

EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOLARSHIPS AND INCENTIVES PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Scholarships and incentives are available for people looking to pursue a rewarding career in early childhood education. Those applying/accepting a scholarship or incentive will play an important role in delivering subsidised kindergarten programs for all three-year-old children across Victoria over the next ten years.

There are three streams of financial support that people may apply for:

- **Early childhood scholarships to become a teacher:** This option is available for eligible people wanting to study to become a registered early childhood teacher and work in a Victorian approved centre-based early childhood service.
- **Early childhood Aboriginal pathway scholarships:** This option is available for eligible Aboriginal people wanting to become an early childhood teacher or educator and work in the early childhood sector.
- **Early childhood teacher incentives:** This option is available for eligible early childhood teachers that take up selected roles in services delivering Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.

Scholarships are available for people looking to become an early childhood teacher through studying a degree or postgraduate qualification. Educators wanting to upskill and take the next step to become degree-qualified are also eligible. People who are already studying an approved bachelor or postgraduate teaching qualification, and who commenced from January 2017 onwards, are also eligible to apply.

Aboriginal pathway scholarships are available to support Aboriginal people to study the Certificate III in or Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care to become educators, right through to degree and postgraduate qualifications to become an early childhood teacher.

Early Childhood Teacher Incentives are available to attract qualified teachers to work in areas where Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is rolling out first. More information can be found on the Department's website (search: early childhood scholarships).

Early childhood scholarships to become a teacher

Scholarships awarded under the **early childhood scholarships to become a teacher** option are available to support approved bachelor or postgraduate qualifications. The qualification studied must allow the recipient to teach as an early childhood teacher registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. For a full list of early childhood education qualifications approved by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) from Certificate III through to postgraduate qualifications, see: [Approved early childhood qualifications](#).

Dual-qualification (early childhood and primary) bachelor and masters degrees are not eligible for this scholarship.

Bachelor trained early childhood teachers may also be eligible for support to study a postgraduate qualification that extends their skills and knowledge of early childhood education and care.

Recipients will receive up to:

- \$25,000 towards an approved early childhood bachelor degree
- \$12,000 towards an approved early childhood graduate diploma
- \$18,000 towards an approved early childhood masters qualification.

Early childhood Aboriginal pathway scholarships

Scholarships awarded under the **early childhood Aboriginal pathways scholarships** option are available to support approved qualifications from Certificate III and Diploma through to degree and postgraduate level qualifications. The qualification studied must allow the recipient to teach either as an early childhood educator or an early childhood teacher registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

Aboriginal pathway scholarship recipients will receive up to:

- \$2,500 towards the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
- \$5,000 towards the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
- \$34,000 towards an approved early childhood bachelor degree
- \$16,000 towards an approved early childhood graduate diploma
- \$24,000 towards an approved early childhood masters qualification.

The study component of scholarships is not available for the Certificate III in, and Diploma of, Early Childhood Education and Care being studied via the Free TAFE initiative. Aboriginal people studying a Free TAFE course can still apply for a scholarship to receive employment milestone payments at the completion of their course.

Additionally, scholarships for the Certificate III and Diploma qualifications will continue to be available for Aboriginal people studying at non-TAFE registered training organisations. You can find further information about Free TAFE [here](#).

Early childhood teacher incentives

Incentives of between \$9,000 and \$50,000 are available for early childhood teachers to take up positions in regional areas rolling out the nation-leading [Three-Year-Old Kindergarten](#) reform.

A once-off \$3,000 relocation payment will also be available to teachers who move 200km or more away from their current home.

Applicants must meet the eligibility requirement detailed in this document under [OVERVIEW: EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER INCENTIVES](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOLARSHIPS AND INCENTIVE MILESTONE PAYMENTS

Funding arrangements for scholarships

This financial assistance is designed to support the individual needs of scholarship recipients to complete their studies. This includes contributing to course fees, study materials such as textbooks and accommodation and living expenses to enable study.

Funding will be paid in instalments. Recipients will receive payments as outlined in their agreements in line with specific milestones described as follows:

- **study milestones** include proof of confirmed enrolment into the course and can include graduation from the course.
- **employment milestones** include proof of commencement of employment and can include completing a specified period of employment in a specified early childhood setting.

Payment for each milestone is subject to satisfactory evidence being submitted each year. For example, while studying, a scholarship recipient must submit evidence that they have completed study requirements and remain enrolled.

For milestone payments refer to **Appendix 1**.

Applications process for scholarships and incentive milestone payments

Applications are submitted through an online platform accessed on the Department of Education and Training's (Department's) website and will be assessed within 10 business days of submission. To apply, visit the Department's website and search for 'Early Childhood Scholarships and Incentives.'

If further information is required, the assessment timeframe may be longer. The applicant will be advised accordingly about the timeframe for the processing of their application.

Applications are assessed against a consistent set of criteria to determine successful recipients.

Unsuccessful applicants may reapply at a later date; however, the same criteria will be applied.

Overview of support and conditions for scholarships milestone payments

At a minimum, the scholarship recipient must successfully complete the required study component in a [relevant course approved by ACECQA](#). Study can be undertaken on a full-time or part-time basis. To receive employment milestone payments, the recipient must commence employment in an approved role in the early childhood sector within six months of graduating from an approved course.

Note that should the recipient be unable to complete their course, or otherwise not meet the terms for financial assistance as set out in their signed agreement, repayment of financial assistance will be determined by the Department.

Support offered and conditions of scholarships, by qualification type		
Qualification	Support for students commencing study	Support for students who began study from January 2017
Early childhood scholarships to become a teacher		
Bachelor degree*	Up to \$25,000	Up to \$22,000
Graduate diploma	Up to \$12,000	Up to \$9,000
Masters qualification*	Up to \$18,000	Up to \$15,000
Early childhood Aboriginal pathway scholarships		
Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care	Up to \$2,500	Does not apply
Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care	Up to \$5,000	Does not apply
Bachelor degree	Up to \$34,000	Up to \$31,000
Graduate diploma	Up to \$16,000	Up to \$13,000
Masters qualification	Up to \$24,000	Up to \$21,000

*Dual-qualification (early childhood and primary) not eligible

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE APPLYING FOR A SCHOLARSHIP

Eligibility

Applicants may be school leavers, career changers and those already working in early childhood who meet the eligibility criteria. Applicants do not have to already be working in the early childhood sector to apply.

Students who have already chosen their career in early childhood and enrolled in an eligible teaching qualification **from January 2017** can also apply for a scholarship. This applies to both bachelor and postgraduate level qualifications.

Those who have commenced an early childhood teaching qualification prior to 1 January 2017 are not eligible to apply.

To apply for a scholarship, you must:

- be an Australian citizen, a New Zealand citizen or the holder of a permanent visa and meet the relevant citizenship and residency requirements
- be a Victorian resident
- for all applicants yet to commence a bachelor degree, graduate diploma or master's qualification, have been accepted into a course leading to an approved early childhood teaching qualification

- for Aboriginal applicants studying either the Certificate III in or Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, have been accepted into a Victorian TAFE or other compliant registered training organisation. Aboriginal people accessing free TAFE will be able to apply for the employment milestone component of scholarships upon completion of the relevant TAFE course and commencement of employment
- be enrolled in each unit for course commencement (at a minimum) at your registered training organisation or tertiary institution by the relevant census date, unless otherwise agreed by the Department
- not be receiving any other scholarship or grant from the Department in relation to the course you intend to study in the event of having previously withdrawn or been terminated from a scholarship awarded by the Department, have repaid any funds in accordance with the former agreement before applying.

Eligible courses

For a full list of approved early childhood education qualifications from Certificate III through to postgraduate qualifications, see: [Approved early childhood qualifications](#).

Those studying to become an educator through the Early Childhood Aboriginal pathway component must enrol in CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care or CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (or the relevant qualifications that supersede these). Search the Victorian Skills Gateway for a list of registered providers at skills.vic.gov.au.

Program requirements

Applicants who are offered a scholarship will be required to accept and sign a Scholarship Agreement with the Department that sets out the terms and conditions on which the Department is willing to make the Scholarship available to the applicant. The Scholarship Agreement must be signed, and the relevant milestone completed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Department before any funding can be paid to the scholarship recipient.

The Scholarship Agreement will detail the successful applicant's and the Department's responsibilities in connection with the scholarship including further detail on the payment structure and the outcomes that must be achieved.

Applicants will be required to notify the Department in the event of a proposed or actual change to their study or employment arrangements.

Repayment of scholarship and employment milestone payment funding

Recipients who do not meet their obligations in the Scholarship Agreement may be required to repay to the Department part of, or the full amount of, the scholarship funding received.

The scholarship recipient will be responsible for paying all costs associated with the course in excess of the amount of the scholarship amount awarded to the recipient by the Department.

Before applying for a scholarship, applicants should consider their personal financial circumstances and ensure that undertaking the required study will be financially feasible.

Employment milestone payments

After successful completion of the approved course, scholarship recipients may be eligible for additional milestone payments upon commencing employment and completing minimum continuous periods of employment in the Victorian early childhood sector in an approved role.

Employment is to commence within six months of graduation from an approved course in order to satisfy the first employment milestone payment.

Continuous employment means meeting the employment and other requirements for the required timeframe as detailed in the Scholarship Agreement. A scholarship recipient may work in successive approved roles at multiple approved services during the relevant timeframe which meet the Department’s criteria for scholarship milestones. In all circumstances, the Department must be notified of any gaps or changes in employment circumstances, status or location to receive employment milestone payments. For example, this may include evidence of successive fixed-term contracts or parental leave taken.

Applicants are solely responsible for arranging their own employment and the Department does not guarantee that scholarship recipients will obtain employment in the early childhood sector.

The Department may also accept service undertaken on a casual basis when determining whether the recipient has successfully met the employment milestone. Generally speaking, casual employment will only be accepted for this purpose where the recipient has, at all times, continued to actively seek ongoing or fixed term employment. Evidentiary documentation may be required to demonstrate the steps taken by a recipient in this regard.

Details of the employment requirements are below:

Qualification type	Period of continuous employment to receive employment milestone payment	Required setting	Required role
Bachelor degree or postgraduate qualification	First payment made upon commencing employment. Second payment made on commencement of third year of employment after graduation from study.	Victorian centre-based early childhood service(s)*	Early childhood teacher or equivalent
Certificate III or Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care	Once-off payment made after 12 months of continuous employment	Victorian early childhood setting(s)+	Early childhood educator or equivalent role

*Victorian approved centre-based early childhood service refers to kindergartens and long day care services delivering a kindergarten program. This excludes family day care and outside school hours care services.

+This excludes outside school hours care services.

OVERVIEW: EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER INCENTIVES

Incentive payments are available to attract qualified early childhood teachers to deliver funded kindergarten programs for three-year-olds.

Incentive payments valued from \$9,000 to \$50,000 are available for eligible early childhood teachers that accept a vacant position in services rolling out Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. The local government areas for 2021 roll out are:

2021		
Alpine	Corangamite	Loddon
Ararat	East Gippsland	Murrindindi
Campaspe	Glenelg	Southern Grampians
Central Goldfields	Hepburn	Towong
Colac-Otway	Indigo	West Wimmera

The locations where incentives are available will change each year in line with the roll-out of kindergarten for three-year-olds. You will find further information about the roll-out schedule at [here](#).

Eligibility

To be eligible to be considered for an incentive payment, early childhood teachers must:

- be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching
- provide confirmation from their employer that they are filling a vacancy at a service that is rolling out a funded kindergarten program for three-year-olds
- be accepting a position 100km or more from their current place of residence **or** be moving from employment outside of the early childhood education sector
- not have received an incentive payment under this program previously
- complete an online application demonstrating the above, which must be submitted within 30 days of accepting a position.

Prioritisation and clarifications

Incentives are not limited to Victorian residents – any applicant who is able to meet the eligibility criteria is encouraged to apply.

Services can apply for pre-approval to offer an incentive as a part of their recruitment strategy, however the successful candidate must still meet the eligibility criteria and complete an online application.

Teachers do not need to have received a scholarship to be eligible for an incentive payment. Additionally, eligible teachers may receive both a scholarship and an incentive payment.

Priority will be given, with available resources, to people taking on positions with higher working hours, such as full time roles. Subject to demand incentives for part-time positions may be applied on a pro-rata basis.

Roles in services where an incentive has previously been awarded under this program will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Department will consider exceptional circumstances, including those who may not meet all eligibility requirements, on a case-by-case basis.

Early Childhood Teacher Incentive payments:

There are three formal tiers of different value incentives available, with payments spread across a number of milestones:

- Tier 1 – \$9,000
- Tier 2 - \$21,000
- Tier 3 - \$50,000

An additional payment of up to \$3,000 for candidates moving over 200kms can be applied for through the incentive application form on the Department's website.

The Department determines the allocation of the tiers giving consideration to a number of factors including historical staffing pressures in the area and educational disadvantage.

Further details of the early childhood teacher incentives, including timing of payment milestones are provided in **Appendix 1**.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOLARSHIPS AND INCENTIVES PROGRAMS**Tax implications**

The receipt of funding may have taxation implications and implications in respect of other Government benefit schemes. This includes, but is not limited to, those administered through Centrelink. Applicants are advised to seek their own independent taxation advice and liaise with relevant organisations to find out about these implications before applying for the Scholarship program.

Compassionate grounds

Where unforeseen exceptional circumstances have prevented the recipient from completing their employment, the Department may have regard to such exceptional circumstances in determining whether to waive some or all of the recipient's repayment obligation. Compassionate or compelling circumstances will be assessed by the Department on a case-by-case basis and evidentiary documentation may be required to support a recipient's request for a waiver of the recipient's repayment obligation.

UPDATE OF GUIDELINES

These guidelines, including program eligibility criteria, will be reviewed and may change in future years.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about the Early Childhood Scholarships and Incentives Program and to apply, please visit www.education.vic.gov.au/ecscholarships. For further information, applicants can also email EC.Financial.Support@education.vic.gov.au or call 1300 161 396.

APPENDIX 1: SCHOLARSHIPS AND INCENTIVES MILESTONE PAYMENTS

Scholarships and incentives milestone payments

The three tables below detail funding amounts paid after evidence the study and employment milestones have been achieved. As part of the agreement entered into with the Department, scholarship and incentive recipients are required to provide evidence of study and employment on a regular basis between milestones. For example, evidence of successful enrolment each year in a bachelor qualification or a new contract with an employer.

Scholarships study and employment milestones

Qualification	Study milestones		Employment milestones		Total value (up to)
	Enrolment/ on signing contract	Graduation	At start of year one	At start of year three	
Early childhood scholarships to become a teacher					
Bachelor degree	\$6,250	\$6,250	\$6,250	\$6,250	\$25,000
Bachelor degree (current students)	\$3,250*	\$6,250	\$6,250	\$6,250	\$22,000
Graduate diploma	\$4,000	N/A	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$12,000
Graduate diploma (current students)	\$1,000	N/A	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$9,000
Masters qualification	\$6,000	N/A	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$18,000
Masters (current students)	\$3,000	N/A	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$15,000
Early childhood Aboriginal pathway scholarships					
Bachelor degree	\$10,750	\$10,750	\$6,250	\$6,250	\$34,000
Bachelor degree (current students)	\$7,750	\$10,750	\$6,250	\$6,250	\$31,000
Graduate diploma	\$5,333	N/A	\$5,333	\$5,334	\$16,000
Graduate diploma (current students)	\$2,333	N/A	\$5,333	\$5,334	\$13,000
Masters qualification	\$8,000	N/A	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$24,000
Masters (current students)	\$5,000	N/A	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$21,000

*Current bachelor degree students who apply for a scholarship in the final year of their course are not eligible for this payment

Key

Recallable payment



Payment cannot be recalled



Not applicable



VET early childhood Aboriginal pathway scholarships and employment milestone

Qualification	Study milestones		Employment milestone	Total value (up to)
	Enrolment	Graduation	At end of year one	
Early childhood Aboriginal pathway scholarships				
Certificate III	\$833	\$833	\$834	\$2,500
Diploma	\$1,667	\$1,667	\$1,666	\$5,000

Early Childhood Teacher Incentives

Category	Description	Total value	Employment milestone (contract signing)	Six-month milestone	Retention milestone (end of first, second, third years)
Tier 1	\$4,000 on contract signing and \$2,000 after six months, retention milestones of \$1,000 per year for three years	\$9,000	\$4,000	\$2,000	\$1,000
Tier 2	\$6,000 on contract signing, \$3,000 after six months, retention milestones of \$4,000 per year for three years	\$21,000	\$6,000	\$3,000	\$4,000
Tier 3	\$10,000 on contract signing, \$10,000 after 6 months, and retention milestones of \$10,000 per year for three years	\$50,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Off-tier*	\$7,000 on contract signing, \$5,000 after six months, retention milestones of \$6,000 per year for three years	\$30,000	\$7,000	\$5,000	\$6,000
Relocation Support	Relocation payment when moving >200km from home residence, once-off on contract signing	\$3,000	\$3,000	N/A	N/A

**In exceptional circumstances, the Department may decide a Tier 2 service may be eligible on a case-by-case basis to have their incentive increased to \$30,000 in order to meet extenuating recruitment challenges (for example, multiple unsuccessful extended recruitment processes).*