fund additional scholarships (these do not get reported to NMP).

By accepting the DH scholarship offer, the health service is agreeing to administer the scholarship quota in accordance with these guidelines.

Scholarships that are declined by health services will be reallocated by NMP.

Targeted scholarships will be provided to certain Health Services in the area of Cancer Care. Health Services will be notified of this allocation by letter. These scholarships can only be used for the target area of practice.

## 5. Guiding principles for health services administering scholarships

Health services/regions that accept an allocation are accountable for administering an application, selection and monitoring process that includes the following elements for all scholarships:

### 5.1 Application & Selection Process

The application and selection process will:

- Include the establishment of a local “scholarship panel”.
- Ensure processes and selection criteria observe the principles of equity, fairness and transparency and are evidence based and defensible.
- Involve the health services advertising the scholarship local processes and associated documents to ensure equal opportunity for all eligible candidates.
- Ensure administration processes for scholarship allocation are endorsed by the EDON.
- Ensure application, selection and notification processes occur in a timely manner to ensure recipients have certainty about the outcome in time to commence academic studies.
- Ensure clear processes for allocation and disbursement of funds to successful candidates.
- Include a process for managing the reallocation of scholarships to other applicants if the required documentation is not received from the applicant by the due date.

The selection of successful applicants will involve:

- (a) Alignment of application with employers/health service’s identified workforce priorities.
- (b) Assessment of applications for eligibility.
- (c) Assessment against other applications giving consideration to the applicant’s educational and clinical background, commitment to practice area, costs associated with study and other funding support.
- (d) Additional selection criteria as required by the health service that meet due process requirements.

An application template (Attachment 2) is available, containing the minimum data requirements. Health services may customise this document for local requirements, but **must not** change the minimum requirements.

### 5.2 Successful applicants

Health services are to notify all successful applicants in writing, including providing them with any additional information about specific conditions of the scholarship (refer to disbursement and conditions). Health services may wish to include information about other support they will provide (including in-kind) that will assist recipients to successfully complete their studies.

To accept the scholarship, successful applicants must submit their acceptance and supporting documents by the due date as set by the health service/region including:

1. A signed letter accepting the scholarship and scholarship conditions.
2. Evidence of Australian citizenship or permanent residency or New Zealand citizenship as required (Applicants from New Zealand must submit a copy of their current passport).

3. Copy of current nursing or midwifery registration front and back - showing name, registration number, endorsements and if there are conditions or restrictions on registration.
4. Confirmation of enrolment in 2012.
5. Evidence of payment or deferment of fees (full fee paying students only), in the form of:
  - An official university letter confirming enrolment.
  - An official Student Tax Invoice or Statement of Account for Semester 1 2012 Students with CSP places need only provide evidence of enrolment.
6. Evidence of Course – enrolled units, subjects or courses for Semester 1 2012 (and Semester 2 2012 where applicable).
7. Enrolment status – part time/full time course load.
8. Type of place – Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP - HECS) or Full-fee paying (FFP).

Health services must ensure that successful applicants are informed that they are responsible for enrolling and paying course fees (or deferring fees) or HECS by the due date, and are responsible for debts incurred in the course of study including FEE-HELP and HECS-HELP loans. Students in CSPs may be eligible for a discount if the student's HECS contribution is paid by the census date.

## 6. Disbursement and Conditions

### 6.1 Payments

DH will progress payment of funds to health services/fund holders via normal budget payment processes when all health services' acceptances of scholarships has been received. This ensures that scholarships that are not accepted can be reallocated to other services.

Health services/fund holders must then:

- Pay scholarship recipients full scholarship funds of \$3500 once applicant's acceptance documentation is received. Administrative fees **must not** be levied against the funds by health services or regions.
- Make the scholarship payment directly to the recipient. It is expected that recipients will utilize scholarship funds for the purpose outlined in these guidelines. Payments will not be made to universities or directly to the Australian Tax Office (ATO) on the student's behalf (unless alternative arrangements are agreed). Scholarship funds are considered to be taxable income. Health services are advised to consult their taxation agent or the ATO before deciding the most appropriate method of payment to recipients.
- All scholarships must be paid in full to the successful candidates by **30 March 2012**.
- Ensure that scholarship recipients are advised in writing that by accepting a scholarship offer, they are accepting the following minimum DH mandated scholarship conditions:

#### **Continued employment**

The scholarship recipient must be employed within the target area of practice in the Victorian public health sector for a period of one year full-time, or pro-rata equivalent, following the completion of the postgraduate course for which a scholarship has been awarded. Students unable to fulfil this condition will be required to refund scholarship monies to the DH.

#### **Participation in data collection**

To assist in the collection of data about workforce planning and training, is a condition that scholarship recipients provide their contact details to the health service for 5 years post completion of studies.

### Deferment from course

If a student is required to defer their studies they must notify the health service within one week of the change in study arrangements. A decision about the return of all or part of the scholarship money will be made by the health service in collaboration with NP. Students may re-apply in subsequent scholarship rounds.

### Withdrawal from course

Scholarship recipients withdrawing from the course are required to notify the health service within one week of withdrawal. A decision about the return of all or part of the scholarship money will be made by the health service in collaboration with NMP.

**Declined scholarships** may be offered to the next most suitable candidate. If there are no other candidates, notify NM, who will recall the scholarship and funds for re-allocation.

## 6.2 Submissions and reporting

DH publically reports the level of scholarship funding and number of recipients as part of the overall investment in the health workforce to Department of Treasury & Finance and other agencies. Additionally, such programs can be subject to review by The Auditor General of Victoria. Accordingly, health services are required to participate in ongoing review and auditing of the program including:

- Submitting the scholarship reconciliation and program evaluation form by **13 April 2012**.
- Maintenance and storage of thorough and clear records for audit process.
- Participating in DH periodic audits as requested.
- Ensuring the accuracy and executive sign off on the data (number, level of funding and compliance with program guidelines) provided to DH for public reporting.

## 6.3 Attachments/Templates

Attachment 1	Health Service scholarship allocation acceptance form
Attachment 2	Scholarship application form template

## 7. Further information and Links

Victorian **Nurse Practitioner** Project (NNPP) Scholarship refer to:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing/furthering/practitioner/nurse-practitioner-scholarships>

Postgraduate Nurse Scholarships **Mental Health** refer to:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/careers/index.htm>

**Maternal and Child Health Nursing** refer to the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development.

Nursing and Midwifery registration refer to: <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/en.aspx>

For information regarding Taxation advice refer to <http://www.ato.gov.au/>

More information about FEE-HELP and HECS-HELP - Commonwealth Government Going to Uni website at <http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/>

DoHA scholarships are often offered through RCNA [www.rcna.org.au](http://www.rcna.org.au)

## 8. Enquiries

Nurse and Midwifery Policy Phone: 9096 7827

Email: [Nursepolicy@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:Nursepolicy@health.vic.gov.au)