

Postgraduate Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program Guidelines 2018-19

Individual scholarship applicants need to read the guidelines and submit their application to their health service (not to the department).

Note these guidelines include information for both health services and individual applications.

Key dates

Date	Activity
Friday 26 October 2018	Letters of scholarship allocation sent to health services
Friday 9 November 2018	Health services acceptance forms due
Friday 9 November 2018	Individual application process commences – via the health services
Friday 8 March 2019	Reconciliation form to be sent to health service or regional fund holder
Friday 29 March 2019	Funds to be provided to scholarship recipients
Friday 5 April 2019	Reconciliation form from health service or regional fund holder due

Program overview

The Department of Health and Human Services (the department), offers postgraduate scholarships for registered nurses and midwives working in the Victorian public health sector, to undertake postgraduate study in areas of clinical practice where there is an identified workforce need.

Scholarship funding is allocated annually to eligible public health services (or for rural health services, to fund holders within the five rural health regions), and calculated based on nursing/midwifery full-time equivalent.

In 2018-19, the Postgraduate Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program will be open to registered nurses commencing a master's program (or other appropriate units/modules at master's level) that will lead to endorsement as a Nurse Practitioner (NP). Health Services will be required to submit additional information that demonstrates: commitment to provide the applicant with supervision and mentorship, appropriate governance arrangements and employment in an advanced practice role within an established NP model of care or one that is in development.

For 2018-19, the number and value of the individual scholarships will be set by the health services/rural consortia, within the departments allocated funding. All scholarship allocations will need to be based on fair and equitable allocation and distribution.

Health services have the flexibility to choose the individual scholarship amounts to be granted within these caveats;

- Scholarship amount offered should be greater than \$2,000 and up to \$4,000 for registered nurses or registered midwives commencing a graduate certificate or graduate diploma.

- Scholarship amounts up to \$8000 may be awarded to registered nurses commencing a master's program leading to endorsement as an NP.
- Individual scholarships within qualification group must be of the same value.

The rationale for the number and value of allocated scholarships will be required in the reconciliation form, due in April 2019.

Rural Midwifery supplementary scholarships remain an exception and will continue to be managed under separate guidelines.

Health services and the regional consortia fund holders are responsible for selection of scholarship recipients, disbursement of funds and monitoring the outcomes of the scholarship program, in accordance with these guidelines. **Health services are obligated to disseminate information regarding scholarships and the application process to all hospitals within their consortia region.**

The scholarship program assumes a shared-cost model where the individual, the department and the employer contribute to the cost of undertaking postgraduate study. The department provides scholarships to assist nurses and midwives with the cost associated with further education.

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 that are currently occurring or planned.

In 2018 NP scholarships were halved to support unprecedented demand. In 2018/19 recipients eligible for a second 'half' scholarship will be managed in a separate (one-off) process. These recipients' employing organisations will be provided with a list of applicants who meet this criteria as well as the amount they remain eligible to receive.

Eligibility

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 1988*, are eligible for allocation.

Scholarship recipients eligibility

Eligible applicants must fulfill all of the following requirements:

- be a currently registered nurse or midwife with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
- hold Australian citizenship, permanent residency or New Zealand citizenship
- be employed in an eligible Victorian public health service
- be enrolled in semester one, 2019 in an eligible postgraduate program that leads to a tertiary qualification in one of the practice areas identified by the health service/department region **or** a master's program (or other appropriate units/modules at masters level) that leads to endorsement as a Nurse Practitioner (NP).
- 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
- agree to complete the course and then work in the area of study for the equivalent of one year full-time
- must 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.

Course eligibility

Eligible postgraduate courses must:

- be delivered by a university or an accredited higher education provider
- lead to an award qualification at postgraduate level (including postgraduate certificate, diploma level or Masters)
- include clinical nursing practice related to area of study.

Determining local priorities for scholarships

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

- the priority areas are actions of the Statewide design, service and infrastructure plan for Victoria's health system 2017-2037
- the health service's Statement of Priorities: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/funding-performance-accountability/statement-of-priorities>
- the Victorian health policy and funding guidelines 2018-19 <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/policy-and-funding-guidelines>
- current capital projects <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/planning-infrastructure/sustainability/capital-works>
- organisational and local area workforce plans (where these exist) or areas of local skilled workforce shortage.
- An identified service gap that could be addressed by a NP model of care in the applicant's area of practice and a commitment to employ the applicant in an appropriately supported advanced practice role. (A checklist provided in the application template will assist your health service to determine its readiness to support the applicant).

Health service quota allocation, acceptance and reconciliation

Health services/regions will receive their annual scholarship allocation by **Friday 26 October 2018**. Health services are required to accept these scholarships by **Friday 9 November 2018**, by submitting the signed acceptance form to your education department or Executive Nursing/Midwifery Officer responsible for your organisations scholarship program.

By accepting the scholarship offers, the health service is agreeing to administer the scholarships in accordance with these guidelines.

The department will reallocate scholarships that are declined by health services.

A copy of the scholarship reconciliation form must be received by the Workforce, Funding, Performance and Review team by **Friday 5 April 2019**.

Guiding principles for health services

Health services/regions that accept an allocation are responsible for advertising the scholarships, administering the applications, selecting recipients, monitoring scholarship use and reporting to the department.

The rationale for the number and value of allocated scholarships will be required in the reconciliation form, due in April 2019.

Application and selection process

As part of the application and selection process health services must:

- establish a local “scholarship panel”
- clearly and widely advertise the scholarships, local processes and associated documents
- ensure processes and selection criteria observe the principles of equity, fairness and transparency
- ensure administration processes for scholarship allocation are endorsed by the Executive Nursing/Midwifery Officer responsible for your organisations scholarship program.
- ensure application, selection and notification processes occur in a timely manner to ensure recipients have certainty about the outcome in time to commence their 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 required
- decide on the number and value of scholarships to be allocated this year.

The selection of successful applicants will involve:

- assessment of applications for eligibility
- addressing nursing and midwifery workforce planning identified by supply and demand within a local area
- 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
- any additional selection criteria as required by the health service/region that meet due process requirements.

An application template, containing the minimum requirements, will be sent to the Director of Nursing and Midwifery and regional fund holders. Health services may customise this template for local requirements, but **must not** change the minimum requirements.

Successful applicants

Health services are to notify all successful applicants in writing, providing them with any additional information about specific conditions of the scholarship (refer to disbursement and conditions below). Health services may include information about other support they will provide 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:

- a signed letter accepting the scholarship and scholarship conditions
- evidence of Australian citizenship or permanent residency or New Zealand citizenship (Applicants from New Zealand must submit a copy of their current passport)
- a copy of current nursing or midwifery registration front and back - noting any restrictions on registration
- confirmation of course enrolment for 2019
- 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 one 2019. Students with Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP) places need only provide evidence of enrolment
- evidence of course – enrolled units, subjects or courses for semester one 2019 (and semester two 2019 where applicable)
- enrolment status – part time/full time course load

- type of place – CSP – Higher Education Loan Program or full-fee paying.

Disbursement and conditions

Payments to health services/fund holders

Funds to health services/fund holders will be paid via normal department budget payment processes once the department has received all health service acceptance documentation.

Payments to recipients

- Scholarship recipients should be paid their **full scholarship amount** once their acceptance documentation is received by the health service. Administrative costs **must not** be levied against the scholarship funds by health services or regional fund holders.

The scholarship payment should be made directly to the recipient. It is expected that recipients will use scholarship funds for the purposes 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 between the health service and the recipient). All scholarships must be paid in full to the successful candidates by **29 March 2019**.

Taxable Income

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

- may be liable to pay tax on their scholarship. For more information refer recipients to the calculator on the ATO website: <https://www.ato.gov.au/Calculators-and-tools/Is-my-scholarship-taxable/>.
- may be entitled to claim a tax deduction for self-education expenses – for more information please refer recipients to the ATO 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 payments.

Repayment of unallocated scholarship funds

If a recipient defers or withdraws from their course they are required to repay their scholarship funds to the health service/regional fund holder. Redistribution of returned funds will need to be negotiated with the department, and health services must agree to reconcile this information. Options for redistribution of funds include allocating the scholarship to the next appropriate candidate for the same year or to a candidate commencing in the following financial year.

If a health service continues to have ongoing numbers of scholarship recipients deferring or withdrawing from their courses, a meeting will be held with the department to discuss selection criteria and allocation of scholarship processes.

See scholarship recipient acceptance rules below for further information.

Scholarship recipient acceptance rules

Health services must advise scholarship recipients in writing that by accepting a scholarship offer, they are accepting the following minimum mandated scholarship conditions:

- **Continued employment**

The scholarship recipient must be employed within the target area of practice in the Victorian public health sector for which the scholarship has been awarded for a period of one year full-time, or pro-rata equivalent, following completion of the postgraduate course.

- **Participation in data collection**

To assist in workforce planning, it is a condition that scholarship recipients provide their contact and employment details to the health service for a period of five 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. If the recipient plans to recommence study in the next 12 months, they will not be required to return the funds. If the recipient does not return to study within this time the scholarship funds will be recalled. The amount to be repaid will be based on the 'Withdrawal from course' rules (see below). 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. Total funds are required to be returned if completion of semester one is unsuccessful. If the candidate withdraws post successful completion of semester one, they will be required to return half of the scholarship funds.

- **Declined scholarships**

Declined scholarships may be offered to the next most suitable candidate. If there are no other candidates please notify the department.

Submissions and reporting

The department publicly reports the value of scholarship funding and the number of recipients as part of its overall investment in the health workforce, to the Department of Treasury and Finance and other relevant agencies. Additionally, programs such as these 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 form by **5 April 2019**
- maintenance and storage of thorough and clear records.

For information regarding application forms and process times, individual scholarship applicants need to contact their health service's education department or Director of Nursing and Midwifery/Chief Nursing Officer.

Health Services wishing to support NP students should consider this recommended reading:

- Public Record Office Victoria "Writing a Business Case": <http://prov.vic.gov.au/>
- A toolkit for the implementation of the Nurse Practitioner role developed by the Government of South Australia: <http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/>
- Western Australian Nurse Practitioner Business Case and Clinical Protocol
Templates: <http://www.nursing.health.wa.gov.au/>

Further information

Alana Smythe, Workforce, Funding, Performance and Review

Phone: 9096 7528; Email: vicworkforce@dhhs.vic.gov.au

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery>

or for Nurse Practitioner related enquiries:

Dan Schifftan, Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine Workforce

Phone: 9096 8227; Email: nmw@dhhs.vic.gov.au