

THE STATE HOSPITALS BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

FURTHER/HIGHER EDUCATION (ACADEMIC STUDY) POLICY

Policy Reference Number	HR29	Issue: 3
Lead Author	Head of Organisational Development & Learning	
Contributing Authors		
Advisory Group	Workforce Governance Group - interim due to temporary deferment of the HR & Wellbeing Group	
Approval Group	Policy Approval Group (PAG)	
Implementation Date	15 March 2024	
Next Review Date	15 March 2029	
Accountable Executive Director	Director of Workforce	

The date for review detailed on the front of all State Hospital policies / procedures / guidance does not mean that the document becomes invalid from this date. The review date is advisory and the organisation reserves the right to review a policy/procedure/guidance at any time due to organisational/legal changes.

Staff are advised to always check that they are using the correct version of any policy / procedure / guidance rather than referring to locally held copies.

The most up to date version of all State Hospital policies/procedures/guidance can be found on the intranet: <http://intranet.tsh.scot.nhs.uk/Policies/Policy%20Docs/Forms/Category%20View.aspx>

REVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

No changes required to policy



(evidence base checked and no change to practice required)

Changes required to policy (evidence base checked)



Summary of changes within policy:

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1 Introduction

The State Hospital is committed to investment in the education, training and ongoing development of all staff and recognises the significant contribution that learning and ongoing development can make to:

- Improving the quality of service delivery.
- Meeting the challenges of change and service modernisation.
- Increasing staff effectiveness at work.
- Achieving corporate and service objectives.
- Meeting the needs of individual employees.

Enabling access to further/higher education (i.e. academic study) is one means by which The State Hospital aims to support lifelong learning and the continuous personal and/or professional development of staff.

Within the context of this policy, further/higher education is defined as:

“A course of study that on completion leads to the award of a nationally recognised educational or professional qualification”.

This includes undergraduate and postgraduate level study (e.g. HNC, HND, Degree, MSc, PhD), as well as technical/professional qualifications (e.g. Institute of Health Records professional qualifications, CIPFA professional qualifications, BPS Chartership, etc).

2 Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- a) Ensure fair and equitable access to further/higher education programmes for all staff within the State Hospital.
- b) Outline the provisions available for financial assistance to support staff engagement in further/higher education programmes.
- c) Provide guidance for managers and staff on study leave entitlement for employees undertaking further/higher education programmes.
- d) Ensure that all decisions regarding authorisation and provision of support for further/higher education are applied in a consistent and transparent manner and give due cognisance to organisational objectives and service priorities, CPD and professional registration requirements, and individual personal development plans.

3 Scope

This policy applies to all staff employed on a substantive basis within the State Hospital, whether full-time, part-time, permanent or fixed term, who are seeking support to undertake further/higher education.

The policy does not apply to staff engaging in educational programmes of the following nature:

- Programmes of study that are an essential job requirement and are required to sustain and/or develop core service provision (e.g. CBT Diploma, AMPS training, etc). Organisational needs associated with programmes of this nature will be incorporated within the annual Corporate Training Plan and funded accordingly.
- Accredited programmes and initiatives that are delivered internally within the State Hospital (e.g. SVQs, ILM programmes).

- Nationally funded academic programmes (e.g. NHS Scotland Frontline Leadership Programme, etc) for which specific application and funding procedures are in place.
- Further/higher education programmes being undertaken by appointed trade union representatives to support them to fulfil their duties as a trade union official. Funding for programmes of this nature will be at the discretion of the relevant trade union and study leave provision should be agreed in accordance with the arrangements set out in the State Hospital's policy on Facility Time for Trade Union Staff Representatives.

4 Application and Approval Process

All staff seeking support to undertake further/higher education will be required to apply through a State Hospital Bursary Award Scheme. The Bursary Award Scheme will be advertised annually and all applications will be reviewed by a Bursary Award Panel. The panel will be chaired by the Head of Organisational Development & Learning and will comprise a minimum of two Executive Directors and a staff-side representative.

Applications for further/higher education will be considered against the following criteria:

- The relevance of the courses of study to the employee's current role, with specific reference to role requirements and the individual's Personal Development Plan.
- The relevance of the course of study to organisational goals and objectives, or links to specific service developments and priorities.
- The demonstrable benefit of the course of study to the employee and/or the organisation.
- The cost and duration of the course of study and the potential impact of any associated absence (i.e. study leave) on service delivery capacity.
- The extent and nature of any previous support the applicant has received from the State Hospital to undertake further/higher education.
- Quality of the application and associated supporting statement.

Having considered all applications, the Bursary Award Panel will make decisions regarding approval/authorisation for the course of study and the level of funding and/or study leave that will be awarded.

All applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of the application approval process. Successful applicants will also be notified of the level of funding and study leave that has been awarded. Where an employee's application has been unsuccessful they can re-apply again at any time in the future.

A copy of the Further/Higher Education Bursary Award Scheme Application Form is included in Appendix 1.

5 Financial Assistance

5.1 Scope of Financial Assistance

Financial assistance for further/higher education may be requested by applicants to cover the following expenses:

- Course matriculation fees.
- Examination fees.
- Travel expenses.
- Accommodation.
- Subsistence.

The applicant must demonstrate within their Bursary Award application that:

- a) The programme of study is desirable within the job role and has been agreed within their Personal Development Plan.
OR
- b) The programme of study will support individual career progression and CPD.

5.2 Financial Assistance Levels

Funding awards will be decided by the Bursary Award Panel and financial assistance may be provided for up to a maximum level of 50% of the total course fees/expenses.

For courses that extend beyond one year, the funding award will be for the full duration of the programme of study. Funding support for course fees/expenses will be capped at £1500 per person in any financial year, and any costs associated with course fees/expenses above this amount will require to be met by the individual employee.

5.3 Payment Of Course Fees

Where funding has been granted, course fees will be paid in full by the State Hospital, direct to the course provider. Any contribution required by the applicant will be recovered, via a mandate, from the employee's salary in the form of monthly instalments over the duration of the programme of study.

If an individual is eligible for financial support through the Skills Development Scotland Individual Training Account (ITA) scheme, or secures financial assistance through any other funding stream, this will be deducted from the total cost of the course fees prior to calculating the level of funding to be provided by the State Hospital.

5.4 Travel, Accommodation and Subsistence Expenses

All travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses associated with the course of study must be detailed on the Bursary Award application form. Funding support for such expenses will be considered by the Bursary Award Panel on an individual basis. All travel, accommodation and subsistence that is approved for funding support will be reimbursed in line with the standard rates associated with the individual employee's terms and conditions of employment.

5.5 Textbooks and Other Miscellaneous Course Expenses

The cost of textbooks, journals or other course materials is not covered by the Bursary Award Scheme. Where possible, core textbooks will be made available through the State Hospital Library and recommendations on the purchase of these materials should be submitted to the hospital's Librarian. Any materials purchased will be the property of the State Hospital. They will be listed within the library holdings and standard access and borrowing arrangements will apply.

5.6 Professional Registration Fees

Registration fees for membership of professional organisations, even if a requirement for the course of study, are the responsibility of the individual and will not be paid by the State Hospital.

5.7 Examination Re-sits / Re-submissions or Repeat Years

Funding associated with examination re-sits, re-submissions or repeat years will only be provided if the candidate is able to show that there were particular family, personal or extenuating circumstances that contributed to the situation. In such situations, the candidate must apply for the additional funding required to cover examination re-sit, re-submission or repeat years. Their application, outlining the reasons, must be submitted for consideration to the Head of

Organisational Development & Learning. If approved, the State Hospital will provide the additional funding required. Such funding, however, will be capped at 50% of the total cost and will cover a maximum of 1 examination re-sit, re-submission or repeat year. A copy of the Examination Re-sit, Re-submission or Repeat Year Application Form is included in Appendix 2.

6 Study Leave

Further/higher education can be delivered in a variety of formats including day or block release, evening classes, or open/distance learning. It is recognised, therefore, that employees undertaking further/higher education may require time away from work during normal working hours to attend classes, prepare for and sit examinations, or attend to other course-related matters.

Where study leave is required, the employee must discuss and agree study leave arrangements with their line manager prior to submitting the Bursary Award application. Details of the study leave arrangements agreed with the line manager must be included on the Bursary Award application form.

To ensure equity across staff groups, guidance on study leave entitlement for staff seeking study leave support through the Bursary Award Scheme is provided below.

Day or block release courses – The employee may be granted paid study leave during normal working hours to support attendance at classes and examinations that are part of the authorised course. Paid study leave to attend day or block release courses is capped at a maximum of 10 working days per academic year. (The academic year is set by individual educational establishments, however, most commonly runs from September to June each year.) When additional time off is required for course attendance, individuals and their line manager should give consideration to use of annual leave, shift swaps, working time back, or unpaid leave to support the individual's attendance.

Evening classes or open/distance learning courses – The employee can be granted paid study leave for attendance at all examinations that are part of the authorised course. In addition, up to a maximum of 5 working days per academic year may be granted to support study activities such as completion of assignments or preparation for examinations.

Study leave entitlement will only be granted for the original duration of the course of study. Any extensions or additional study leave requirements must be approved by the relevant Director.

7 Self-Funding

In some situations, individuals seeking to undertake further/higher education may offer to self-fund the course of study. Self-funding, however, must be at the individual's request and not at the request of the manager. Where an individual offers to self-fund a course of study, the line manager and Bursary Award Panel can use discretion to support paid study leave.

In addition, individuals can seek funding support through the Bursary Award Scheme but offer to undertake the course in their own time. This, again, must only be at the individual's request and not at the request of the manager.

7.1 Study Leave Support for Non-Work Related Study

Where employees are undertaking further/higher education that falls out-with the Bursary Award Scheme (e.g. self-funded study courses being undertaken by employees primarily to support their own personal development), managers should give consideration to granting use of annual leave,

shift swaps, working time back, or unpaid leave to support individuals in their academic endeavours.

7.2 Lifelong Learning Advance Scheme

Employees undertaking self-funded further/higher education can apply for financial support through the State Hospital's Lifelong Learning Advance Scheme. The scheme enables candidates to spread the payment of annual course fees. Through the scheme, course fees are paid by the State Hospital and recovered in full, via a mandate, from the employee's salary through monthly instalments over a 12 month period. A copy of the Lifelong Learning Advance application form is included in Appendix 3.

8 Study Breaks / Deferrals

There may be circumstances when a candidate is unable to continue with a course of study due to family, personal or other exceptional circumstances. In such situations, the candidate can apply for a break in study. Their application, outlining the reasons, must be submitted for consideration to the Head of Organisational Development & Learning. If approved, the State Hospital will continue to support the course of study, however, deferral will be for a maximum of 1 year. Requests for a break in study must be approved by the course provider and must not incur additional course fees/expenses. A copy of the Study Break / Deferral Application Form is included in Appendix 4.

9 Non-completion or Withdrawal from Courses

If an employee commences on an authorised course of study and subsequently withdraws or fails to successfully complete the qualification they will be required, in the absence of extenuating circumstances, to repay 100% of the State Hospital's contribution. Each case will be reviewed by the Head of Organisational Development & Learning, in consultation with the employee's line manager and relevant Director, and will be considered on an individual basis.

10 Non-attendance at Authorised Courses

If an employee has been awarded financial assistance and/or study leave and subsequently fails, without reasonable cause, to attend the course, he or she may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

11 Termination of Employment Repayment Arrangements

If an employee in receipt of financial assistance through the Bursary Award Scheme leaves the employment of the State Hospital prior to completion of the programme of study, or within 1 year of completing the course, other than in exceptional circumstance, they will be required to repay a proportion of the funding received. In such situations, the following repayment scale will apply:

Period After Course Completion	Repayment Amount
a) Course incomplete	100%
b) Within 3 months of course completion	100%
c) Between 3 – 5 months after completion	75%
d) Between 6 – 8 months after completion	50%
e) Between 9 – 12 months after completion	25%

Successful applicants will be required to agree to the above terms as a condition of accepting the Bursary Award.

12 Learning Evaluation

Line managers are responsible for discussing and reviewing with staff the outcome of any participation in authorised further/higher courses. The review should consider what was learned and how the learning can be applied in the workplace. Any continuing support needs should also be addressed. Details of the learning evaluation should be recorded within the individual's PRD documentation.

Individuals provided support through the Bursary Award Scheme may also be asked to provide feedback to other staff within the organisation through submission of a written course evaluation report or short presentation on their work. They will also be required to participate in any questionnaire surveys conducted by the OD & Learning Department to evaluate the effectiveness of external training and education.

13 Appeals and Grievances

Any appeals or grievances against decisions made in relation to Bursary Awards or study leave arrangements for further/higher education should be raised through the State Hospital's grievance process. (Please refer to NHS Grievance Policy for details.)

14 Equality and Diversity

The State Hospitals Board (the Board) is committed to valuing and supporting equality and diversity, ensuring patients, carers, volunteers and staff are treated with dignity and respect. Policy development incorporates consideration of the needs of all Protected Characteristic groups in relation to inclusivity, accessibility, equity of impact and attention to practice which may unintentionally cause prejudice and/or discrimination.

The Board recognises the need to ensure all stakeholders are supported to understand information about how services are delivered. Based on what is proportionate and reasonable, we can provide information/documents in alternative formats and are happy to discuss individual needs in this respect. If information is required in an alternative format, please contact the Person-Centred Improvement Lead on 01555 842072.

Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff can undertake their role, adhering to policies and procedures. Specialist advice is available to managers to ensure that reasonable adjustments are in place to enable staff to understand and comply with policies and procedures. The Equality and Impact Assessment (EQIA) considers the Protected Characteristic groups and highlights any potential inequalities in relation to the content of this policy.

15 Stakeholder Engagement

No practice changes were required to the policy; therefore stakeholder engagement was not required.

Key Stakeholders	Consulted (Y/N)
Patients	N/A
Staff	N/A
The Board	N/A
Carers	N/A
Volunteers	N/A

16 Communication, Implementation, Monitoring and Review of Policy

This policy will be communicated to all stakeholders within the State Hospital via the intranet and through the staff bulletin.

The Workforce Governance Group (interim advisory group) will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this policy.

Any deviation from policy should be notified directly to the policy Lead Author. The Lead Author will be responsible for notifying the Advisory Group of the occurrence.

This policy will be reviewed every **five** years or earlier if required.

Appendix 1: Bursary award application form

FURTHER/HIGHER EDUCATION BURSARY AWARD APPLICATION FORM
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1. Applicant Details:

Name:	Job Title:
Ward/Department:	Date of Application:
Have you previously received support from the State Hospital (e.g. funding; study leave; etc) to undertake further/higher education? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
If Yes, please provide details below:	

2. Course Details:

Course Title:	Course Provide:
Course Venue/Location:	Level of Study:
Course Duration:	Mode of Attendance (e.g. day or block release, open/distance learning, evening classes, etc):
Course Start Date:	Course Finish Date:
Are you receiving financial support to undertake this programme of study from any other sources of funding? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
If Yes, please provide details below:	

3. Learning Objectives:

Has this programme of study been agreed with your line manager as part of your Personal Development Plan?

Yes

No

Please provide a supporting statement below that includes details of what new knowledge and skills you will gain and how this programme of study will support individual career development/CPD and enhance service delivery and support wider organisational objectives:

Are there any implications for other services/departments within the hospital associated with you undertaking this programme of study (e.g. requirement for you to undertake placements in other departments; requirement to have a mentor/supervisor from a specific discipline, etc)?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide details below:

4. Funding Request:

	£ Total	£ Applying For	£ Granted
Course Fee			
Examination Fees			
Travel Expenses			
Accommodation Expenses			
Subsistence Expenses			
Other (please specify):			

5. Study Leave Request:

	Course Total	Applying For	Granted
Number of Study Days (please specify requirement per year for courses over 12 months in duration)			

Applicant Signature:	Print Name:
Ward/Dept Manager Signature:	Print Name:
Head of Service Signature:	Print Name:

Please return the completed form to the Learning Centre Manager

Appendix 2: Examination re-sit / re-submission or repeat year funding application form

<p style="text-align: center;">FURTHER/HIGHER EDUCATION EXAMINATION RE-SIT / RE-SUBMISSION OR REPEAT YEAR FUNDING APPLICATION FORM</p>
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1. Applicant Details:

Name:	Job Title:
Ward/Department:	Date of Application:

2. Course Details:

Course Title:	Course Provide:
Course Start Date:	Original Course Finish Date:
<p>Please give details below of the reason(s) for the examination re-sit, re-submission or repeat year, including any extenuating circumstance that you feel should be taken into consideration in support of your application:</p>	

3. Additional Funding Request:

What is the additional funding required for?
(1) Examination Re-sit / Re-submission <input type="checkbox"/> Amount requested: £.....
(2) Repeat Year Course Fee <input type="checkbox"/> Amount requested £.....

Applicant's Signature:	Print Name:
Manager's Signature:	Print Name:

Please return the completed form to the Head of Organisational Development & Learning

Appendix 3: Application for lifelong learning advance

<p>FURTHER/HIGHER EDUCATION</p> <p>APPLICATION FOR LIFELONG LEARNING ADVANCE</p>
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Name:			
Address:			
Job Title:		Payroll No:	
Ward/Dept:		Grade:	

Course Title:			
Course Provider:			
Course Duration:			
Learning Objectives:			
Total Course Fee:		Amount of Advance:	
Signature of Line Manager			
Signature of relevant Director:			

<p>I agree to the above advance being deducted from my salary by twelve monthly instalments. I also agree to pay in full, any monies owed in the event of the termination of my contract of employment.</p>			
Signed			
Witnessed by (including address)			
Witnessed by (including address)			
Date			
Director of Finance Authorisation:		Date:	

Please return the completed form to the Learning Centre Manager

Appendix 4: Study break / deferment application form

FURTHER/HIGHER EDUCATION STUDY BREAK / DEFERMENT APPLICATION FORM
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1. Applicant Details:

Name:	Job Title:
Ward/Department:	Date of Application:

2. Course Details:

Course Title:	Course Provide:
Course Start Date:	Original Course Finish Date:

Please give details of your request below including the reason(s) for the study break / deferment, and any extenuating circumstance that you feel should be taken into consideration in support of your application:

3. Additional Funding Request:

What is the additional funding required for?	
(1) Examination Re-sit / Re-submission <input type="checkbox"/>	Amount requested: £.....
(2) Repeat Year Course Fee <input type="checkbox"/>	Amount requested £.....

4. Additional Study Leave Request:

Number of additional study days required	
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Applicant's Signature:	Print Name:
Manager's Signature:	Print Name:

Please return the completed form to the Head of Organisational Development & Learning