

Victorian Postgraduate Mental Health Nurse Scholarships- \$3000

Semester 1, 2024 Application Guide

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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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ISBN 978-1-76131-397-4 (pdf/online)

Available at [Department of Health's website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-workforce/mental-health-and-wellbeing-workforce-scholarship-program) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-workforce/mental-health-and-wellbeing-workforce-scholarship-program>

Scholarship program overview

Scholarships are available for nurses working in Victorian public mental health services to support postgraduate study in mental health nursing. This round of scholarships will be offered for semester 1, 2024. The department funds 117 postgraduate mental health nursing scholarships per year. Each scholarship is \$3,000. This document has been prepared to guide applicants through the application process.

Purpose and scope

Scholarships provide financial assistance to nurses employed (or commencing employment) within Victorian Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services and Statewide Mental Health Services. The objective of this initiative is to support continued learning and development pathways to help build workforces skills, knowledge, and capabilities to deliver high quality, evidence-based and consumer-centred care.

Scholarship funds contribute towards the cost of undertaking postgraduate studies including tuition fees, student contributions, study loans (including HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP), books and equipment, travel required to attend lectures and clinical placements, childcare, and other related study costs. The scholarships are paid directly to individual recipients.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQA+, workers with disabilities and culturally diverse workers are strongly encouraged to apply. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants will be given additional weighting in the application process. This is to assist in promoting a diverse workforce as recommended by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

How do I apply?

Applicants must read and understand this application guide before completing their application. The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) administer the scholarships for the Department of Health (the department). Applications should be submitted via the application form on the [ACN's website](https://www.acn.edu.au/scholarships) <<https://www.acn.edu.au/scholarships>> by 11.59pm AEST on 31 January 2024.

For more information, please contact the ACN on 1800 117 262 or scholarships@acn.edu.au. Please note, the ACN does not evaluate scholarship applicants.

Key dates

Activities	Date for completion
Applications open	15 September 2023
Closing date for substantive questions	13 October 2023
Information sessions	Refer to the Department of Health's website < https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-workforce/mental-health-and-wellbeing-workforce-scholarship-program > for session dates and times
Applications close	31 January 2024 (Scholarships will be awarded on a rolling basis up until the end of January 2024 or until the full allocation is reached.)
Outcomes announced	From early December 2023 to late February 2024

Background

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

The Victorian Government has committed to implementing all recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (the Royal Commission) and is doing so via the department's Mental Health and Wellbeing Division.

The Royal Commission provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform the mental health system and improve access to services, service navigation and models of care.

The Royal Commission released an interim and final report which recommended a series of programs to build the foundations of a future reform agenda. These reforms aim to ensure Victoria's mental health and wellbeing workforce is well supplied, highly skilled and supported to thrive.

Victoria's Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024

Victoria's mental health and wellbeing workforce strategy 2021-2024 ([the Strategy](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/mental-health-workforce-strategy) <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/mental-health-workforce-strategy>>) was released in 2021 in response to Recommendation 57 from the Royal Commission's final report. The Strategy sets out the Victorian Government's vision and implementation plan for the mental health and wellbeing workforce.

To support implementation of the Strategy, the department is delivering a suite of scholarships for Victorian mental health professionals, as part of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Scholarship Program. The Australian College of Nursing (the ACN) is administering the scholarships on behalf of the department.

For information about a full range of development opportunities for mental health nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists, alcohol and other drug (AOD) practitioners and lived and living experience workers (LLEWs), please refer to the [Department of Health's website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-workforce/mental-health-and-wellbeing-workforce-scholarship-program) <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-workforce/mental-health-and-wellbeing-workforce-scholarship-program>> or the [ACN's website](https://www.acn.edu.au/scholarships) <<https://www.acn.edu.au/scholarships>>.

Scholarship program details

All eligible applicants are encouraged to apply for a scholarship. All applications are screened by the ACN for eligibility, and a department-led assessment panel will undertake a merit assessment to award scholarships through a competitive process.

Applicant eligibility

The following eligibility criteria applies, applicants should assess their eligibility prior to applying.

Applicant Eligibility	
1	Applicants must be a registered nurse with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au> or be registered by the end of 2023.
2	Applicants must be an Australian citizen, permanent resident or New Zealand citizen.
3	Applicants must be employed (or commencing employment) in a Victorian public mental health service at or above 0.5 FTE, and remain working in the public mental health system during study and for at least one year after completing your studies (note: moving between roles/service etc within public mental health is acceptable)
4	Applicants must be enrolled (or intending to enrol) in an eligible course for semester 1, 2024 (see 'Course eligibility' below).
5	Applicants must not have already received the full course fee Postgraduate Mental Health Nurse Scholarship.*
5	Applicants must have their application reviewed and endorsed by their Director of Mental Health Nursing or manager as part of their application.

*Please note: You cannot apply for this scholarship if you have already received the full course fee scholarship. If you are eligible to apply for both scholarships, you are welcome to, but the full course fee scholarship will be prioritised.

Course eligibility

The following course eligibility applies, applicants should assess this eligibility before applying.

Course Eligibility	
1	The course must classify as level 8 or higher under the Australian Qualifications Framework <https://www.aqf.edu.au/>
2	The course must be delivered by an accredited university or higher education provider <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register>
3	Eligible courses are those that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead to a tertiary qualification in mental health nursing or one that advances the applicant's knowledge, skills and capacity to provide effective mental health care • build the capabilities required to deliver high quality, evidence-based consumer-centred care in the public mental health and wellbeing sector and/or • build the capacity of the Victorian mental health and wellbeing sector by improving the skills and knowledge of other mental health nurses within the sector.

Please note, individuals undertaking studies to become a nurse practitioner are ineligible for this scholarship program. The department recommends that you speak to the relevant person at your organisation (usually the Head of Nursing Midwifery Education) on how to apply for the Postgraduate Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program.

For information about other postgraduate nurse scholarships in a range of practice areas (including Nurse Practitioner Scholarships), please refer to the [Postgraduate nursing and midwifery scholarships page](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing-and-midwifery/working-as-a-nurse-or-midwife) <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing-and-midwifery/working-as-a-nurse-or-midwife>>.

Weightings and prioritisation

Prioritisation will be provided for the following eligible applicants by way of a weighting:

- applicants who have not previously received a Postgraduate Mental Health Nurse scholarship
- applicants who aren't receiving funding support from other sources (eg. scholarships, professional bodies or university etc.)
- applicants who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- eligible applicants employed by a health service in regional or rural Victoria.

Application process

STEP 1- Confirm Eligibility

- check your eligibility against the eligibility criteria in these guidelines
- check that you can meet the grant conditions
- confirm if your employer will support you to undertake postgraduate studies and have them review and endorse your application.

STEP 2- Complete application form

- ensure all required supporting documentation is attached
- proofread your application.

STEP 3- Submit application

- scholarships will be awarded on a rolling basis up until the **end of January 2024** or until the full allocation is reached.

STEP 4- Applicants notified of outcome

- applicants are notified of their outcome either early December 2023 or end of February 2024.
- successful applicants can expect payments to be made by the ACN in April 2024, **after** the first semester census date (31 March 2024).

Please note: Late applications will not be accepted.

Assessment Criteria

A panel will be convened to assess all eligible applications.

Applicants will be asked to provide a 200-300-word statement addressing the below assessment criteria.

Assessment Criteria
Commitment to the public mental health or AOD sector and career aspirations
<p>Provide a 200-300-word statement describing your commitment to mental health nursing.</p> <p>It should consider how your proposed studies will support you to provide person-centred, recovery-oriented care. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • why you chose a career in the mental health sector • a rationale for undertaking your selected course of study • how this course enhances your professional practice • how this course improves the outcomes of consumers and their family, carers and supporters <p>Strong applications utilise clear examples of translating study into practice, and working with consumers, families and carers. Examples of competitive and non-competitive responses can be found in Appendix 1.</p>

Tips to support your scholarship application

1. **Know the key dates.** The scholarship applications will close at 11:59pm AEST on 29 January 2024. Late applications will not be considered.
2. **Review the assessment criteria a few times.** Applicants should familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria and spend some time thinking about how they satisfy it.
3. **Refer to Appendix 1 to aid your responses to the assessment criteria.** Examples have been provided which are strong versus weak to assist you to submit a competitive application.
4. **Answer the question.** Ensure that in providing a written response, the assessment panel has a clear understanding of your experience and motivation in relation to the posed question. For example, when providing your 'commitment to the mental health sector', provide clear detail so that it is clear why you are working in a mental health or AOD service, and any personal/professional experiences that have led you to this career.
5. **Use past experiences as examples.** Applicants are encouraged to share their experiences which have motivated them, including self-directed and voluntary initiatives such as additional courses completed, leadership positions or other specific examples which have led them to their career in mental health (not limited to paid roles in the mental health).
6. **Ensure the use of language is professional and contemporary.** For more information regarding the correct use of language and terminology, refer to the 'Language and definition' section of the [Mental health lived experience engagement framework](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/mental-health-lived-experience-engagement-framework) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/mental-health-lived-experience-engagement-framework>.
7. **Spend some time refining written responses.** Keep responses as concise as possible noting the word limit of 300 words. Remember to use examples to demonstrate strengths, and passion and commitment to the mental health sector.

- 8. Ensure your application has been reviewed and endorsed by the Director of Mental Health Nursing or Unit Manager.** Applicants must get their application reviewed and endorsed for both the quality of their application and organisational support of their postgraduate studies. This includes that the language used in their application is respectful, professional, and contemporary and that the application is clear in answering the posed questions. A template of the required endorsement letter is provided on the application form on ACN's website.

Scholarship awarding process

An overview of the scholarship process is laid out below.

1	<p>Eligibility check</p> <p>Applicants screened to ensure eligibility requirements are met.</p>
2	<p>Applications assessed</p> <p>Applications are assessed against the assessment criteria.</p>
3	<p>Weightings applied</p> <p>Weightings are added to qualifying applicants.</p>
4	<p>Scholarship assessment</p> <p>Scholarships are granted at the discretion of an assessment panel through a competitive process.</p>
5	<p>Applicants notified</p> <p>Applicants are notified of their outcome by mid December 2023.</p>
6	<p>Scholarship payments made</p> <p>Payments are expected to be made by the ACN in April 2024, after the first semester census date (31 March 2024).</p>

Unsuccessful applications

An unsuccessful application is either unsuccessful because they were ineligible, or they were not recommended by the assessment panel due to competitive, merit-based nature of the assessment process.

Upon request from the applicant, ineligible applicants will be advised on the specific eligibility criteria they did not meet and applicants who have not been recommended by the assessment panel can request further feedback where appropriate.

Assessment panel

The assessment panel will comprise of at least three members appointed by the department. Assessment panel members hold appropriate expertise including lived and living experience and representation from the Office of the Chief Mental Health Nurse.

Responsibilities, conditions and commitments for scholarship recipients

Scholarship recipients are required to meet a number of conditions to maintain eligibility for the scholarship, as summarised below.

Scholarship agreement

An acceptance pack detailing the required paperwork to be submitted as well as a copy of the scholarship’s terms and conditions will be provided by the ACN upon successful notification of receiving this scholarship.

Successful applicants will be required to sign a scholarship acceptance form prior to the commencement of the scholarship.

Supporting documentation for successful applicants

To begin receiving funds, scholarship recipients must provide the ACN with evidence in the form of supporting documentation.

Required supporting documentation	
Upon commencement of course	
1	Evidence of Australian citizenship, permanent residency or New Zealand citizenship (New Zealand Citizens must submit a copy of their current passport).
2	Copy of current Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia registration – front and back showing name, registration number, endorsements and if there are conditions or restrictions on registration.
3	Evidence of enrolment in semester 1, 2024, in a postgraduate course at an accredited tertiary institution in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an official university letter confirming enrolment OR • an official Student Tax Invoice or Statement of Account for semester 1, 2024 This must include the following details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the names of enrolled units, subjects, or courses for semester 1, 2024 • the enrolment status – part time / full time study load • the type of place / student status – eg. Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP), Higher Education Loan Program (HECS-HELP) or Direct Payment to Academic Institution.

Funding disbursement

Once the required evidence has been provided to the ACN, scholarship recipients will receive funds via a direct electronic transfer to their account. It is important to note that funds will only be provided **after the census date** (31 March 2024).

Enrolment process

Scholarship recipients are responsible for enrolling and paying course fees (or deferring fees) or HECS-HELP by the due date and are responsible for debts incurred during study including FEE-HELP and HECS-HELP loans. More information about FEE-HELP and HECS-HELP is available at the Commonwealth Government's [Study Assist website](https://www.studyassist.gov.au/) <https://www.studyassist.gov.au/>.

Taxation queries

Scholarships may be classed as taxable income depending on your financial situation. Please note the department cannot provide advice to applicants/recipients about taxation. For further information consult your tax agent or visit [Australian Taxation Office website](https://www.ato.gov.au/calculators-and-tools/is-my-scholarship-taxable/) <https://www.ato.gov.au/calculators-and-tools/is-my-scholarship-taxable/>.

Scholarship conditions

Continued employment

It is expected that recipients intend to remain in a Victorian public mental health service for a period of one year full-time following the completion of the postgraduate course for which a scholarship has been awarded.

Students unable to fulfil this condition may be required to refund all or part of the scholarship funds to the department. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Deferral from course

If a student is required to defer their studies for any reason, they must notify the ACN within 14 business days of the change in study arrangements. All or part of the scholarship funds may be required to be returned.

Withdrawal from course

Scholarship recipients withdrawing from the course are required to notify the ACN within 14 business days of withdrawal. All or part of scholarship funding may be required to be returned. Students are encouraged to be aware of their university's fees policy as most universities will not refund course fees if the student withdraws or defers after the census date.

Consent to share student information

Applicant information may be shared with the department for evaluation purposes, where the applicant has expressed their consent.

Scholarship recipient information, including contact information, will be shared with the Victorian Department of Health for application assessment, evaluation and administration purposes. The department may also contact you via the ACN at any time after receipt of a scholarship.

A link to the ACN's privacy collection notice can be found on the [ACN's website](https://members.acn.edu.au/Public/Join/Privacy_Collection_Notice.aspx) <https://members.acn.edu.au/Public/Join/Privacy_Collection_Notice.aspx>.

The Victorian Government values and is committed to protecting your privacy. We handle your personal information in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) (PDP Act), Public Records Act 1973 (Vic), Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) and other applicable legislation.

Please visit our [privacy policy](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/department-of-health-privacy-policy) <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/department-of-health-privacy-policy>> for more information. It contains information about how you can access and correct the personal information you may give us, how you can lodge a complaint regarding the handling of your personal information and how any complaint will be handled by the department.

For questions regarding privacy, email us at privacy@health.vic.gov.au.

Frequently asked questions

What degrees are considered eligible?

Relevant degrees are those that:

- build the capabilities required to deliver high quality, evidence-based consumer-centred care in the specialist mental health sector; and/or
- build the capacity of the Victorian mental health sector by improving the skills and knowledge of other mental health nurses within the sector.

Relevant degrees may include:

- Master of Nursing (majoring in mental health)
- Master of Mental Health Nursing
- Graduate Diploma/Certificate in Mental Health Nursing
- Master of Forensic Mental Health
- Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in Nursing Practice
- Master of Advanced Nursing Practice
- Graduate Certificate in Alcohol and Other Drug Studies
- Master of Addictive Behaviours
- Master of Professional Education and Training

Who can apply?

Registered nurses who are Australian citizens, permanent residents or New Zealand citizens working in a Victorian Area Mental Health Service or Statewide Specialist Service can apply.

Can I apply if I have already received the full course fee scholarship?

No, you cannot apply for this scholarship if you have already received the full course fee scholarship. If you are eligible to apply for both scholarships, you are welcome to, but the full course fee scholarship will be prioritised.

Can I apply if I have already received this scholarship?

Yes, you can apply for this scholarship if you have already received it previously.

Can the scholarship be paid before the census date?

No. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they pay any fees for their courses by the agreed due date with the education provider or with the Australian Taxation Office. Scholarships are only paid **after the census date** and after all appropriate paperwork has been submitted.

What can these scholarships be used for?

The scholarships are worth up to \$3,000 and considered a contribution towards the cost of undertaking postgraduate studies, including tuition fees, student contributions, study loans (HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP), books and equipment, travel required to attend lectures and clinical placements, childcare and other related study costs.

Do scholarship recipients need to provide a budget?

No, recipients do not need to prove how they will spend the money or provide the department or ACN with a proposed budget for the \$3,000.

How will the money be paid to scholarship recipients?

Successful applicants will receive \$3,000 in full as a one-off payment into their personal bank account.

Can the scholarship be paid directly to my university or to the ATO?

No. Scholarships are provided directly to the applicant via direct deposit. Applicants are responsible for paying any fees/student loans.

Can the scholarship be paid before the census date?

No. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they pay any fees for their courses by the agreed due date with the education provider or with the Australian Taxation Office. Scholarships are only paid **after the census date** and **after all appropriate paperwork has been submitted**.

Are late applications accepted?

No. All applications must be submitted by the closing date, after this time the application portal will no longer be available.

Am I able to make any changes once I have submitted my application?

No, you cannot make any changes once an application is submitted.

If your contact details change prior to notification, please email the new details to the scholarships team at scholarships@acn.edu.au.

When will I be notified if I am successful?

Applicants are notified of their outcome by mid-December 2023.

Appendix 1: Example responses

Please note: the below examples are illustrative only, and a response aligned to the below competitive example is not a guarantee of a scholarship, it is merely intended to demonstrate a robust response that would be considered competitive within the assessment process.

Submissions which copy and paste (exactly or substantively) the competitive example below, will not be awarded scholarships. Applicants should consider the example below in drafting their response and their own circumstances.

Question	Weak example	Competitive example
<p>Provide a 200-300-word statement describing your commitment to mental health nursing.</p> <p>It should consider how your proposed studies will support you to provide person-centred, recovery-oriented care. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • why you chose a career in the mental health sector • a rationale for undertaking the course of study • how this course enhances your professional practice • how this course improves the outcomes of consumers and their family, carers and supporters <p>Strong applications utilise clear examples of translating study into practice, and working with consumers, families and carers</p>	<p>I am completing this course in order to equip myself with the skills to become a senior nurse and have a strong passion for mental health. This course will give me the skills to become a good mental health nurse.</p>	<p>Growing up in rural Victoria as a family member of someone who lived with undiagnosed bipolar disorder for many years and after diagnosis, having to travel large distances for the treatment required I developed a passion to support others in similar situations. I have acquired valuable skills and knowledge working as a graduate mental health nurse but feel that building my expertise further will enable me to provide the best possible care to consumers, families, carers and supporters.</p> <p>I am passionate about holistic care that considers psychosocial needs rather than only pharmacological intervention, and advocate for these approaches in my work with consumers. I try to work with consumers, families, carers and supporters by developing rapport through empathy, to help with recovery.</p> <p>This study will help me in my career by providing me with advanced skills in mental health nursing and improving my understanding of the challenges faced by consumers, carers, families and supporters, and my ability to respond to those challenges. This education will help me provide better treatment, care and support. It will also assist me to have more of a leadership position and reduce stigma as I will be better able to educate others about mental health, improving empathy for those experiencing mental ill health and distress.</p>