

Information Kit

Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme

Office of Rural Health

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**Queensland
Government**
Queensland **Health**

General Information

Queensland Health is a large and complex organisation and is the major provider of health services in this state.

As part of its commitment to maintain and improve the health status of rural communities, the department administers a rural scholarship scheme for students in dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, psychology (clinical masters), occupational therapy, radiography, social work, speech pathology and oral health.

The rural scholarship scheme provides benefits to the assisted students and Queensland Health. Scholarship holders are provided with financial assistance to support them during full-time tertiary study in their chosen field. Following graduation, scholarship holders are contracted to be employed by the Health Service Districts in rural health care facilities throughout the State, providing rural communities with essential health services. An objective of the scheme is to provide professional health services to people living in rural and remote communities.

The scheme is administered under the *Assisted Students (Enforcement of Obligations) Act 1951 - 1988*.

The Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme aims to:

- *Establish for Australian students, premier career pathways to rural health practice in multiple disciplines from tertiary to postgraduate education/training and service placement.*
- *Increase supply of health professionals exceptionally fit to practice in rural and remote Queensland.*
- *Provide preparation, training and support of such high standard and value to the scholarship holder that bonds become inconsequential to them.*
- *Provide advice on the recruitment, retention, education and training of rural health workers to workforce planning activities.*
- *Commit to match personal, family and career needs and aspirations with organisational and community requirements through indicative planning.*
- *Assist to fill vacant positions in rural health facilities.*

Role of the Office of Rural Health

Located in Roma, the Office of Rural Health sits within the Workforce Planning and Coordination Branch, Policy Planning and Resourcing Division in Queensland Health's Central Office in Brisbane. The Office of Rural Health provides a source of expertise concerning health workforce issues in rural communities, including management of the Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme. It works with Area Health Services and Government Agencies on rural health issues and supports the Minister for Health's Rural Health Advisory Council and Medical subcommittee, in relation to rural workforce issues.

Eligibility for a scholarship

You are eligible to apply for a Queensland Health Rural Scholarship if you are:

- A full time student at university
- An Australian resident or have permanent residency and
- Studying one of the following disciplines:
 - Dentistry
 - Physiotherapy
 - Medicine
 - Podiatry
 - Nursing
 - Psychology (Clinical Masters)
 - Occupational Therapy
 - Radiography
 - Oral Health
 - Social Work
 - Pharmacy
 - Speech Pathology

Queensland Health rural scholarships are offered in the following disciplines:

Discipline	Scholarship holders Recruited	Contracted Service	Number Offered
Medicine - 4 year course - 6 year course	January – 1 st year of course January – 3 rd year of course	4 years	30
Nursing	January – 2 nd year of course	2 years	15
Dentistry Dentistry - Bridging Course	January – 4 th year of course January – 1 st year of course	2 years	8
Oral Health	January – 2 nd year of course	2 years	3
Pharmacy	January – 3 rd year of course	2 years	3
Allied Health Professions			
Occupational Therapy	January – 3 rd year of course	2 years	1
Physiotherapy	January – 3 rd year of course	2 years	2
Podiatry	January – 3 rd year of course	2 years	1
Psychology (Clinical Masters)	January – 1 st year of course	2 years	1
Radiography	January - 2 nd year of course	2 years	1
Social Work	January - 3 rd year of course	2 years	1
Speech Pathology	January - 3 rd year of course	2 years	1

Selection of Students

Presentation

Medicine

Information sessions are presented by staff of the Office of Rural Health and the Rural Medical Health Advisor, to medical students at Queensland universities. Application kits are available at this time and can be collected by interested medical students after the information session.

All other disciplines

An email containing the Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme information kit is sent out by the universities or placed on the universities website.

Information Kits

Information Kits are available by contacting the Office of Rural Health on 1800 680 291. All students who are interested in applying for Qld Health Rural Scholarship must complete a written application addressing the selection criteria. Students must demonstrate an interest in rural health and living in a rural community. Depending on the number of applications received, short-listing of applications to decide who will be interviewed may occur.

Interviews

Students who are successful in obtaining an interview will be contacted by the Office of Rural Health to arrange an interview time and travel to the interview if applicable. Every effort is made to ensure that interviews cause minimal disruption to academic studies. All interviewees will be notified in writing of the outcome of their interview. Successful applicants will then be offered a contract with Qld Health.

Contractual Obligations

- A student who accepts the offer of a scholarship completes a contracted service period after graduation.
- Continuation of the scholarship is dependent upon satisfactory progress in their studies.
- For post-graduate pharmacy and radiography scholarship holders, the pre-registration or professional development years are not counted toward the bonded period.
- Scholarship holders are required to work in rural communities for a period equal to the period of assistance given.
- At the completion of each academic year the student is required to submit to the Office of Rural Health a certified photocopy of examination results.
- If a scholarship holder fails to complete the course or does not satisfy the obligations of contracted service, a financial liability is incurred.

As an assisted student

You are expected to:

- Apply yourself diligently and complete your course in the minimum required time.
- Undertake a compulsory, annual rural placement.
- Complete your contracted rural service obligation after graduation.

Assisted students sign a legally binding contract and are liable to repay a scholarship debt within 14 days if they withdraw from the scheme.

Deferment from Scholarship

Contract variations are prepared when scholarship holders are given approval to defer or extend their contract in some way, this can be at an undergraduate or post graduate level. At an undergraduate level, an extension may be given with or without additional financial assistance. At a post graduate level, a deferral or extension will vary the length of the return of service period therefore a contract variation is required. A contract variation is required for any reason that varies the original contract signed at the commencement of the scholarship.

Employment Opportunities

If students accept a scholarship they become employees of Qld Health and are guaranteed employment on graduation. As you are a rural scholarship holder your employment following graduation will be predominantly in rural and remote areas.

Financial Assistance

Allowances and grants are paid annually for the duration of the scholarship at the following rates:

- Living Allowance:
 - Medicine: \$14,200 per academic year.
 - Other Disciplines: \$7,000 per academic year.
- Tertiary Grant:

Scholarship holders are encouraged to use this grant to help offset Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) fees. The tertiary grant for each discipline ie:

 - Medicine: \$5,800 per academic year.
 - Dentistry and Oral Health: \$5,500 per academic year.
 - Other Disciplines: \$4,700 per academic year.
- Travel Allowance:

Students are provided with an annual travel allowance of \$500, paid at the commencement of the academic year. This allowance is intended to assist students with travel costs to annual placements or rural electives. Medical students receive an additional \$500 annual allowance to attend training/professional conferences.

Payments commence from 1 January of the year in which the scholarship commences and cease on 31 December of the year in which the degree is completed.

All components of the financial assistance are taxable.

Annual Rural Placement

All scholarship holders must complete one annual rural placement per year, whilst receiving the scholarship allowance, for a period of two consecutive weeks. Annual rural placements must be done in different rural locations each year as per your contract obligations. Annual rural placements are designed to give scholarship holders a feel for working and living in a rural area. Rural health can be challenging and this is a way to experience living and working in a rural community.

Placement

Scholarship Holders are placed in a rural area to complete their bonded service. Rural is defined as anywhere west of the Great Dividing Range, not within 120km radius from the Brisbane GPO which includes Gold Coast, Sunshine Coasts and outside the Rockhampton, Toowoomba, and Townsville and Cairns metropolitan regions for the purposes of the Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme.

Scholarship Support:

Qld Health offer a range of support measures to assist scholarship holders including:

- A support network of rural health advisors and past scholars.
- Regular teleconferences.
- E-Newsletters.
- Assist with the transition from university to work.
- Funding to attend conferences.
- Availability of a Case Manager to discuss any issues.
- Membership and funding to University Rural Health Clubs.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I want to move, my circumstances change or I need to defer?

There is flexibility with the scholarship scheme. A Contract variation can be prepared when scholarship holders wish to defer or extend their contract in some way, this can be at an undergraduate or post graduate level. At an undergraduate level, an extension may be given with or without additional financial assistance. At a post graduate level a deferral or extension will vary the length of the return of service period therefore a contract variation is required. A contract variation is required for any reason that varies the original contract signed at the commencement of the scholarship. Each circumstance is assessed by the Principal Workforce Planning Officer for the Office of Rural Health

Can I still work while I am at university?

Yes. Remember your financial assistance is fully taxable and there may be some tax implications, you will need to look at.

Can I apply for a Scholarship if I am not at a Queensland University.

Yes. However you must do an annual rural placement in Queensland each year and after graduation you will be placed at a Qld Health Facility to work out your bonded period of service.

What happens if I fail a subject?

Some allowance is made for students to repeat subjects. In this instance you may require a contract variation, with an extension of your financial assistance and bonded service period.

When will my scholarship payments commence/cease?

Payments commence from 1st January in the year the scholarship is awarded and continue until the 31st December in the year of graduation.

When will I receive my tertiary grant payments?

50% of your tertiary grant will be paid to you at the commencement of the academic year and 50% to be paid on or before 31 July of each year.

Can my tertiary grant be paid in fortnightly instalments?

No. Tertiary grant payments are paid in two lump sum payments.

Does the Office of Rural Health pay my Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) fees?

No. The tertiary grant is recommended to be used to help pay your HECS fees, but it is entirely up to you how you spend it.

Will the scholarship payments affect my Centrelink payments?

Yes. As the Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme guarantee's you employment, your financial assistance is classed as taxable income. You will need to contact your local Centrelink office to discuss how it will affect you.

Why are the scholarship payments taxed?

The financial assistance received is taxed due to the guarantee of employment.

Can I do my annual rural placement within my university clinical placement period?

Yes. Provided it is in a designated rural area. Queensland Health may be able to provide free accommodation for placements undertaken during vacation periods if available.

Does my annual rural placement have to be completed in a hospital?

No. The idea of the annual rural placement is to get a feel for rural practice, so placements with private practitioners in rural and remote areas are allowed. It may be much more difficult for you to arrange accommodation if you choose this option.

Do I have to do annual rural placements and contracted service time within Queensland?

Yes. All of your annual rural placements and contracted bonded period of service time must be served in Queensland. The intent of the annual rural placement is to give students realistic expectations of rural Queensland facilities and to build networks for future reference.

How does the placement process work? Who decides where I go for my bonded period of service? Do I have a say in where I will be placed for my bonded period of service?

Rural health service districts within Queensland provide the Office of Rural Health information on vacancies within their districts in approximately August of each year. A preference list is then forwarded to scholarship holders to preference where they would like to go. A working group then consider all preferences and makes placement decisions in consultation with scholarship holders.

When do I find out where I am going for my bonded period of service?

You will find out where you will be going for your bonded period of service in approximately late October of the year you graduate.

Does my intern year count towards my bonded period of service?

Yes. For medical scholars their intern year counts towards their bonded service.

Does Queensland Health pay for my removal costs?

Yes. Health service districts will pay for your removal costs when re-locating for your bonded period of service in conjunction with individual district policies. Relocation arrangements and expenses must be negotiated and pre-approved by the respective district manager prior to relocation.

