



HSE HR Circular 020/2009

25th May, 2009.

**To: Each Member of Management Team, HSE;
Each Assistant National Director, PCCC, HSE;
Each Hospital Network Manager, NHO, HSE;
Each Local Health Manager, PCCC, HSE;
Each Assistant National Director of HR, HSE;
Each CEO, Voluntary Hospitals / Services.**

Re: Sponsorship of Nursing/Midwifery Third Level Education Initiatives

The following circulars are superseded by this circular:

- Circular 095/2000 - Revised Arrangements for Student Midwives
- Circular 098/2000 - Payment of Fees for Part-Time Nursing Degree Courses
- Circular 149/2000 - Revised Arrangements for Student Paediatric Nurses
- Circular 150/2000 - Specialist Nursing Courses
- Circular 047/2001 - Specialist Nursing Courses
- Circular 011/2005 - Payment of Fees for Part-Time Nursing Degree Courses

This circular applies to the following nursing/midwifery education initiatives and the conditions under which they will be sponsored by the HSE.

Post Registration Student Midwives

Recognised midwifery education Hospitals/NMPDU's are authorised to pay course fees for all students studying for the post-registration Higher Diploma in Midwifery. Student Midwives are to be paid at their existing salary and are entitled to receive incremental credit. This initiative is subject to the conditions set out below.

Post Registration Student Children's Nurses

Recognised children's nursing education Hospitals/NMPDU's are authorised to pay fees for all students studying for the post-registration Higher Diploma in Children's Nursing. Student children's nurses are to be paid at their existing salary and are entitled to receive incremental credit. This initiative is subject to the conditions set out below.

Part-Time Nursing/Midwifery Degree/Access Courses

Under this initiative a registered nurse or midwife who has commenced a part-time undergraduate nursing/midwifery degree/access course prior to 1 January 2009 and who does not already hold a recognised third level degree will be entitled to have their fees paid in full by their employing agency. This funding initiative is discontinued for all new entrants with effect from 1 January 2009.

Specialist Nursing Courses

Under this initiative a registered nurse or midwife undertaking an An Bord Altranais Category II approved (as at November 2008)* Post Graduate/Higher Diploma courses in specialist areas of clinical nursing/midwifery practice and who have not been already been funded for a specialist course within the

last thirty six months (or less if specifically required by service need) be entitled to have their fees paid in full *provided the conditions of this initiative are fulfilled*.

* Appendix 1

This initiative is subject to the conditions set out below.

Conditions

1. Eligibility

Candidates must be registered with An Bord Altranais and employed in the public health service on a permanent or temporary basis (provided the term of their contract allows them fulfil their service commitment see section 4 below), whether working full-time or part-time to be eligible to receive funding.

Courses undertaken must be relevant to the nurse's/midwife's area of practice and meet patient and service needs with due regard to cost and the educational needs of the employing organisation as a whole. Applicants requiring a work visa/authorisation for employment in the State must provide evidence that their work visa /authorisation allows them to fulfil their commitment required under the circular. These funding initiatives do not apply to agency staff or nurses/midwives employed in private hospitals and private nursing homes or GP practices.

2. Funding

Course funding will only be provided for courses run in the State and at the fee applicable to an EU/EEA citizen. Any amount in excess of the fee applicable to an EU/EEA citizen will not be funded under the terms of this circular.

No funding will be provided for repeat module(s), units of study or examination fees. Such fees must be borne by the nurse or midwife concerned.

3. Satisfactory Employment Record

In order to qualify for sponsorship, the Director of the Nursing/Midwifery must be satisfied that the applicant has a satisfactory service record.

4. Service Commitment

Successful applicants for sponsorship will be required to give a written undertaking to their sponsoring public health service agency that they will following successful completion of the programme, work for their sponsoring agency for a minimum period of twelve months or for the length of the academic course undertaken, whichever is longer (see paragraph 7 below in relation to service commitment required of part-time employees). The employing agency has responsibility for enforcing the sponsored employees' compliance with their contractual service commitment contract. Until such time as a sponsored employee has fulfilled their service commitment they will not be approved for further sponsorship under any other nursing/midwifery education initiative.

In exceptional circumstances, all or a portion of the service commitment may, with the prior agreement of the sponsoring public health service agency concerned, be given in the employment of an alternative Irish public health service agency.

A sponsored employee who fails to honour their contractual undertaking to work as a nurse/midwife for their sponsoring agency (or agreed Irish alternative public health service agency) for the period of the service commitment immediately following successful completion of the programme shall be required to repay to that sponsoring agency their fees and in the case of fulltime courses the value of the salary received by them during the theory element of the programme. Any repayment due will be adjusted on a pro rata basis for any period of service commitment honoured.

5. Additional Costs

All other and additional costs, charges and expenses, including travel, text books and library charges incurred by the student undertaking the programme will be discharged by the student at their own expense.

6. Retention of Salary

A public health service employee who is sponsored in accordance with the terms of this circular will remain on the payroll of their public health service agency. They will retain their existing basic salary plus specialist allowances (where applicable) throughout the period of the programme, and will continue to be entitled to normal incremental progression up to the maximum of that scale.

7. Part-time Employees

Part-time employees who are awarded sponsorship for a full time course leading to an additional registration with An Bord Altranais will be required to become full-time employees for the duration of the programme. Following successful completion of the programme, they may, with the prior agreement of their Director of Nursing/Midwifery, revert to working part-time (provided the part-time work is not less than half-time)

8. Annual Leave

In the case of fulltime courses sponsored employees shall retain their annual leave entitlements throughout the period of the programme. However, annual leave may only be taken outside of academic semesters and in accordance with service need.

9. Student Obligations

The student will attend in full the programme with proper diligence and will undergo such examination and tests as may be prescribed in or required by the programme curriculum with a view to successfully completing the programme.

10. Governance

The student will be required to provide their sponsoring agency with a copy of their examination results at the end each academic term...

11. Exceptions

A student absenting themselves, and/or failing to complete the programme due to unforeseen or exceptional circumstances, may be facilitated at the discretion of the sponsoring agency and higher education institute to complete the course and examinations in such manner as may be specified.

12. Repayment of Fees and salary

Part-time programmes

Where an employee is required to repeat elements of a part-time programme they must remain in the employment of their sponsoring agency during the repeat period.

If they cease employment or do not complete the programme they will have their sponsorship terminated and will be required to both course registration and tuition fees.

Fulltime programmes

When an employee is required to repeat elements of the programme they must remain in the employment of their sponsoring agency during the repeat period.

If they cease employment or do not complete the programme they will be required to repay both course registration and tuition fees and the portion of the salary received by them during the theory element of the programme.

In exceptional circumstances all the above repayments may be waived or deferred at the discretion of the Sponsoring Health Service Agency. Such repayments shall be made to the public health service sponsoring agency where they were employed.

13. Review of Initiatives

These initiatives will be kept under annual review.

14. Definition:

A Sponsoring Health Service Agency is a statutory or voluntary agency in the public health service in which the student is working when they commence the sponsorship. This includes any of the following:

- an acute/non-acute hospital
- a community care area
- a long-term care facility
- a mental health service
- an intellectual disability service



Séan McGrath,
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