



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig an Stiúirthóra Náisiúnta, Acmhainní Daonna
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Ospidéal Dr. Steevens
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HSE HR Circular 009/2010

31st December 2010

**To: Each Assistant National Director, Human Resources, HSE;
Each Director NMPDU**

Re: Sponsorship for Public Health Service Employees wishing to train as Nurses/Midwives

Dear Colleagues,

As you will be aware, the HSE operates a sponsorship scheme for eligible and experienced public health service employees wishing to train as nurses/midwives.

1. Number of Sponsorships

Funding for 10 sponsorship places will be made available in 2011. The maximum number of sponsorships available in each functional area of the Health Service Executive, based on the number of undergraduate places in each such area, is as follows:

	Number	
HSE Dublin/Mid Leinster	3	
HSE Dublin/North East		2
HSE West	2	
HSE South	3	
Total	10	

2. This is the maximum number of sponsorships which can be awarded.

3. Eligibility

The sponsorship scheme is open to employees in the Irish Public Health Service, such as support staff, **who are directly involved in the delivery of care to patients /clients.**

4. Applicants must have at least **two** years relevant service in the Irish public health service on the 1st day of January of the year in which they apply for sponsorship, and must qualify as a Mature Code Applicant for a place on the Pre-registration Nursing/Midwifery Degree Programme under the system operated by the Central Applications Office (CAO) on behalf of the Higher Education Institutions (HEI's). They may be employed on a full-time or part-time basis, either in a permanent or temporary capacity. Where employed on a part-time basis, they must have been working an average of not less than 15 hours per week.

5. The sponsorship scheme is not open to public health service employees who

- (a) are currently undertaking a pre-registration nursing/midwifery education programme, or
- (b) have withdrawn from a pre-registration nursing/midwifery education programme within the five-year period immediately preceding their application for sponsorship or

- (c) have deferred the acceptance of a place on a pre-registration nursing/midwifery education programme from a previous year.

6. Application to CAO

An eligible employee intending to apply for sponsorship must first of all make a formal application through the Central Applications Office (CAO) as a Mature Code Applicant, for a place on the Pre-registration Nursing/Midwifery Degree Programme at one of the thirteen Higher Education Institutions that are involved in the delivery of the programme. The CAO Handbook and Application Form are available from the CAO. This can be accessed from www.cao.ie The Nursing Careers Centre's information booklet *Nursing A Career for You*, obtainable from An Bord Altranais, 31/32 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2, contains valuable information including details of all the nursing/midwifery training places available throughout the country. Alternatively this information can be accessed on-line at www.nursingcareers.ie

7. An employee should only apply for sponsorship to undertake a nursing degree in the area of care (general, psychiatric, Intellectual disability, midwifery or children's) in which his/her employing agency is involved in delivering.

8. Satisfactory Employment Record / Verification of Service.

In order to qualify for sponsorship, an applicant must have a satisfactory service record and fulfill the relevant service requirement. This must be verified by the applicant's employer on the sponsorship application.

9. Acceptance of sponsorship conditions by employer.

The applicant's employer must accept the conditions attached to the sponsorship.

10. Applications for Sponsorship

In order to be eligible for sponsorship, employees who have applied through the CAO as Mature Code Applicants must successfully pass the written assessment test and interview administered by the Nursing Careers Centre (NCC) of An Bord Altranais, and be offered a place on the Pre-Registration Nursing/Midwifery Degree Programme. Mature Code Applicants who are called for interview by the NCC are notified of the result of their interview and of their performance in the written assessment by the end of June. Applications for sponsorship should be made to the Director of the Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Unit (NMPDU) in their area before the closing date for receipt of sponsorship applications outlined on the Sponsorship Application Form together with a copy of the results of the assessment process. (Appendix 1- Sponsorship Application)

Employees who are then deemed eligible for sponsorship and who are subsequently offered a place by the CAO on the Pre-registration Nursing/Midwifery Degree Programme, should inform the Director of the NMPDU supporting the area within which the employee is working of the offer. Such notification should be made within ten working days following receipt of the offer of a place and a copy of the offer should be sent to the NMPDU.

11. Award of Sponsorships

Subject to the following paragraphs, sponsorships within the approved complement (see paragraph 1 above) may be awarded by each functional area of the HSE to applicants employed in its functional area who have successfully passed the written assessment test and interview carried out by the Nursing Careers Centre and who have been offered a place by the CAO on the Pre-Registration Nursing Midwifery Degree Programme. Sponsorships not awarded or not likely to be awarded will be reallocated to other functional areas based on their applicant numbers and their number of round zero offers.

12. The first applicants to be considered for sponsorship are those who receive an offer of a place by the CAO in Round Zero in early August. Each Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Unit should draw up an order of merit list of such applicants employed in its functional area on the basis of their scores at the written assessment carried out by the NCC. (This score is given in the notification referred to in paragraph 10 above.) Sponsorships within the approved complement should be awarded to those placed highest in the order of merit, provided that they satisfy the criteria set out in this circular. The relative positions of applicants with equal scores on the order of merit list should be determined by reference to the length of their respective relevant service in the Irish public health service. The Nursing Careers Centre will confirm the written assessment scores of applicants for sponsorship upon request from the Directors of the Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Units.

If sponsorships are still available to be awarded following Round Zero, the procedure outlined in paragraph 11 should be repeated in respect of applicants for sponsorship who receive an offer in the next round. If necessary, the procedure should be repeated in each subsequent round of offers until such time as all available sponsorships are awarded or until there are no applicants left.

13. Service Commitment

Each successful applicant for sponsorship will be required to give a written undertaking (Appendix 2) to their sponsoring public health service employer in which they are located that they will:

- (a) immediately register as a nurse/midwife with An Bord Altranais following successful completion of the four-year nursing/midwifery degree programme, and
- (b) following satisfactory employment selection procedures, work as a nurse/midwife for that particular employer for a period of five years service, accepting the terms conditions and salary associated with a staff nurse/midwife position. (See paragraph 16 below in relation to service commitment required of part-time employees).

In exceptional circumstances, all or a portion of the five-year nursing service commitment may, with the prior agreement of the public health service employer concerned, be given in the employment of an alternative Irish public health service agency. HSE employees directly involved in patient care who are not directly attached to a nursing department (e.g. Ambulance personnel) will be facilitated with sourcing an appropriate nursing/midwifery employer by the workforce planning function of their local Nursing and Midwifery Planning Development Unit, (NMPDU). Each employer has responsibility for ensuring compliance with the service commitment contract.

14. Third Level Fees/Registration Fees

All participants will have their registration fees paid as part of this sponsorship. A sponsored employee who already holds a primary degree or is not covered under the Department of Education and Science free tuition fees initiative will be required to pay her/his own third level tuition fees. A sponsored employee who commenced, but did not complete, an undergraduate programme within the last five years will be required to pay the third level tuition fees in respect of the academic years in question. A sponsored employee who is required to repeat any element of the programme will also be required to pay her/his own associated third level fees.

15. 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 her/his public health service employer. S/he will retain her/his existing substantive salary throughout the four years of the nursing/midwifery degree programme, and will continue to be entitled to normal incremental progression up to the maximum of that scale, up until full registration with An Bord Altranais and the taking up of duty as a staff nurse. Sponsored employees will not receive any extra remuneration or allowances during the period of training other than premium payments where appropriate. During the interim period between programme completion and full An Bord Altranais registration, participants will have an employment commitment on the terms and conditions of their substantive post

16. Part-time Employees

Part-time employees who are awarded sponsorship will be required to become full time employees for the four-year duration of the nursing/midwifery degree programme. Following successful completion of the programme, they may, with the prior agreement of their employer, revert to working part-time (provided the part-time work is not less than half-time).

17. Annual Leave

Sponsored employees shall retain their annual leave entitlements throughout the four years of the nursing/midwifery degree programme. However, annual leave may only be taken outside of academic semesters and allocated clinical time in full consultation with the employer.

18. Availability for Work

Sponsored employees will be required to work during all periods outside of academic semesters, except when they are on annual leave or undertaking supernumerary clinical placements as part of the nursing/midwifery degree programme.

19. Repeat Year

A sponsored employee who is required to repeat a year of the nursing/midwifery degree programme must remain in employment with her/his public health service agency for that year, working in her/his substantive grade, with the exception of time required for theoretical instruction, clinical instruction or examinations. The sponsorship arrangement in relation to salary and fees will be discontinued for the duration of the repeat year but will recommence after the employee has successfully completed the repeat year. However, salary will be paid in respect of time actually worked for the agency during the repeat year.

20. An employee who does not remain in employment during a repeat year will have her/his sponsorship terminated and will be required to repay all moneys received under the sponsorship as determined by the employer. Such repayments shall be made to the public health service agency where s/he was employed.

21. Repayment of Salary

A sponsored employee who does not remain in employment with the sponsoring employer during the period of the degree will have her/his sponsorship terminated and will be required to repay salary and fees as outlined in paragraph 23 below.

22. A sponsored employee who fails to honour her/his written undertaking to work as a nurse/midwife for her/his employer for a period of five years immediately following successful completion of the nursing/midwifery degree programme and registration with An Bord Altranais shall be required to repay to that employer on a pro-rata basis the value of the salary received by her/him during (a) academic semesters, and (b) all supernumerary clinical placement periods outside of those semesters.

23. Discontinuation or Non-Completion

A sponsored employee who discontinues or otherwise does not complete the programme will:

- (a) If remaining in employment with the sponsoring employer be required to repay to that employer all third level fees paid on her/his behalf over a period determined by that employer, and
- (b) if not remaining in employment with the sponsoring employer be required to repay to that employer on a pro-rata basis the value of the salary received by her/him during:
 - (i) academic semesters, and
 - (ii) all supernumerary clinical placement periods outside of those semesters, and
 - (iii) all third level fees paid on her/his behalf.

24. The National HR Directorate funds the costs of this initiative through the NMPDU's.
All enquiries should be directed to the Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development Units, which will also provide any background information required.

25. Review of Sponsorship Scheme

The sponsorship scheme will be kept under review.



Séan McGrath,
National Director of Human Resources.