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| Inclusion scholarships for social work placements (Placement scholarships) |
| Round 3 Program guidelines  Last updated: 7 October 2024 |
| **OFFICIAL** |

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# [Background](#_top)

The Victorian Government is supporting future social workers to complete mandatory practical placements. Placements are a vital stage of the social work student journey. They give students the experience they need to be work-ready graduates.

The Inclusion scholarships for social work placements (Placement scholarships) will reduce the financial burden of placements for students needing support. The Placement scholarships will support students to finish their degrees and start their careers.

These program guidelines detail how the Placement scholarships program will work. They include 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](#_top)

The Victorian Government funds this program. It is administered by:

* the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
* the Department of Government Services (DGS)
* the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR).

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

Placement scholarships of $7,500 are available to eligible students. Students must be 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 using 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
  + people caring for a person with disability, a person with chronic health conditions or mental illness
  + people caring for 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. Preference will be given to applicants who can demonstrate that they meet multiple criteria from both the socio-economic and demographic areas. These criteria are 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
* after confirmation from the university that they have secured a placement.

You may receive your payment earlier, if you:

* commence your placement prior to the university census date
* are within the scholarship round timeframe
* have the university’s confirmation that the placement has commenced.

The second payment of $3,500 will be made at a mid-placement milestone.

### Round three dates

For placements commencing between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Priority will be given to applicants whose placements occur between 1 January – 30 June 2025.

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| Stage | Dates |
| Applications open | Monday 28 October 2024 |
| Applications close | 4pm, Monday 25 November 2024 |
| Notification of application outcomes | By Monday 20 January 2025 |
| Payments | First payment following either the March/April or August/September 2025 university Census date  University confirmation is required.  Second payment at a mid-placement milestone |

### Indicative round four dates

For placements commencing between 31 March 2025 to 31 December 2025

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| Applications open | Monday 31 March 2025 |
| Applications close | Wednesday 30 April 2025 (just over four weeks due to Easter) |

Application dates for Round 4 will be confirmed at least 4 weeks prior to applications opening on the [Inclusion scholarships for social work placements webpage](http://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/inclusion-scholarships-social-work-placements) <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/inclusion-scholarships-social-work-placements>.

# [Eligibility](#_top)

To be eligible for a Placement scholarship you must comply with all the following criteria:

* Be 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
* Undertaking a mandatory unpaid practical placement in 2025 as part of a Bachelor or Master of Social Work degree that is accredited by the Australian Association of Social Workers, provided by one of the following Victorian public universities:
  + Deakin University
  + Federation University
  + La Trobe University
  + Monash University
  + RMIT University
  + University of Melbourne
  + Victoria University
* Undertaking a mandatory unpaid practical placement as part of your university course requirements in 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 as the main service user of social or community services
* primary carer of a family member who is the main user of 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
  + people caring for a person with disability, a person with chronic health conditions or mental illness
  + people caring for 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:

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

### 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. The terms and conditions are 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, to accept 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 (2025), and
  + confirmation from your university that you have secured a placement in that semester

You may receive your payment earlier, if you:

* commence your placement prior to the university census date
* are within the scholarship round timeframe
* have the university’s confirmation that the placement has commenced.

A second payment of $3,500 will be made following confirmation from your university that you have met a specified mid-placement milestone.

#### Withdrawals

If you withdraw from your program of study during the timeframe of the scholarship round 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.

DFFH cannot hold, postpone or defer a scholarship. If a recipient is unable to start their nominated placement, they will need to withdraw their application. They may have to return any payments they have received.

#### Reapplying

A student who has previously applied for a scholarship under this program can apply again in future rounds if they remain eligible. Each new application will be assessed based on its own merit during the relevant application round. Placement scholarships are limited, not all eligible applicants are guaranteed to receive a scholarship.

If a student has previously received a scholarship for a specific placement period, they cannot apply for another scholarship for the same placement period.

# [How to apply](#_top)

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 as 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 student applying for the Placement scholarship must be the one who submits the application. They must provide one of the following current proof of identity documents with 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 we cannot verify your proof of identity, you will receive a follow up email with instructions on how to provide the necessary details. You might also be asked to provide proof of address, if it cannot be confirmed during 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](#_top)

When you apply, you will need to confirm that you meet the eligibility criteria. And you will need to confirm that all the information you provide is complete and accurate. When you accept a Placement scholarship offer, you will also need to confirm that the information is still correct.

DFFH will assess all applications based on the socio-economic and demographic eligibility criteria and make the final decision. Only de-identified application data is made available to DFFH.

Round 3 will be open to eligible applicants for placements between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Round 3 will prioritise eligible applicants who will be undertaking their placement between 1 January – 30 June 2025.

Indicative dates for the opening of Round 4 to eligible applicants undertaking placements will be between 31 March 2025 and 31 December 2025.

Placement scholarships are limited, and not all eligible applicants are guaranteed to receive a scholarship. Applications will be assessed based on the information and evidence you provide as per the eligibility criteria. Preference will be given to applicants who can demonstrate that they meet multiple criteria from both the socio-economic and demographic areas outlined in the eligibility section and in Appendices 1 and 2.

Any applicant who has previously applied for a scholarship under this program can apply again for rounds 3 and 4 if they remain eligible. Each new application will be assessed based on its own merit during the relevant application round.

As part of this process, any information you provide may be shared with and verified byL

* approved education providers
* the Australian Government Department of Education
* the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs
* Victorian Government departments including DFFH, DGS, and DJSIR.

Universities will be asked to provide administrative information on your placement. This includes confirming that you are undertaking the nominated placement, that you have started, and that you are continuing throughout the semester. Universities will not be asked to provide information about your academic results or progress. They will not be asked to assess your suitability for a scholarship. Additionally, the specific socio-economic and demographic information you provide will not be shared with universities.

If your application is successful, you may need to provide more information to help us process a payment claim. The Victorian Government reserves the right to refuse your application or payment claim if you do not meet the eligibility criteria, provide enough information on time, or if the payment claim cannot be supported.

# [Terms and conditions](#_top)

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.

Placement scholarships for Rounds 3 and 4 cannot be deferred. If you are unable to undertake your placement, you will be required to withdraw your application and may be required to repay any amount paid to you. This is at the absolute discretion of DFFH and will be subject to confirmation from your university.

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

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.

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 as well as 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 the DJSIR.

By accepting a Placement scholarship, you are also consenting to your application information being utilised in the 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, complete, and 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 from your placement or course. Noting that scholarships cannot be deferred for rounds 3 and 4.

## [Fraudulent claims](#_top)

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](#_top)

By accepting a Placement scholarship, you are consenting to your application information being utilised for the 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 de-identified and treated in accordance with the privacy statement detailed below.

# [Privacy statement](#_top)

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. DFFH will only have access to deidentified application data. 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 relating to 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)*](https://sprintlaw.com.au/articles/privacy-and-data-protection-act-victoria/) <https://sprintlaw.com.au/articles/privacy-and-data-protection-act-victoria/>, the [*Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/health-records-act-2001/049) <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/health-records-act-2001/049>, the[*Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/public-records-act-1973/042) <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/public-records-act-1973/042> 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 [placement.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au](mailto: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](mailto:privacy@dgs.vic.gov.au).

# [Other information](#_top)

Tax is not deducted from the payments at the time of payment. 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. You may also wish to visit www.ato.gov.au

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](#_top)

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 at [placement.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au](mailto:placement.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au) with Placement scholarships queries.

# [Appendices](#_top)

## 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 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 | * 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)*](https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/latest/text) <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. |
| Person with caring responsibilities as defined by Commonwealth Carer Recognition Act | The [*Carer Recognition Act 2010 (Cth)*](https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2010A00123/asmade/text) <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2010A00123/asmade/text> 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 considered a carer in respect of care, support and assistance that they provide:   * under a contract of service or a contract for the provision of services or * while 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 addressing disadvantage or vulnerability experienced by people or communities.  For these scholarships, social and community services refers to contact with statutory Child Protection and youth justice services or accessing the following types of services:   * Child and family services * Disability services, including those funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme, WorkSafe or the Transport Accident Commission * Family violence services * 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   Examples of accessing social and community services may include the following:   * carer support programs * case management * counselling * crisis care response * family preservation and reunification * out of home care, which includes foster care, kinship care, residential care * parenting services * respite and support care   If you are unsure about whether you are eligible, please contact the Placement scholarships team at [placement.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au](mailto:placement.scholarships@grants.vic.gov.au). |
| 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 9067 0393 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, October 2024.  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.  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> |