



**The Health Service District  
Guide to the  
Rural Scholarship Scheme**

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**Queensland  
Government**  
Queensland Health

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## 1. History of the Scholarship Scheme

The Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme was first introduced in 1944 and was originally called the Queensland State Government Scholarship Scheme (SGSS). Initially scholarships were offered in medicine and dentistry at the University of Queensland only.

Due to the success of the scheme, it was broadened in 1975 to include a number of other disciplines, and additional cadetships were offered for Health Inspectors and Social Welfare students.

By 1996 approval was gained for Queensland Health to manage its own scholarship scheme. A reference group was established to guide the project in preparation for the departmental initiative to locate the Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme to the Office of Rural Health from 1 November 1997.

From then, Queensland Health Rural Scholarships were offered in the following disciplines:

- Dentistry
- Medicine
- Occupational Therapy
- Pharmacy
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Psychology (Clinical Masters)
- Social Work
- Speech Pathology

In the 1998 recruitment round, Radiography and Oral Health were also added to the list of disciplines to be recruited to the Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme. In an attempt to address the misdistribution of the nursing workforce between metropolitan, rural and remote areas, scholarships for nursing were introduced in 2000.

To date the Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme remains very successful, with other states of Australia looking to model and develop similar schemes.

The Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme aims to:

- Establish for Australian students, premier career pathways to rural health practice in multiple disciplines from tertiary to postgraduate education/training and service placement.
- Increase supply of health professionals exceptionally fit to practice in rural and remote Queensland.
- Provide preparation, training and support of a high standard and value to the scholarship holder.
- Commit to match personal, family and career needs and aspirations with organisational and community requirements through indicative planning.
- Assist to fill vacant positions in rural health facilities.

## 2. Office of Rural Health

Located in Roma, the Office of Rural Health (ORH) is part of the Office of Rural and Remote Health Branch, and provides a source of expertise concerning health workforce issues in rural communities, including management of the Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme. The Office of Rural Health works with Health Service Districts and Government Agencies on rural health issues.

Functions of the Office of Rural Health:

- Provide all management functions of the Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme (QHRSS).
- Provide advice on rural workforce matters.
- Contribute to the development of departmental policies.
- Provide advice on the recruitment, retention, education and training of rural health workers to workforce planning activities.

### 3. Recruitment & Selection for the Scholarship Scheme

The ORH conducts a formal Recruitment and Selection process to award the Scholarships. The applicant must provide a response to the selection criteria, birth certificate or equivalent, and academic results (except medicine). Short listed applicants undergo and a formal interview. Health Service Districts are encouraged to participate on selection panels in order to provide a clinical aspect to the assessment process and ensure quality candidates are recruited.

### 4. Immunisation

Scholarship Holders are required to be immunised against the Hepatitis B virus prior to undertaking any clinical or annual scholarship Rural Experience Week placements.

### 5. Indemnity

All scholarship holders are considered employees of Queensland Health once they sign their Scholarship contract. Therefore Scholarship Holders are indemnified by Queensland Health when performing duties as per their Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme contract.

### 6. Registration

It is Queensland Law and Queensland Health Policy for Scholarship Holders to provide the ORH and the employing Health Service District with a copy of the degree and registration with a Professional Health body where applicable upon graduation. The award conditions for employment allow only registered health professionals to perform work and be paid as a registered health professional.

Failure to obtain and maintain current registration may lead to termination of employment and the scholarship contract.

### 7. Employment of the Scholarship Holder (Placement)

Following graduation, Scholarship Holders must be employed by Queensland Health within Health Service Districts in rural health care facilities throughout the state, providing rural communities with essential health services.

#### Overview of the Employment Placing Process (NOTE: each discipline varies slightly in this process)

1. Suitable positions are sourced from all rural and remote Health Service Districts via an Expression of Interest.
2. A Placement Preference List is compiled from the information received from Health Service Districts and forwarded to Scholarship Holders for consideration.
3. Scholarship Holders are encouraged to contact the Health Service Districts they are considering for employment for their contracted return of service period to discuss the requirements of the position.
4. Within Nursing, Health Service Districts are provided with a list of Scholarship Holders preferencing their district, and are encouraged to contact Scholarship Holders in order to recommend their preferred candidate to the ORH.
5. Scholarship Holders will be contacted if their first preference is not allocated and negotiations will commence in order to identify a mutually suitable placement.

#### Overview of Placement Balloting Process

A live ballot will be conducted when a particular position is oversubscribed.

Over the course of five days, Scholarship Holders are given the chance to change their preferences. At the end of the five days, should the situation not be resolved, a Working Group will consider each Scholarship Holders submission for that position and make the decision on which Scholarship Holder will be placed at that facility.

Should the Working Group be unable to decide, a Lottery System will be undertaken to decide the placements.

### 8. Employment (Service Period)

Scholarship Holders are appointed to a facility or Health Service District on a temporary basis for the duration of the Service Period according to their contract. The length of the Service Period is detailed on their Appointment Letter. Once the Scholarship Service Period has been completed, Scholarship Holders may be offered a permanent position should one be available. Scholarship Holders are not required to undergo a formal Recruitment and Selection process for at-level appointments as this has already been conducted during the Scholarship recruitment phase.

## 9. Human Resources Policies relating to Scholarship Holders

All Queensland Health Human Resource Policies can be found at: [www.health.qld.gov.au/hrpolicies](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/hrpolicies)

### Transfer and Appointment

Directive 11/08: Transfer and Appointment Expenses

HR Policy D4: Transfer and Appointment Expenses

### Prior Service Recognition

Directive 02/03: Recognition of Previous Service and Employment

IRM 11.3-2: Leave – Sick and Long Service – Recognition of Previous Service

### Probation Periods

HR Policy B2: Probation

### Accommodation and Meals

IRM 2.2-6: Accommodation and Meal Charges – Tertiary Students

IRM 2.2-11: Accommodation Assistance – Employees of District Health Services

### Indemnity

IRM 3.8-3: Indemnity for Employees and Other Persons (Excluding Medical Practitioners – Health Service Districts)

## 10. Payroll

Scholarship Holders are allocated a payroll number upon signing their Scholarship contract. This payroll number resides with Corporate HR until the Scholarship Holder begins their employment within a Health Service District. Transfer of the payroll account from Corporate HR to the Health Service District is via an Employee Movement Form. Details for each Scholarship Holder are available from the ORH.

## 11. The Scholarship Contract

Scholarship Holders may vary the terms their Rural Scholarship Scheme contract regarding the Service Period, and need to contact the ORH to discuss the matter. Contract Variations would be required for:

- deferral from the scheme to undertake further training or study.
- change from 1.0 FTE or extended Leave With Out Pay.
- resignation of employment at that location.

Contract Variations are considered on a case by case basis and are up to the discretion of the Manager. Scholarship Holders are to fill out the Contract Variation Request Form available on the website, and forward to the ORH for consideration by the Manager.

Districts are asked to contact the ORH should any of the above occur with your Scholarship Holder.

## 12. Transfers

In approved circumstances, Scholarship Holders may transfer their employment to another Queensland Health facility. Again, Scholarship Holders should contact the ORH to discuss the matter. Requests for Transfer are considered on a case by case basis and are up to the discretion of the Manager. Scholarship holders are to fill out the Transfer Request Form available on the ORH website, and forward it to the ORH for consideration by the Manager. The ORH endeavours to work with Health Service Districts in addressing any issues relating to a request for transfer at the time of notification.

## 13. Conference Assistance

The ORH provides some financial assistance to support Scholarship Holders to access professional development relevant to their clinical practice in the Health Service District.

Scholarship Holders working in Health Service District's (postgraduates), must first seek permission from the district for leave to undertake professional development.

### 14. Rural Experience Week

For each year of the Scholarship during the study period, all Scholarship Holders must spend a continuous period of not less than seven whole days (eg Monday to Sunday inclusive) at a rural health facility . Rural Experience Week placements must be done in a different rural location each year . The Rural Experience Week placement is designed to give Scholarship Holders a feel for working and living in a rural area.

#### Accommodation & Travel

Queensland Health will provide accommodation, if available, for Scholarship Holders in the Health Service Districts (refer to IRM 2.2-6). Queensland Health is unable pay for student's accommodation at motels, therefore Scholarship Holders are advised to liaise with the Health Service District for the type and availability of accommodation within that district. Scholarship holders must arrange and pay for their own travel for their Rural Experience Week.

#### University Clinical Placements

Rural Experience Week placements can be undertaken in conjunction with clinical placements if it is in a rural area. Scholarship Holders are advised that it is a requirement of Queensland Health that all students going on a compulsory clinical placement in a Queensland Health facility complete the Essentials Section of the website below before they start their placement.  
**Web: [www.health.qld.gov.au/SOP/default.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/SOP/default.asp)**

#### Activity Tool

All Scholarship Holders are required to take the **Rural Experience Week Activity Tool** with them and have the supervisor in charge of their placement sign off on completion of their placement.

### 15. Support for Scholarship Holders

Case Managers have been assigned to the Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme to help students fulfil their contracts and to obtain advice regarding careers in rural practice and the transition from student to rural health practitioner.

The ORH aims to assist students with the following:

- Establishing individual Vocational Indicative Plans/Career Intentions for all Scholarship Holders.
- Provide preparation, training and support to the Scholarship Holder.
- Commit to match personal, family and career needs and aspirations with organisational and community requirements through Vocational Indicative Planning./Career Intentions.
- Access to a range of different health professionals through Queensland Health.
- Regular teleconferences with Scholarship Holders throughout the year to discuss their progression.

### 16. Support and benefits for Health Service Districts

The ORH and the Scholarship Scheme aims to assist Health Service Districts in the following areas:

- Provide districts with suitably trained and qualified employees across a range of disciplines.
- Opportunity for involvement in recruitment and employment processes.
- Regular contact with Scholarship Holders Case Manager.
- Hand over teleconference between Scholarship Holder, Line Manager and ORH covering employment commencement details.
- Future planning for your workforce needs.

### 17. Health Service District Obligations

Health Service Districts are expected to:

- Assist undergraduate Scholarship Holders in their compulsory annual Rural Experience Week.
- Treat Scholarship Holders as permanent employees.
- Provide a welcoming and supportive environment.
- Provide a suitable supervisor/mentor.
- Contact the ORH should there be any issues with Scholarship Holders.
- Advise the ORH of any change in FTE, leave with out pay or resignation of a Scholarship Holder.
- Provide the ORH with vacancy and expected vacancy information.

# Medicine

## Career Pathway

Scholarship holders wishing to pursue vocational registration in Rural Generalist Medicine will make application to join the Rural Generalist Pathway in their final year of medical school. However, all Queensland Health Rural Medical Scholarship Holders will follow the Rural Generalist Pathway for the first two years ie PGY1 and PGY2, after which it is an individual choice to continue on this pathway, or just complete your return of service.

## Rural Generalist Specialist Framework

In 2007 the first cohort of trainees undertook their internship as first year Rural Generalist Trainees (RGT). The prevocational framework developed as part of the Rural Generalist Pathway outlines the terms, clinical and educational experience required to enable safe clinical practice in rural areas from as early as PGY3. For Rural Generalists, the prevocational training pathway begins on day one of Internship. From 2010 the ten supporting hospitals that will provide Rural Generalist prevocational training are Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Ipswich, Nambour, Logan, Redcliffe and Caboolture, these location will be reviewed annually. Medical graduates can only be employed as interns (PGY1) or Junior House Officers (PGY2) by hospitals whose Junior Doctor Education Program has been accredited by the Postgraduate Medical Education Council of Queensland (PMCO). RGTs and/or Rural Scholarship Holders undertaking pre-vocational training in these accredited hospitals are therefore expected to participate fully in the training program provided for all junior doctors.

However, there are additional expectations of RGTs and/or Rural Scholarship Holders. These expectations result from the requirement that RGTs have the clinical and life skills, personal and professional support networks, to work effectively and safely in a rural placement from the start of their third postgraduate year.

The Rural Generalist Prevocational Training Framework therefore details additional considerations required to support pre-vocational training for RGTs. This framework is designed for maximum flexibility of entry points to accommodate a variety of medical backgrounds and experiences. It is therefore described in terms of certification of activities undertaken and outcomes demonstrated, rather than being time-based.

## Vocational Indicative Plan

All RGTs and/or Rural Scholarship Holders will be required to participate in Vocational Indicative Planning (VIP). The VIP illustrates the career pathway of all RGTs and/or Rural Scholarship holders. Input will be provided by the individual themselves, the Case Management Team, Regional Training Providers, the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM)/Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), and the employing health service district. This overview will then feed into an individual learning plan, and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

## Rural Generalist Team Contacts

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# Frequent Contacts

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