Department of Human Services
Capacity Building for Aboriginal Health
Promoting Career Opportunities for Aboriginal People in Public Health

Guidelines for Applicants

Masters/Doctoral Degree Scholarships in Public Health for Aboriginal Australians

Promoting Career Opportunities for Aboriginal People in Public Health

The Public Health Branch of the Department of Human Services (DHS) is seeking to improve access to Masters and Doctoral degree level public health training for Aboriginal people by the provision of scholarships. It is anticipated the scholarships will result in:

• an increase in the number of Aboriginal people recruited to, and graduating from Masters and Doctoral degree level public health courses;
• increased involvement of Aboriginal people and communities in research problem identification, design, implementation and management; and
• a strengthened evidence framework within Aboriginal health services based on the uptake of research findings.

Masters/Doctoral Degree Scholarships will assist eligible students undertaking a Masters or Doctoral program that has a major public health focus. DHS has been offering Masters Level Scholarships since July 2002. From July 2004 the postgraduate scholarship program has been expanded to encourage applications from Aboriginal Australians to undertake studies at a Victorian university leading to a doctorate in a public health related discipline.

The Department will be offering a limited number of Masters/Doctoral Scholarships for 2008.

Student Eligibility

To be eligible applicants must meet the following requirements:
1. be of Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent; and
2. identify as an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and
3. be accepted as such by the community in which he/she lives or has lived; and
4. reside in Victoria or will live in Victoria upon completion of their course.

Eligible Courses of Study

Students must be enrolled in a Masters level coursework program or Doctoral program that has a major focus on public health issues e.g. Masters of Public Health, Masters in Health Services Research or Social Health, or other recognised course.

To be eligible, Masters/Doctoral degree study programs must develop skills in:
• research project planning, management, and evaluation;
• research design (qualitative and quantitative);
• evidence based practice and its implementation;
• research policy and project development.

Applications and requests for overseas, interstate and distance education study will not be considered.
Scholarship Entitlements
A limited number of scholarships are offered each year for eligible applicants. A Scholarship currently provides a maximum living allowance of $25,470 gross per year paid on a fortnightly basis. Scholarship holders are responsible for all other costs and fees associated with their course of study.

Masters Degree Scholarships
A Masters degree will normally be completed in 18 months of full-time study. Students undertaking the maximum study load of 4 subjects per semester (or equivalent credit points) will receive a fortnightly scholarship payment of $979.62. Scholarships will be paid on a pro rata basis with fortnightly payments of $734.72 for students undertaking 3 subjects, and $489.81 for those studying 2 subjects. Masters degree scholarship holders must undertake a minimum of 2 subjects (or equivalent credit points) each semester.

Doctoral Degree Scholarships
A Doctoral degree will normally be completed in 3 years of full-time study. For studies towards a doctorate, the maximum scholarship available will be $25,470 per annum. In addition, DHS will contribute an allowance of $3000 to cover conference travel and registration, professional development and other costs associated with the study program, including the production of a thesis. The scholarship and the allowance will be administered by the enrolling University under an agreement between the student, DHS and the University.

Eligibility criteria will remain the same. Scholarships will be paid on a pro rata basis with fortnightly payments of $979.62 for students undertaking a full-time study load, and $489.81 for those undertaking a part-time study load. Definitions of 'full-time' and 'part-time' study loads that apply at the Approved Institution shall apply. The maximum period a scholarship may be payable to a full-time student is three years. For part-time doctoral students, scholarships may be paid for no more than six years.

Scholarship payments:
- will not be approved until the Scholarship holder is accepted into the course of study as detailed in their application and confirmation has been received from the university;
- will not commence until two weeks after the Scholarship holder begins their course of study; and
- will continue until the end of the approved course of study, subject to satisfactory progress.

Application Form
Applicants must complete the Application Form, (including Attachment A – Community Reference and Attachment B – Academic Reference) available from the website: http://www.health.vic.gov.au/researchprograms/ or from the Scholarship Contact Officer on 9096 0351.

Doctoral Degree Scholarship applicants must also complete Appendix 1 - Additional Information required for Doctoral Scholarship Applications.

The Application Form and all supporting documentation must be received by DHS by the closing date.

Interviews
Based on the information provided in the Application Form, eligible applicants will be invited to discuss their applications with the Department selection panel. The selection panel will assess eligible applicants against the selection criteria.
Selection Criteria
Scholarships will be awarded to eligible applicants on the basis of merit, with consideration in part given to:

- the relevance of the proposed course to the Department’s priorities;
- the applicant’s involvement with, and connection to, the Aboriginal community;
- evidence of professional commitment to the health of the Aboriginal community and assessed potential to contribute to evidence based practice in the future;
- past academic results and assessed ability to complete the course; and
- referee reports.

Scholarship Recipient Requirements
Masters/Doctoral Degree Scholarship holders will be required to:

- perform to a satisfactory academic standard;
- provide proof of enrolment at the commencement of each semester;
- provide proof of satisfactory progress at the end of each semester to the Department;
- provide the Department with information on progress;
- provide the DHS Contact Officer, in writing and within seven days, details of any change to workload or contact details i.e. address and telephone numbers; and
- sign a formal Agreement, confirming acceptance of the terms and conditions, for the duration of the Scholarship.

Paid Employment
Paid work must not interfere with the Recipient’s study program. Recipients are permitted to undertake a strictly limited amount of paid employment throughout the Academic Year depending on the level of funding support provided:

- Recipients undertaking 3 or 4 subjects per semester (or equivalent credit points) for the Masters Scholarship must undertake no more than 16 hours paid work, on average, in any one week; and
- Recipients undertaking 2 subjects per semester (or equivalent credit points) for the Masters Scholarship must undertake no more than 24 hours paid work per week.

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that paid work will not jeopardise the completion of the Approved Course of Study in the time allowed and that the Approved Institution is satisfied with the employment arrangements.

‘Academic Year’ is defined as any period during the year in which the Recipient is undertaking any subject in the Approved Course of Study, but does not include any mid-semester break.

Doctoral degree scholarship holders must adhere to the working hours guidelines and/or regulations in place at their institution.

Additional Scholarship Assistance
Scholarship holders are required to finish the proposed course of study within the required time-frame. Failure to achieve satisfactory academic results will result in review of the Scholarship with the possibility of its cancellation. In any event, additional assistance to complete an extended course of study is unlikely to be approved.

Scholarship holders must not receive more than one scholarship for the intended course of study and must not undertake concurrent enrolment in another course, unless approval is granted from the appropriate university and the Department of Human Services.

Taxation
At the commencement of this Agreement the Australian Taxation Office advised that Scholarships DHS awards to eligible Aboriginal students are income tax exempt pursuant to section 51-10, item 2.1A, of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997. It is the responsibility of
Scholarship holders to advise the Taxation Office of their income details, including the Scholarship allowance.

ABSTUDY

It is the responsibility of Scholarship holders in receipt of Commonwealth allowances, including ABSTUDY/AUSTUDY, to advise Centrelink of their Scholarship allowance. Ongoing Commonwealth allowances and benefits available to Scholarship holders are for Centrelink to assess.

Privacy Statement

Consistent with Victorian Government policy and legislation, the Department of Human Services endorses fair information handling practices. Any information provided, including identification of individuals, will be used for the purposes permitted under the Information Privacy Act 2000, including but not limited to the purpose for which the information is collected.

Relevant information may be provided to the Approved Institution for the purpose of monitoring the Applicant’s satisfactory progress.

If Applicants do not provide the information requested within the application form, DHS may not be able to process the application.

Access to the personal information held by the Department about an individual may be provided to that individual on request in accordance with Information Privacy Principle 6. The Department of Human Services Privacy Policy can be viewed at http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/privacy/ If you would like more information about the Privacy Policy contact the Department of Human Services by email: privacy@dhs.vic.gov.au

Applications Forms are available at:

For further information about the Masters/Doctoral Degree Scholarship in Public Health please contact:

Lee Barclay
Telephone: 9096 0351, Email: Lee.Barclay@dhs.vic.gov.au

Signed applications must be on the official Scholarship Application Forms with all references attached and submitted to:

Lee Barclay
Office of the Director, Public Health Branch
Department of Human Services
50 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE 3000

Application closing date is 11 July 2008

Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted