



## Purpose

West Wimmera Health Service is committed to the consistent delivery of safe and high quality healthcare. This policy is a means of demonstrating this commitment through detailing what is required in relation to offering financial and/or other assistance to Service employees with the aim of continuing to meet the Service's ongoing objective to attract and retain high-performing employees.

Further, the policy aims to ensure a fair and equitable process is in place that allows prospective employees to apply for and potentially enjoy the significant financial benefits associated with a bursary on an equal footing with other prospective employees (if applicable).

As such, any decision made to approve a bursary must be based solely on the expected future benefits it will provide to the Service. Other factors including personal relationships or specific attributes or skills of the employee that have no direct relation to the furtherance of the outcomes of this policy or the Service's objectives in general must not be taken into consideration (refer Conflict of Interest Policy for further guidance in this regard).

## Target Audience

Prospective Service Employees

## Policy/Guideline

### Application of Policy

This policy applies to all prospective West Wimmera Health Service employees. Current Service employees seeking financial and/or other assistance to undertake further study should refer to the Service's Bursary Policy for Current Service Employees.

Relevant study can include TAFE Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, or Associate Degrees, University Degrees and University Post Graduate courses but will generally be a bachelor's degree obtained from an accredited university allowing the prospective employee to practice in particular field or specialty at the Service.

### Outcomes

This policy aims to:

- materially enhance the Service's ability to attract appropriately qualified employees to enable it to continue to meet the ongoing requirements of its service profile.
- materially assist the Service to retain appropriately qualified personnel to enable it to continue to meet the ongoing requirements of its service profile.
- increase the number of potential bursary applicants so as to enable the Service to choose between competing bursary candidates to increase the likelihood that higher performing individuals will be selected.

### Pre-Requisites for Bursary Approval

- There is a reasonable likelihood that during the short to medium term (i.e. out to five years from current) that the Service will experience difficulty in recruiting high performing and/or sufficient numbers of specific employee types to be able to meet the requirements of its service profile. That is, bursaries should generally only be offered to prospective employees when it can be reasonably expected that there will be a definite future need for employees with their particular qualification.



- The availability of the bursary must be sufficiently advertised in appropriate media / locations including all of the following unless not reasonably practical or cost-effective to do so:
  - At least two universities at which the relevant course of study is offered
  - Local newspapers
  - Local schools
  - Professional magazines / websites
  - Social media including the Service’s Facebook page
  - The Service’s website
  - The Service’s intranet
  - By internal email to all Service employees (given the large number of Service employees it is not unlikely that they will be aware of a potentially interested prospective employee).
- The bursary applicant’s previous academic results are considered of reasonably high standard
- There are and will be sufficient funds available to meet the current and projected financial impost on the Service associated with the financial support it agrees to provide to the applicant.

Support Available

The following support benefits are applicable to approved recipients of a Service bursary on the provision that they have passed all subjects studied:

- Payment / reimbursement of up to 50% of course fees up to a maximum yearly total of \$7,000.
- Payment / reimbursement of required text books and learning aids up to a maximum of \$1,000 per year.

No payment / reimbursement will be made for any subject that is repeated due to it having been previously failed.

Any payment / reimbursement must only be made after having due regard to the annual training budget of the Service department in which the prospective employee will work and also the annual total training budget of the Service as a whole. i.e. if making the payment is likely to cause the Department’s and/or the Service’s annual training budget to be exceeded by the end of the relevant financial year then this may be used as a reason to decline an approval of financial support either in full or in part.

Method of Payment / Reimbursement

- Payment may be made directly by the Service to the education provider; and/or
- Payment may be made as a reimbursement to the prospective employee if they have already paid the education provider; and/or
- Payment may be made directly to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) on behalf of the prospective employee as a reduction of any student loan arising out of the study course and registered with the ATO through the education provider.
- Any payment / reimbursement must only be made upon presentation to the Service of written evidence that such expenses have been incurred e.g. copies of invoices from the education provider; transcript of results; HELP/HECS fee statements.

Timing of Support

The length of the course of study (full time) will determine the length of service the applicant will be expected to continue working with the Service after their date of commencement as an employee with

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the Service i.e. for a 3 year course (full time) the applicant will be expected to work for at least three (full time) years with the Service.

Payment / reimbursement for course fees up to the maximum amount allowed will be made as follows:

- 50% paid / reimbursed within a reasonable period of time after the commencement of each subject.
- Upon successful completion of the course of study the remaining 50% of the agreed bursary amount for each year of study will be paid after the completion of a further 1,976 hours of service.

For example, for a 3 year course of study:

- the 50% remaining to be paid / reimbursed that relates to the first year of study will become payable after 1,976 hours worked following completion of the whole course of study.
- the 50% remaining to be paid / reimbursed that relates to the second year of study will become payable after 3,952 hours worked following completion of the whole course of study.
- the 50% remaining to be paid / reimbursed that relates to the third year of study will become payable after 5,928 hours worked following completion of the whole course of study.
- Payment / reimbursement of text books and learning aids will be made in full upon receipt of a prompt payment request with relevant invoices and evidence of payment attached.

**Requirement to Repay WWHS if Bursary Requirements not Fulfilled**

Any amounts paid or reimbursed will be subject to repayment by the prospective employee to the Service in the event of the termination of the prospective employee’s training course or their employment with the Service before the completion of the amount of hours of service equivalent to the course of study (in full time service).

For example, for a 3 year course of study if the employee works 1,976 hours of service (including annual leave hours and accrued days off hours taken but not including any other types of leave) after the end of the course but then their employment is terminated, they will be required to repay the Service any payments / reimbursements made that relate to the remaining two years of their course of study, in full.

In the event the prospective employee’s training course is terminated for reasons outside the prospective employee’s control, the Service may, at its discretion, waive all or part of the requirement by the employee to repay any of the above amounts.

In the event that the prospective employee / employee may suffer undue financial hardship as a result of having re repay any amount to the Service, the Service may, at its discretion, waive all or part of the requirement by the prospective employee / employee to repay any of the above amounts.

**Bursary Application and Approval Process**

Applicants must apply for bursary assistance by responding in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the Service’s advertisement of the availability of the bursary.

Each year the People and Culture Manager will coordinate the process to determine what bursaries the Service may offer in the coming year. This process should commence at the start of November. Unsolicited bursary applications are to be discouraged but prospective employees who apply in this manner should be encouraged to remain alert to any bursary opportunities advertised in future by the Service.



The purpose of the above requirement is to reduce, as far as is reasonably practicable, the likelihood that prospective employees are denied the opportunity to apply for a particular bursary only because they were not aware it was on offer. This should also assist in minimising any future claims against the Service of favouritism of one prospective employee over others.

Bursary applications are to be assessed by a panel consisting of at least the relevant Manager and the People and Culture Manager. The relevant Executive Director may also sit on the panel at their discretion.

Where three or less applicants have applied for the same bursary, all three applicants must be interviewed by the panel.

Where four or more applicants have applied then the panel may agree on a shortlist of applicants for interview.

Interviews should be conducted in general accordance with the Service’s guidelines for interviewing prospective employees.

Applications must be compared on an objective basis with the highest scoring applicant to be awarded a bursary.

Factors to be taken into account when comparing applications include:

- Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) score
- Interview skills
- Leadership skills
- Communication skills
- Any other reasonable factors agreed by the panel to be relevant

Upon agreeing on the which applicant to recommend should be awarded the bursary, the panel must then submit a written recommendation to the Chief Executive Officer providing all relevant detail in relation to the recommendation.

Upon approval or non-approval by the Chief Executive Officer applicants will then be notified in writing of the outcome of their application.

The successful applicant must then provide the People and Culture Manager with an annual update of progress towards completion of their course. Any changes to the expected completion date, or other changes relating to progress including deferral or withdrawal must be notified to the People and Culture Manager within seven days of them occurring.

Late applications will not be considered unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated to the satisfaction of the relevant Executive Director.

Other Funding

In the event the bursary recipient becomes entitled to funding to meet part or all of the cost of the their course from another source they must declare this to the Service within seven days of becoming aware of the entitlement to receive such funding.

The Service may elect to reduce the total amount of financial assistance to the bursary recipient by an amount equal to the excess (if any) of the other funding over the bursary recipient’s expected share of the cost of the course of study.



For example, if the bursary recipient's total share of the cost of the course is \$10,000 and they receive funding from another source towards the course totalling \$12,000, the Service may reduce its level of total financial assistance by \$2,000.

Overriding Authority of Service

The Service retains, for whatever reason or reasons it considers appropriate, full discretion and final decision making authority in relation to the amount and timing of any support offered under this policy as well as any requirement by the prospective employee to repay to the Service any monies previously paid / reimbursed by the Service in relation to their course of study.

**Linked P&P's**

- [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
- [Bursary Policy for Current Service Employees](#)

**Contributors**

	Name	Position	Service / Program
<b>Lead Reviewer:</b>		Chief Executive Officer	People & Culture
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<b>Committee/s:</b>	Board of Directors		21/08/2019