

Funding Guidelines – Undergraduate (Entry-To-Practice) Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program

Making it Free to Study Nursing and Midwifery

April 2023

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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 Victorian Government is implementing a range of initiatives to support Victoria's healthcare workforce.

The *Making It Free to Study Nursing and Midwifery* 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 package – building an army of home-grown health workers to care for Victorians.

Funding purpose

The Undergraduate (entry-to-practice) Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program (Scholarship Program) is part of the Making It Free to Study Nursing and Midwifery initiative and is designed to remove financial disincentives for eligible students who commence an entry-to-practice nursing and midwifery qualification program of study in 2023 and 2024 and to encourage recently graduated registered nurses and midwives to work in a Victorian Public Health Service.

How the program works

Approximately 10,000 scholarships are available to eligible students studying to obtain their first qualification that leads to registration as a registered nurse or midwife.

Nursing and midwifery students commencing eligible programs of study in 2023 or 2024 may receive up to a maximum of \$9,000 under the University Component of the scholarship depending on their eligibility.

Eligible recipients may then be eligible to receive a further \$7,500 if they work as a registered nurse and/or midwife for a required period in a Victorian Public Health Service following graduation.

Eligible recipients may claim the University Component payments annually over two or three years commencing from 2023 or 2024.

This program is funded through the Victorian Government Department of Health and is administered on behalf the State of Victoria by its departments, including the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions and the Department of Government Services.

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1. Available funding

1.1. The Scholarships will be provided to eligible recipients in two components:

University Component

Eligible students may receive up to a maximum of \$9,000 while they undertake their undergraduate studies. Recipients may receive \$3,000 per annum for three years. For example:

- if enrolled in a three- or four-year degree program, you may be eligible to be paid up to \$9,000
- if enrolled in a two-year entry-to-practice program of study (such as graduate-entry courses) you may be eligible to be paid up to \$6,000.

Eligible students studying part-time in a three- or four-year degree program are only eligible to receive \$3,000 each year for the first three years of study up to a maximum of \$9,000.

Eligible students studying part-time in a two-year degree are only eligible to receive \$3,000 each year for the first two years of study up to a maximum of \$6,000.

Health Service Component

Eligible nursing and midwifery graduates may receive a further \$7,500 if employed in a Victorian Public Health Service as a registered nurse or midwife within 12 months of study completion or by 30 June 2029, whichever is earliest.

The total maximum value of a scholarship (if eligible for both components) is \$16,500. An eligible student/public health service employee can only receive one scholarship.

2. Program dates

Applications open	April 2023 (for four weeks)
Applications open	September 2023 (for four weeks)
Applications open	April 2024 (for four weeks)
University Component payments	from December 2023
Health Service Component payments	from December 2026

3. Eligibility

3.1. To be eligible for the University Component you must be:

- a domestic student. For the purposes of this scholarship, this is defined as:
 - an Australian citizen
 - a New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand)
 - an Australian permanent resident
 - an Australian permanent humanitarian visa holder and
- enrolled in a course:
 - that is a program of study approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia as listed on the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) website to obtain a first qualification that leads to general registration as a registered nurse and/or midwife and
 - offered by an education provider located in Victoria or a border community and be attending the course at an eligible campus for the purpose of undertaking the approved program of study (see Appendix 2 for a list of eligible providers and border community campuses) and
 - with the first year of study commencing in 2023 or 2024 and be enrolled as at the Semester 1 census date for 2024 and remain enrolled for a minimum 0.5 EFTSL (Equivalent Full-Time Student Load)
- a current Victorian resident or resident of a border community for the duration of your approved nursing or midwifery program of study (see Appendix 3) and

in your application, you must:

- acknowledge that the purpose of the Scholarship is to encourage newly graduated registered nurses and midwives to join a Victorian Public Health Service and
- confirm that you will make reasonable efforts to complete your degree and work in a Victorian Public Health Service as registered nurse and/or midwife and
- agree to undertake your clinical placements within Victoria and/or a border community (see Appendix 2).

3.2. Further eligibility considerations:

- Students enrolled in a two-year entry-to-practice program of study (for example, graduate-entry courses) that lead to a first general registration as a registered nurse or midwife commencing between 1 January 2023 and the Semester 1 2024 census date are eligible.
- Students enrolled in a double degree or honours degree that includes nursing and midwifery may be eligible if they meet all other eligibility criteria and if eligible, the scholarship will only be paid for the first three years of study.
- Students undertaking an eligible program of study that allows both online and on-campus course delivery must have an on-campus component and be attending an eligible campus to receive a scholarship.
- Students who receive other academic scholarships are eligible to apply to this Scholarship Program, however students should be aware that receipt of this scholarship may impact eligibility for other academic scholarships. Individuals are responsible for ensuring they meet scholarship eligibility requirements for the other scholarships they receive.

4. Ineligible applicants

4.1. The following students are ineligible for this scholarship:

- Students who commenced a Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia-approved program of study (as listed on the AHPRA website) for general registration as a registered nurse or midwife at any institution before 2023 are not eligible. This includes individuals who have partially completed studies.
- Students who enrol in an undergraduate (entry-to-practice) nursing and midwifery program of study after March 2024 will not be eligible.
- Students enrolled in a transition degree, for example, courses that enable enrolled nurses to transition from 'diploma to degree' to become a registered nurse are not eligible.
- Students who receive other scholarships under the Making It Free to Study Nursing and Midwifery initiative are not eligible for the Scholarship Program.
- Students who are enrolled in an online-only program of study are not eligible.

5. Eligibility to claim payments

5.1. Following a successful outcome of your application for the University Component of the scholarship, the initial payment will be made from December of that year (either 2023 or 2024).

Your claims for subsequent payments must be submitted annually during your continued enrolment in an eligible program of study.

5.2. To make a claim for each annual payment for the University Component, you must maintain your eligibility and remain enrolled for the year of study.

You must, on request, provide updated information to confirm your eligibility for further payments, including proof of enrolment and your EFTSL for the current year and confirmation of address. We may ask you for proof that you have undertaken your clinical placements in Victoria or a border community.

5.3. If you withdraw from the program of study following the census date or take a leave of absence in accordance with your university's policy, you cannot claim a payment for that year.

5.4. All University Component scholarship payments must be claimed by the end of 2028. No further payments will be made after this point.

University Component payments must be claimed within:

- Four years for a three- or four-year degree including the year of applying (2023 or 2024)
- Three years for a two-year degree including the year of applying (2023 or 2024).

You should be aware that the time it takes to complete your course (e.g., with an honours year or part-time or an approved university leave of absence) may impact upon the time it takes to gain employment in a Victorian Public Health Service and therefore may impact your eligibility for the Health Service Component of the Scholarship.

5.5. In special circumstances, assessed on a case-by-case basis, consideration may be given to scholarship recipients who have had to take a leave of absence from their course beyond the times specified above. The scholarship recipient will be responsible for

providing sufficient reasons or evidence to be considered as a special case. In such cases, the decision of the Victorian Government on special circumstances will be final.

- 5.6. You may transfer from one approved program of study to another and remain eligible for further payments. However, the maximum amount of the University Component of the scholarship cannot exceed \$9,000.
- 5.7. If successful, you will be notified when your next claim for payment may be submitted.

6. Eligibility for health service component

- 6.1. To be eligible for the additional \$7,500 Health Service Component payment, you must:
 - have been a recipient of the full University Component of the scholarship for your program of study and
 - be employed as a registered nurse and/or midwife at a Victorian Public Health Service within 12 months of study completion or by 30 June 2029, whichever is earliest and
 - remain employed as a registered nurse or midwife in a Victorian Public Health Service for at least two years and have maintained an average of 0.8 FTE hours across the two years, from the date of employment.
- 6.2. The Health Service Component payment will be paid towards the conclusion of the two years of employment. You will be notified when you may be eligible to claim the Health Service Component of the scholarship.

7. How to apply

- 7.1. You must apply online at business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/undergraduate-nursing-and-midwifery-scholarships-program. Applications must be submitted by the Scholarship Program closure dates published on the program's website.
- 7.2. You must provide the following information and documentation in support of your application:
 - name of your educational institution, program of study and campus where enrolled
 - student ID number from your educational institution
 - Unique Student Identifier number
 - EFTSL status
 - proof of enrolment provided by an eligible institution or for an eligible program of study for either 2023 or 2024 (ideally in PDF or JPG)
 - your current Victorian or eligible border community residential address (i.e., where you are living while you study)
 - Australian bank account details for where you would like the scholarship paid.
- 7.3. Proof of Identity

The eligible student must be the person who applies for the scholarship and must provide information from one of the following current proof of identity documents on the application form:

 - Australian passport or New Zealand passport
 - Medicare card

- Victorian driver licence or learner permit
- foreign passport for those issued with an Australian visa.

If proof of identity is unable to be confirmed, the applicant will receive a follow-up email with instructions on how to provide their proof of identity details.

7.4. Scholarship Agreement with the Victorian Government

As part of the application process, you must accept and agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of the Scholarship Program as stated in the application form and these guidelines. By completing the application form, you are making an offer to the Victorian Government and will be bound by the terms of the offer if accepted by the Victorian Government.

If your application is successful, you will be notified via email. This will form an agreement between you and Victorian Government on the terms contained in the application, these guidelines and the conditions of grant in the application form on delivery of the successful email notification.

8. Assessment of eligibility and claims

- 8.1. You will be required to confirm you meet the eligibility criteria at the time of application and again when claiming further payments. Eligibility must also be met when the application or claim is assessed by the Victorian Government.
- 8.2. Applications and claims will be assessed using the information and evidence provided by the applicant. As part of this process, any information provided by an applicant may be shared and subject to verification by the eligible education providers, the Australian Government Department of Education and Department of Home Affairs, and Victorian Government departments including the Department of Health, Department of Government Services, Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions and any of the Victorian Public Health Services.
- 8.3. You may be requested to provide further information to assist in assessment of your application or claim. The Victorian Government reserves in its absolute discretion the right to refuse an application or claim where eligibility criteria are not met, or where the applicant does not or cannot provide sufficient information in the required timeframe to assess whether eligibility criteria have been met, or where a claim cannot be supported.

9. Terms and conditions

- 9.1. If you receive a scholarship, you are responsible for enrolling in and successfully completing the program of study in line with course requirements and in the timeframes specified to remain eligible for payments.
- 9.2. You are responsible for organising associated payments to your chosen education provider by the due date (including up-front payments or deferral by HECS-HELP/FEE-HELP loan) and for any study costs incurred beyond the value of the scholarship.
- 9.3. Receiving a scholarship does not guarantee registration as a nurse or midwife or employment as a registered nurse and/or midwife (including in a graduate program) within a Victorian Public Health Service after study completion. You are responsible for

looking for and arranging employment with a Victorian Public Health Service on completion of your studies.

- 9.4. If you do not obtain employment within a Victorian Public Health Service in accordance with the eligibility requirements for the Health Service Component of the scholarship, you will not be eligible to receive this payment.
- 9.5. If you enter into the Scholarship Agreement and do not comply with its terms and conditions, you may be required to refund any amount paid to you.
- 9.6. Scholarships are provided as financial support for students by contributing towards the costs incurred when undertaking study and/or clinical placements.
- 9.7. By entering into the Scholarship Agreement, you consent to the State of Victoria sharing information provided by you within the Victorian Government and between the Victorian Government and external parties for the purposes of validating enrolment and other eligibility requirements, including:
 - your education provider
 - the Australian Government Department of Education
 - the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs
 - Victorian Government departments including Department of Health, the Department of Government Services and Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
 - Victorian Public Health Services
- 9.8. Applications and claims may be subject to audit by the Victorian Government or its representatives for a period of up to three years following the completion of the Scholarship to determine whether the application and information provided during the term of the Scholarship Agreement was compliant.
- 9.9. The administering department may, at any time, remove an applicant from the application assessment process or terminate an agreement if, in the department's opinion, association with the applicant may bring the department, a minister or the Victorian Government into disrepute.
- 9.10. You are responsible for informing the Scholarship Program via email of changes to your circumstances, including:
 - changes to contact details, such as address, mobile number, email and bank account details
 - significant change to your enrolment, such as withdrawal, deferral or change of education provider.
- 9.11. Program surveys and evaluation
You must agree to participate in the Victorian Government's performance monitoring and evaluation of this Program by completing survey questions, which may be for a period of

up to seven years after applying to the Program. This information will be treated in accordance with the privacy statement detailed below.

9.12. Fraudulent claims

By submitting your application form, you are declaring that the information provided in the application form and supporting documentation is true, accurate and not misleading about a material fact.

If any information in the application or claims for payment is found to be false, misleading or fraudulent (as determined by the administering department in its discretion), the scholarship will be repayable on demand and the Victorian Government reserves the right to take further action, including referring the applicant to the relevant law enforcement agency. Providing inaccurate, untrue, or misleading information may result in an offence being committed and serious penalties may apply.

10. Privacy statement

- 10.1. Information you provide for this Program, that includes personal information, will be collected and used by the Victorian Government. The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) is a program administrator and collects your personal information for the purpose of assessing eligibility, to compare eligibility with other Making It Free to Study Nursing and Midwifery initiative programs, and to administer claims and payments.
- 10.2. By applying for a grant, applicants consent to the sharing of information as outlined in the Terms and Conditions. DJSIR as an administrator may contact you to clarify your submitted information, and for program review, reporting, monitoring, audit and evaluation purposes.
- 10.3. DJSIR will complete a range of eligibility assessments that may include data matching to clarify the accuracy and quality of information supplied by you. The data matching may occur on enrolment information and personal information provided in your application, your supporting evidence and any claim or payment forms.
- 10.4. For verification purposes, DJSIR will share your personal information with other agencies such as the Australian Government (Department of Education), State departments (Department of Health and Department of Government Services) and its agencies and Victorian Public Health Services. As part of the verification process, DJSIR may contact your education provider to confirm your enrolment and student status as noted in this Program guideline section 7 - How to apply.
- 10.5. If there is an intention to include personal information about a third party in the application, the applicant applying must ensure the third party is aware of and consents to the contents of this privacy statement.
- 10.6. As an administering department, DJSIR collects demographic information for economic reporting purposes on behalf of the Victorian Government. No personal information is used in reporting; all reports are presented with aggregated data.
- 10.7. Any personal information about the applicant applying or a third party will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred and stored in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)* and other applicable laws.
- 10.8. For enquiries about access to, or correction of, your personal information, nams@ecodev.vic.gov.au. For other concerns regarding the privacy of personal information and DJSIR's privacy policy can be emailed to privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

11. Other information

- 11.1. It is strongly recommended when you are considering applying to this program that you obtain relevant professional advice on any impact of the payment of a scholarship has on your tax liability or any other benefits paid under an Australian Government scheme, such as Austudy, Abstudy, aged, disability or carer allowances, pensions or the like.
- 11.2. The administering department reserves the right to amend these guidelines and application terms at any time as it deems appropriate (subject to appropriate notice being given either by publication on the Scholarship Program website or by email to applicants and recipients).
- 11.3. If an unsuccessful applicant considers that their application has been incorrectly assessed, they may contact the Scholarship Program in writing to nams@ecodev.vic.gov.au.

12. Contact

Please contact nams@ecodev.vic.gov.au with any Scholarship Program queries.

Appendix 1: Definitions

Term	Definition
Eligible program of study	An Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)-accredited course leading to general registration as a registered nurse and/or midwife completed on site in Victoria (or a border community as specified in Appendix 3). Online programs, enrolled nurse (EN) entry courses, international conversion courses and postgraduate midwifery programs are excluded from this initiative.
Victorian Resident	A person who lives at a Victorian address for the majority of the time.
Border Community Resident	A person who lives at an address in a border community defined at Appendix 3 for the majority of the time
Undergraduate (entry-to-practice)	Undergraduate, graduate-entry or professional-entry degrees which lead to general registration as a registered nurse or a midwife. This may include double degrees, but excludes transition degrees (for example, courses that enable enrolled nurses to transition from 'diploma to degree' to become registered as a registered nurse).
Census date	The census date is the last date that a student can withdraw from a program of study or apply for a leave of absence without remaining liable to pay for the course.
Victorian Public Health Service	A Victorian Public Health Service refers to a public health service listed in Schedule 1 – 5 (inclusive) in the <i>Health Services Act 1988</i>
EFTSL	An Equivalent Full-Time Student Load defined by the tertiary education provider delivering the eligible program of study.
University Component	Scholarship payments (of up to a maximum of \$9,000) to eligible recipients while undertaking an eligible program of study
Health Service Component	Scholarship payment (of up to a maximum of \$7,500) to eligible recipients who have been employed in a Victorian Public Health Service as a registered nurse and/or midwife
FTE	Full Time Equivalent (FTE) hours of nursing or midwifery service at a Victorian Public Health Service

Appendix 2: Providers and border community campuses*

Victorian provider and campus	New South Wales	South Australia
Monash University	Charles Sturt University – Albury, Wagga Wagga Campus (border community)	UniSA – Mount Gambier Campus (border community)
La Trobe University	University of Wollongong – Bega Campus (border community)	Flinders University – Riverland, Renmark Campus (border community)
Australian Catholic University – - Melbourne and Ballarat campuses		
Deakin University		
Federation University		
RMIT University		
Swinburne University of Technology		
University of Melbourne		
Victoria University		
Holmesglen		
Central Queensland University – Hamilton Campus (WDHS arrangement)		
Torrens University – Melbourne Campus		

*as at 31 March 2023 (census date), however, may be subject to change.

Appendix 3: Border communities

Eligible Local Government Area border communities:

New South Wales
Balranald Shire
Bega Valley Shire
Berrigan Shire
City of Albury
City of Broken Hill
City of Wagga Wagga
Edward River Council
Federation Council
Greater Hume Shire
Hay Shire
Lockhart Shire
Murray River Council
Murrumbidgee Council
Snowy Monaro Regional Council
Snowy Valleys Council
Wentworth Shire
South Australia
Berri Barmera Council
City of Mount Gambier
District Council of Grant
District Council of Loxton Waikerie
District Council of Robe
Kingston District Council
Naracoorte Lucindale Council
Renmark Paringa Council
Southern Mallee District Council
Tatiara District Council
Wattle Range Council