

# Victorian Postgraduate Mental Health Nurse Scholarships- Full course fee

Semester 1, 2024 Application Guide

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Department  
of Health

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# Scholarship program overview

These scholarships support nurses working in Victorian public mental health services to undertake postgraduate study in mental health nursing. Approximately 140 full course fee postgraduate mental health nurse scholarships are funded per year. Scholarships cover the full cost of course fees for a Graduate Diploma in Mental Health Nursing, a Master of Mental Health Nursing or, for applicants who are early in their mental health nursing career, a Master of Advanced Nursing Practice (Mental Health Nursing). This document has been prepared to guide applicants through the application process.

## Purpose and scope

Scholarships are available to mental health nurses employed (or commencing employment) in Victorian public mental health services who are studying an eligible course in semester 1, 2024.

This initiative primarily aims to:

- incentivise and support nurses to undertake specialist mental health qualifications
- help build the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of Victoria's mental health nurses to deliver high quality, evidence-based and consumer-centred care.

To assist in promoting a diverse workforce as recommended by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+, 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.

## How do I apply?

Applicants must read and understand this Application Guide before applying. 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 29 January 2024. For more information, please contact the ACN on 1800 117 262 or [scholarships@acn.edu.au](mailto:scholarships@acn.edu.au).

## Key dates

Activities	Key dates
Applications open	22 September 2023
Information sessions	Refer to the <a href="https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-workforce/mental-health-and-wellbeing-workforce-scholarship-program">Department of Health's website</a> < <a href="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</a> > for session dates and times
Closing date for questions	13 October 2023
Applications close*	end January 2024*
Outcomes announced	From early December 2023 to late February 2024

\*Please note that scholarships will be awarded on a rolling basis up until the end of January 2024 or until the full allocation is reached. Applicants are encouraged to **apply early to avoid disappointment**.

# Background

## Introduction

The department is implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (the Royal Commission). As part of the reform agenda, and in partnership with Victoria's Chief Mental Health Nurse, the department funds 140 full course fee postgraduate mental health nursing scholarships per year to encourage and support nurses to specialise in mental health nursing.

Each scholarship covers the full cost of course fee for a Graduate Diploma in Mental Health Nursing, a Master of Mental Health Nursing or, for applicants who are early in their mental health nursing career, a Master of Advanced Nursing Practice (Mental Health Nursing) based on the availability of funds.

## The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

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's interim (November 2019) and final (February 2021) reports 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.

The Victorian Government has committed to implementing all recommendations from the Royal Commission. Implementation of workforce reform priorities are outlined in *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>>) which is being led by the Mental Health and AOD Workforce Strategy and Planning Unit within the Commissioning and System Improvement Division in the department.

## Scholarship administration

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) are administering the scholarships on behalf of the department. Please note that the ACN does not determine the successful scholarship recipients; this assessment process is undertaken by the department.

For information about a full range of development opportunities for mental health nurses, allied health professionals, alcohol and other drug (AOD) practitioners and lived and living experience workers, 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 <a href="https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au">Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia</a> < <a href="https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au">https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au</a> > or will 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 (including Local Mental Health and Wellbeing services) at or above 0.5 FTE.
4	Applicants must be enrolled (or intending to enrol) in an eligible course for semester 1, 2024 (see 'Course eligibility' below).
5	Applicants must have their application reviewed and endorsed by their Director of Mental Health Nursing or manager as part of their application.

## Course eligibility

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

Course Eligibility	
1	Scholarships will be provided for the following courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate Diploma in Mental Health Nursing</li> <li>• Master of Mental Health Nursing</li> <li>• Master of Advanced Nursing Practice (Mental Health Nursing)*</li> </ul>
2	The course must be delivered by an accredited university or <a href="https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register">higher education provider</a> < <a href="https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register">https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register</a> >

\*Applicants who are early in their mental health nursing career and who do not hold a postgraduate mental health nursing qualification will be eligible to apply for a Master of Advanced Nursing Practice (Mental Health Nursing).

**Please note:** No other courses other than the courses listed above are eligible. If you are studying something other than the courses listed, you may be eligible for other scholarships outlined on 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>>.

## Weightings and prioritisation

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

- those not receiving other funding support (eg. employer support for course fees, scholarships, grants or financial support from an organisation or institution)
- those who have not previously received a postgraduate mental health nurse scholarship
- those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- those employed by a health service in regional or rural Victoria.

## Value of the scholarship

The scholarships cover the full cost of your course fees for a Graduate Diploma in Mental Health Nursing, a Master of Mental Health Nursing or a Master of Advanced Nursing Practice (Mental Health Nursing), based on the availability of funds. This includes the gap if you are enrolled in a Commonwealth Supported Place.

Please note that the scholarship provides funding for course fees only, any additional costs such as textbooks will need to be funded by the student.

You will need to indicate the approximate course costs associated with your chosen qualification.

## 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.

## Successful applicants

Scholarship offers can be accepted prior to course enrolment however, proof of enrolment in a postgraduate course must be provided prior to receiving any scholarship funds.

# Assessment Criteria

A panel will be convened to assess all eligible applications.

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

Assessment Criteria
<b>1. Motivation</b>
<p>Provide a 200-300-word statement describing what motivated you to pursue a career in mental health nursing.</p> <p>Please feel free to include any of the following in your answer (this is a non-exhaustive list):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your reasons for pursuing mental health as a career</li> <li>• someone who has inspired you and why</li> <li>• an example of working alongside consumers, families, carers and supporters and/or lived and living experience workers</li> <li>• an example of a time where you wished you had mental health skills/knowledge to support a person</li> </ul>
<b>2. Commitment to the public mental health or AOD sector and career aspirations</b>
<p>Provide a 200-300-word statement describing your commitment to working in the public mental health sector.</p> <p>Please include how your study will aid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your commitment to mental health nursing in the context of providing person-centred, recovery-oriented care</li> <li>• your career development, such as what your goals, hopes and expectations are (eg. are there specialist areas or specific interests you would like to move toward or explore within mental health?)</li> </ul>

Refer to **Appendix 1** which provides comparable responses that can assist you with a competitive application.

## 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, for question 1 'Motivation', 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 any self-directed voluntary initiatives such as additional courses completed, leadership positions or other specific examples which have led them to this career in mental health. These do not need to be limited to paid roles in the mental health sector.
6. **Ensure the use of language is respectful, 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/mental-health-lived-experience-engagement-framework) <Mental health lived experience engagement framework | health.vic.gov.au>.
7. **Spend some time refining written responses.** Keep responses as concise as possible noting the word limit of 200 words per question. Remember to use examples to demonstrate strengths, and your passion and commitment to working in the mental health sector. A peer review is highly recommended to ensure that your responses are clear and understandable.
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.

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

## Unsuccessful applications

An unsuccessful application is either unsuccessful because they were ineligible, or they were not recommended by the assessment panel.

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.

Scholarship recipients can accept their scholarship offer prior to enrolling in their course. However, scholarship recipients will need to provide proof of enrolment in a postgraduate course prior to receiving the scholarship funds.

## 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 <b>Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia registration</b> – 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 the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an official university letter confirming enrolment</li> <li>OR</li> <li>• an official Student Tax Invoice or Statement of Account for semester 1, 2024</li> </ul> This must include the following details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the names of enrolled units, subjects, or courses for semester 1, 2024</li> <li>• the enrolment status – part time / full time study load</li> <li>• the type of place / student status – eg. Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP), Higher Education Loan Program (HECS-HELP) or Direct Payment to Academic Institution.</li> </ul>
For subsequent semesters (to enable payment for additional units)	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evidence of enrolment in each subsequent semester (per point 3 above)</li> <li>• evidence of completion of prior funded units.</li> </ul>

## Funding disbursement

Once the required evidence has been provided to the ACN, scholarship recipients will receive funds for their semester 1, 2024 units 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).

Funding will be disbursed to the recipient each semester based on evidence of enrolment. Evidence of the completion of prior funded units will be required before the ACN can pay a recipient for additional units.

## 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](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](mailto:privacy@health.vic.gov.au).

# Frequently asked questions

## What degrees are considered eligible?

Eligible courses include a Graduate Diploma for Mental Health Nursing, a Master of Mental Health Nursing or a Master of Advanced Nursing Practice (Mental Health Nursing)\* delivered by a university or [accredited higher education provider](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register) <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register>.

\*Applicants who are early in their mental health nursing career and who do not hold a postgraduate mental health nursing qualification will be eligible to apply for a Master of Advanced Nursing Practice (Mental Health Nursing).

**Please note:** No other courses other than the courses listed above (such as Master of Applied Mental Health) are eligible. If you are studying something other than the courses listed, you may be eligible for other scholarships outlined on 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>>.

## Can I apply if I have previously received this scholarship?

No, you cannot apply for this scholarship if you have already received the full course fee scholarship.

## Can I apply if I have already received the postgraduate mental health nursing scholarship (worth \$3000.00)?

Yes, you can apply for this scholarship if you have received the \$3000.00 scholarship previously.

## When do scholarship applications close?

Scholarships will be awarded on a rolling basis up until the end of January 2024 or until the full allocation is reached. We recommend applying for a scholarship as soon as you can to avoid disappointment.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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](mailto:scholarships@acn.edu.au).

## When will I be notified if I am successful?

Applicants are notified of their outcome between early December 2023 to late February 2024 depending on the date the application is submitted.

## What happens after I receive a scholarship?

Once the required evidence has been provided to the ACN, scholarship recipients will receive funds for their semester 1 2024 units via a direct electronic transfer to their account following the census date.

Generally, funding will be disbursed to the recipient incrementally based on evidence of enrolment for each semester. Evidence of the completion of prior funded units will be required before the ACN can pay a recipient for additional units.

Scholarship recipients will be required to provide the ACN with evidence via supporting documents to begin receiving funds (including evidence of previous university qualifications if relevant, proof of enrolment in a postgraduate course at an accredited university, and proof of Australian citizenship, permanent residency, or New Zealand citizenship).

# List of Appendix

## Appendix 1: Example responses

Question	Weak example	Strong example
<p><b>1. Provide a 200-word statement describing what motivated you to pursue a career in mental health nursing.</b></p>	<p>i have been mental health nurse for more than 5 years and seen how effective nurses would be in the recovery journey. i cannot explain these feelings and are lived experience that I will never forget. Mental health nursing is not for everyone although it is challenging. This requires determination, braveness and assertiveness. With the new MH act and its recovery and client focused practices which put the patient holistically centre at what we do.</p>	<p>Growing up in rural Victoria as a homosexual individual, I have been impacted by the limited mental health resources available to support marginalized people in my community. I understand the stigma surrounding mental health treatment, coupled with the ever-rising youth suicide rate for cross-sectional populations. With 1 in 3 persons who identify as LGBTIQ+ having suicidal ideation, I have been in a position where I have supported peers and managed my own mental health struggles. I have drawn on my lived experience of someone suffering from anxiety and depression and how I have navigated my mental health journey to help others. Through this support, I realized my passion for Mental Health as a career and my need to complete further study to expand my knowledge and skills. By working in the mental health sector, I hope to have a beneficial impact and advocate for marginalized cross-sectional people in rural communities.</p>
<p><b>2. Provide a 200-word statement describing your commitment to working in the public mental health sector.</b></p>	<p>I have been a nurse for over 15 years and have been aspiring to meet my patients goals the best way I could. Doing this extended learning will help me to attain these goals which are closer to my client's recovery.</p>	<p>I am currently working in the XX team for XX Hospital. I have a specific interest in working with Adolescents, Borderline Personality Disorder and Schizophrenia. XX Hospital is expanding their mental health workforce who treat consumers who are admitted with these mental health diseases. I plan to further up-skill in that area to meet the increasing need. After completing the Graduate Diploma in Mental Health, I plan to complete training in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy to offer evidenced based psychological interventions. My long-term goal will be to complete the Master of Nurse Practitioner so that I can offer a holistic treatment to mental health consumers.</p>