

Victorian Postgraduate Mental Health Nurse Scholarships- \$3000

Semester 2, 2023 Application Guide

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Scholarship program overview

These 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 two, 2023. The next round of scholarships will be offered in December 2023 for semester one, 2024.

The department funds 117 postgraduate mental health nursing scholarships per year. Each scholarship is up to \$3,000. This document has been prepared to guide applicants through the application process.

Purpose and scope

Postgraduate mental health nurse 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, not their employers or the Australian Taxation Office.

To promote a diverse workforce as envisioned by the Royal Commission and the Strategy, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTQIA+, workers with disabilities and culturally diverse workers in the mental health sector 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 completing their application. To apply, please complete the application form on the [ACN's website](https://www.acn.edu.au/scholarships) <<https://www.acn.edu.au/scholarships>> and submit the application online with all supporting documentation by 11.59pm AEST on 21 July 2023.

The ACN can also be contacted directly for any queries about eligibility or support with the application process. You can contact the ACN via phone on 1800 117 262 or via email at scholarships@acn.edu.au. Please note, the ACN's role does not evaluate scholarship recipients.

Key dates

Activities	Date for completion
Applications open	23 June 2023
Applications close (please note this date may be extended)	21 July 2023
Scholarship recipients advised and agreement of terms and conditions signed	Mid to end of August 2023

Background

Introduction

In accordance with a commitment under the *Victorian Psychiatric Services Certified Agreement 2007-2011 (2009 Varied and Extended Version)*, the Department of Health (the department) funds 117 postgraduate mental health nursing scholarships per year. Each scholarship is funded at \$3,000 (GST excluded).

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 scholarship program for mental health professionals in Victoria, 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 [ACN's website](https://www.acn.edu.au/scholarships) <<https://www.acn.edu.au/scholarships>>.

Scholarship application process

Applicant eligibility

Applicants must:

- be a registered nurse with the [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia](https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au) <<https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au>>
- be an Australian citizen, permanent resident or New Zealand citizen
- be employed (or commencing employment) in a Victorian public mental health service
- be enrolled (or intending to enrol) in an eligible postgraduate course for semester two, 2023
- have the endorsement of their Director of Mental Health Nursing or manager in their application.

Course eligibility

Eligible courses are those that:

- classify as level 8 or higher under the [Australian Qualifications Framework](https://www.aqf.edu.au/) <<https://www.aqf.edu.au/>>
- are delivered by a university or [accredited higher education provider](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register) <<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register>>
- 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://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery/furthering-your-nursing-and-midwifery-career/postgraduate-nurse-scholarships) <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery/furthering-your-nursing-and-midwifery-career/postgraduate-nurse-scholarships>>.

Weightings and prioritisation

Prioritisation will be provided for the following:

- 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

- confirm if your employer will support you to undertake postgraduate studies
- check your eligibility against the eligibility criteria in these guidelines
- check that you can meet the scholarship conditions

STEP 2- Complete application form

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

STEP 3- Submit application

- applications close at 11.59pm AEST on 21 July 2023

Selection Criteria

A tailored selection panel will assess all eligible applications based on their response to the following information provided in the application form:

A 100-200-word statement describing your commitment to mental health nursing.

It should consider how your proposed studies will support you to provide person-centred, recovery-oriented care. This should include:

- 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

Strong applications utilise clear examples of translating study into practice, and working with consumers, families and carers

Supporting documentation

In addition to the online application form, applicants must submit several supporting documents to support their application. All applications must include:

- Evidence of Australian citizenship, permanent residency or New Zealand citizenship (New Zealand Citizens must submit a copy of their current passport).
- 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.
- Evidence of enrolment in semester 2, 2023, in a postgraduate course at an accredited tertiary institution in the form of:
 - An official university letter confirming enrolment
 - OR
 - An official Student Tax Invoice or Statement of Account for Semester 2, 2023
- Evidence of enrolment should also include the following information:
 - the names of enrolled units, subjects, or courses for Semester 2, 2023
 - 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.
- A letter of recommendation from your employer (Director of Mental Health Nursing or Unit Manager). A template is available within the application form on the ACN website.

Tips to support your scholarship application

1. **Know the key dates.** The scholarship applications will close at 11:59pm AEST on 21 July 2023. Late applications will not be considered.
2. **Review the selection criteria a few times.** Applicants should familiarise themselves with the selection criteria and spend some time thinking about how they satisfy it.
3. **Use past experiences as examples.** Applicants are encouraged to share their experiences which have motivated them, including self-directed any voluntary initiatives such as additional courses completed, leadership positions or other specific examples which have led them to this career in mental health (not limited to paid roles in the mental health).
4. **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>.
5. **Spend some time refining written responses.** Keep responses as concise as possible noting the word limit of 200 words. Remember to use examples to demonstrate strengths, and passion and commitment to the mental health sector.
6. **Ensure your application has been endorsed by the Director of Mental Health Nursing or Unit Manager.** Applicants are to gain appropriate endorsement of their application from management to ensure that they will be supported in their postgraduate studies and that the language used in their application is respectful, professional, and contemporary. A template 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>Applications assessed</p> <p>Applications are assessed provided eligibility requirements are met.</p>
2	<p>Weightings applied</p> <p>Weightings are added to qualifying applicants.</p>
3	<p>Scholarship selection</p> <p>Scholarships are granted at the discretion of a selection panel through a competitive process.</p>
4	<p>Applicants notified</p> <p>Applicants are notified of their outcome by the end of August 2023.</p>
5	<p>Scholarship payments made</p> <p>Payments are expected to be made by the ACN in early September 2023, after the second semester census date (end August 2023).</p>

Unsuccessful applications

An unsuccessful application is either unsuccessful because they were ineligible, or they were not recommended by the selection 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 selection panel can request further feedback where appropriate.

Selection panel

The selection panel will comprise of at least three members appointed by the department. Selection 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

Applicant responsibilities

The following provides an overview of recipients' responsibilities, conditions and commitments. Please note that the ACN will provide a more comprehensive statement to scholarship recipients upon acceptance of their scholarship.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they have read this Application Guide, obtained employer support and compiled all necessary documentation before applying. Applicants should ensure that their application meets the eligibility requirements detailed in this application guide.

Late applications will not be accepted.

Successful applicants 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/>.

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 taxation agent or visit [Australian Taxation Office website](http://www.ato.gov.au/) <http://www.ato.gov.au/>.

Funds will only be paid following the census date and after all the required evidence has been provided to the ACN. An acceptance pack detailing the required paperwork to be submitted will be provided by the ACN upon successful notification of receiving this scholarship. Payments are made via a direct electronic transfer to the scholarship recipients account following the census date.

Scholarship conditions

Continued employment

The scholarship recipient must be employed within mental health in the Victorian public health sector for a period of one year full-time, or pro-rata equivalent, 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.

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 money 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

Scholarship recipients may be required to sign a consent form, granting the selection panel and university permission to share application information with the department for the scholarship administration purposes.

Scholarship recipient information may be shared with the Victorian Department of Health for assessment and evaluation purposes, where recipients have expressed their consent.

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
- Master of Education

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.