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| Inclusion scholarships for social work placements |
| Program guidelines |
| **OFFICIAL** |

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# Background

The Victorian Government is supporting future social workers by making it easier for students to complete mandatory practical placements. Placements are a vital stage of the social work student journey, giving students the experience they need to be work-ready graduates.

The Inclusion scholarships for social work placements (placement scholarships) will help reduce the financial burden of placements for students who need this support most, supporting them to finish their degrees and start their careers.

These program guidelines detail how the Placement scholarships program will work, including eligibility criteria and the application and payment process. These guidelines also include terms and conditions and a privacy statement. Applicants should read this information in full. Appendices 1 and 2 include definitions of key terminology and eligibility criteria.

# How the program will work

This program is funded by the Victorian Government, and administered by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), the Department of Government Services (DGS), and the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR).

The Placement scholarships will be available for domestic students completing their placements in 2024 or 2025.

Placement scholarships of $7,500 are available to eligible students undertaking their placement as part of completion of an accredited Bachelor or Master of Social Work at an eligible Victorian public university.

The program will support Victorians who face more barriers to completing their degree or who are underrepresented in the community services workforce. The opportunity to apply for a Placement scholarship is open to:

* People from disadvantaged financial backgrounds
* People with experience of engaging with social or community services
* Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
* Refugees and people from multicultural backgrounds
* People who identify as LGBTIQA+
* People with disability
* People with caring responsibilities, including single parents, and people caring for a person with disability, a person with chronic health conditions or mental illness, or a person who is frail or aged
* People living in regional and rural areas of Victoria or defined border communities, as detailed in Appendix 2.

Placement scholarships are limited and eligible applicants are not guaranteed a scholarship. Applications will be assessed according to the eligibility criteria. Priority will be given to applicants that meet at least one from each of the socio-economic and demographic criteria detailed in the eligibility section.

Successful applicants will receive their Placement scholarship over two payments. The first payment of $4,000 will be made following the university census date for the semester in which they are undertaking their placement. The second payment of $3,500 will be made at a mid-placement milestone.

## Key dates

The first Placement scholarship round will be open to people undertaking placements in early 2024. Later Placement scholarships rounds will support people undertaking placements in mid to late 2024 and in 2025.

### Round one dates

For placements commencing after 1 January 2024 and before 30 June 2024.

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| Stage | Dates |
| Applications open | 13 November 2023 |
| Applications close | 10 December 2023 |
| Notification of application outcomes | By 22 January 2024 |
| Payments | First payment following the March 2024 university census date; second payment at a mid-placement milestone |

### Indicative dates for later rounds

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| Placement semesters | Timeline |
| Applications for people completing placements in mid-late 2024 open | Early April 2024 (for four weeks) |
| Applications for people completing placements in early 2025 | Early November 2024 (for four weeks) |
| Applications for people completing placements in mid-late 2025 open | Early April 2025 (for four weeks) |

Application dates for later rounds will be confirmed on the website [Inclusion scholarships for social work placements](http://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/inclusion-scholarships-social-work-placements) <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/inclusion-scholarships-social-work-placements> at least four weeks prior to applications opening.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for a Placement scholarship you must be all of the following.

* A domestic student. For the purposes of the Placement 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
* Enrolled in a Bachelor or Master of Social Work degree that is accredited by the Australian Association of Social Workers. Accredited degrees are provided by the following Victorian public universities:
  + Deakin University
  + Federation University
  + La Trobe University
  + Monash University
  + RMIT University
  + University of Melbourne
  + Victoria University
* Undertaking a mandatory practical placement as part of your university course requirements in either 2024 or 2025
* A current Victorian resident or resident of a defined border community (see Appendix 2), and
* Meet socio-economic and demographic criteria detailed in the section below.

### Socio-economic and demographic eligibility

To be eligible for a Placement scholarship you must meet one or more of the following socio-economic and demographic criteria.

Socio-economic criteria:

* Disadvantaged financial background
* Experience of engaging with social or community services

Demographic criteria:

* Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
* Refugees and people from multicultural backgrounds
* People who identify as LGBTIQA+
* People with disability
* People with caring responsibilities, including single parents, and people caring for a person with disability, a person with chronic health conditions or mental illness, or a person who is frail or aged
* Live in regional or rural Victoria or defined border communities

Appendix 1 includes more detail on eligibility criteria and defines key terms. Appendix 2 details the defined border communities.

### Ineligible applicants

The following students are ineligible for a Placement scholarship:

* Students who are studying the Master of Social Work (Child and Family Practice) as part of the Switch to Social Work program
* Social work students receiving scholarships through the Victorian Government Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Scholarships Program
* Students receiving an academic scholarship through another organisation, including a university, that is valued at over $7,500 per year.

### Eligibility to receive payments

As part of the application process, you must accept and agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of the Placement scholarships program as stated in the application form and these guidelines.

If your application is successful, you will be notified via email. You will be required to respond to this email within a specified time frame, indicating your acceptance of the Placement scholarship offer. Your response will form an agreement between you and the Victorian Government on the terms contained in your application form and these guidelines.

Following a successful outcome of your application:

* An initial payment of $4,000 will be made following:
  + the university census date in the semester you are undertaking your placement (either 2024 or 2025), and
  + confirmation from your university that you are undertaking a placement in that semester
* A second payment of $3,500 will be made following confirmation from your university that you have met a specified mid-placement milestone.

If you withdraw from your program of study following the census date or take a leave of absence in accordance with your university’s policy, you may not be able to claim both payments, and may be required to return payments.

In special circumstances, consideration may be given to holding the Placement scholarship place for recipients who have had to take a leave of absence from their placement. The scholarship recipient will be responsible for providing sufficient reasons or evidence to be considered as a special case. In such cases, the decision to hold the Placement scholarship will be at the complete discretion of DFFH.

## How to apply

You must apply online at the website [Inclusion scholarships for social work placements](http://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/inclusion-scholarships-social-work-placements) <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/inclusion-scholarships-social-work-placements>. Applications must be submitted by the Placement scholarships closure dates published on the program website.

You must provide the following information and documentation in support of your application:

* name of your educational institution and program of study
* student ID number from your educational institution
* Unique Student Identifier number
* your current Victorian or defined border community residential address

The eligible student must be the person who applies for the Placement 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 permanent resident or humanitarian visa

If proof of identity is unable to be confirmed, you will receive a follow-up email with instructions on how to provide their proof of identity details. You may also be asked to provide proof of address, if this is unable to be determined through the identify verification process.

All information provided will be used to assess your application, and/or support implementation and monitoring of the program.

## How applications will be assessed

You will be required to confirm that you meet the eligibility criteria at the time of application, including by attesting that you have provided full and accurate information as part of your application. You will be asked to confirm that information remains accurate when you accept the Placement scholarship.

DFFH is the final decision maker for all applications.

Placement scholarships are limited and eligible applicants are not guaranteed a scholarship. Applications will be assessed using the information and evidence you provide and evaluated according to the eligibility criteria. Priority will be given to applicants that meet at least one from each of the socio-economic and demographic criteria detailed in the eligibility section and in Appendices 1 and 2.

As part of this process, any information provided by an applicant may be shared and subject to verification by eligible education providers, the Australian Government Department of Education and Department of Home Affairs, and Victorian Government departments including DFFH, DGS, and DJSIR.

Universities will be asked to provide administrative information on your placement, including that you are undertaking a placement, that your placement has commenced, and that you continue to participate in your placement over the course of the semester. Universities will not be asked to provide information about your university results or progress, or to provide any advice on your suitability for a scholarship. The specific socio-economic and demographic information that you provide will not be shared with universities.

You may be requested to provide further information to assist in the assessment of your application or a claim for payment if your application is successful. The Victorian Government reserves the right to refuse an application or claim for payment 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 for payment of the Placement scholarship cannot be supported.

# Terms and conditions

Placement scholarships are provided as financial support for students when undertaking mandatory practical placements. If you receive a Placement scholarship, you are responsible for commencing and successfully completing your placement in line with course requirements and in the timeframes specified to remain eligible for Placement scholarship payments. Receiving a Placement scholarship does not guarantee a placement. You are responsible for securing a placement through the processes established by your university.

If you receive a Placement scholarship but are unable to secure a placement for reasons outside of your control or need to defer or withdraw from your placement for reasons outside your control, the Placement scholarship may be held for you up to December 2025 for you to complete the placement within that period. These types of special circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis, are at the absolute discretion of DFFH, and will be subject to confirmation from your university.

If you do not comply with the terms and conditions of the Placement scholarship, you may be required to repay any amount paid to you.

The terms and conditions of the Placement scholarship are contained in these guidelines and the Inclusion scholarships for social work placements application form.

Your application will constitute an offer to the State. If the State accepts your application, it will issue an email of acceptance confirming its acceptance of your offer. If this occurs, an agreement will be formed between you and the State (the Placement scholarship agreement) which incorporates:

* the email of acceptance
* these guidelines and
* your completed application

By submitting your completed application, you consent to DGS and/or DFFH 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 DFFH, DGS and DJSIR.

By accepting a Placement scholarship, you are also consenting to your application information being utilised in monitoring and evaluation of the program.

Applications and claims for Placement scholarship payments 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 Placement scholarship to determine whether the application and information provided during the term of the Placement scholarship was accurate and complete, consistent with these program guidelines.

DFFH may, at any time, remove your application from the assessment process or terminate a scholarship agreement if, in the department’s opinion, you may bring the department, a Minister or the Victorian Government into disrepute.

You are responsible for informing the Placement scholarships program via email of any changes to your circumstances, including:

* changes to contact details, such as address, mobile number, email and bank account details
* significant changes to your enrolment, such as withdrawal or deferral from your placement or course.

## 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 are found to be false, misleading or fraudulent the amount of scholarship funding paid to you under the Placement scholarship will be repayable on demand. The Victorian Government reserves the right to take further action, including referring the Placement scholarship recipient to the relevant law enforcement agency. Providing inaccurate, untrue, or misleading information may be an offence and serious penalties may apply.

## Program surveys and evaluation

By accepting a Placement scholarship, you are consenting to your application information being utilised for monitoring and evaluation of the program. You are also agreeing to receive requests to participate in additional evaluation activities, such as to complete survey questions or participate in interviews or focus groups. These requests may be made for a period of up to three years after applying for a Placement scholarship. All information utilised in monitoring and evaluation will be deidentified and treated in accordance with the privacy statement detailed below.

# Privacy statement

In applying for a Placement scholarship you will be providing personal, sensitive and health information which will be collected and used by DGS and DFFH as the program administrators. Your personal, sensitive and health information is collected for the purpose of assessing eligibility, administering claims and payments and other functions necessary for the effective delivery of the program, including monitoring and evaluation.

By applying for a Placement scholarship, you consent to the sharing of information as outlined in the Terms and Conditions section above and in the application form. DGS or DFFH, as program administrators may contact you to clarify your submitted information, and for program review, reporting, monitoring, audit and evaluation purposes.

DGS and DFFH 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, sensitive and health information provided in your application, your supporting evidence and any claim or payment forms.

As part of application verification and to enable payment of Placement scholarships, DGS and/or DFFH will share your personal, sensitive and health information with other Victorian and Commonwealth Government agencies such as the Commonwealth Department of Education, the Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs, and DJSIR. As part of the verification process, the DGS and/or DFFH will contact your education provider to confirm your placement enrolment, commencement and other placement related milestones.

Personal, sensitive and health information, including demographic information, that is collected as part of the application process will be utilised to assess your eligibility. Deidentified demographic information may also be used for evaluation and reporting purposes on behalf of the Victorian Government. No identifying information is used in reporting; all reports will be presented with aggregated data.

Other than as set out in these guidelines, your personal, sensitive and health information will not be shared with any other external parties, without your consent, unless otherwise authorised or required by law. In the circumstances your information is shared with external parties apart from those listed above, DGS and/or DFFH will use best endeavours to inform you of the nature and purpose of sharing that information prior to doing so.

If there is an intention to include personal, sensitive or health information about a third party in the application, you must ensure the third party is aware of and consents to the contents of this privacy statement.

Any personal, sensitive or health information that you provide about yourself, 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), the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic), the Public Records Act 1973 (Vic) and other applicable laws.

If you do not provide all the information requested of you, your application may be unable to proceed.

You have the right to request access to your personal, sensitive or health information that is collected at any time. If you identify information that is incorrect, you may request for it to be corrected.

For enquiries about access to, or correction of, your personal information you can [email the Placement scholarships team](mailto:email%20the%20Placement%20scholarships%20team) at <placement.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au>. If you have concerns regarding your privacy and/or how your personal, sensitive or health information has been used, please [email the Department of Government Services](mailto:privacy@dgs.vic.gov.au) at <privacy@dgs.vic.gov.au>.

# Other information

It is strongly recommended when you are considering applying for a Placement scholarship that you obtain relevant professional advice on any impact that the payment of a Placement scholarship may have on your tax liability or any other benefits paid under an Australian Government scheme, such as Austudy, ABSTUDY, aged, disability or carer allowances and pensions.

Students who receive academic scholarships not funded by the Victorian Government may be eligible to apply for a Placement scholarship. If you are the recipient of another scholarship, it is recommended that you review the terms of your existing scholarship and the impact of receiving the Placement scholarship, if you were to be successful, prior to applying.

DFFH 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 Placement scholarships website or by email to applicants and recipients).

# Contact

Please review the frequently asked questions and program guideline appendices if you have questions or require further detail. You can also [email the Placement scholarships team](mailto:email%20the%20Placement%20scholarships%20team) at <placement.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au> with Placement scholarships queries.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Key terms and definitions

| Term | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| Accredited social work degree | The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is the accreditation body for social work degrees in Australia. Only degrees accredited by the AASW are in scope for this program. All accredited courses can be viewed at [Accredited courses | AASW](https://www.aasw.asn.au/education-employment/higher-education-providers/accredited-courses/) <https://www.aasw.asn.au/education-employment/higher-education-providers/accredited-courses/> |
| Border community Resident | A person who lives at an address in a border community defined at Appendix 2 for the majority of the time. |
| Disadvantaged financial background | Applicants fall under this criterion if they currently receive a government pension, allowance or benefit, or have a current Services Australia Health Care Card. |
| Domestic student | A student who is an:   * an Australian citizen * a New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand) * an Australian permanent resident or * an Australian permanent humanitarian visa holder. |
| Eligible Victorian public university | Eligible public universities are:   * Deakin University * Federation University * La Trobe University * Monash University * RMIT University * University of Melbourne * Victoria University. |
| Mandatory practical placement, or placement | The mandatory field education component of an accredited social work degree. Students must successfully complete a minimum of 1,000 hours in at least two field education subjects. At least one placement must be direct practice, as opposed to a research or policy based placement. This document uses ‘practical placement’ to describe a direct practice placement. |
| Person with disability | The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) defines disability in relation to a person as follows:   * Total or partial loss of the person’s bodily or mental functions, or * Total or partial loss of a part of the body, or * The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness, or * The presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness, or * The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body, or * A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning different from a person without the disorder or malfunction, or * A disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or that results in disturbed behaviour. |
| Person with caring responsibilities as defined by Commonwealth Carer Recognition Act | The Carer Recognition Act 2010 (Cth) defines a carer as an individual who provides personal care, support and assistance to another individual who needs it because that other individual:   * has a disability, or * has a medical condition (including a terminal or chronic illness), or * has a mental illness, or * is frail and aged   An individual is not a carer in respect of care, support and assistance they provide:   * under a contract of service or a contract for the provision of services or * in the course of doing voluntary work for a charitable, welfare or community organisation, or * as part of the requirements of a course of education or training.   The Placements Scholarship program also includes single parents in scope of person with caring responsibilities. |
| Refugee or multicultural background | * A person who has been a refugee in Australia or elsewhere, or * A person who is the child of someone who has been a refugee, or * A person who was born in a non-English speaking country, or * A person who is the child of someone who was born in a non-English speaking country * A person who speaks a primary language other than English at home |
| Regional or rural Victoria | Residents of the following regional and rural local government areas:   * Alpine * Ararat * Ballarat * Bass Coast * Baw Baw * Benalla * Buloke * Campaspe * Central Goldfields * Colac Otway * Corangamite * East Gippsland * Gannawarra * Glenelg * Golden Plains * Greater Bendigo * Greater Geelong * Greater Shepparton * Hepburn * Hindmarsh * Horsham * Indigo * Latrobe * Loddon * Macedon Ranges * Mansfield * Mildura * Mitchell * Moira * Moorabool * Mount Alexander * Moyne * Murrindindi * Northern Grampians * Pyrenees * Queenscliff * South Gippsland * Southern Grampians * Strathbogie * Surf Coast * Swan Hill * Towong * Wangaratta * Warrnambool * Wellington * West Wimmera * Wodonga * Yarriambiack |
| Social and community services | The terms social and community services can be used to describe a broad range of community-based services targeted at address disadvantage or vulnerability experienced by people or communities, including:   * Child and family services, including child protection and out of home care * Disability services, including those funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme, WorkSafe or the Transport Accident Commission * Family violence response services and perpetrator interventions * Sexual assault services * Social housing (including public and community housing) and homelessness services * Services for Aboriginal people and communities delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations * Community mental health services * Alcohol and other drugs services * Youth justice services |
| University 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 resident | A person who lives at a Victorian address for the majority of the time. |

## Appendix 2: Border communities

Defined border communities are local government areas in New South Wales and South Australia.

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

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| To receive this document in another format, phone 03 9500 7022, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email or [email the Department of Government Services](mailto:placement.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au) <placement.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au>.  Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.  © State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, November 2023.  In this document, ‘Aboriginal’ refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Koori/Koorie’ is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.  ISBN/ISSN 978-1-76130-431-6  Available at [Inclusion scholarships for social work placements](http://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/inclusion-scholarships-social-work-placements) <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/inclusion-scholarships-social-work-placements> |