

Voluntary Bonding Scheme Terms and Conditions for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners - 2025 Intake

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Voluntary Bonding Scheme (the Scheme) is a practical initiative run by Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) to encourage newly qualified health professionals to work in the specialties/settings and/or communities that need them most, and to retain essential health professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 1.2 For nurses, the Scheme is targeted to new graduate Registered Nurses and newly qualified Nurse Practitioners who are starting their career, with the aim of incentivising them to work in eligible specialties/settings and/or communities. Those accepted to the Scheme can become eligible for payments in the first three-to-five years of their career. Funding is intended to help repay a Scheme participant's student loan (if they have one) or otherwise provide a direct payment.
- 1.3 To be eligible to register for the Scheme and qualify for payment(s), you must:
- be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident ¹ at the time you make an application for payment; and
 - **If a Registered Nurse**, have completed your final year of study in 2024 for your undergraduate qualification² for your profession at an accredited New Zealand Training Institution (clauses 1.11 to 1.13) and be registered with the Nursing Council of New Zealand - Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa as a Registered Nurse **or**
 - **If a Nurse Practitioner**, have completed a Masters of Nursing (or equivalent, or papers which lead directly to obtaining registration as a Nurse Practitioner) in 2024 at an accredited New Zealand Training Institution (clauses 1.11 to 1.13) and be registered with the Nursing Council of New Zealand - Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa as a Nurse Practitioner, and
 - have commenced working, or intend to start working, in the profession and nursing scope for which you have trained, and intend to do so for at least three and up to five years; and
 - work in one or more of the eligible specialties/settings in Aotearoa New Zealand as per the eligibility criteria for your profession and scope (clauses 4.3 to 4.5) for at least three and up to five years, beginning on the applicable commencement date (refer clauses 4.7 to 4.10) and
 - comply with all other terms and conditions of the Scheme.
- Roles/employment with Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ), or any other New Zealand Crown Entity, are not eligible under any specialty or setting under these Terms and Conditions.**
- 1.4 Involvement in the Scheme involves four phases:
- Registration of Interest
 - confirmation (of place) on the Scheme
 - participation (employment)
 - applications for payment.
- 1.5 **In order to be eligible for payment**, you must register for the Scheme, have your place on the Scheme confirmed and meet the Scheme's Terms and Conditions during the participation phase. **You must also apply for payment within twelve (12) months of becoming eligible for payment, under the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme.** Health NZ strongly encourages you to apply for payment no later than six months after becoming eligible to apply under the Terms and Conditions.
- 1.6 Health NZ also recommends that you check your progress while participating in the Scheme (by contacting us via email at ybs@tewhatuora.govt.nz), particularly:

¹ For the purposes of the Scheme, Permanent Residents include those who hold a NZ Permanent Resident Visa, or a Returning Residents Visa (with no expiry date for travel).

² A Masters of Nursing (or equivalent) is considered an eligible training pathway if the qualification was the study path which immediately preceded the registrants' first registration as a Registered Nurse in Aotearoa New Zealand.

- at the three, four- and five-year points after registering for the Scheme, and
 - if you change employers, communities, specialties/settings, take parental leave or extended leave.
- 1.7 You will not be eligible for any payment from the Scheme if you do not complete at least three full years (36 months) on the Scheme, in accordance with these Terms and Conditions.
- 1.8 The Scheme is a voluntary process and you, not Health NZ, are responsible for any employment decisions you may make based on your intended participation in the Scheme, including decisions about working in eligible specialties/settings and/or communities.
- 1.9 You are responsible for notifying Health NZ of any change of postal address, email address or other contact details in a timely manner.
- 1.10 There are limited places available on the Scheme. Where eligible Registrations of Interest exceed the number of places available on the Scheme, a selection process will be conducted. This is not subject to appeal.

Education Prerequisites

- 1.11 You must:
- **If a Registered Nurse**, have completed, in 2024, the requirements of an undergraduate training programme³ for Registered Nursing from the list of accredited institutions below (clause 1.12) and be registered with the Nursing Council of New Zealand - Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa as a Registered Nurse **or**
 - **If a Nurse Practitioner**, have completed a Masters of Nursing (or equivalent, or papers which lead directly to obtaining registration as a Nurse Practitioner) in 2024, from the list of accredited institutions below (clause 1.12) and be registered with the Nursing Council of New Zealand - Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa as a Registered Nurse or Nurse Practitioner.
- 1.12 Accredited training institutions for Registered Nurses and/or Nurse Practitioners are:
- Ara Institute of Canterbury, Te Pūkenga
 - Auckland University of Technology Te Wānanga Aronui O Tāmaki Makau Rau
 - Eastern Institute of Technology, Te Aho A Māui, Te Pūkenga
 - Manukau Institute of Technology, Te Pūkenga
 - Massey University, Te Kunenga Ki Pūrehuroa
 - Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology, Te Whare Wānanga o Te Tauihu o Te Waka a Māui, Te Pūkenga
 - Northland Polytechnic, Tai Tokerau Wānanga, Te Pūkenga
 - Otago Polytechnic, Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, Te Pūkenga
 - Southern Institute of Technology, Te Whare Wananga o Murihiku, Te Pūkenga
 - Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi
 - Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology, Te Pūkenga
 - UCOL Universal College of Learning, Te Pae Mātauranga ki te Ao, Te Pūkenga
 - UNITEC New Zealand, Te Pūkenga
 - University of Auckland, Waipapa Taumata Rau
 - University of Canterbury, Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
 - University of Otago (Christchurch), Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo ki Ōtautahi
 - University of Waikato, Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato
 - Victoria University of Wellington, Te Herenga Waka
 - Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec), Te Pūkenga

³ A Masters of Nursing (or equivalent) is considered an eligible training pathway if the qualification was the study path which immediately preceded the registrants' first registration as a Registered Nurse in Aotearoa New Zealand.

- Western Institute of Technology (WINTEC) at Taranaki, Te Pūkenga
- Whitireia New Zealand, Te Pūkenga

Definition of an eligible Registrant

- 1.13 Eligible registrants are Registered Nurses who completed their studies towards their undergraduate degree⁴ in 2024 from the list of accredited institutions (clause 1.12) **or** Nurse Practitioners who have completed their Masters' degree (or equivalent, or papers which lead directly to obtaining registration as a Nurse Practitioner) in 2024 from the list of accredited institutions (clause 1.12) and can provide evidence of having done so (if requested by Health NZ), irrespective of the date of their graduation ceremony, and who have obtained registration with the Nursing Council of New Zealand - Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa as Nurse Practitioner.

2. Registration of Interest

- 2.1 In order to be a participant on the Scheme, you must successfully register your interest and be confirmed on the Scheme.
- 2.2 To successfully register your interest, you must complete the online Registration of Interest form. This involves providing information to show that you meet, or intend to meet, the eligibility criteria of the Scheme. You are responsible for ensuring that you register during the registration of interest period. Registrations submitted outside this period will not be considered. It is your responsibility to ensure that you successfully register for the Scheme and obtain a formal notification from Health NZ confirming this.
- 2.3 Completing a Registration of Interest does not guarantee a place on the Scheme. The purpose of the Registration of Interest process is to provide information about you, your education and future work plans so that you can be considered for one of the places on the Scheme.
- 2.4 If you have previously registered for the Scheme in an earlier intake in **a different nursing scope** and have already received a Scheme payment, you are eligible to register for the 2025 intake and receive additional payment(s) under a new Scheme registration should you be accepted and go on to meet these terms and conditions.
- 2.5 If you have previously registered for the Scheme in an earlier intake in **the same nursing scope** and have already received a Scheme payment, you are not eligible to register for the 2025 intake or receive additional payment(s) under a new Scheme registration. If you have previously registered for the Scheme but have not received any payments from the Scheme, your previous registration can be voided at your request, and (if eligible) you may re-register for the Scheme. Please contact vbs@tewhaturora.govt.nz if you have any queries.

3. Confirmation on the Scheme

- 3.1 There are limited places on the Scheme. Successfully registering your interest for the Scheme does not guarantee you will be confirmed on the Scheme.
- 3.2 A separate process will be conducted by Health NZ (following consideration of your Registration of Interest) to formally confirm you on the Scheme. You will be advised in writing whether your place on the Scheme has been confirmed.
- 3.3 There are limited places available on the Scheme. Where eligible Registrations of Interest exceed the number of places available on the Scheme, a selection process will be conducted. This is not subject to appeal.

⁴ A Masters of Nursing (or equivalent) is considered an eligible training pathway if the qualification was the study path which immediately preceded the registrants' first registration as a Registered Nurse in Aotearoa New Zealand.

4. Participation

- 4.1 Once you are confirmed on the Scheme, your participation is determined by:
- your Commencement Date on the Scheme
 - minimum employment requirements
 - movement between eligible specialties/settings, communities and/or employers
 - breaks and pauses in your employment
 - parental leave
 - work you may undertake as an agency nurse or a locum.
- 4.2 In order to be eligible to receive payment from the Scheme you must comply with the eligibility criteria for payment (Section 5) and comply with all other terms and conditions of the Scheme.

Eligibility Criteria

- 4.3 To be eligible for the Scheme and payment(s), you must:
- meet the prerequisites as listed in Clauses 1.3 and 1.11 to 1.12 AND
 - **work as a Registered Nurse** in Aotearoa New Zealand in one or more of the eligible **specialties/settings** for Registered Nurses for at least the next three and up to five years (clause 4.3) beginning on the applicable commencement date (refer clauses 4.7 to 4.10) **OR**
 - **work as a Nurse Practitioner** in Aotearoa New Zealand in one or more of the eligible **specialties/settings** for Nurse Practitioners for at least the next three and up to five years (clause 4.3) beginning on the applicable commencement date (refer clauses 4.7 to 4.10) AND
 - comply with all other terms and conditions of the Scheme.
- 4.4 **The eligible 2025 intake specialties/settings for Registered Nurses or Nurse Practitioners** are:
- Practice Nursing (GP Clinics or nurse led practices)
 - Practice Nursing (Urgent Care, or Youth and Tertiary Education primary health services, not including School nurses)⁵
 - Aged residential care (including hospices)
 - Homecare Nursing
 - Hauora Māori primary health services
 - Pacific primary health services
 - Well Child Tamariki Ora
 - Primary Mental Health and Addiction Services (NGO⁶ primary care settings)
 - Other primary (Public Health, Family Planning/Sexual health, Occupational Health and primary care roles in Rural Trust hospitals)
- 4.5 **Roles/employment with Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ), or any other New Zealand Crown Entity, are not eligible under any specialty or setting under these Terms and Conditions.**

Changes to eligible Specialties/settings and/or Communities

- 4.6 You must commence working in one or more of the eligible specialties/settings for your nursing scope listed in clauses 4.3 to 4.5. If you wish to change the specialty/setting you are working in, you may only do so in accordance with clauses 4.14 to 4.15.

⁵ NOT INCLUDING Primary or Secondary School Nurses

⁶ NGO = 'non-Governmental organisation'

Commencement Date

- 4.7 If you were already working in an eligible specialty/setting on or before 1 January 2025, your Commencement Date on the Scheme is **1 January 2025**. Time employed in an eligible position prior to this date does not contribute towards the bonding period.
- 4.8 If you began (or begin) working in an eligible specialty/setting after 1 January 2025, your Commencement Date is the date on which your employment began.
- 4.9 If you have indicated in your Registration of Interest that you intend to shift into a eligible specialty/setting, your Commencement Date is the date that your employment in an eligible specialty/setting and/or community begins.
- 4.10 If you have not commenced eligible employment in accordance with these Terms and Conditions by **30 June 2026** your confirmation on the Scheme will lapse and you will cease to be eligible for the Scheme or payments.

Minimum Employment Requirements

- 4.11 To be eligible for payments you must be employed for a minimum of 0.6 FTE (this may be an average FTE during any 12-month period of employment if the hours worked fluctuate for any reason). This equates to 24 hours per week, or 1,152 hours across a normal working year of 48 weeks.
- 4.12 You will not be eligible for payment from the Scheme if you undertake substantive or continuous locum work that means that you cannot meet the breaks and pauses clauses (clauses 4.16 to 4.19 and 4.23 to 4.28).
- 4.13 You are responsible for verifying that the FTE requirements have been met and will be required to make a declaration and provide a certificate of service from your employer(s) before each bonding payment is made (Section 5).

Moving Between eligible Specialties/settings and/or communities

- 4.14 You may move between eligible specialties/settings for your nursing scope:
- listed in clause 4.4 for Registered Nurses or Nurse Practitioners
- 4.15 You cannot move to a specialty or community that is listed in any Voluntary Bonding Scheme Terms and Conditions before 2025 that is not listed in clause 4.4.

Breaks and Pauses in the Term of Service

- 4.16 You can take up to 14 weeks absence (total paid and unpaid leave, not including Parental Leave) in a 12-month period from your position in an eligible specialty/setting and/or community without affecting your eligibility for bonding payments. Such an absence is known as a “break”.
- 4.17 A “pause” is any time beyond the 14 weeks break allowance that you spend away from work an eligible specialty or community. Time taken as pauses is added to the term necessary to complete the bond, and no more than ten weeks may be added during any one year. No more than 50 weeks in total can be added to the five-year bonding term.
- Total absences of more than 24 weeks in any 12-month period (not including Parental Leave) will render an applicant ineligible for the Scheme and payments unless there are exceptional circumstances as accepted and agreed to in writing by Health NZ (refer clauses 4.27 and 4.28).**
- 4.18 Breaks and pauses include any leave or absence from employment, with or without pay, including normal employment leave entitlements, such as annual leave and sick leave.
- 4.19 Locum work will also be considered as an absence against the breaks and pauses

provisions (see clauses 4.23 to 4.28).

Parental Leave

- 4.20 You may take up to 52 weeks parental leave (per pregnancy), in accordance with the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987 and remain on the Scheme.
- 4.21 Time spent on parental leave does not accrue towards your bonding period and must be made up. The bonding period will automatically restart as soon as you return to eligible work in an eligible specialty or community listed in clauses 4.3 to 4.5.
- 4.22 Time spent on parental leave (up to a maximum of 52 weeks) is separate to the break and pause provisions (clauses 4.16 – 4.19). Parental leave of over 52 weeks (per pregnancy) will be considered under the breaks and pauses clauses.

Working as a Locum or Agency Nurse

- 4.23 **Locum work** that you may undertake is considered an absence under these terms. If you undertake locum work such that you cannot meet the breaks and pauses clauses (clauses 4.16 to 4.19), you will not be eligible for payment from the Scheme.
- 4.24 For the purposes of the Scheme, a locum is someone who provides the services in the stead of another nurse within the same scope of practice.
- 4.25 When you apply for payments from the Scheme, you will be asked to confirm that you have not engaged in “substantive” locum work.
- 4.26 **Agency nurse** work is allowable, provided verification from the employer can be provided which confirmed an annual average of 0.6FTE is worked within the eligible specialties/settings or communities.

Exemptions and Reviews in Exceptional Circumstances

- 4.27 If there is a change in your circumstances that is exceptional and results in an inability to meet the 2025 Terms and Conditions, you may request an exemption from Health NZ. Exemptions from the standard Terms and Conditions will only be granted in ***exceptional circumstances, at the sole discretion of the relevant Health New Zealand business unit***. Health New Zealand is under no obligation to offer an exemption, for any reason. It is strongly recommended that you seek an exemption prior to becoming ineligible under the normal terms. If you are applying for payment and have not met the terms due to exceptional circumstances, you can also request a retrospective review.
- 4.28 Applications for exemptions under exceptional circumstances must be made in writing, with a clear explanation as to what clauses cannot be met and the exceptional circumstances which have prevented you from meeting the Terms. These can be sent to vbs@tewhatuora.govt.nz or submitted along with an application for payment.

5. Applying for Payment

- 5.1 You are responsible for initiating the first claim for payment after three full years (36 months) have been completed on the Scheme, in accordance with these Terms and Conditions, starting from your Commencement Date (see clauses 4.7 to 4.10).
- 5.2 If you remain on the Scheme for a fourth and fifth year, you are responsible for initiating the second and third claims for payment.
- 5.3 **To be eligible for payment under the scheme, you must apply for payment within twelve (12) months of becoming eligible for payment under the Terms and Conditions.** Health NZ strongly encourages you to apply for payment no later than six months after becoming eligible to apply, under the terms and conditions.

- 5.4 Health NZ also recommends that you check your progress while participating in the Scheme (by contacting us via email at ybs@tewhatuora.govt.nz), particularly:
- at the three, four- and five-year points after registering for the Scheme, and
 - if you change employers, communities, specialties/settings, take parental leave or extended leave.
- 5.5 You will only be eligible for payments if:
- you have been employed for at least three full years (1st payment) in Aotearoa New Zealand in accordance with these Terms and Conditions. Up to two additional payments can be applied for upon completion of a fourth or fifth year, provided all terms are met.
 - you have met the minimum full time equivalent (FTE) employment requirements (clauses 4.11 to 4.13)
 - you have complied with the rules governing breaks and pauses (clauses 4.16 to 4.19), Parental Leave (clauses 4.20 to 4.22) and locum work for the Scheme (clauses 4.23 to 4.26).
- 5.6 No payments will be made until you have:
- applied for payment in accordance with the application for payment process
 - submitted a declaration confirming that you have met these Terms and Conditions
 - provided a certificate of service from your employer(s) confirming that your employment has complied with the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme during the bonding period.
- 5.7 Details of further information required to confirm that you have met these Terms and Conditions and to enable payment to be made (e.g., proof of identity) are outlined in the payment application form, which will be made available to you by January 2028.
- 5.8 If you have a student loan, the net Scheme payment will be made against your student loan. If the balance of your student loan is less than the Scheme payment, you may need to contact Inland Revenue once the payment has been made to enable the difference to be paid to you.
- 5.9 If you do not have a student loan, the net Scheme payment will be paid directly to you.
- 5.10 The payment for Registered Nurses or Nurse Practitioners for the first 36-month bond completed on the Scheme is **\$8,499** after tax (net). You can go on to be eligible to apply for additional payments of **\$2,833** net upon completion of a fourth year, and **\$2,833** net again after a fifth year.
- 5.11 Scheme payments are subject to income tax and may affect your tax situation, for example, in relation to provisional tax, Working for Families child support payments.
- 5.12 If you are an independent contractor, a gross payment will be made and the net amount you receive will depend upon your personal tax situation.
- 5.13 Health NZ recommends that you seek independent advice on how the payment will affect your tax position. For further tax information, contact Inland Revenue.

6. Privacy Statement

- 6.1 All of the information you provide in the Registration of Interest form will be treated as personal information and will be used, stored and disclosed in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act 2020.
- 6.2 By submitting the Registration of Interest form, you are authorising Health NZ to collect personal information about you and consenting to relevant information being shared with other key stakeholders, for the purposes of the Voluntary Bonding Scheme. This information will be stored and used by Health NZ for purposes associated with the Scheme, in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act 2020.
- 6.3 The information will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to any person except in connection with the purposes for which it is obtained, or by operation of law.
- 6.4 You have the right to contact Health NZ to request access to and correction of any personal information held about you.
- 6.5 We suggest you keep a copy of these Terms and Conditions for your records.