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| Allied Health & Alcohol and Other Drug Postgraduate Scholarship Program |

Application guide – semester 2, 2025 and semester 1, 2026 course enrolment

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# 1. Background

## 1.1. About the program

*Victoria’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024* ([The Strategy](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/mental-health-workforce-strategy)) was released in 2021 in response to Recommendation 57 of the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System.

To support the implementation of the Strategy, the Victorian Department of Health (the Department of Health) is delivering a scholarship program for mental health allied health (AH) professionals and alcohol and other drug (AOD) workers in Victoria, the Allied Health & Alcohol and Other Drug Postgraduate Scholarship program (AH & AOD Scholarship).

The AH & AOD Scholarship is designed to support eligible allied health and AOD workers to undertake postgraduate studies in semester 2, 2025 and semester 1, 2026 that support the development of their mental health or AOD practice.

The AH & AOD Scholarship will provide up to $13,000 to contribute to the course fees of eligible postgraduate courses.

The AH & AOD Scholarship is funded by the Department of Health and administered on behalf of the State of Victoria by the Department of Government Services.

These program guidelines explain how the AH & AOD Scholarship works, including:

* Eligibility criteria
* How to apply
* Grant value
* How the grants are assessed
* The payment process.

The guidelines also include terms and conditions, and a privacy statement.

Applicants should read this information in full. Appendix 1 includes definitions of key terminology.

## 1.2. Program objectives

The AH & AOD Scholarship will be available to mental health allied health professionals and AOD practitioners working in a state funded mental health and wellbeing or AOD service who are enrolled (or intending to enrol) in an eligible course in semester 2, 2025 and/or semester 1, 2026.

The objectives of the program are:

* To build workers’ capabilities to deliver high quality interventions that are aligned with the reforming mental health and wellbeing system and/or AOD sector.
* To build workers’ skills so that their mental health and/or AOD practice meets the needs and preferences of consumers, families, carers and supporters who use these services.
* To support and improve workforce retention by providing opportunities to upskill in a particular area of practice and increase their prospects for career development and progression.
* To support workers to deliver diverse and contemporary treatment or therapies, care and support.

To assist in promoting a diverse workforce as recommended by the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQA+, workers with disabilities and culturally diverse workers are strongly encouraged to apply.

# 2. Program details

## 2.1. Available funding

The AH & AOD Scholarship will provide up to $13,000 to successful applicants to contribute towards eligible course fees. There are approximately 70 scholarships available for this round. Fifty scholarships are available for allied health professionals and twenty for AOD practitioners, reflecting the size disparity between the two workforces.

Successful applicants can use the scholarship for any postgraduate qualification level (including Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Master or Doctorate) in courses that support the development of their mental health and/or AOD practice.

You will be required to indicate the approximate cost of the course associated with your chosen qualification.

Successful applicants will receive two payments per year for up to four years or up to a maximum total of $13,000, whichever occurs first. Applicants will be required to submit a claim and any required information to receive payments.

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| **Funding component** | **Date** | **Funding amount** |
| First yearly payment | June 2026 | Grant funding will be equal to the applicant’s semester course fees (up to a maximum scholarship value of $13,000) |
| Second yearly payment | December 2026 | Grant funding will be equal to the applicant’s semester course fees (up to a maximum scholarship value of $13,000) |

## 2.2. Eligibility

### 2.2.1. Eligible applicants

To be eligible for an AH & AOD Scholarship, applicants must meet the following criteria:

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| **Applicant eligibility** | |
| 1 | Applicants must be an Australian citizen, New Zealand citizen, Australian permanent resident or humanitarian visa holder. |
| 2a | **Mental health allied health professionals**  The applicant must be directly employed in a state-funded mental health service (including those delivered by non-government organisations). Applicants must be qualified in one of the following disciplines:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * Art therapist | * Clinical pharmacist | | * Counsellor | * Dietician | | * Exercise physiologist | * Music therapist | | * Occupational therapist | * Physiotherapist | | * Psychologist | * Social worker | | * Speech pathologist | * Youth worker |   Please note,individuals qualified in the above allied health professions but working in generic, psychosocial, case management, education or leadership roles can apply. |
| 2b | **AOD practitioners**  The applicant must be working in a consumer facing role in a state-funded AOD service (including those delivered by non-government organisations). |
| 3 | Applicants must have at least two years cumulative experience working in their relevant discipline. |
| 4 | Applicants must be enrolled or intending to enrol in an eligible course that is being undertaken in semester 2, 2025 and/or semester 1, 2026.  *Please note, applicants who have commenced the eligible course prior to semester 2, 2025 are still eligible to apply, however scholarship payments will not be backdated for previous semesters.* |
| 5 | Applicants must be employed (or commencing employment) in a state-funded mental health service or AOD service and work at **0.5 FTE** or more. Movement between roles or services within the public mental health system is acceptable.  Please note, applicants are required to submit the following supporting documentation to verify employment details:   * A signed letter of offer or employment contract and; * A recent payslip from your employer (see Appendix 1 for further details). |

### 2.2.2. Course eligibility

Applicants must be enrolled or intending to enrol in an eligible course commencing in semester 2, 2025 or semester 1, 2026.

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| **Course eligibility** | |
| 1 | The course must classify as level 8 or higher under the [[Australian Qualifications Framework](https://www.aqf.edu.au/publication/aqf-second-edition)](https://www.aqf.edu.au/publication/aqf-second-edition). This includes:   * Graduate Certificates * Graduate Diplomas * Master’s degrees * Doctorates   Applicants should review the [program FAQs](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/allied-health-and-alcohol-and-other-drug-postgraduate-scholarship-program) for the list of priority courses. Courses that are not listed may still be deemed eligible by the Department of Health on review. |
| 2 | The course must be delivered by a university or [accredited higher education provider](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register) as outlined by the Australian Government’s Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). |
| 3 | The course must lead to a postgraduate qualification that enhances the applicant’s knowledge, skills, and capacity to provide effective mental health or alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment, care, or support. |
| 4 | The postgraduate qualification should either:   * Focus on front line/direct clinical practice skills * Build the necessary capability to confidently progress the applicant’s career across your sector and to influence positive change. |

### 2.2.3 Ineligible applicants

The following applicants are ineligible to receive an AH & AOD Scholarship if the below applies:

* Applicants who are receiving scholarships through any other Victorian Government funded scholarship program for course enrolment in 2025-26. This includes but is not limited to scholarships provided by the Hamilton Centre and Turning Point.

As part of this process, any information provided by an applicant may be shared and subject to verification by eligible education providers and Victorian Government departments including the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Department of Government Services and the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions.

### 2.2.4 Practice-based research degrees

Scholarships may be awarded for practice-based research degrees. If applying for a practice-based research degree, the degree must be focused on direct clinical skills. Theoretical research or other research that does not focus on clinical skills will not be considered as eligible.

### 2.2.5 Course duration and deferrals

Applicants may defer studies and remain eligible for the Scholarship. Applicants are required to advise the Department of Government Services at [**AHAOD.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au**](mailto:AHAOD.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au)to confirm deferral arrangements. The maximum completion timeframe under the AH & AOD Scholarship is four years, including deferrals and any leave of absence.

### 2.2.6 Transition of enrolment

Applicants that wish to transition between eligible courses (i.e. Graduate Program of Addictive Behaviours to the Master of Counselling (Alcohol and Drug Studies)) will remain eligible for the Scholarship provided continued eligibility is met. Applicants are required to advise the Department of Government Services at **AHAOD.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au** to confirm transition of enrolment details.

## 2.3. Program dates – 2025 Round

**Important dates for AH & AOD Scholarship 2025 Round**

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| **Status** | **Date** |
| Applications open: | 21 October 2025 at 11am |
| Applications close: | 19 November 2025 at 4pm |
| Application assessments: | January 2026 |
| Notification to applicants of scholarship outcome\*  \**Note that your outcome will be conditional on you continuing to meet eligibility criteria at the point of claim, following confirmation of your enrolment in an eligible program.* | February - March 2026 |
| Confirmation of course enrolment and continued eligibility. Eligible applicants will receive an invitation to submit a claim form. | May 2026 |
| First yearly payment: | June 2026 |
| Second yearly payment: | December 2026 |

### 2.3.1 Future rounds

This is the final round of the Allied Health & Alcohol and Other Drug Postgraduate Scholarship Program.

# 3. How the program works

## 3.1. How to apply

You must read these program guidelines and the [Frequently Asked Questions online](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/allied-health-and-alcohol-and-other-drug-postgraduate-scholarship-program) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/allied-health-alcohol-other-drug-postgraduate-scholarship-program> before applying.

You must [apply online](https://grants.business.vic.gov.au/PublicForm?id=ahaods-r1) <https://grants.business.vic.gov.au/PublicForm?id=ahaods-r1>. Applications must be submitted by 4pm on the closing date, 19 November 2025. Late applications will not be accepted.

You will be required to confirm that you meet the eligibility criteria at the time of application and the time of your claim assessment.

The applicant must be the person who applies for the grant and must provide proof of identity documentation. If proof of identity cannot be confirmed, you will receive a follow-up email with instructions.

Applicants will be required to provide a written response to the assessment criteria outlined in section 3.2.1.

### 3.1.1. Required documents and information

You may be required to provide the following documentation in support of your application:

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| **Document type** | **Description** |
| **Application Stage** | |
| Proof of identity | Submit one of the following:   * + Australian passport or New Zealand passport,   + Medicare card,   + Victorian driver licence or learner permit, or   + Foreign passport for those issued with an Australian visa. |
| Proof of enrolment | Submit the following:   * Unique Student Identifier (USI) number, and * Student ID number from your educational institution * If available, an official university letter confirming enrolment (i.e. Verification of Enrolment letter or Confirmation of Enrolment document) |
| Proof of employment | Submit the following:   * Signed letter of offer/employment contract * Recent payslip * Your role title * Your team name |
| **Claim Stage** | |
| Proof of course fees | Submit the following:   * An official Student Tax Invoice or Statement of Account for semester 2, 2025 or semester 1, 2026. * If required, an official university letter confirming enrolment (i.e. Verification of Enrolment letter or Confirmation of Enrolment document). |

## 3.2. Assessments

All applications will be assessed by Department of Government Services to verify applicant eligibility based on the information you provide in your application. This includes the confirmation of your employment with your Victorian public mental health service or AOD service.

An assessment panel led by the Department of Health will review and evaluate responses to the assessment criteria to determine successful applicants.

Scholarships are limited and eligible applicants are not guaranteed a scholarship.

You may be requested to provide further information to assist in assessment of your application or claim. The Victorian Government reserves in its absolute discretion the right to refuse an application or claim where:

* You do not meet the eligibility criteria
* You do not provide sufficient information in time for the Victorian Government to assess whether you meet the eligibility criteria.

### 3.2.1 Merit assessment criteria

Applicants will be assessed based on how well they meet the criteria outlined below.

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| Assessment criteria | |
| **Commitment and motivation to work in the public mental health sector.**  You are asked to respond to four questions regarding your commitment and motivation to work in the public mental health and/or AOD sector. Each response should be in the form of a 100–150 word statement. Each response is weighted equally.  Your responses should provide practical examples of how you intend to apply your learning in practice, including collaboration with service users, families, and carers. You may wish to include examples of:   * Influential experiences or individuals who shaped your decision. * Examples of working with consumers, carers, Allied Health (AH) professionals, Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) practitioners or lived/living experience workers. * A time you recognised the need for additional skills or knowledge to better support someone. * Explain how these experiences have shaped your commitment to the sector. | |
| **Question 1** | Why did you choose a career in the public mental health Allied Health (AH) or Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) workforce? |
| **Question 2** | Describe your ongoing commitment to working in the public Mental Health and/or AOD sector – please provide examples of your ongoing involvement, contributions, or advocacy within public mental health and/or AOD services and your career goals for the next 5-10 years. |
| **Question 3** | In what ways does the proposed course of study align with your professional development goals? Please explain how the course aligns with your interests, enhances your skills or prepares you for future roles or specialisations. |
| **Question 4** | How will your learning enhance outcomes for consumers, families, carers, and supporters? |

It is strongly encouraged that applicants have their assessment criteria responses reviewed and endorsed by a peer or senior manager prior to submitting their application.

We encourage all applicants to carefully consider their response to the assessment criteria, to ensure the use of appropriate, respectful and contemporary language, reflective of sector values.

**Artificial Intelligence (AI) Responses**

Reliance on AI generated responses is discouraged by the Department of Health. If AI is used, responses should be personalised to highlight your own professional or lived experiences and your own unique attributes as an applicant.

### 3.2.2 Weightings and Prioritisation

Eligible applicants will be prioritised for grants based on the criteria below. The Department of Health may adjust the allocation model to meet changing priorities over the life of the program.

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

* Applicants who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
* Applicants with disability
* Applicants with a Health Care Card (HCC) or Pension Card
* Applicants employed by a health service in regional or rural Victoria
* *For Allied Health applications* - Applicants who are completing courses which enhance consumer-facing clinical skills and/or courses which are aligned with the priorities set out in [Our Workforce Our Future](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/our-workforce-our-future/introduction), the Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Capability Framework.
* *For AOD applications* - Applicants who are completing courses which enhance consumer-facing clinical.
* Applicants who have not previously received a Postgraduate Mental Health Nurse Scholarship ([$3,000](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/3000-postgraduate-mental-health-nurse-scholarship-program) or [Full Course Scholarship](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/full-course-fee-postgraduate-mental-health-nurse-scholarship-program)) or an [AH & AOD Scholarship](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/allied-health-and-alcohol-and-other-drug-postgraduate-scholarship-program).

### 3.2.3 Assessment panel

The assessment panel will comprise of at least three members appointed by the Department of Health. Panel members will hold appropriate expertise including lived and living experience, AOD sector experience and/or allied health representation.

### 3.2.4 Scholarship application process

The AH & AOD Scholarship application and awarding process is outlined below:

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| **Step/Stage** | |  |
| 1 | **Application submission**  Applicant creates a grant portal account and submits application form.  Applicant will receive email acknowledgement of submission. | |
| 2 | **Applicant eligibility assessment**  Applicants are screened to ensure eligibility requirements are met, including eligibility of course, confirmation of employment, and FTE status. | |
| 3 | **Applicant prioritisation and weightings**  Additional weighting and prioritisation are provided to all eligible applicants. Please see section 3.2.2 for further information on the weightings and prioritisation. | |
| 4 | **Assessment panel**  Applicant written responses are assessed by the Department of Health led assessment panel. | |
| 5 | **Scholarship outcome**  Following the completion of the above assessments, applicants will be notified of the outcome of their scholarship in February – March 2026.  *Note that your outcome will be conditional on you continuing to meet the eligibility criteria at the point of claim, following confirmation of your enrolment in an eligible program and provision of a valid Student Tax Invoice or Statement of Account.* | |
| 6 | **Claim invitation and submission**  Following the semester 1 national census date of March 31st 2026, the Department of Government Services will confirm applicant enrolment using data from the Commonwealth Department of Education.  Successful applicants will receive an invitation to submit a claim form and evidence of their course fees in May 2026. | |
| 7 | **Scholarship payments**  Following claim form submission and assessment to confirm continued eligibility, successful applicants will receive the first scholarship payment in June 2026.  *This process will be repeated each semester until studies are completed or for up to 4 years and/or $13,000, whichever comes first.* | |

## 3.3 Grant agreement

If your application is deemed successful, you will be notified via email in February – March 2026.

This email forms an agreement between you and the Victorian Government, based on the terms contained in the application form and these guidelines.

## 3.4. Grant payments

If your application is successful, you will be asked to complete a claim form to receive payment. As part of this claim form, you will need to:

* Provide your bank account details
* Complete an attestation to confirm you are still meeting program eligibility requirements
* Provide an official student tax invoice or statement of account for the current semester/s **dated after the national census date of 31, March 2026.**

The Department of Government Services will review data from the Commonwealth Department of Education to verify course enrolment status each semester. You must, on request, provide updated information to confirm your continuing eligibility for payments (see section 2.2).

After completing the claim form and an assessment of your supporting documentation and continued eligibility, your payment will be processed. You will receive a notification confirming the amount you are eligible to receive (up to a maximum of $13,000). Payment will take **5-10 business days** from this notice.

Successful applicants will continue to be sent a claim form each semester while enrolled in eligible studies, or up to a maximum of four years and/or $13,000.

# 4. Terms and conditions

1. The Department of Health reserves the right to:
   1. Amend these guidelines and application terms at any time as it deems appropriate.
   2. Request additional information from applicants to support application assessment.
   3. End the program where allocated funding is exhausted.
   4. At any time, remove an applicant from the application assessment process or terminate an agreement if, in the Department of Health’s opinion, association with the applicant may bring the Department of Health, a minister or the Victorian Government into disrepute.
   5. Take further action, including clawing back grant monies paid or referring applicants to law enforcement or regulatory bodies if inaccurate, misleading or fraudulent conduct (as determined by the Department of Health in its discretion) is suspected. Providing inaccurate, untrue or misleading information may be an offence.
   6. Cancel the grant or payment following reasonable attempts to rectify your bank account details.
2. Decisions on all matters regarding the recommendation and awarding of grant funding is at the absolute discretion of the relevant minister and department.
3. Applications and claims may be subject to audit by the Victorian Government or its representatives for a period of up to 3 years following completion of your agreement to determine whether the application and information provided during the term of the agreement was compliant with the terms and conditions as stated in the application form, claim form and these guidelines.
4. Applicants who apply to the Program accept and agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of the Program as stated in these guidelines and the application form. By submitting an application form, applicants are making an offer to the Victorian Government and will be bound by the terms of the offer if accepted by the Victorian Government.

# 5. Privacy statement

1. To apply for the Program, applicants are required to provide personal and sensitive information. As the program administrator, the Department of Government Services will collect and use this information to:
   1. assess applications
   2. administer claims or payments
   3. other activities such as program monitoring and evaluation
   4. make referrals to law enforcement where fraud or other illegal activity is suspected
   5. support Victorian Government evaluation and reporting (where collected demographic data will be de-identified).
2. As part of application assessment and to enable payment processing, the Department of Government Services may share data provided with third parties and other Victorian Government departments for verification and program administration. These bodies may include:
   1. Department of Health, including:
      1. Your Victorian public mental health services, or state-funded AOD service employer,
   2. Department of Jobs, Skills, Industries and Regions,
   3. The Commonwealth Department of Education,
   4. Australian Government’s Document Verification Service (DVS), including:
      1. VicRoads
      2. Services Australia
      3. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
      4. Department of Home Affairs
   5. Third parties as required, such as law enforcement bodies
3. Unless otherwise outlined in these guidelines or the application from, data provided by you will not be shared with any other external parties without your consent, unless otherwise authorised or required by law. If your information is shared with external parties apart from those listed above, the Department of Government Services will use best endeavours to inform you of the nature and purpose of sharing that information before doing so.
4. 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 its correction.
5. A copy of our privacy statement is [available online](https://www.vic.gov.au/privacy-policy-department-government-services) <https://www.vic.gov.au/privacy-policy-department-government-services>. If you have concerns about your privacy and/or how your personal, sensitive or health information has been used, please email the Department of Government Services at [privacy@dgs.vic.gov.au](mailto:privacy@dgs.vic.gov.au)

# 6. Other information

## 6.1 Tax advice

We strongly recommend you get professional advice when you are considering applying for a grant. Find out about any impact that the grant may have on your tax liability, or any other benefits paid under an Australian Government scheme. These include:

* Austudy
* ABSTUDY
* Youth Allowance
* Aged, disability or carer allowances
* Pensions.

You may also seek advice from the Australian Tax Office on 1800 806 218 or visit the [ATO](http://www.ato.gov.au/) <www.ato.gov.au>.

## 6.2. Complaints

If you believe that your application or claim has been incorrectly assessed or paid, you can lodge a complaint. The complaint must be received within 60 days from the date the Department of Government Services notifies you of the outcome of your application or claim. If a complaint is not received withing 60 days, the decision will be final. Contact the Department of Government Services at **AHAOD.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au**

## 6.3. Contact information

For more information and support, please contact Department of Government Services at **AHAOD.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au**

# 7. Appendices

## 7.1. Appendix 1: Key terms and definitions

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| Key term | Definition |
| Allied health | Allied health professionals are autonomous practitioners who work collaboratively as part of effective teams alongside doctors, nurses and midwives and other professionals to provide holistic person-centred care. |
| Eligible applicants with disability | The [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)](https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/latest/text) 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. |
| Recent payslip | A payslip from within six weeks from application submission, from the employer indicating employment at a minimum of 0.5 FTE. |
| Regional or rural Victoria | Regional and rural service areas are defined as those classified as MM2 or higher under the Modified Monash Model. |
| Semester 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. |
| State-funded mental health service | A Victorian state funded mental health service (including those delivered by non-government organisations) refers to any organisation that receives funding from the Victorian Government to deliver mental health and wellbeing treatment, care and support. This includes public hospitals, specialist mental health services, local mental health and wellbeing services and other entities funded by the state to provide mental health care. |
| State funded non-government mental health service | Mental health services that are funded by the Victorian Government but delivered by non-government providers (community-based groups, charities, non-profit organisations). |
| State funded AOD service | A state-funded alcohol and other drugs service is a Victorina state funded facility that provides treatment and support for individuals affected by alcohol and drug use. |
| State-funded non-government AOD service | Alcohol and Other Drug services that are funded by the state, but delivered by non-government providers (i.e community-based groups, charities, non-profit organisations). |
| Our Workforce, Our Future - Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Capability Framework | Framework aiming to articulate the knowledge, skills and ways of working that a diverse, multidisciplinary and evolving workforce needs to deliver quality care, support and treatment in the mental health and wellbeing system. |

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