

Palliative care postgraduate incentive program

Application guideline

As part of the [Queensland Health Specialist Palliative Care Workforce Plan](#), and in collaboration with clinicians and service providers, Queensland Health is investing in access to postgraduate education programs to improve capability of palliative care services.

Applications are now open for health professionals currently working in generalist and specialist palliative care and end-of-life services to undertake supported education as part of the Palliative Care Postgraduate Incentive Program.

This program provides an opportunity for eligible health professionals to access **reimbursement of courses fees and other associated costs** for approved programs of education that will strengthen Queensland Health's palliative care workforce capability.

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to improve access to professional development by health professionals working in palliative and end of life care across Queensland, to build workforce capability and strengthen palliative and end-of-life care for Queensland individuals, families and carers. Uptake of postgraduate education by health professionals aims to support retention and growth of the specialist palliative care workforce while fostering statewide service improvement and development.

Priority will be given to the following:

- eligible Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicants
- eligible applicants employed in regional or rural Queensland
- programs of study which enhance consumer-facing clinical skills.

Eligible courses

Postgraduate courses specific to palliative care or related directly to palliative care are covered by this program. Examples include, but are not limited to, postgraduate qualifications in palliative care, Master of Nursing programs (leading to nurse practitioner qualifications in palliative care), Master of Nurse Practitioner Master of Counselling, bereavement counselling and intervention, trauma response and lymphoedema management.

For university courses, the following two levels of qualifications or equivalent credentials are considered postgraduate qualifications in scope for the postgraduate incentives program

Level 1 qualification: Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level 8 – relevant postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma; or course

Level 2 qualification: AQF level 9 relevant postgraduate master's degree.

Course eligibility

1	<p>The course must classify as level eight or higher under the Australian Qualifications Framework <https://www.aqf.edu.au/>. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• graduate certificate• graduate diploma• masters degrees.
2	<p>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).</p>
3	<p>The course must lead to a postgraduate qualification that advances the applicant's knowledge, skills and capability to provide effective palliative or end-of-life care.</p>
4	<p>The postgraduate qualification should either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• focus on direct clinical practical skills in palliative care <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• build the necessary capability to support practice and service development in the palliative care sector to influence positive change.

Eligible applicants

To be eligible to apply for the postgraduate incentive program, applicants must:

- be employed in a permanent or temporary capacity in a palliative care setting in a Queensland Health hospital or health facility, and have completed relevant employment checks
- demonstrate a strong commitment to providing palliative and end-of-life care that is person-centred, compassionate, culturally safe and respectful of the preferences and unique cultural and spiritual needs of people affected by life-limiting illnesses, and their families and carers.
- meet the admission requirements of the approved course
- be able to contribute to classroom learning and have a willingness to share knowledge in the workplace.

The incentive program may provide for practice-based research degrees where such course is focused on direct clinical skills. Study programs involving theoretical research or research that does not focus on clinical skills will not be eligible.

A summary of applicant eligibility requirements is provided below.

Applicant eligibility	
1	Palliative care health professionals Applicants must have at least two years cumulative experience working in their profession*
2	The applicant must be working in a generalist capacity within Queensland Health with demonstrated interest and/or experience in palliative care; OR be employed in a permanent or temporary capacity within a palliative care setting in a Queensland hospital or health facility; AND have completed relevant employment checks.
3	Applicants must be an Australian citizen, permanent resident or New Zealand citizen
4	Applicants must be eligible to enrol in the postgraduate qualification for which they are applying.
5	Applicants must provide a recommendation of support from their line-manager and/or discipline senior providing confirmation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the applicant's length of employment in the sector that they support the applicant's learning (e.g., through study leave, flexible workload, etc.) that they have read and endorse the application. Applicants will be prompted to upload this information via the application form

**Credential and/or registration to practice as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker, medical practitioner, nursing or midwifery professional, or specific allied health professional.*

Selection criteria

Interested and eligible health professionals are encouraged to apply for the postgraduate incentive program. All applications will be assessed by an expert panel for eligibility and merit to determine successful applicants. Incentives will be awarded prioritising the following applicants and coursework, through an additional weighting in the assessment process, to support:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicants
- workforce providing palliative and end-of-life care in a rural, remote or regional palliative care setting
- consumer-facing service delivery.

In making selection decisions, the panel will consider the overall spread of locations of applicants and the diversity of occupations and professions (allied health, nursing, medical etc).

How to apply

Applicants must provide a 250-word statement addressing each of the assessment criteria.

Assessment criteria	
1	<p>Commitment to Queensland Health and the palliative care sector including career aspirations</p> <p>Describe your commitment to practice in Queensland Health and the palliative care sector including your career goals over the next five years (approximately 250 words).</p> <p>Your response should provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a rationale for undertaking the study program and how your proposed studies will support your career goals.
2	<p>Alignment with the Queensland Health Palliative and End-of-life Care Strategy</p> <p>Describe how the proposed qualification you are planning to undertake will support the development of your practice in palliative and end-of-life care in line with the Strategy (approximately 250 words).</p> <p>Your response should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• how your proposed qualification aligns with the principles, goals and intended outcomes detailed in the Strategy• how this study program will lead to improvement in the experience and/or outcomes of consumers and their family, carers and supporters at your service.• how your proposed qualification will support you to provide person-centred, palliative and end-of-life care• how the qualification will amplify collaborative care within your interprofessional team, (including patients, carers, families) and between other teams (including other health services, community care providers).
3	<p>Area of strategic need and prioritisation</p> <p>Weighting and prioritisation will be provided for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• eligible Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicants• eligible applicants employed in rural, remote or regional Queensland• programs of study which enhance consumer-facing clinical skills.

Timeframes

Applications must be received by **Monday, 20 November 2023** to support timely course applications and enrolment for the 2024 study year.

Conditions of education support

Funding offer

Following a selection process and approval of an application, the program coordinators, Workforce Strategy Branch (WSB) will provide a written offer of funding via email to successful applicants.

The following funding support will be available:

- education provider enrolment fees for the approved study program
- student services and amenities fees levied by the university in relation to the study program
- travel and associated costs incurred for mandatory (on-campus) teaching including:
 - flights and accommodation
 - airport transfers
 - travel allowance as per domestic travelling and relieving expenses (Directive 09/11).

Successful applicants will be responsible for organising their travel arrangements following the usual process through their HHS staff travel unit

- HHSs will be reimbursed for eligible travel and associated costs for successful applicants through an inter-entity journal (IEJ) process upon submission of relevant IEJ forms and evidence of staff travel booking confirmation details and relevant tax invoice/receipts.

If the successful applicant fails or withdraws after the financial census date, the employee will be responsible for funding the subject. If the subject payment has been processed, the student will be responsible for repaying WSB for the study program.

Reimbursement: Successful applicants will be reimbursed for study on submission of proof of up-front payment of fees. **IMPORTANT:** reimbursement cannot be processed on fees that are deferred to the taxation system or similar student loan scheme e.g. FEE-HELP. Fees must be paid in full by the employee and claimed back through WSB. Reimbursement can take up to eight weeks to process. Fees cannot be reimbursed if paid by the HHS, without prior negotiation and approval by WSB.

Claims for reimbursement will be submitted using an expense reimbursement or advance claim form as advised by WSB and have all accompanying evidence including tax invoice/receipt issued by the university (Note: payment cannot be processed on a financial statement).

If applicants do not complete the full study program, they will be required to repay all course fees paid by the WSB.

When accepting an offer of funding, employees will be required to authorise WSB to source enrolment and academic results information from the education provider.

Costs not covered by WSB

Expenses other than those listed in the previous section are not covered under the incentive program and must be met by the successful applicant or where separately agreed by the employing HHS.

Such additional expenses may include internet access fees, data usage costs, textbooks or other course resources, printing, stationery, consumables etc.

The HHS is expected to provide in-kind resourcing to support the applicant to meet and maintain the eligibility requirements described in this guideline (see Eligibility).

Important information: Taxation

The payment or reimbursement of education expenses by Queensland Health may have fringe benefits tax (FBT) implications.

A course that is commonwealth supported will result in a reportable fringe benefit and will impact those employees eligible to access the public hospitals FBT exemption cap (\$17,000 GUTV).

Non-salary sacrificed fringe benefits such as taxable self-education expenses have priority in applying the cap and will impact the amount an employee may salary package without incurring a personal cost for the FBT liability.

For further information refer to FBT Fact Sheet – Public Hospital FBT Exemption Cap & Salary Packaging Arrangements.

https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/680746/fbt-exemption-cap.pdf

Employees are recommended to seek independent financial advice to determine whether an adjustment is required to their personal salary packaging arrangements. Please see link below for further information.

- Queensland Health (2017) Self-Education – Tuition Fees and HELP debts at https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0034/668329/self-education.pdf

Reporting

- Successful applicants will be required to provide a written summary of the course learning and provide a summary of palliative care local improvement activities fostered by the study program. Please refer below.
- Successful applicants can opt for reimbursement of study program fees on a subject-by-subject basis OR on the successful completion of coursework OR when credentials are conferred. The applicant must forward evidence of successful completion of subjects, coursework and/ or credentials conferred, requesting reimbursement to Workforce Strategy Branch via healthworkforce@health.qld.gov.au.

Performance reporting

Ongoing reporting requirements of the funding support are listed below and include (a) descriptive / operational information AND (b) academic progress.

Reports should be provided to healthworkforce@health.qld.gov.au by the due dates listed below to ensure the HHS and successful applicant have continued eligibility for the funding support. Failure to meet the reporting requirements will lead to withdrawal of the funding support.

Academic progress

The successful applicant will complete scheduled reports on academic progress and/or course completion to allow reimbursement of fees and demonstrate continued eligibility for funding. This will include enrolment, assessment submission and subject outcomes as described below.

Scheduled reports

Templates will be supplied to the successful applicant and their line manager for scheduled reports.

Commencement report

Due: On enrolment in study program and before the course commencement date, a commencement report will be submitted including:

- evidence of enrolment including schedule of study for the course (subjects and study periods)
- operational/contact information (if different to application).

Scheduled report 1

Due: By the study period census date (or by 31 March for study period 1 or 30 September for study period 2) for university courses or upon course completion for workshops or other credentialed courses (e.g., lymphoedema management), the successful applicant must submit the following to WSB:

- academic results from first assessment in all subjects currently enrolled for university courses or certificate of completion for other credentialed courses (e.g., lymphoedema management).
- a tax invoice or receipt of fees paid up-front (excludes fees deferred to FEE-HELP or student loan program and includes evidence of subjects undertaken)
- a staff expense claim form for fees paid.

Scheduled report 2

Due: six months after commencement (end of first study period) for university programs of study.

- academic results for previous study period.

Ongoing scheduled reporting as required

As postgraduate courses progress, the following reporting should be provided by the study period census date (or by 31 March for study period 1 or 30 September for study period 2)

- academic results from first assessment in all subjects currently enrolled
- a tax invoice or receipt of fees paid for subjects (see scheduled report 2 for details of evidence required)
- a staff expense claim form for fees paid.

Completion report

Due: 12 months after commencement (end of funding period)

- outcomes / outputs and learnings including academic results for previous study period and course overall.

Exception reporting

The employing HHS must advise WSB at healthworkforce@health.qld.gov.au within seven days should the following circumstances arise:

(a) The successful applicant:

- ceases their employment with Queensland Health. In this case, the employee will lose entitlement to the funding support if they leave their position permanently.
- has a change of employment status e.g., is approved to change from full-time to part-time or goes on secondment etc.
- takes a period of paid or unpaid leave greater than four weeks (continuous) in a three-month period. In this case, WSB will liaise with the HHS and employee to determine if completion of the course is feasible within the term of the funding support and determine whether access to funding will be continued.
- ceases their enrolment in the postgraduate course before completion.
- is at risk of failing to complete the requirements for the postgraduate course in the term of the funding support.

(b) The nominated employees' position status (permanent, temporary, FTE) changes to no longer meet the requirements for funding.

Responsibilities

WSB will reimburse enrolment fees and travel and accommodation expenses, as outlined in this guideline. WSB is responsible for providing administrative support for the initiative including promoting the program, coordinating the application and selection process, processing reimbursements, liaising with HHSs, providing supportive contact for successful applicants, and monitoring and reporting.

The HHS will support the successful applicant to meet the performance framework for this program and ensure all reporting requirements, outlined in this guideline are implemented.

WSB recommends approximately 0.1 FTE is allocated by the work unit, funded by the HHS in kind, to allow the successful applicant to undertake education and research translation activities. Any relevant funding support will be negotiated between the employee and manager at the local level.

Funding from WSB and support provided by HHSs constitute a substantial investment by the Queensland public health system in the development of generalist and specialist palliative care capabilities in the Queensland Health workforce. Benefits will be derived from this investment by the organisation and the individual employee. Consequently, the employee should expect to commit personal time, effort, and resources to complete the postgraduate program. Universities generally estimate study time investment for a standard load AQF Level 8 subject to be approximately ten hours per week. Before applying for the palliative care postgraduate incentive program, interested applicants should familiarise themselves with the study program and expected workload and ensure that they are able to make the level of commitment required to successfully complete the course.

Before applying for this program, the applicant and their line manager should discuss expectations regarding allocation of work and personal time to study, and the responsibility for financial costs that the WSB funding support does not cover (i.e. textbooks, laptop, internet data etc). The employee should demonstrate that they understand the personal time commitment of undertaking postgraduate study.

Funding offer

WSB will provide a written offer of funding to the HHS representative and the successful applicant. The offer will outline the funding commitment of WSB for the applicant and will list the HHS commitments described in this guideline. The successful applicant must confirm their intention to engage actively in and complete the study within the required timeframe, including understanding that they are responsible for financial and time commitments to the education program beyond those listed in the offer and provided by the HHS. The HHS delegate, line manager and successful applicant must sign the offer and return it to WSB by the due date to formalise the arrangement.

More information

Further enquiries regarding the palliative care postgraduate incentive program can be directed to Workforce Strategy Branch via healthworkforce@health.qld.gov.au

How to apply

Eligible employees interested in applying should:

- talk to their line manager and obtain their support to apply
- complete and submit the application to Workforce Strategy Branch via healthworkforce@health.qld.gov.au
(Please include email subject line: **Postgraduate incentive program application**)
- applications close 5pm **Monday, 20 November 2023**

Please note that application must be in pdf format with all signatures by the due date. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Tips to support successful applications

1. **Know the key dates.**

Take note of the closing date for applications as late applications will not be considered.

2. **Review the selection criteria**

Applicants should familiarise themselves with the selection criteria and consider how they can demonstrate that they meet the requirements.

They should provide examples of their experience and demonstrate their motivation regarding each criteria. For example, for question 1 'Commitment to the palliative care sector and career aspirations', the applicant should explain why they are motivated to work in a palliative care service (i.e. what is meaningful about their role, why they have chosen to pursue this career, and what their goals are). This will enable the panel to assess whether the chosen course of study aligns with the applicant's career interests.

3. **Use past experiences as examples.**

Applicants are encouraged to share experiences which have motivated them, including any self-directed voluntary initiatives such as additional courses completed, leadership positions or service improvement projects undertaken in their current role or other specific examples which have led them to this career in palliative care (not limited to paid roles).

4. **Refine written responses.**

Applicants should keep responses concise, noting the word limit for each question. Applicants should use examples to demonstrate their strengths and their commitment to working in the palliative and end-of-life care sector.

5. **Seek line manager endorsement**

Applicants must obtain line management endorsement for their application to ensure the appropriate level of workplace support for the completion of their postgraduate studies.