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| Making it free to study Nursing and MidwiferyInformation brief – Scholarships for postgraduate nurses and midwives in specialty areas September 2022 **OFFICIAL** |

## Background

Victoria’s healthcare workforce faces long-standing pressures that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Amid increased demand for care, ongoing action is needed to address issues regarding the supply and distribution of the healthcare workforce. The Victorian Government is implementing a range of initiatives to support Victoria’s healthcare workforce, including free university and specialist training for thousands of nurses and midwives.

This initiative aims to boost the health system, with more than 17,000 nurses and midwives recruited and trained as part of a massive hiring and upskilling initiative – building an army of home-grown health workers to care for Victorians.

## Funding purpose

Nursing and midwifery postgraduate scholarships are provided to Victorian public health services to support registered nurses and midwives to undertake postgraduate study, in areas of clinical practice where there is an identified workforce need.

This funding will increase both the number and value of scholarships provided to nurses and midwives undertaking postgraduate studies. This will contribute to building capability in the nursing and midwifery workforce, particularly in intensive care, emergency, oncology, midwifery and other areas of high need.

**Given the changes to the postgraduate scholarships, new funding arrangements will be in place for 2022-23. The department will provide further information to health services directly in September 2022.**

## Funding principles

Under this initiative:

* All nurses and midwives employed in Victorian public health services and undertaking an eligible clinical postgraduate course (commencing in 2023) will be eligible for a scholarship
* The value of this scholarship will cover the course fees for the postgraduate qualification
* As per current scholarship arrangements, the nurse or midwife must agree to complete the course and work in the target area of practice in the Victorian public health sector for a period of two years at 0.8 EFT (or pro-rata equivalent) post course completion.

## Eligibility criteria

**Eligible applicants** must fulfill all of the following requirements:

* be a currently registered nurse or midwife with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
* be an Australian citizen, a New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand), an Australian permanent resident or an Australian permanent humanitarian visa holder.
* be employed in an eligible Victorian public health service
* be enrolled in Semester 1 2023 (or as appropriate, for subsequent funding rounds), in an eligible postgraduate program that leads to a tertiary qualification in one of the clinical practice areas identified by the health service/department
* not already hold an award qualification in the practice area for which the scholarship is sought
* have not previously received a department scholarship to study in the practice area for which the scholarship is sought.

In addition, eligible applicants must:

* agree to complete the course and then work in the target area of practice (for which the scholarship was awarded) in the Victorian public health sector for a period of two years at a minimum of 0.8 EFT, or pro-rata equivalent, following completion of the postgraduate course
* only use the scholarship funds for the purpose of nursing/midwifery postgraduate study deemed relevant to address an area of identified workforce need, as determined by the health service.

**Eligible postgraduate courses** must:

* be delivered by a university or an accredited higher education provider
* lead to an award qualification at postgraduate level (including Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma or Master(s))
* include clinical nursing practice related to the area of study.

## How do I apply?

* Applications for this funding will be co-ordinated through health services directly.
* From November to March:
	+ Health services recruit participants in their nursing and midwifery postgraduate programs
	+ Health services promote the new program guidelines and encourage participation.
* Following April – June:
	+ Health services report postgraduate activity to the department, funding allocations will be confirmed and scholarships provided to program participants.

## Priorities for scholarships

Health services are accountable for determining the areas of practice in which they wish to provide scholarships. Health services should use their scholarships to address local workforce shortages, projected demand in target areas of clinical practice, or to align with workforce requirements for service expansion currently occurring or planned.

Priority clinical areas for 2022-23 identified by the department include:

* Midwifery
* Aged Care
* Intensive care
* Emergency
* Perioperative
* Oncology

Other relevant clinical specialties including paediatrics, renal and neurology will also be considered. Scholarships for studies in mental health are offered separately and are not included in this initiative.

## Information for recipients of the postgraduate scholarships

Recipients are responsible for enrolling and completing the qualification by the due date and for any study costs incurred beyond the value of the scholarship.

If the recipient needs to defer or withdraw from their studies, they must notify the employer within one week of the change in study arrangements.

If the recipient plans to recommence study in the same year, they do not need to return the funds.

If the scholarship recipient does not return to study in the same year, the scholarship funds will be recalled.

The department is not required to withhold tax (PAYG) from grants paid. Recipients should be aware that:

* they may be liable to pay tax on their scholarship. For more information refer recipients to the calculator on the Australian Taxation Office website <<https://www.ato.gov.au/Calculators-and-tools/Is-my-scholarship-taxable/>>.
* they may be entitled to claim a tax deduction for self-education expenses – for more information please refer recipients to the Australian Taxation Office site at the following link <<https://www.ato.gov.au/individuals/income-and-deductions/deductions-you-can-claim/self-education-expenses>>.

The department strongly recommends that recipients seek independent tax advice in respect to their scholarship payment.