



DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH
AN ROINN
SLÁINTE

Shaping a
Healthier Future

Circular 85/2000

17 July 2000

Chief Executive Officer
Each Health Board/Authority

Revised Arrangements for Sponsorship of Student Public Health Nurses

I am directed by the Minister for Health and Children to refer to the priority Action Plan for implementation of the report of the Commission on Nursing agreed as part of the settlement of the nurses' strike. This plan was included as an appendix to Labour Court Recommendation No. 16330.

The priority Action Plan includes a commitment to the issue of a revised strategy statement on the role of the Public Health Nurse (PHN). In this context, the Department is currently examining the existing strategy statement (circular 27/66) and will be in contact with health boards as soon as possible.

In the interim, having regard to the shortage of Public Health Nurses and to the commitment in the priority Action Plan to the introduction of uniform criteria in relation to the provision of financial support to nurses and midwives undertaking post-registration courses, the Department wishes to advise health boards of revised sponsorship arrangements for Student Public Health Nurses as follows:

- **2000 intake and beyond.**

A total of 65 students have been selected for the Higher Diploma in Public Health Nursing courses starting in University College Cork and University College Dublin in Autumn 2000. It has been agreed that all students should be sponsored by a health board and appointed on probation as Student Public Health Nurses. A nurse holding a permanent post in the health board service, on appointment as a Student PHN, would retain the permanent status of his/her substantive post.

Each health board will be assigned a quota of places for sponsorship from 2001 onwards having regard to need and current population figures. Health Boards are asked to assess requirements and advise the Nursing Policy Division of the Department as to their requirements for 2001 without undue delay.

Special arrangements are required for the 2000 intake as students have already been selected. Health Boards are asked to advise the Department as quickly as possible as to the number of students they propose to sponsor, having regard to the revised sponsorship arrangements now advised.

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All Student Public Health Nurses should receive refund of fees, and be paid salary at the minimum of the Staff Nurse scale while studying for the Higher Diploma in Public Health Nursing, and at 80% of the minimum point of the Public Health Nurse scale for the duration of the clinical placement period.

The sanction of the Minister may, therefore, be assumed for the payment of an annual salary of £17,180 to Student PHNs who undertake the Higher Diploma in Public Health Nursing during the academic year 2000/1. This rate will fall to be revised in future in accordance with movements in pay of the Staff Nurse and Public Health Nurse grades.

As originally envisaged in Circular 27/66, vacancies should be reserved to which the students would be automatically appointed on successful completion of their course at the minimum point of the Public Health Nurse scale.

A nurse failing to obtain the Public Health Nurse qualification on completion of the course would be retained on probation to afford him/her a further opportunity of securing the qualification. Only in the unlikely event of continued failure to secure the qualification would his/her appointment not be ratified.

Student PHNs must undertake to remain in employment as Public Health Nurses with the sponsoring health board for a minimum period of two years. Students who do not complete the course or leave employment within two years would be expected to refund fees (on pro-rata basis if appropriate).

- **1999/2000 Students**

It has also been agreed that Student PHNs currently sponsored by health boards should receive refund of fees, and be paid salary at the minimum of the Staff Nurse scale while studying for the Higher Diploma in Public Health Nursing, and at 80% of the minimum point of Public Health Nurse scale at 1 July 1999 rate for the duration of the clinical placement period. Payments already made by Health Boards should be deducted from this amount.

Health Boards are therefore requested to immediately make arrangements to ensure payment of additional monies, if any, to those Student PHNs whom they currently sponsor. Student PHN salaries should be calculated at a rate of £ 16,101. The fee charged by UCD for the 1999/2000 academic year is £3,400 and the UCC fee is £3,447.

This is subject to Student PHNs signing an undertaking that they will take up employment with the sponsoring health board and remain with that board for a period of two years. Students who do not complete the course or leave employment within two years would be expected to refund fees (on pro-rata basis if appropriate).

Health boards are reminded that sponsored students should be automatically appointed on successful completion of their course at the minimum point of the Public Health Nurse scale.

The Department will make arrangements to have course fees refunded to the remaining students (who are currently not sponsored) and payment made for the clinical placement period at 80% of the minimum point of the Public Health Nurse scale.

- **1998/1999 Students**

It has been agreed all such students will receive payment for the clinical placement period at 80% of minimum PHN scale at 1 July 1998 rate. All Health Boards, except the Western Health Board, are therefore requested to immediately make arrangements to ensure payment of £3,247 per person to the individuals sponsored by them for the 1998/9 academic year. In the case of the Western Health Board, £203 should be paid to each sponsored student to bring the payment for the clinical placement period up to £3,247.

Your non-capital allocation will be adjusted to take account of appropriate additional costs. In this context, please submit detailed costings to the Nursing Policy Division as soon as possible.

Any queries in relation to this circular should be addressed to the Nursing Policy Division. Telephone enquiries may be made at (01) 635 4056/7.

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