

PE2039/E: Fair pay to student nurses while on placement

Scottish Government written submission, 19 May 2025

Thank you for your letter of 1 November 2024 inviting the Scottish Government to comment on the recommendations within the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) report [Nursing Student Finance: the true costs of becoming a nurse](#). Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in the response to your letter, this was due to staff absences.

The Scottish Government was grateful for the research conducted by the RCN and the findings in the report. Following the publication of the report, the former Chief Nursing Officer, Alex McMahon, met with students at an RCN roundtable event in September 2023. The roundtable discussion allowed further conversation around the themes within the recommendations.

Following the roundtable in September 2023 and a Royal College of Midwives (RCM) student roundtable in May 2024, the Scottish Government created a short-life working group comprising representatives from the Scottish Government, Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) and higher education institutes (HEIs) to review the clinical placement expenses guidance to respond to student concerns and RCN recommendations.

The group concluded its review and revised guidance was finalised on 1 July 2024. This work ensured that students are refunded as quickly as possible and provided students with greater clarity and flexibility on issues such as use of the young persons' free bus travel, when authority may be granted to use their own car and claiming advance payments or interim payments during long placements. Students may also claim reasonable costs for accommodation if required while on placement.

A focus of the RCN recommendations is ensuring that student nurses have a fair financial support package throughout their studies. The Scottish Government recognises the financial challenges faced by all students, including nursing students, and are aware that the current cost of living crisis is causing an impact for many households.

Following the RCN and RCM student finance reports and the insight from students at the RCN and RCM roundtable events, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care committed to carrying out a review of the financial support package for nursing, midwifery and paramedicine students. The current funding package is multifaceted and as such the review will consider what is currently in place and also any opportunities to create additional financial support mechanisms, such as student loans.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care wrote to stakeholders on 17 September 2024 to provide an update on the review of the package of financial support and to detail the scope of the review.

In addition to this, throughout March and April of this year, the Scottish Government hosted two engagement sessions with stakeholders and five sessions with students to provide an update on the review and to capture their views.

Scottish Government officials will use the broad themes raised at these sessions to survey the wider student body to ensure as many students as possible have the opportunity to share their views.

Finally, the RCN report also recommends a review of the processes in place to allow students to register with their local NHS Board bank. As recognised in the report, this is a matter for NHS health boards as health boards are independent institutions, separate from the Scottish Government, and are responsible for their own recruitment. It may be helpful to highlight that NHS Board Executive Nurse Directors have been made aware of the reported difficulties in students accessing bank work.

The Scottish Government is extremely grateful to our highly skilled nursing and midwifery students for their extraordinary hard work, dedication, skills and commitment. Scottish Government officials will continue to engage with stakeholders and students throughout the financial support review to ensure Ministers are able to consider options that are reflective of the needs of the diverse range of nursing students.

I hope you find this response helpful.

Chief Nursing Officer Directorate