

Health Service Executive
Floor 2, Oak House
Limetree Avenue
Millennium Park
Naas
Co Kildare

HR Circular 004/05

16th May 2005

**Chief Officer
Each Area**

Sponsorship of Student Public Health Nurses

Arrangements relating to the sponsorship of student Public Health nurses were set out in circular letter 85/2000 issued by the Department of Health and Children on 17th July 2000. A provision of this circular was the subject of a Labour Court hearing in 2004. Labour Court recommendation 18030, which issued on 29th November 2004, recommended that sponsorship, as outlined in the circular letter, should be paid to all those undertaking the course, regardless of whether they had entered into a prior sponsorship agreement with Health Boards or not. In respect of 2003/2004 there were 32 claimants involved –details are attached. In respect of 2004/2005 there are 15 such claimants. The Labour Court recommendation in the matter has now been considered further and accepted and it has been agreed that it be implemented on the basis outlined beneath.

Each claimant should receive sponsorship as follows:

1. Refund of course fees paid
2. Salary at the minimum point of the Staff Nurse scale while studying for the Higher Diploma in Public Health Nursing
3. Salary at 80% of the minimum point of the Public Health nurse scale for the duration of the clinical placement period

The amount of sponsorship payable to any individual claimant should be offset by any salary that may have previously been paid to the claimant during the course of clinical placement while undertaking the course. Sponsorship should, of course, be calculated on the basis of the course fees and salary scales applicable at the time the course was undertaken. In addition, where individuals previously receive tax relief in respect of their fees and are now being refunded such fees in full, appropriate arrangements should be made to ensure tax compliance in the matter. In summary, the claimants should not benefit from arrangements more favourable than their fellow students who benefited from the sponsorship arrangements at the time.

The Labour Court recommendation in question also stated “*the Court is also of the view that the parties should engage in a process of consultation to improve the*

operation of the quota system going forward". This recommendation in relation to the operation of the sponsorship and quota system has been the subject of further discussion with the Irish Nurses Organisation. The INO has confirmed that it recognises and accepts that the HSE cannot assume an on-going liability for the payment of either salary or fees in respect of individuals who have not applied for, or, having applied for, have not been successful in securing sponsorship for the PHN course prior to entering on the course of study.

The following principles have been agreed;

- the number of sponsored places should relate clearly to the level of recruits required by the HSE to meet anticipated vacancies and planned service developments in each year
- the number of clinical placements provided by the HSE to facilitate PHN training should relate clearly to the number of places it sponsors in the year in question
- a single selection process should be used to fill the sponsored places. The arrangement under which Universities/Colleges and the HSE conducted separate application processes is being discontinued with effect from the 2006 intake.
- in respect of the September 2005 intake, the HSE will sponsor 130 students and clinical placements will only be provided for those students to whom such sponsorship is granted prior to commencement of the course. In respect of the 2006 intake, the HSE will sponsor 120 students.
- as a matter of good practice, Universities/Colleges should ensure that these principles are known to all potential students.

The relevant provisions of Department of Health and Children circular 85/2000 in relation to sponsorship of student Public Health Nurses are superceded by this circular. A revised circular covering all pertinent matters will issue shortly.

A note of the financial costs involved in implementation should be forwarded to the National HR Directorate in due course setting out the relevant details. Any enquiries regarding the terms of the Labour Court Recommendation should be addressed to Mr Gerry Bellew, HSE-Employers Representative Division, 63/64 Adelaide Road, Dublin 2.

Yours Sincerely



Martin McDonald
National HR Directorate