

Health practitioners – Higher education incentive

Policy Number: C27 (QH-POL-144)

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Purpose: To outline the entitlement and process for the higher education incentive as outlined in clause 25 of the Health Practitioners and Dental Officers (Queensland Health) Certified Agreement (No.2) 2016.

Application: This policy applies to all Queensland Health permanent, temporary and casual HP1 to HP4 health practitioners.

Delegation: The 'delegate' is as listed in the relevant Department of Health Human Resource (HR) Delegations Manual, or Hospital and Health Services Human Resource (HR) Delegations Manual, as amended from time to time.

Legislative or other authority:

- Health Practitioners and Dental Officers (Queensland Health) Award – State 2015
- Health Practitioners and Dental Officers (Queensland Health) Certified Agreement (No.2) 2016

Related policy or documents:

- [Higher Duties HR Policy B30](#) (QH-POL-260)

Policy subject:

1	Policy statement	2
1.1	Eligible level 1 qualifications	2
1.1.1	Post graduate certificates and diplomas.....	2
1.1.2	Second degrees	3
1.2	Eligible level 2 qualifications	3
1.2.1	Post graduate masters degree	3
1.2.2	Doctorate degree.....	3
	History:.....	4
Attachment One	Application of entitlement	
Attachment Two	Examples	



1 Policy statement

This policy enables Queensland Health to acknowledge and recognise health practitioners from HP1 to HP4 who obtain higher education qualification(s), thus providing a highly skilled workforce and improved service delivery.

The higher education qualification is to be relevant to the health practitioner's discipline or their current position and is to be additional to the minimum required qualification for registration purposes or entry level equivalent.

Types of eligible qualifications

The following two levels of qualifications or equivalent credentials are to be considered for the higher education incentive allowance on the condition they are relevant to the discipline/position and meet the criteria set out in the policy:

Level 1 qualification: Relevant post graduate certificate, post graduate diploma, second degree

Level 2 qualification: Relevant post graduate masters degree or PhD.

The following accreditations/qualifications or equivalent credentials are not to be considered for the higher education incentive allowance:

- Certificate I
- Certificate II
- Certificate III
- Certificate IV
- Diploma
- Vocational graduate certificate
- Vocational graduate diploma.

In order for credentials to be recognised as equivalent, the employee needs to submit documentation for assessment (by a relevant authority) against the Australian qualification framework (AQF). Employees seeking to have a qualification recognised are to lodge an application via their local manager to Human Resources Branch. In forwarding their application, employees are encouraged to seek endorsement by their professional body.

The application is to be referred to the Health Practitioners and Dental Officers' Consultative Group (HPDOCG) where the appropriate processes for assessment are initiated. Once the qualification equivalency has been established, it is to be presented to the HPDOCG for processing. Recognition for prior learning (RPL) is not to be considered in assessing equivalence of credentials.

Qualifications conferred by international or overseas education institutions need to be assessed in relation to the AQF before they can be submitted for recognition under the higher education incentive.

1.1 Eligible level 1 qualifications

1.1.1 Post graduate certificates and diplomas

Post graduate certificates and diplomas are to be at either the graduate or post graduate level.

1.1.2 Second degrees

Second degrees are to be recognised bachelor degrees that do not provide eligibility for registration or current entry level employment in that profession or discipline. All degrees that provide eligibility for registration or entry level employment are considered first degrees and not second degrees. The order in which the qualifications are undertaken does not affect the definition of first or second degree.

Examples of first degrees include (but are not limited to):

- Bachelor of Speech Pathology (employed as a speech pathologist)
- Bachelor of Pharmacy (employed as a pharmacist)
- Graduate Entry Bachelor, Masters or Doctorate of Physiotherapy Studies (employed as a physiotherapist)
- Bachelor of Psychology (employed as a probationary psychologist)
- Bachelor of Social Work (employed as team leader).

Examples of eligible second degrees include (but are not limited to):

- Bachelor of Education (employed as a pharmacist with an education role)
- Bachelor of Exercise Physiology (employed as a musculoskeletal physiotherapist)
- Bachelor of Music (employed as a music therapist)
- Bachelor of Business (employed in a line management or supervisory role with formal management responsibilities).

Examples of second degrees which would not typically be eligible include (but are not limited to):

- Bachelor of Education (employed as an HP3 occupational therapist without a teaching responsibility)
- Bachelor of Science (employed as a dietician)
- Bachelor of Music (employed as a scientist)
- Bachelor of Business (employed in a professional HP3 role, e.g. a social worker).

1.2 Eligible level 2 qualifications

1.2.1 Post graduate masters degree

Post graduate masters degrees are defined in the AQF (<http://www.aqf.edu.au/>). These may include coursework, research or professional coursework masters degree programs. These qualifications do not include masters programs that are considered equivalent to bachelor degree programs as described by the AQF as: “the graduate entry degree, which is a minimum of two years in duration, is specifically designed on the assumption of graduate entry, sometimes in a specified discipline, often as a shorter alternative to the standard four year (or longer) degree for initial professional preparation”.

1.2.2 Doctorate degree

Post graduate doctorate degrees (PhD) are defined in the AQF (<http://www.aqf.edu.au/>). These may include both research doctorates as well as professional doctorates, however do not include graduate entry programs called doctorate programs, e.g. Doctorate of Physiotherapy Program, Bond University.

Refer Attachment Two sections 1 (higher education incentive for occupations requiring a degree qualification for registration) and 2 (higher education incentive for occupations not requiring a degree for registration or practice purposes) for examples.

History:

June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – formatted as part of the HR Policy review – application amended as a result of changes to the Hospital and Health Boards (Changes to Prescribed Services) Amendment Regulation 2019.
October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – formatted as part of the HR Policy review – amended to update references and naming conventions – amended to clarify incremental advancement (Attachment One section 1.1) – amended to remove transition information relating to the date of commencement of the higher education incentive (Attachment One section 7) – amended to clarify appeal process (Attachment One section 8).
December 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended section 8.6 to reflect related higher education incentive forms.
October 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended to adjust end date for applications to 3 January 2009 as agreed between Queensland Health and unions.
September 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed as a result of the certification of the Health Practitioners (Queensland Health) Certified Agreement (No.1) 2007.

Attachment One – Application of entitlement

1 Higher education incentive

1.1 Incremental advancement

Employees at levels HP1, HP2, HP3 and HP4 who gain a relevant Post Graduate Certificate, Post Graduate Diploma, second Degree or equivalent credential, or Post Graduate Masters Degree or PhD will be entitled to immediate advancement of one increment (maintaining the employee's increment date). Such employees are to retain their existing increment date and continue to increment on this date annually until they reach the maximum pay point in their level. After completion of 12 months service at the maximum pay point, they are to be paid the higher education incentive allowance.

1.2 Higher education incentive allowance

An eligible employee who has completed 12 months service at the maximum pay point is entitled to receive the higher education incentive allowance, in lieu of the incremental advancement referred to in section 1.1 of this Attachment. The allowance is to be paid on the following basis:

Level 1 qualification: calculated on the basis of 3.5% of:

- HP2.7 for level HP1 and HP2 employees
or
- HP3.7 for level HP3 and HP4 employees

or

Level 2 qualification: calculated on the basis of 5.5% of:

- HP2.7 for level HP1 and HP2 employees
or
- HP3.7 for level HP3 and HP4 employees.

In the case of a part-time or casual employee, the employee is to receive a salary at the maximum pay point for a period of at least 12 months and have worked 1,200 ordinary hours at the maximum pay point.

For the purposes of this policy, the maximum pay point for HP2 is HP2.7, and for HP3 the maximum pay point is HP3.7.

Employees who translated to either HP2.8 or HP3.8 are automatically eligible for payment of the allowance. There is no requirement for these employees to complete 12 months service at HP2.8 or HP3.8 to be eligible to receive the higher education incentive allowance (refer clause 22 of the Health Practitioners (Queensland Health) Certified Agreement (No.1) 2007).

Employees at HP1.7, HP2.7 (ineligible for HP2.8), HP3.7 (ineligible for HP3.8) or HP4.4 level are required to have completed 12 months service at this pay point before they are entitled to receive the higher education incentive allowance. In the case of a part-time or casual employee, the employee is to receive a salary at the maximum pay point for a period of at least 12 months and have worked 1,200 ordinary hours at the maximum pay point.

The higher education incentive allowance is an all-purpose allowance, i.e. the allowance attracts shift penalties, weekend penalties, overtime, leave payments, and leave loading. Leave payments and loading attract payment only when the allowance is being paid at the time of taking the leave.

The higher education incentive allowance is not included in superannuable salary but is included in ordinary time earnings (OTE). The allowance is paid through the payroll system and taxed as part of gross income.

2 More than one qualification

2.1 Additional qualifications within level 1 or within level 2 qualifications

Employees may only make application for the higher education incentive for one eligible qualification within a category.

An employee who holds more than one eligible qualification within level 1 or 2 and is in receipt of the higher education incentive is not eligible for additional advancement and/or additional allowance.

2.2 Additional qualifications across level 1 and level 2 qualifications

An employee who holds a level 1 qualification and subsequently obtains an eligible level 2 qualification, may apply for recognition of the level 2 higher education incentive allowance in lieu of the level 1 higher education incentive allowance, thus changing the employee's entitlement from the 3.5% to the 5.5% incentive.

3 Entitlements upon higher duties

When an employee who is in receipt of an incremental advancement or the higher education incentive allowance subsequently undertakes higher duties at either HP2, HP3 or HP4 level, the employee becomes eligible for the incremental advancement only (one pay point) at the higher HP classification level, on condition the qualification remains relevant to the higher level position. The incremental advancement is payable irrespective of whether the employee is in receipt of the allowance at their substantive level. The higher duty qualifying period is to be in accordance with the approved eligibility requirements in Higher Duties HR Policy B30.

Employees who are in receipt of a higher education incentive are **not** entitled to retain the higher education incentive allowance or the incremental advancement when relieving in positions classified at HP5 and above. These employees are to resume payment of the higher education incentive when they revert to their substantive position. No back payment can be claimed for the period of time the employee was acting in a HP5 or higher position.

4 Entitlement upon promotion

When an employee who is in receipt of the higher education incentive is subsequently promoted to either HP2, HP3 or HP4 based on merit selection, they become eligible to be advanced one increment level, on condition the qualification remains relevant to the higher level position.

The relevance of the higher education incentive is to be assessed by the interview panel. The interview panel is required to document whether a particular higher education qualification held by the successful applicant(s) for the position is relevant for the purposes of the higher education incentive policy.

It is the panel's task to ensure that the successful applicant is appointed to the appropriate level after consideration of the incumbent's higher education qualification.

All periods of acting/relieving in higher duties are to be taken into account and the Higher Duties HR Policy B30 is to be applied.

5 Approval process for the higher education incentive

The line manager (supervisor) is to sign in support of the application. When the line manager is of a different profession, the professional supervisor or discipline leader is also required to sign in support of the application. If the employee is promoted via a merit selection, the chairperson of the panel is to sign in support of the application.

For Hospital and Health Service (HHS) employees, the delegate approval for the higher education incentive is with the Health Service Chief Executive (or delegate). The delegate may typically be the Director of Allied Health.

For employees within a state-wide service, Department of Health, the delegate approval for the higher education incentive is with the senior directors (Health Support Queensland, Clinical Excellence Division, Prevention Division).

6 Process for applying for the higher education incentive

- The employee receives an eligible post graduate qualification and completes the application for recognition of the qualification under the higher education incentive policy (refer higher education incentive increment or allowance application for recognition of qualification form).
- The application is to be accompanied by a certified copy of the qualification being sought for recognition.
- The supervisor provides the employee with written acknowledgement that the application has been received (refer employee receipt for higher education incentive form).
- The supervisor, or the interview panel in the case of a merit-based promotion, assess the relevancy of the qualification and sign to support the application.
- When the line manager is of a different profession, the professional supervisor or discipline leader also assesses the relevancy of the qualification and signs off in support on the application.
- The relevant delegate approves the application.
- The higher education incentive is applied as per this policy.

7 Date of commencement of the higher education incentive

Once an application for recognition of qualification(s) is approved, the employee is to receive the higher education incentive from the date the approved application is submitted to the supervisor.

8 Qualification no longer relevant

A qualification may cease to be relevant when an employee is appointed to a position away from the area in which the qualification is relevant. In such cases the higher education incentive ceases.

The HHS/Department is to provide the employee with written advice of their intent to cease any advancement or allowance, stating the reason for which it is believed no longer relevant. In the case of merit appointments, the interview panel is to provide the employee with written advice of their intent not to recognise a higher education qualification, stating the reason for which it is deemed no longer relevant to the position.

When employees do not agree with the HHS/Department or the interview panel, they have 21 days in which to lodge an appeal. The appeal process is outlined in the Employee complaints HR Policy E12 and Health Practitioners and Dental Officers (Queensland Health) Award – State 2015 (refer section 7.2, Employee grievance procedures – other than Award matters).

In addition, the HHS/Department or interview panel is to provide written advice to Payroll Services of the date the allowance is to cease, including a copy of the letter provided to the employee.

The date of discontinuing any allowance is the date that the HHS/Department or interview panel formally advised the employee in writing.

9 Grievance procedure

Normal grievance procedures apply to this policy.

Attachment Two – Examples

1 Higher education incentive for occupations requiring a current degree qualification

- A speech pathologist who requires a four year degree for registration purposes and obtains a post graduate diploma in speech pathology can apply for recognition.
- A scientist who has a bachelor of science degree and completes a master of bio-chemistry can make application for recognition.
- A nutritionist who completes a diploma in natural medicine (undertaken through a registered training organisation) is **not** able to seek recognition for the higher education incentive as the minimum qualification for registration purposes in this profession is a degree qualification. For recognition, a higher education qualification needs to be obtained, e.g. a post graduate certificate, post graduate diploma, post graduate masters or a PhD. A second degree which is relevant to the current position the employee occupies may also be relevant.
- A physiotherapist who undertakes a short course in massage therapy and is awarded a diploma in remedial massage (undertaken through a registered training organisation (RTO)) is **not** eligible to make application as the minimum qualification is a bachelor, masters or doctorate of physiotherapy. For recognition, a higher education qualification needs to be obtained.
- An audiologist who completes a certificate IV in training and assessment (undertaken through an RTO) is **not** eligible to make application as the minimum qualification is a masters degree in audiology. For recognition, a higher education qualification needs to be obtained, e.g. a doctoral (PhD) in audiology. A second degree which is relevant to the position the employee currently occupies may also be relevant.
- A radiation therapist who previously only required a diploma qualification for registration and practice purposes obtains an entry level qualification (current relevant bachelor degree). This bachelor degree is deemed to be an entry level qualification. Therefore, this qualification is ineligible for the higher education incentive as it is deemed an entry level qualification.

2 Higher education incentive for occupations not requiring a degree for registration or practice purposes

The higher education incentive is to reward health practitioners who have obtained a higher qualification in addition to the minimum required qualification. Some professions included in the Certified Agreement do not require a degree for registration or practice purposes. This makes setting guidelines for this policy extremely complex. These examples are provided for general guidance however specific cases may need to be assessed on their merits. The basic premise of this policy is to reward employees for obtaining relevant higher education qualifications that are additional to the current base qualification requirement.

- A medical laboratory technician employed as a technician who has a diploma of biosciences from an RTO completes a bachelor of biomedical science degree. This employee can make application for recognition.
- A biomedical technician with an advanced diploma in electrical engineering undertakes a certificate IV in occupational health and safety (through an RTO). This is not a higher education qualification and therefore is **not** eligible to make application for the higher education incentive, e.g. if the biomedical technician with a diploma in electrical engineering undertook a degree in electrical engineering, this employee qualifies for recognition.