



NEW ZEALAND

Voluntary Bonding Scheme Terms and Conditions for Sonographers 2016

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Voluntary Bonding Scheme (the Scheme) is an incentive based payment scheme that has been introduced by the Government to reward sonographers who agree to work in hard-to-staff communities for three to five years after graduation.
- 1.2 Graduates who are part of the Scheme are eligible for their first incentive payment after they have completed three years in their specified hard-to-staff community. Funding is intended to help graduates repay student loans (if they have them) or provide cash payments to top up income if student loan balance is zero.
- 1.3 To be eligible for the Scheme, you must:
- be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident at the time you make an application for payment;
 - have completed your final year of study in 2015 for your qualification for your profession at an accredited New Zealand Training Institution (clauses 1.10 to 1.11);
 - be registered, or be eligible to be registered with the Medical Radiation Technologists Board;
 - be working, or intending to work, in the profession for which you have trained, for three to five years; and
 - be working or intending to work in a hard-to-staff community as per the eligibility criteria for your profession (clause 4.3).
 - comply with all other terms and conditions of the Scheme.
- 1.4 Participation on 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 have had your place on the Scheme confirmed and have met the Scheme's Terms and Conditions during the participation phase (clause 4).
- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 The Scheme is a voluntary process and you, not the Ministry of Health (the Ministry), are responsible for any employment decisions you may make based on your intended participation in the Scheme.
- 1.8 You are responsible for notifying the Ministry of any change of address, email address or other contact details on an annual basis.
- 1.9 There are limited places available on the Scheme. Where eligible Registrations of Interest exceed the number of places available on the Scheme, a ballot process will be applied for selection. This is not subject to appeal.

Education Prerequisites

- 1.10 You must:
- have completed an undergraduate degree in medical imaging and/or a relevant health science qualification as accredited by the Medical Radiation Technologists Board AND
 - in 2015, completed a postgraduate diploma in ultrasound from an accredited New Zealand tertiary institution AND
 - be eligible to be registered as a sonographer with the Medical Radiation Technologists Board.
- 1.11 New Zealand citizens and permanent residents who gained their base professional qualifications from an overseas training institution in 2015 and who meet the registration requirements of the relevant Authority may be considered for the Scheme on a case-by-case basis, if they meet all other eligibility criteria and other Terms and Conditions of the Scheme. This will be assessed prior to the confirmation of your place on the Scheme.

Definition of a Graduate

- 1.12 Eligible graduates are those who completed their postgraduate diploma in ultrasound in 2015 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 (subject to approval of your application).
- 2.2 To register your interest you must complete the online Registration of Interest application form. This involves providing information to show that you meet, or intend to meet, the eligibility criteria of the Scheme. The Registration of Interest period is typically six weeks in duration, usually taking place between February and March each year. You are responsible for ensuring that you register during this period. Entries outside this period will not be considered.
- 2.3 A Registration of Interest is not an application for 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.

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 (following consideration of your Registration of Interest) to formally confirm you on the Scheme will follow your Registration of Interest. You will be advised in writing whether your place on the Scheme is confirmed.
- 3.3 Where the eligible number of Registrations of Interest exceeds the number of places on the Scheme, a ballot process will be applied for selection. 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
- minimum employment requirements
- movement between hard-to-staff communities
- 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 (clause 5).

Eligibility Criteria

4.2 To be eligible for the Scheme, you must:

- have completed your postgraduate diploma in ultrasound AND
- work as a sonographer in one of the hard-to-staff communities for sonographers for the next three to five years.

Hard-to-Staff Communities

4.3 **The 2016 hard-to-staff communities are:**

- public health facilities

Changes to Hard-to-Staff Communities

4.4 You must commence working in one of the hard-to-staff communities listed in clause 4.3. If you wish to change the community you are working in, you may only do so in accordance with clause 4.13.

Commencement Date

4.5 Your time on the Scheme is calculated from the Commencement Date of employment.

4.6 If you were already working in a hard-to-staff community on or before 1 January 2016, your Commencement Date is **1 January 2016**. Time employed in an eligible position prior to this date does not contribute towards the bonding period.

4.7 If you began (or begin) working in a hard-to-staff community, after 1 January 2016, your Commencement Date is the date on which your employment began.

4.8 If you have indicated in your Registration of Interest that you intend to shift into a hard-to-staff community, your Commencement Date is the date that your employment in a hard-to-staff community begins.

4.9 If you have not commenced employment in accordance with these requirements by **30 June 2017**, your confirmation on the Scheme will lapse and you will not be eligible for the Scheme in any later year.

Minimum Employment Requirements

- 4.10 To be eligible for the Scheme sonographers 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.
- 4.11 You will not be eligible for payment from the Scheme if you undertake substantive or continuous locum work (see clauses 4.20 – 4.23).
- 4.12 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 (clause 5).

Moving Between Hard-to-Staff Communities

- 4.13 You may move between hard-to-staff communities:
- listed in clause 4.3 OR
 - listed in any Voluntary Bonding Scheme Terms and Conditions for sonographers after 2016.

Breaks and Pauses in the Term of Service

- 4.14 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 as a sonographer without affecting your eligibility for bonding payments. Such an absence is known as a “break”.
- 4.15 A “pause” is any time beyond the 14 weeks break allowance that you spend away from your hard to staff community and/or specialty. 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 the course of one year. No more than 50 weeks in total can be added to the five year bonding term.
- Note: 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.**
- 4.16 Breaks and pauses are to include any leave from employment, with or without pay, including normal employment leave entitlements, such as annual leave and sick leave.

Parental Leave

- 4.17 You may take up to 52 weeks parental leave, 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 your employment as a sonographer as specified by your registration on the Scheme.
- 4.19 Time spent on parental leave is separate to the break and pause provisions (clauses 4.14 to 4.16).

Working as a Locum

- 4.20 If you undertake substantive or continuous locum work you will not be eligible for payment from the Scheme.
- 4.21 The Ministry defines “substantive” locum work or agency nurse work as being a period of six weeks or more, but does not include undertaking additional duties for your employer.
- 4.22 For the purposes of the Scheme, a locum is considered to be someone who provides the services in the stead of another sonographer registered within the same scope of practice during normal working hours.
- 4.23 When you apply for payments from the Scheme, you will be asked to confirm that you have not engaged in “substantive” locum work.

Exceptions

- 4.24 If there is a change in your circumstances that results in an inability to continue to meet the 2016 Terms and Conditions, you may request an exemption for a specified period. Please refer to clause 7.

5. 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 4.9).
- 5.2 If you stay on the Scheme for a fourth and fifth year, you are responsible for initiating the second and third claims for payment.
- 5.3 You must apply for payment within nine months of becoming eligible to apply.
- 5.4 You will only be eligible for payments if you have:
- been employed for three full years in accordance with these Terms and Conditions
 - met the minimum FTE employment requirements (clauses 4.10 to 4.12)
 - complied with the rules governing breaks and pauses (clauses 4.14 to 4.16), parental leave (clauses 4.17 to 4.19), and locum work for the Scheme (clauses 4.20 to 4.23).
- 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 application for payment. Application for payment forms will be available on the Ministry of Health website early January 2019.

- 5.7 If you have a student loan, the full Scheme payment will be made against your student loan. If the balance of your student loan is less than the Scheme payment, you will 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 Scheme payment will be paid directly to you.
- 5.9 Payment for sonographers for each period of 12 months completed on the Scheme is **\$3,932** after tax.
- 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 The Ministry 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 1993.
- 6.2 By submitting the Registration of Interest form, you are authorising the Ministry of Health to collect personal information about you. This information will be stored and used by the Ministry for purposes associated with the Scheme, in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act 1993.
- 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 the Ministry of Health 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.

7. Review in special circumstances

- 7.1 If your circumstances change and the break, or pause or parental leave clauses do not apply, you may apply for a review by the Review Panel.
- 7.2 Applications to the Review Panel must be made to vbs@moh.govt.nz in accordance with its procedures.