

# Making it free to study Nursing and Midwifery

Funding guidelines for health services – Scholarships for postgraduate nurses and midwives in specialty areas 2022-23

October 2022

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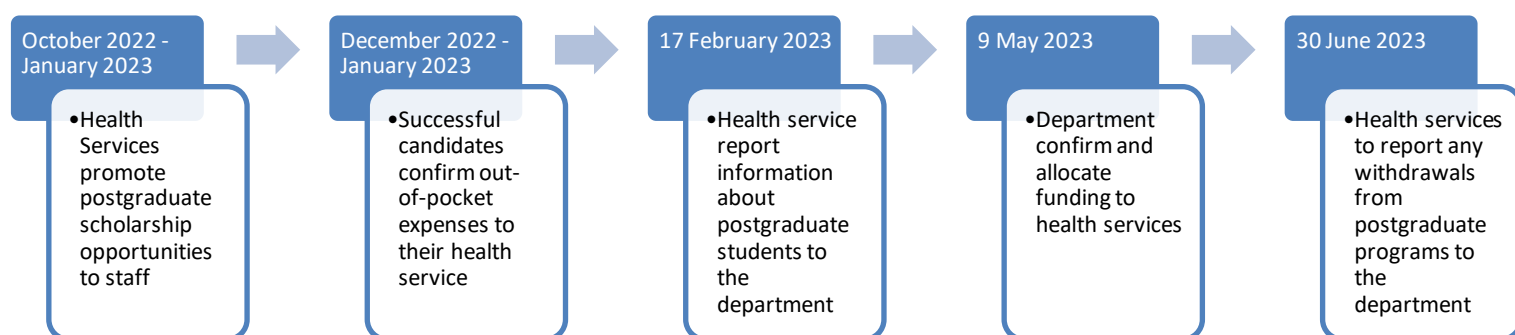
## Background

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 Department of Health (the department) 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.

## Overview

Scholarships are available to nurses and midwives undertaking eligible postgraduate studies in 2023. Health services will be responsible for promoting postgraduate scholarship opportunities to their nursing and midwifery staff. A summary of key dates for the allocation process is provided below. Further detailed information is provided in this guidance document.



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## Funding purpose

Nursing and midwifery postgraduate scholarships are provided to 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 in 2023 and 2024. 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.

**Previously, funding under the nursing and midwifery postgraduate scholarship program was allocated to health services on a proportional basis. Given the uplift in investment through this initiative, new funding arrangements will be in place in 2022-23, replacing previous funding arrangements.<sup>1</sup>**

## Funding principles

Nurses and midwives employed in Victorian public health services and undertaking an eligible clinical postgraduate course (commencing in 2023 or 2024) will be eligible for a scholarship.

The value of this scholarship will cover the out-of-pocket course fees for the postgraduate qualification.

Funding will be distributed to each health service (rather than consortia in regional and rural areas), with the exception of the rural midwifery postgraduate scholarships. For more details about the rural midwifery postgraduate scholarships, refer to the [Training and Development Funding Guidelines](#).

## Eligibility criteria

**Eligible applicants** must fulfill and agree to 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 2023 in an eligible postgraduate program that leads to a tertiary qualification in one of the priority clinical practice areas identified by the health service or 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
- agree to complete the course and then work in the target area of practice (for which the scholarship was awarded) in a Victorian public health service for a period of one year at a minimum of 0.8 EFT, or pro-rata equivalent, following completion of the postgraduate course

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<sup>1</sup> For details of funding arrangements for the Nursing and Midwifery Postgraduate Scholarship program in 2021-22, refer to the Training and Development Guidelines 2021-22, available here: [Training and Development Funding \(health.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.health.vic.gov.au).

- 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
- have a structured clinical component (within the speciality area and as evidenced through the university/health service course curriculum) of at least an average of 24 hours a week
- has dedicated clinical educator and/or clinical support staff, employed by the health service
- 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.

## 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 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
- 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.

It should be noted that the State Government has supported 400 scholarships statewide as part of the Pandemic Repair Plan/Surgery Recovery and Reform Strategy to support nurses undertake postgraduate qualifications in perioperative nursing.

Decisions must be aligned with the service/growth priorities above and/or referred to in:

- the priority areas and actions of the [Statewide design, service and infrastructure plan for Victoria's health system 2017-2037](#)
- Pandemic Repair Plan
- the health service's [Statement of Priorities](#)
- the 2022-23 [Victorian health policy and funding guidelines](#)
- The 2022-23 training and development funding program [guidelines](#)
- [current capital projects](#)
- organisational and local area workforce plans (where these exist), or areas of local skilled workforce shortage.

## Key dates and reporting requirements 2023

Given scholarships will be available for all participants in nursing and midwifery postgraduate programs, the department will introduce a new allocation process for postgraduate scholarship funding in 2022-23.

In 2022, health services will recruit or allocate nurses and midwives to their 2023 postgraduate programs as per their usual practices. Health services can inform all postgraduate program participants that they will receive a scholarship for their postgraduate courses, to the value of their out-of-pocket course fees.

Health services are required to submit details to the department about the number of scholarships required, the value of each (depending on the out of pocket fee for each program participant) and the area of practice. The department will then provide this funding to the health service, which will in turn provide the scholarship to program participants.

The table below sets out the relevant steps, timeline and reporting requirements for the first funding round (April 2023).

| Date                         | Process  |
|------------------------------|--|
| October 2022                 | The department will provide information to health services about the nursing and midwifery postgraduate scholarship program in 2022-23 (including an updated application form for scholarship recipients).   |
| October 2022 to January 2023 | Health services promote the new scholarship opportunities and recruit participants to their nursing and midwifery postgraduate programs.<br><br>Students confirm their out-of-pocket course fees for their course.   |
| 17 February 2023             | Health services report information about the program to the department, including for each scholarship: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• discipline/area of study</li><li>• course and education provider</li><li>• out-of-pocket course fees</li><li>• postgraduate learner EFT.</li></ul> |
| 9 May 2023                   | The department will confirm funding allocations for each health service.<br><br>Health services will receive funding full funding allocation and must then provide scholarships to program participants.   |
| 30 June 2023                 | Health services report any withdrawals from postgraduate programs to the department.   |

## Funding conditions

The value of the scholarship provided to each eligible nurse and midwife will depend on the participant's out-of-pocket costs for course fees. Health services will need to provide information about the course and out-of-pocket course fees to the department to receive their funding allocation.

Scholarship recipients must commence their postgraduate course in the 2023 calendar year. This initiative will not provide additional funding for postgraduate activities undertaken in 2022 or earlier.

Health services are responsible for dissemination of information regarding scholarships and the application process, selection of scholarship recipients, disbursement of funds and monitoring the outcomes of the scholarship program, in accordance with these guidelines.

By accepting this funding, a health service agrees to:

- maintain corporate knowledge and record-keeping of program details, including appropriate handover should coordinating staff leave
- adhere to reporting timelines and respond to departmental requests for reporting accurately and in a timely manner
- adhere to the latest Department of Health Policy and Funding Guidelines – see this website for details [Policy and funding guidelines for health services | health.vic.gov.au](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/policy-and-funding-guidelines-for-health-services).

Funds will be disbursed through the department's budget payment system, in line with current finance arrangements and policy. Where eligibility criteria or funding conditions are not met, the funding may be adjusted or recalled.

## 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 grant 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 grant. 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 grant payment.

## Contact

Any queries can be directed to: [nmw@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:nmw@health.vic.gov.au).

*Disclaimer: the Department of Health reserves the right to alter this funding guidance/alter the allocations, eligibility and conditions in future funding rounds*