

NGO
Social Work
Study Awards

APPLICANT
INFORMATION

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The NGO Social Work Study Awards assist non-government organisations (NGOs) to support employees to complete a qualification in social work that meets the educational requirements for social worker registration.

The long-term aim of the awards is to achieve positive outcomes for children, young people and their whānau by increasing the qualification level, and so the skills and competence of the social services workforce.

These awards are administered by Family and Community Services (FACS), a service of the Ministry of Social Development.

■ WHO CAN APPLY?

These awards are for practising social workers employed by Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), including people supervising the work of practising social workers. Any social worker employed by an NGO who is enrolled in or intending to enrol in a social work course that is recognised by the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) as meeting the educational requirements for Social Worker Registration may apply. This is a joint application process and employers and their student will need to complete a standard application form.

Employers

Employers must be a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) - this means the employer is likely to be a Community & Voluntary Organisation (or similar), and most likely registered as an Incorporated Society. Alternatively, the employer may be either registered as a charity with the Charities Commission, or is recognised as a charity by the Inland Revenue Department (IRD). In all cases, evidence must be provided as to organisational and charitable status.

In some instances it might be possible for the employer to be a Limited Liability Company - however evidence must be provided to show ownership and organisational purpose, and to demonstrate charitable status.

Study Awards cannot be provided to employees of private sector organisations, the State Sector, or DHBs, or similar.

Priority will be given to NGOs delivering social work services to vulnerable families and children, including services that:

- support families
- address and prevent abuse and neglect
- support children in families experiencing family violence
- have an early intervention/prevention focus such as SWIS and Family Start.

Preference will be given to applications from NGOs that have government contracts for services.

Students

Students must be a New Zealand citizen (ie a person entitled to a New Zealand passport) or a New Zealand Permanent Resident (ie is not a New Zealand citizen but holds a New Zealand permanent residency visa and may stay in New Zealand indefinitely).

Students must be employed by an NGO - this means the student must be in paid employment (ie volunteers, contractors, etc are not eligible). Preference will be given to students who are employed on a full-time permanent basis (ie 20 hours or more per week), and who have previously studied or who are already engaged in study.

Applications can not be accepted from students working in the State Sector or in DHBs or similar.

Joint Application

Employers and their student will need to complete a standard joint application process centred on the application form, and will be required to send in a range of supporting documentation, including study results/transcripts and CV, etc. Applicants are advised to provide a complete and well-presented application, as it is the main basis for selection.

■ WHICH COURSES WILL BE SUPPORTED?

These study awards are only available to support social work qualifications that are recognised by the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) as meeting the educational requirements for social worker registration. These will generally be Level 7 (bachelor) qualifications in social work, but may

also include a Level 8 (postgraduate) social work qualification if this is the first professional social work qualification for the applicant and if it is recognised by the SWRB.

In some instances a Level 6 (diploma) social work qualification may initially be supported with one

educational provider where this is then completed at Level 7 (degree) level with a different educational provider - evidence of ability to complete a recognised qualification is vital. However applicants are strongly advised to refer to www.swrb.govt.nz before selecting this study pathway. Applicants are advised that there are limitations for credit transfers and for the recognition of prior learning with field-work placements etc. which will limit the number of credits that can be transferred from a Level 6 qualification to a recognised Level 7 qualification.

Please note that these awards are not available to support further study where the applicant already has a social work qualification that meets the

educational requirements for registration, and/or who is already fully registered (ie has met the requirements with a Level 6 qualification, but wishes to carry on and complete a Level 7 qualification).

These awards are strongly linked to the social worker registration requirements, and as a matter of course all applicants are urged to become familiar with the SWRB requirements. As a minimum, the student needs to meet the requirements of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 to be a 'fit and proper person' to practise social work. The SWRB website (www.swrb.govt.nz) provides a list of recognised courses and other policy and practice requirements, including those for field-work placement.

■ STUDY-LOAD GUIDE

These awards are intended for full-time employees (ie employed for at least 20 hours or more per week) who are studying part-time.

As a guide, Family and Community Services (FACS) recommends that students undertake a study load that is loosely based on 50% of the normal full-time study load for their course and mode of study. Normally the full-time study load will be 120 credits per year, and under this approach students would generally be expected to undertake study for 60 credits per academic year (or equivalent).

Where students are enrolled in a programme of study that is significantly different to this, FACS will need additional information on:

- the reason(s) for a student's decision to undertake the study load they have chosen
- the ability of the student to complete the course of study within the period of support available from FACS, and within the course regulations
- the ability and willingness of the employer to continue to support the student should the Student Support Funding provided through this study award be exhausted (see *What Costs are Met by the Award?*).

■ SELECTION

Selection Criteria

The selection process will consider the suitability, attributes and commitment of the student, and the relevant circumstances of the NGO employer.

The NGO Employee (ie The Student)

- is a practising social worker employed by an NGO that is delivering 'priority' social services
- can evidence work with 'high need' populations
- has the appropriate personal attributes to be an effective social worker - is highly motivated and is a role model

- can demonstrate the capabilities, commitment and attributes to successfully complete study
- is a 'fit and proper' person to practice social work as outlined in the Social Workers Registration Act 2003
- has no outstanding issues of concern which would, in the Ministry's view, make it inappropriate for MSD to support them with a study award
- can evidence a commitment to remain in the NGO sector.

The NGO Employer

- provides services to vulnerable children and families, including early intervention services (see *Who Can Apply?*)
- has a history of effectively working with high needs populations
- actively supports the application of the student for an award
- commits to supporting the student for the anticipated duration of study (eg mentoring, study support, time off, etc)
- has a low level of qualifications held by staff members in that site/agency or employed by that employer nationally
- holds a government contract.

Selection Process

The selection process is a standardised process centred on the application form, with the main basis for selection being the information provided by the student and their employer through completing the application form, along with any accompanying documentation, including study results/transcripts and CV, etc.

The selection process considers and evaluates each application against the selection criteria - including the relevant circumstances of the employer, and the suitability, attributes and commitment of the student relative to the level of study required to attain a “recognised” qualification in social work. While in some instances additional information may be sought from students and/or employers if necessary, applicants cannot rely on additional information

being sought if there are any shortfalls. Interviews will not normally be undertaken, and should not be expected.

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) must be satisfied that the employer and student are suitable recipients of a NGO Social Work Study Award. As a minimum, this means ensuring that the student is a ‘fit and proper person’ to practise social work and is likely, in the assessment of FACS, to meet the requirements as set out in the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 and the Policy Statement of the SWRB (see www.swrb.govt.nz) for more information about these requirements).

The Ministry may form the view that a person is not ‘fit and proper’ to practice social work if that person ‘has been convicted, in New Zealand or overseas, for an offence that is punishable by imprisonment for three months or more, or an offence where the nature and circumstances of the offence reflect adversely on a person’s ability to practice social work’ as per S 47 (2) of the Social Workers Registration Act; or if the Ministry is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the applicant is not of “good character and reputation”, or is unlikely to satisfactorily practise social work.

Additionally, neither the employer nor student should have any outstanding issues of concern relating to any of their current or previous dealings with the Ministry, nor arising from information held by it which would, in the Ministry’s view, make it inappropriate to support them with a study award.

A national advisory committee, representing NGOs, Iwi agencies and social work educators, oversees the selection process.

■ AWARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The granting of a study award will be conditional upon the:

- student satisfying the Ministry that they are a ‘fit and proper person’ to practise social work within the meaning of the Social Workers Registration Act (see *Vetting*)
- student successfully enrolling in a course of study meeting the educational requirements for social worker registration (see *Which Courses Will Be Supported?*)
- employer and the student having no outstanding issues of concern relating to any of their current or previous dealings with the Ministry or arising from information held by it which would, make it inappropriate to support them with a study award (see *Selection Process*)
- employer and the student signing the Agreement offered by FACS (see *Agreement*).

Vetting

In applying for an NGO Social Work Study Award students will be asked to:

- authorise the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) to undertake a police vetting check to help satisfy MSD that they are 'a fit and proper person' to practise social work
- authorise MSD to conduct "benefit" and "CYF" checks to satisfy MSD that the applicant is both a 'fit and proper person to practise social work', and has no issues of concern relating to any of their current or previous dealings with the Ministry or arising from information held by the organisation, which would make it inappropriate for MSD to support them with a study award
- authorise MSD to access the information held by education providers in relation to current or previous tertiary education undertaken by the applicant
- declare whether or not they are currently in receipt of a benefit or any other payment from the Ministry (see *Terms and Conditions*)
- declare other study funding assistance.
- Students and their employers will not receive a study award without these requirements being met to the satisfaction of MSD.

Agreement

Successful applicants (students and their employers) will be offered an Agreement to sign. This Agreement outlines the obligations of each party to the Agreement. (A copy of this Agreement is online at www.familyservices.govt.nz). The offer of a study award is not concluded, and no money can be paid, until the Agreement is signed by all three parties - MSD, the employer and the student.

Some of the more significant Terms and Conditions are set out below for your information.

Term (Clause 2)

- This Agreement can cover a period longer than the current year and details a "Contract Start Date" and a "Contract Completion Date" - this term may be amended by agreement.
- The continuation of this study award from one year to the next will be determined through the annual academic review process as outlined in clause 13 which will determine whether the student has "sufficient study success" to warrant further support.

Other Support (Clause 4)

The Ministry may reduce the Course Fee Payment where the total amount of the proposed course fee payment plus the other financial support for course fees exceeds the actual cost of course fees in any Academic Year.

Employee Obligations (Clause 7)

- has disclosed all material information through the application process
- undertakes to attend a "post selection workshop"
- undertakes to use his or her best endeavours to successfully complete his or her Course of Study
- undertakes to report all information that is material to this Agreement to the Programme Administrator; this includes the annual provision of academic results following the completion of study for that academic year.

Employer Obligations (Clause 8)

- has disclosed all material information through the application process
- will use the Funding solely and specifically for the purposes of supporting the Employee in his or her Course of Study
- will use its best endeavours to support the Employee to complete his or her Course of Study by providing the Employee with reasonable and sufficient support
- undertakes to report all information that is material to this Agreement to the Programme Administrator.

Changes in Circumstances (Clause 10)

Successful applicants (ie both employers and employees) have an ongoing obligation to inform Family and Community Services of any changes to their circumstances and any information that may affect their ongoing eligibility for, and the administration of, the study award. This includes changes in contact information (such as home or work addresses, email address or home or work or cell telephone number etc.), changes in employment information (including change job or employment status, and change of employer etc.), and changes in personal circumstances (such as criminal charges laid, or convictions etc.).

Suspension or Termination (Clause 12)

- Funding may be recovered from students and/or employers in some circumstances (particularly where full disclosure is lacking, or funding has been used unwisely)
- Students may be suspended or terminated in some circumstances
- The Ministry may approve students changing employers in some circumstances.

Miscellaneous Terms and Conditions

Bonding

Family and Community Services will not require a bonding arrangement to ensure that students continue to work in the NGO sector for a minimum period of time after graduation.

Recovery of Funding

As a general approach, where the student does not successfully complete their planned study programme, FACS will not seek the recovery of monies already paid in support of a study award. However, FACS may recover funding for:

- a course fee payment from the student where the student has withdrawn from their course of study after the period in which the education provider allows for a full refund of the course fee payment, and where the student has subsequently withdrawn from their course of study
- a proportion of the student support payment and/or final placement payment from the employer where the student has left the employer, and where FACS has paid for support beyond the period of employment

- all or any of the student support payment or the final placement payment from the employer where FACS determines that the employer has not used this funding in accordance with the Agreement (see the copy online at www.familyservices.govt.nz).

The recovery of any money will be considered on a case-by-case basis. FACS will consider the circumstances of each situation before determining whether to recover all or any of monies paid in support of a study award.

Changes in Education Provider / Study Programme

In some instances, for a wide variety of reasons, students may want to change from one education provider to another. However, students need to be aware that problems have been encountered when students seek to transfer from one education provider to another after their study has commenced. In some instances, when moving to their new education provider the student may lose up to 120 credits of the credits gained at their original education provider.

Students need to be aware that they are unlikely to be able to transfer from one education provider to another whilst retaining the full credits gained to date - most often credits already gained will be “lost” to the student in this transfer process. This occurs for a range of reasons, including the difficulties of mapping papers gained with one education provider to papers provided by another, and because of the impact of the requirements of the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB).

SWRB policy limits the ability of education providers to recognise certain key credits gained at a different provider (ie The Final Placement), and to recognise credits gained whilst undertaking qualifications that are not recognised by the SWRB. See the SWRB website (www.swrb.govt.nz) for details.

Students need to look very carefully at the process of changing from one education provider to another, and to be aware of the consequences of transferring. As a minimum students need to consult with their preferred education provider and the SWRB as to the possible consequences of transferring, and then to discuss their situation with FACS prior to initiating any transfer process.

Wherever possible, FACS will support the shortest practical pathway to a recognised social work qualification.

Example

The student has completed 240 credits at one recognised education provider, and is seeking to transfer to another education provider. The new provider has advised that the student can only cross-credit 180 credits. In this instance the change to an alternative education pathway seems to be one of personal choice, and FACS can see no reason to financially support this change.

Whilst the student could still transfer to the new education provider, the student would need to fund the cost of the fees required to bring the new qualification up to the same number of credits as the student previously held. In addition, no monies are payable to the Employer during this period.

Resignation from Current Employer

- If a student resigns from their current employer the continuation of their award will be reviewed.
- FACS will have no obligation to continue the award and may suspend or terminate the award. In most situations FACS will not seek to recover any or all of the funding paid in support of a study award, but will review this on a case-by-case basis depending on the particular circumstances of that situation. In some instances the student may continue studying in courses already funded.

- FACS will consider the individual's changed circumstances and the study award may be continued if, as a minimum, the award holder continues to work in the NGO sector for a priority provider.
- Study Awards cannot be transferred to private sector organisations, the State Sector, or DHBs or similar.

Impact of Other Study Awards

- NGO Social Work Study Award recipients cannot simultaneously be in receipt of an NGO and a Family Start Study Award.
- Previous Family Start Study award recipients who subsequently become NGO Social Work Study Awards will have their total funding restricted to that available under the NGO Social Work Study Award.
- Each student can only have access to one NGO Social Work Study Award, and the amounts for each annual and total funding limit cannot be exceeded in any circumstance. This amount is not reset if the student leaves the programme and subsequently rejoins with the same, or with a different employer.

■ WHAT COSTS ARE MET BY THE AWARD?

These awards are not intended to meet all costs associated with study - whilst it is probable that this study award will meet the majority of the costs, it is anticipated that both the student and the employer will both incur some costs at times as well. Where there is a shortfall between the funding available and actual costs, the student and the employer will need to agree how to fund this shortfall.

Each study award has a maximum possible value of \$33,244.45 (Including GST). This funding is available

within three clearly defined categories, each with annual and total funding limits. This funding cannot be increased, and unused funding is not transferable between categories or students.

Each student can only have access to one NGO Social Work Study Award, and the amounts for each annual and total funding limit cannot be exceeded in any circumstance. This amount is not reset if the student leaves the programme and subsequently rejoins with the same, or with a different employer.

Funding Categories and Annual and Total Funding Limits:

Course Fee Payments

Family and Community Services (FACS) will pay up to \$3,500.00 (incl. GST) per year for course fees. Course fees are broadly defined as being the compulsory items charged by the education provider, and may include a variety of items such as course costs, extra-mural costs, photocopying costs, student union fees, etc. The maximum payment for course fees per student over the total course of study is \$10,500.00 (incl. GST).

In some instances these amounts will not fully fund fee costs, and the student is responsible for making up any shortfall.

Student Support Payments

The student support payment is to assist the employer to support the student in study. It can be used to pay for a wide variety of costs and expenses, such as “back-fill”, and/or cover the cost of travel and accommodation for block courses, and/or to purchase study resources for students, such as books etc - these and other expenses cannot be claimed separately from FACS.

- This funding is paid to the employer to provide some additional resources from which the employer can support the student in their study - this funding is managed by the employer.
- FACS will pay the employer a standard student support payment of \$2,300.00 (incl. GST) per semester of study, with a maximum payment of \$4,600.00 (incl. GST) per calendar year where the student is studying in both semesters.
- Where students are studying for a part-year only (e.g. for one semester only, or if their study starts or concludes mid-year), then only a single semester payment of \$2,300.00 (incl. GST) will be payable.
- The amount to be paid for the entire calendar year will need to be calculated at the beginning of each year, and the employer will need to submit an invoice for the entire year to FACS early in that year. Payment of the yearly amount will generally be made to the employer in March or April of each year. The maximum student support payable per student over the total course of study is \$13,800.00 (incl. GST).

- Employers and students should discuss how to get the best value from this funding. If students are seeking funding for study-related costs, this will need to be discussed with and agreed with the employer if it is to come from the student support funding.
- This process should be open and transparent, and the student should know how the funding is being used - expenditure needs to be visible to the student.
- Annual reporting of expenditure is not required, however periodic audit checks will be undertaken to determine how this funding is used, and to ensure that this is used appropriately.

Final Fieldwork Placement Payment

This payment is a contribution towards the additional costs incurred by the employer in supporting the student during their external placement process.

Ordinarily all social work students are expected to complete 120 days of placement as a part of their social work degree, of which 60 days is to be “external” to their current organisation. Whilst education providers manage this in a variety of ways, this payment is to support the external placement process only, often referred to as the “Final Placement”.

Primarily, this payment is to help the employer to support the student in an external placement, but FACS will consider funding internal placements on a case-by-case basis, where the student is being backfilled and where the employer is incurring additional costs. Placements where no additional costs are incurred by the student, such as those which are based on the “recognition of prior learning” or internal placements that are not “back-filled” will not be eligible for this payment.

Ordinarily FACS will pay the employer a standard final placement payment of \$8,944.45 (incl. GST) upon verification of the details of the placement, and where FACS determines that this payment is warranted. In some instances a lesser amount may be agreed between FACS and the employer where a full payment is not warranted. This may be in cases where partial back-fill is provided, or where the external placement is for a period of less than 60 days.

The minimum expectation through making this payment is that the student is paid during their final placement process.

■ AWARD PAYMENTS

No payments can be made until an Agreement is signed by the employer, the student and the Ministry of Social Development.

Course Fee Payments

Family and Community Services (FACS) will pay course fees directly to education providers, and in the majority of cases StudyLink (a service of the Ministry of Social Development) will make these payments on behalf of FACS. With the exception of Social Services Industry Training Organisation (SSITO) students, StudyLink will obtain Verification of Study (VOS) from the student's education provider.

Course fees cannot be paid until the student's study programme is verified by the educational provider to StudyLink. SSITO students are funded independently of the above process.

Student Support and Final Placement Payments

Employers will need to submit invoices to FACS to receive both the student support and final placement payments.

Student support and final placement payments will be made through the Ministry of Social Development's contracts payment system. Employers who do not currently have contract payment arrangements with the Ministry will need to provide payee information (such as GST and bank account information) to FACS through the application process.

These payments cannot be made until employers are established as payees within the contracts payment system and until invoices have been received and processed by the Ministry.

■ REVIEW OF ACADEMIC RESULTS

Students and employers do not have to reapply for a study award each year (see *Award Terms and Conditions*). Students who wish to extend their NGO Social Work Study Awards to the next year will need to:

- remain enrolled in a course of social work study which leads to a qualification that meets the requirements of the NGO Social Work Study Award programme (see *Which Courses Will Be Supported?*)
- remain employed by an employer meeting the requirements of the NGO Social Work Study Award programme (see *Who Can Apply?*)
- have an acceptable pass rate for the studies undertaken.

Once students meet the educational requirements for Social Worker Registration (see *Who Can Apply?*) they will no longer be eligible for this award.

Passing the Academic Review

Students who meet the eligibility requirements above will have their NGO Social Work Study Award extended for a further academic year if they pass a minimum of 50% of the credits attempted during

the previous year, providing that no less than a total of 30 credits are achieved during the academic year under review.

FACS will write to advise both the student and their employer that the study award is being extended, and will authorise StudyLink to pay the fees on behalf of the student for the next academic year.

Failing the Academic Review

Where a student does not meet the academic review requirements as outlined above (ie to pass a minimum of 50% of the study undertaken during the academic year under review, provided that the student passes at least 30 credits in that year) then they "fail" the academic review process. In these instances, the study award could be either suspended or terminated, at the discretion of FACS.

Where a student does not meet the academic review requirements and the award is "suspended", the student will not be supported financially by FACS until they meet the required standard. This means that no fees will be paid by FACS on behalf of the student, and no Student Support will be paid to their employer.

This will then require the student to fund their own study in the new academic year (eg with a student loan) to bring their existing results up to the required minimum standard. This means that the student must successfully complete additional study that, when combined with their original results, will allow the student to meet the minimum academic review requirements for the year under review. Once this standard has been achieved, students will need to demonstrate this with an official transcript.

FACS will then confirm that the student has achieved the academic review requirements, and will then pay the fees for any papers to be undertaken in the next semester of study, and also retrospectively for any additional papers passed during the “make-up” semester, beyond the minimum requirements.

Student support payments will resume for the employer at the beginning of the next semester of study.

Withdrawal / Did Not Complete (DNC)

Where a student does not complete, for whatever reason, a paper that is funded by FACS (ie Withdraws,

or Does Not Complete, etc), this will generally be counted as a “fail” for the purposes of the academic review process.

As noted above, generally, where students withdraw early in the year or the semester, and a full refund is obtained by FACS these papers will not appear on the transcript, and will not be counted as a part of the academic review process.

All students are urged to contact FACS as soon as possible where it seems possible that they may not complete, or withdraw from papers already funded by FACS. This allows FACS to work with StudyLink to maximise the chances of obtaining a fee refund from the education provider.

However, if the withdrawal is too late in the semester of study then no fee refund is available, and the education provider will record this as “Withdrawn” or “DNC” or similar on the academic results for that student.

In these instances, these papers will be counted both as a part of the study load funded by FACS for that year, and as papers “failed” by the student. As noted above, the student will either pass or fail the academic review, and no additional sanctions will be applied.

WORKSHOPS

Family and Community Services (FACS) will hold workshops for students and NGO employers both before applications close and after selection for the successful applicants.

Pre-application workshops

The pre-application workshops include a presentation and discussion about the study awards, eligibility criteria, which courses will be supported, and the costs that can be met. Intending applicants and their NGO employers are urged to attend these workshops to help inform their application decision and process.

The workshop schedule will be available online at www.familyservices.govt.nz or by contacting FACS on free phone 0508 346 376.

Post-selection workshops

FACS will host a number of regionally-based workshops for successful applicants and their employers. Generally these will be held in March each year.

It is vital that students and employers attend these as there will be full discussion on the administration of the awards, including the Agreement (see *Terms and Conditions*), the payment processes, study requirements and expectations.



■ MAKING AN APPLICATION

Timetable

Applications for the NGO Social Work Study Awards will open on the first Monday in July of each year, and will close on the first Friday of October of each year. Selections will be made by the end of November and all applicants will be advised of the outcomes in writing during December. Detailed information will be posted on the FACS website (www.familyservices.govt.nz) in June of each year, in time for the application process to commence in July.

Application forms are available and can be directly down-loaded from the FACS website.

They will also be available at the pre-application workshops, from Family and Community Services regional offices and from schools of social work. Application forms can be requested by calling free phone **0508 346 376**.

Applications must be made using the official application form, though applicants are expected to provide additional information and papers as requested within the application form.

Applications close on the first Friday in October each year.

Send applications to:

The Administrator
NGO Social Work Study Awards
Family and Community Services
PO Box 1556
Wellington

Further information

If you have questions go to www.familyservices.govt.nz
or call free phone **0508 346 376**.