

Examining the student support system in Scotland

Introduction

The student support system for nursing and midwifery students in Scotland is currently being reviewed by The Scottish Government. This paper is designed to give CoDH and CoDH Scotland members an overview of the current system to help inform discussion about the future of student support.

This paper covers nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions. Its scope is limited to pre-registration education and to financial support received by students (it does not cover the funding received by universities for the provision of courses).

Overview - main points to note

- Student support systems are different in all of the four UK home nations. Reforms to student funding in England from 17/18 do not apply to Scotland.
- Nursing and midwifery students in Scotland are funded under a different system to AHP students.
- Nursing and midwifery students receive a non-means tested non-repayable bursary and additional allowances
- AHP students are eligible for means-tested bursaries and students loans.
- The Scottish Government is currently reviewing support for student nurses and midwives. The review will be published in May or June 2016. The Scottish Government has however committed to retaining free tuition and a bursary. Any changes that come about as a result of the review's recommendations will apply from 2017/18 onwards.

Financial support for nursing and midwifery students

Nursing and midwifery students in Scotland are eligible for a non-means tested non-repayable bursary plus additional allowances for eligible applicants, as outlined in the table below. Students do not pay tuition fees.

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Purpose:

This briefing paper examines the current (2016) student support system in Scotland for nurses, midwives and AHPs in training.

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Relevance for CoDH Scotland members:

The Scottish Government is currently reviewing the financial support system for nurses and midwives. This briefing is intended to provide descriptive contextual background to help CoDH Scotland and CoDH members to take an informed view.

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Table 1: Financial support available to nursing and midwifery students in Scotland

Non-means tested non-repayable bursary	£6,578 in years 1-3, £4,934 in year 4
Additional allowances for eligible applicants	
Initial expenses	£60
An income-assessed dependent's allowance (means-tested)	Up to £2,640 for a spouse, cohabiting partner or first child and up to £557 for each other dependent child
Lone parent allowance	£1,303
Formal childcare costs	Up to £1,216
Disabled students allowances	Variable
Paid maternity leave of up to 45 weeks	
Clinical placement expenses (travel and subsistence)	A £5 a day allowance is included in the bursary for travel. If the cheapest method of public transport exceeds £5 a day this can be claimed in arrears up for £30 a day after which it is expected a student finds local accommodation. Up to £15 a day accommodation costs can be claimed if a student has to live away from home or their term time address while on placement.
Other support	
Free uniforms	
Free health checks	
Free protecting vulnerable groups checks	

Scottish Government spending on the non-means tested nursing and midwifery student support bursary ranges from £56-60 million a year.

Nursing and midwifery students are not currently eligible for the Government funded discretionary hardship funds available to students on other courses because of the nursing and midwifery bursary. If institutions choose to provide hardship funding to nursing and midwifery students the funding would be from non-Governmental sources. This will soon change as a commitment was made in February 2016 to introduce a discretionary hardship fund for nursing and midwifery students. It is not known whether this fund will continue beyond 2016/17 as this is likely to be decided by the ongoing review.

Financial support for allied health profession students

Unlike nursing and midwifery students, allied health profession students in Scotland come under the general Scottish student funding system and receive a combination of bursaries and loans, dependent on household income and whether an individual is classified as a Young Student or Independent student. This is outlined in the table below. All students can access a loan of at least £4,750 regardless of income. Note that no tuition fees are paid.

HEIs in Scotland have discretionary funds that they can use to help students in financial difficulty meet their living costs. A separate Discretionary Childcare Fund is also available for students. Both types of support are administered by HEIs using Scottish Government funding. AHP students are eligible to apply for this assistance but nursing and midwifery students are not because of their bursary.

Discretionary fund allocation is made based on assessment of student income, expenditure and need. In 2013/14 universities and colleges provided £13.3m of assistance to students under the discretionary fund and another £2.8m of support through the Discretionary Childcare Fund.

Table 2: Financial support available to AHP students in Scotland

Household income	'Young student'			'Independent student'		
	Bursary	Loan	Total	Bursary	Loan	Total
£0-£16,999	£1,875	£5,750	£7,625	£875	£6,750	£7,625
£17,000-£23,999	£1,125	£5,750	£6,875	£125	£6,750	£6,875
£24,000-£33,000	£500	£5,750	£6,250	-	£6,250	£6,250
£34,000 and above	-	£4,750	£4,750	-	£4,750	£4,750
An income-assessed dependent's grant for those with an adult dependent			Up to £2,640 (means-tested)			
Lone parent grant			£1,303 (means-tested)			
Disabled students allowances			Variable			
Clinical placement expenses (travel and subsistence)			SAAS pay travel expenses over and above the student's normal day to day costs on the basis of cheapest fares available.			
Other support (interim measure)						
Free uniforms						
Free health checks						
Free protecting vulnerable groups checks						


The Scottish review of student support

The Scottish Government is currently reviewing the support provided to nursing and midwifery students “with a view to ensuring that the process continues to be fair and reflects the needs of today’s students”. This review has included a survey of nursing and midwifery students and student focus groups.

The review is also looking at a limited number of expenses associated with AHP students (namely the costs for protection of vulnerable groups (PVG) checks, health clearances and uniforms). Bursary/loan support for AHP students is not being considered.

The Scottish review of student support is due to report in May or June 2016, with any changes being implemented in 2017. CoDH Scotland is involved.

Although the review is underway, in February 2016 Nicola Sturgeon committed to retaining free tuition and a bursary for nursing and midwifery students. This limits the range of possible recommendations from the review. However the Government has not made a commitment to the level of that bursary leaving open the possibility that this will change.¹



Nicola Sturgeon has stated that “The Scottish Government is completely committed to retaining a nursing and midwifery bursary.”

¹ Nicola Sturgeon, Scottish First Minister, spoke at Queen Margaret University on 10 February 2016 - <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/A-modern-health-workforce-2273.aspx>