

NHS BURSARIES

THE NHS BURSARY SCHEME

The NHS Bursary Scheme (hereafter referred to as 'the Scheme') is established to provide support for a range of students studying professional healthcare programmes.

The Scheme is composed of several elements:

- Contribution to tuition fee (for courses leading to professional registration as a doctor or dentist)
- Maintenance award (known as a bursary)
- Additional allowances including where applicable:
 - o Disabled students allowance
 - o Practice placement expenses reimbursement
 - o Dependents allowance or parent learning allowance
 - o Child care allowance
 - o Extra weeks allowance

Prior to the introduction of the Scheme as we know it today, a range of healthcare students were included within The Education Mandatory Awards system. NHS Bursaries for healthcare professionals have developed since the early 1990s when nursing, midwifery and other training (e.g. radiography, physiotherapy and occupational therapy) were transferred from delivery within the NHS into higher education in accordance with the educational reforms at the time - Education and Training: Working Paper Ten (WP 10) (Department of Health 1989a).

The Scheme is revised annually to reflect any necessary changes and to detail the financial amounts relevant to the period of the edition which is the academic year 1st September to 31st August the following year. The current edition (twelfth) can be found at:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_129569.pdf

The current Scheme is comprised of two distinct regimes:

1. Non-means-tested regime for traditional diploma students (diploma programmes in Nursing, Midwifery and Operating Department Practice)
2. Means-tested regime for mainstream students (all other diploma and degree programmes)

The table below lists the current professions eligible within the Scheme:

Audiologist	Occupational Therapist
Chiropodist or Podiatrist	Operating Department Practitioner
Dental Hygienist/Dental Therapist	Orthotist/Prosthetist
Dentist	Orthoptist
Dietician	Physiotherapist
Doctor	Radiographer
Nurse	Radiotherapist
Midwife	Speech and Language Therapist

For Doctors and Dentists, only the later years of the courses as set out in the Scheme are eligible for an NHS Bursary.

There are comprehensive regulations within the terms of the Scheme that determine eligibility with regard to the student and also in respect of the programme of study.

The forecast spend for the total NHS Bursary Scheme for 2011/12 is £521.9 million to approximately 82,000 students representing around 10.7% of the total Multi-Professional Education and Training budget.



REVIEW OF NHS STUDENT SUPPORT

The Department of Health has undertaken a review of NHS student support, to consider changes to the NHS Bursary Scheme that could remove existing anomalies, provide better value for money and improve the system of support available to all eligible students. Whilst the Department of Health ultimately led the review, it was undertaken in partnership with key stakeholders, including representatives of the NHS, Higher Education, Trades Unions, other Government departments and students. The Department of Health ran a public consultation on a number of options to seek the views of others with an interest, including people who were currently considering entering healthcare training. The outcome of the consultation is reported in Supporting our future workforce: Consultation report.

http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100509080731/http://dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Closedconsultations/DH_105110

The review of NHS student support concluded that, in the future, eligible students will all have access to the same package of financial support from September 2012 irrespective of their course.

The new package of support will provide new students with a small non-means tested grant, a means tested bursary and a reduced rate non-means-tested loan. The loan will be provided by Student Finance England. As with the current scheme, different rates of means-tested bursary and loan will apply according to where a student lives and studies, whether in London, outside of London, or with their parents.

It is planned that these changes will take effect from September 2012. Any changes which are made will apply only to new students who begin their training on or after the date on which the changes come into effect. Existing students will remain on the current scheme.

STAKEHOLDER ROLES

Below is the list of primary stakeholders and their key roles in relation to NHS Bursaries.

a) Secretary of State

The Secretary of State is the owner of the Scheme.

b) Department of Health (DH)

DH is responsible for policy decisions affecting the provisions of the Scheme. DH is also responsible for managing the service level agreement with NHS Business Services Authority in respect of administration of the Scheme and the service level agreement with NHS North West in respect of its Lead SHA role.

c) NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA)

NHS BSA is responsible for hosting the NHS Bursary Unit and provision of the administration function to deliver the Scheme.

d) NHS Student Bursary Unit (SBU)

SBU administer the Scheme and directly pay students their individual entitlements.

e) Lead Strategic Health Authority (Lead SHA)

NHS North West assumed responsibility as lead SHA for NHS Bursaries during 2008. The lead role was established to enable resolution of a set of issues in relation to the operating of the Scheme:

- The shift in responsibility and accountability for NHS Bursary funding from DH to SHAs;
- Reducing DH involvement in operational issues whilst ensuring ministers retain responsibility for the Scheme;

- Provision of ongoing stability for the SBU enabling continued good service provision to students;
- Improved information flows between stakeholders.

The Lead SHA is responsible for managing the service level agreement that defines the key Performance Indicators to which the SBU operates.

f) Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs)

SHAs are responsible for performance management of the contract schedule that describes the information requirements and performance standards applicable to effective functioning of the Scheme.

g) Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

HEIs are responsible for provision of information to the defined standards and to enable students to receive correct and timely payments.

h) Students

Students are responsible for the applications process and provision of information to enable appropriate assessment and administration.





HOT TOPIC

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND WORK PROGRAMMES

The Scheme and its administration are going through a systematic modernisation process with the overarching aim of providing a high quality, responsive and cost-effective service to customers, primarily the students. To achieve this, there is a comprehensive work programme comprising several strands that will ultimately enable a fit for purpose, modern NHS Bursary Scheme that supports the future healthcare workforce.

Here are details of a few of the recent developments and current work programmes.

• Countering Fraud

Unfortunately the NHS Bursary Scheme is a victim of fraudulent use by some students and this represents fraud to NHS funding as a whole, a serious and worrying issue. The key stakeholders responsible for NHS Bursaries are working in partnership to adopt measures that address, reduce and prevent fraud. Processes for checking student identity and residency status are being tightened through such measures as requesting original documentation and introducing training to enable recognition of forged or false documents.

NHS North West is working with NHS Protect, who are responsible for tackling crime and fraud across the health service, to raise awareness of the levels of fraud and the actions that can be adopted to reduce the risks.

• Mechanism for Considering Professional Eligibility

As part of the review of NHS student support, several workstreams were identified that would support further modernisation and development of the Scheme. One of the workstreams being led by NHS North West is to develop a mechanism for considering professional eligibility for the Scheme. This work has progressed and is almost at completion. When introduced, this will be a framework that will enable a systematic approach to considering eligibility of professions for the Scheme.

• Reducing Overpayments

NHS North West in partnership with HEIs across the North West has undertaken work to try and understand the range of influencing factors associated with bursary overpayment to students who have discontinued from training. Through this work, HEIs have investigated overpayments at individual student level and have subsequently introduced a range of measures that enable timely notification to SBU of when a student discontinues training. Improvements in this issue will deliver tangible cost savings, something that represents significant benefit in the current economic climate.

• Social Media Developments

SBU has developed a page on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/pages/NHS-Student-Bursaries/148320495240479#!/pages/NHS-Student-Bursaries/148320495240479?sk=wall>

This development provides a modern means of communicating with students whilst enabling key notifications to be publicised and also providing signposting to related schemes and partners. This is a relatively new development and its full impact has yet to be determined, however early evidence is very positive.

• Online Application Process

SBU is introducing an online application process for students to replace the current paper-based system. The new system has been through rigorous testing and has now gone live on 28th October 2011 for new students applying to the Scheme. To date the applications have proved successful and the benefits are already demonstrable. The online system will be introduced in a phased approach with all students on the new system by end of August 2013.

IN CONCLUSION

This report represents only a cross-section of activity in respect of NHS Bursaries. This is a complex policy area that requires collaborative working across key partners. Our key aim is to ensure that our student community receives a quality service to enable them to have the funding to which they are entitled in a timely way.

For any further information please contact Kerry Hemsworth, Assistant Director of Education and Commissioning at kerry.hemsworth@northwest.nhs.uk

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Kerry Hemsworth, Assistant Director of Education and Commissioning

Email: kerry.hemsworth@northwest.nhs.uk

