

**Voluntary Bonding Scheme Terms and Conditions for Pharmacists 2025**

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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/for the specialties, communities and employers that need them most, and to retain essential health professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 1.2 For Pharmacists, the Scheme is targeted to new and recent graduates who are starting their career, with the aim of incentivising them to work in eligible communities and settings. 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 payments, you must:
- be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident <sup>1</sup> at the time you make an application for payment;
  - have completed your final year of study in 2024 for your undergraduate qualification as a pharmacist at an accredited New Zealand training Institution (clauses 1.11 to 1.12) **AND** have commenced your pharmacist internship in 2024 or 2025; **OR**
  - have completed your final year of study in 2022 or 2023 for your undergraduate qualification as a pharmacist at an accredited New Zealand training Institution (clauses 1.11 to 1.12) **AND** successfully completed your pharmacist internship in 2024
  - be registered with the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand – Te Pou Whakamana Kaimatū o Aotearoa; and
  - have commenced working, or intend to start working, as an intern pharmacist or pharmacist, and intend to do so for at least three and up to five years; and
  - work in an eligible community and setting in Aotearoa New Zealand as an intern pharmacist or pharmacist as per the eligibility criteria (clause 4.3) for at least three and up to five years, beginning on the applicable commencement date (refer clauses 4.5 to 4.8); **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 setting under these Terms and Conditions.**
- 1.4 Involvement in the Scheme involves four phases:
- Registration of Interest
  - confirmation on the Scheme
  - participation (employment)
  - application 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@tewhatauora.govt.nz](mailto:ybs@tewhatauora.govt.nz)), particularly:
- at the three-, four- and five-year points after registering for the Scheme, and
  - if you change employers, take parental leave or extended leave.

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

- 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.
- 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:
- have completed a Bachelor of Pharmacy from the University of Auckland - Waipapa Taumata Rau or University of Otago - Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka and/or a relevant qualification as accredited by the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand – Te Pou Whakamana Kaimatū o Aotearoa in 2024 **AND** have commenced your pharmacist internship in 2024 or early 2025 **OR**
  - have completed a Bachelor of Pharmacy from the University of Auckland - Waipapa Taumata Rau or University of Otago - Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka and/or a relevant health science qualification as accredited by the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand – Te Pou Whakamana Kaimatū o Aotearoa in 2022 or 2023 **AND** have successfully completed your Pharmacy internship in 2024 **AND**
  - be registered as an intern pharmacist or pharmacist with the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand – Te Pou Whakamana Kaimatū o Aotearoa.

### **Definition of a Graduate**

- 1.12 Eligible graduates are those who completed their Bachelor of Pharmacy from the University of Auckland - Waipapa Taumata Rau or University of Otago - Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka and/or a relevant qualification as accredited by the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand – Te Pou Whakamana Kaimatū o Aotearoa in 2022, 2023 or 2024 and can provide evidence of having done so, irrespective of the date of their graduation ceremony.

## **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. Entries 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 your 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 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@tewhatuora.govt.nz](mailto:vbs@tewhatuora.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. 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 communities and settings
  - breaks and pauses in your employment
  - parental leave
  - work you may undertake as a locum.

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**

- 4.2 To be eligible for the Scheme payment(s), you must:
  - meet the prerequisites as listed in Clauses 1.3 and 1.11 and 1.12 AND
  - have completed a Bachelor of Pharmacy from the University of Auckland or University of Otago and/or a relevant qualification as accredited by the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand – Te Pou Whakamana Kaimatū o Aotearoa in 2024 AND have commenced your pharmacist internship in 2024 or early 2025 **OR**
  - have completed a Bachelor of Pharmacy from the University of Auckland or University of Otago and/or a relevant health science qualification as accredited by the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand – Te Pou Whakamana Kaimatū o Aotearoa in 2022 or 2023 **AND** have successfully completed your Pharmacy internship in 2024 **AND**
  - work as an intern pharmacist or pharmacist in Aotearoa New Zealand in one of the eligible communities and settings for pharmacists for three to five years, beginning on the applicable commencement date (refer clauses 4.5 to 4.8); **AND**
  - comply with all other terms and conditions of the Scheme.

## Eligible Communities and Settings

### 4.3 The 2025 eligible Communities and Settings are:

- Pharmacies and Primary Care Practices in Rural and Regional Community settings in Aotearoa New Zealand (excluding metropolitan Auckland, Tauranga, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin).

If you have any queries around the eligibility of your community or setting, please email us at [vbs@tewhatuora.govt.nz](mailto:vbs@tewhatuora.govt.nz). If in any doubt about the eligibility of a community or practice setting, it is the responsibility of the registrant to obtain written confirmation of eligibility from Health NZ.

**Roles/employment with Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) or any other New Zealand Crown Entity, are not eligible under any setting under these Terms and Conditions.**

## Changes to Eligible Communities and Settings

- 4.4 You must commence working in one of the eligible Communities and Settings listed in clause 4.3. If you wish to change the Community and Setting you are working in, you may only do so in accordance with clause 4.12.

## Commencement Date

- 4.5 If you were already working in an eligible Community and 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.
- 4.6 If you began (or begin) working in an eligible Community and Setting after 1 January 2025, your Commencement Date is the date on which your employment began.
- 4.7 If you have indicated in your Registration of Interest that you intend to shift into an eligible Community and Setting, your Commencement Date is the date that your employment in an eligible Community and Setting begins.
- 4.8 If you have not commenced 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

- 4.9 To be eligible for payments Pharmacists must be employed for a minimum 0.6 FTE (Full Time Equivalent). This may be an average FTE during any 12-month period of employment if your hours of work fluctuate for any reason. This equates to 24 hours per week, or 1,152 hours across a normal working year of 48 weeks.
- 4.10 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 (see clauses 4.13 to 4.16 and 4.20 to 4.22).
- 4.11 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 Communities and Settings**

- 4.12 You may move between eligible Communities and Settings:
- Listed in clause 4.3
  - You cannot move to a eligible Community and Setting that is listed in any Voluntary Bonding Scheme Terms and Conditions before 2025 that is not listed in clause 4.3.

## **Breaks and Pauses in the Term of Service**

- 4.13 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 a eligible Community and Setting without affecting your eligibility for bonding payments. Such an absence is known as a “break”.
- 4.14 A “pause” is any time beyond the 14 weeks break allowance that you spend away from your hard to staff Community and Setting. Time taken as pauses must be added to the term necessary to complete the bond, and no more than ten weeks may be added during 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 4.23 and 4.24).**

- 4.15 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. Breaks and pauses clauses also apply to those participating in the Scheme as contractors.
- 4.16 Locum work will also be considered against the breaks and pauses provisions (see clauses 4.20 to 4.22).

## **Parental Leave**

- 4.17 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.
- 4.18 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 employment as a pharmacist intern/pharmacist.
- 4.19 Time spent on parental leave (up to a maximum of 52 weeks) is separate to the break and pause provisions (clauses 4.13 to 4.16). Parental leave of over 52 weeks (per pregnancy) will be considered under the breaks and pauses clauses.

## **Working as a Locum**

- 4.20 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 4.13 to 4.16), you will not be eligible for payment from the Scheme.
- 4.21 For the purposes of the Scheme, a locum is someone who provides the services in the stead of another Pharmacist registered within the same scope of practice.
- 4.22 When you apply for payments from the Scheme, you will be asked to confirm that you have not engaged in “substantive” locum work.

## **Exemptions and Reviews in Exceptional Circumstances**

- 4.23 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.

- 4.24 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 [ybs@tewhatuora.govt.nz](mailto:ybs@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 you have completed three full years (36 months) on the Scheme, in accordance with these Terms and Conditions, starting from your Commencement Date (see clauses 4.5 to 4.8).
- 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](mailto:ybs@tewhatuora.govt.nz)), particularly:
- at the three, four- and five-year points after registering for the Scheme, and
  - if you change employers, take parental leave or extended leave.
- 5.4 You will only be eligible for payments if you have:
- been employed for at least three full years (1<sup>st</sup> payment) in Aotearoa New Zealand 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.
  - met the minimum FTE employment requirements (clauses 4.9 to 4.11)
  - complied with the rules governing breaks and pauses (clauses 4.13 to 4.16), parental leave (clauses 4.17 to 4.19), and locum work for the Scheme (clauses 4.20 to 4.22).
- 5.5 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 the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme
  - 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.
- 5.6 Details of further information required from you in order to confirm that you have met the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme 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.
- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 If you do not have a student loan, the net Scheme payment will be paid directly to you.

- 5.9 The payment for Pharmacists for the first 36-month bond completed on the Scheme is **\$11,796** after tax (net). You can go on to be eligible to apply for additional payments of **\$3,932** net upon completion of a fourth year, and **\$3,932** net again after a fifth year.
- 5.10 Scheme payments are subject to income tax and may affect your tax situation, for example, in relation to provisional tax, Working for Families and child support payments.
- 5.11 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.
- 5.12 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 print a copy of these Terms and Conditions for your records.