

Guidelines for the Forward Scholarship Program 2024



1. Program Objectives

Forward is committed to supporting the career and life goals of people with spinal cord injury (SCI) and related neurological disability.

One of the ways we do this is to offer Scholarships to assist Forward members engage in education and other programs and initiatives that enhance employability, life skills and meaningful community engagement.

We believe that this leads to greater independence and quality of life.

2. Scholarship Program Funding Options

Each Forward Scholarship is valued at up to \$5,000. Applicants are asked to describe the courses, training or program/s they intend to undertake, the item/s they wish to use funds for, and the total funding required, up to the amount of \$5,000.

Successful applicants may use funds to help cover the costs of participation in courses, programs or initiatives that lead to greater skills and independence.

Forward's person-centred approach and our commitment to choice and control means that Scholarship applicants identify the program, course or activity that best suits their needs, within the categories and guidelines provided below.

Funding may be used across more than one category of study/training, although no more than \$5,000 may be requested in total. If a successful applicant wishes to vary the funded items during the Scholarship program, this is allowable, provided that the items are those allowed under the program. Scholars are advised to check with Forward prior to varying items after commencement of the Scholarship.

Organisations, institutions and persons offering training or activities must be appropriately qualified, registered and accredited. Programs and activities must be provided through recognised, accredited channels.

Categories covered under the program are described below.

2.1 Formal study and further education

Applicants may apply to undertake:

- Undergraduate or postgraduate formal qualifications
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD), short courses and single units of study aimed at maintaining and improving professional knowledge and skills
- Short courses related to employment, employability, life skills, independence or where this is related to SCI community engagement and contribution (for example, writing, community development, advocacy)
- Study readiness courses; for example, university preparation courses, literacy and numeracy courses.

Study may be undertaken through any tertiary, TAFE, vocational or registered training organisation (RTO) with a CRICOS or RTO code, or other registration appropriate to the type of organisation. Courses may be undertaken via face-to-face, external, online, correspondence learning or a combination of these.

2.2 Career preparation and planning

Successful engagement in employment and building a career requires more than qualifications, knowledge and skills. Career planning involves considering your goals, interests and skills; researching various career paths, exploring the options available to you, and thinking through how you will achieve your goals.

This applies to both those new to the workforce and those looking to change careers.

Forward Scholarship funds may be used to cover the cost of career planning and counselling sessions and appointments, and costs directly associated with this (for example, transport to appointments, internet and computer costs, stationery requirements).



Included in this category are resume services, interview preparation and coaching and development of a professional portfolio and profile.

Career counsellors and planners must have appropriate qualifications or experience. Details of the counsellor/planner must be provided in the application.

Specialist career counselling and planning services are available through several SCI rehabilitation services (for example, In-Voc through Royal Rehab, Sydney). Most of these services are covered under NDIS, iCare and other funding schemes.

Forward Scholarship funds may be used to cover additional sessions / services not covered by your plan, or services for those without such plan funding.

Evidence of this will be required in the application – the career counsellor may assist with this.

2.3 Internships, graduate programs and mentoring

Currently, Forward does not offer its own internship or mentoring program. Scholarship applicants are supported to take up these opportunities by using funding to cover the cost of engaging in programs offered through other organisations.

Although most internship, graduate and mentoring programs do not have fees associated with participation, Scholarship recipients may wish to purchase items to support their placement. This may include IT or other equipment not otherwise funded or supplied, or additional training or study.

Transport may be required to the place of employment, coaching or mentoring.

Forward members may apply for a Forward Scholarship while awaiting the outcome of their application to an internship or graduate program.

2.3.1 Internships and Graduate Programs

Internships and graduate programs help translate qualifications and knowledge into real-world experience, provide opportunities to develop networks and boost employment following graduation.

Internships may be paid or unpaid and may or may not lead to ongoing permanent employment.

They are usually aimed at students close to completion of undergraduate or postgraduate study.

Graduate programs offer paid positions upon completion of a qualification and assist you to develop a career pathway in a specific organisation. Programs offer more support and mentoring than you would receive in a standard entry-level position.

2.3.1.1 Australian Network on Disability (AND)

(AND) offers a paid internship scheme, Stepping Into Internship program, in conjunction with member businesses across Australia, and in a wide variety of professional fields.

Internships are available to university students with disability in their final or second-last year of either undergraduate or postgraduate study. Placements are for a minimum of 152 hours, with attendance format negotiated between student and their AND supervisor.

There is no age limit; mature age university applicants are eligible.

AND holds preparation webinars and briefings during the application period and works with successful applicants to arrange required workplace adjustments. Each AND member business is committed to developing disability confident workplaces and to attracting graduates with disability.

Students are eligible if they are registered with their university's Disability Services or provide medical documentation of their disability. You may use the same documentation for both the Forward Scholarship and the AND application.

AND applications open twice per year, with summer and autumn intakes.

Dates and further information may be found on the Australian Network for Disability website: and.org.au

2.3.1.2 Other Opportunities

A wide variety of government and industry internship and graduate programs are available in Australia and are advertised on various platforms. The information below is correct at time of writing (January 2024).

These include career search platforms such as SEEK, Local Government (council websites) and State Government departmental websites.

In New South Wales, the latter includes the departments of Education, Transport for NSW, and Industry, Skills and Regional Development. Opportunities are advertised at various times throughout the year at iworkfor.nsw.gov.au/graduate-program

Northern Territory Government opportunities may be found at graduates.nt.gov.au, while the ACT Government advertises positions at cmtedd.act.gov.au/employment-framework/graduates

Other government and industry positions are advertised by GradAustralia; information may be found at gradaustralia.com.au

Applicants are encouraged to do due diligence on any program prior to application. Career counsellors at university, TAFE or college can assist with this and are also a source of information on programs available.

2.3.2 Mentoring

Mentoring programs pair new graduates, those returning to the workforce and those changing careers with an experienced role model. The goal is to provide guidance and support during the early phase of career development.



Mentors may be from the same organisation or someone from within the same industry. Again, university and college career counsellors are helpful sources of available programs.

The Australian Network on Disability (AND) offers its Positive Action towards Career Engagement (PACE) Mentoring program to jobseekers over the age of 18 with disability. The program is not restricted to tertiary students or graduates.

Entry is via application; further information is available at and.org.au/students-jobseekers/find-a-mentor/

The program is a four-month commitment during which mentors and mentees meet approximately eight times at the mentor's workplace. Applicants may nominate up to five industry / career options, and the program is available across Australia.

2.4 Skills that enhance employability, independence and community engagement

Scholarship funds may be used to gain life skills and abilities that boost employability, financial and other independence, engagement with the community and quality of life post injury.

Funds may be used for courses and training where the cost is not covered by NDIS, iCare or other funding schemes.

Such courses and training may include, but are not limited to:

Modified driving

- Driving lessons, rehabilitation and assessment

Assistive technology

- Gaining skills and confidence in the use of assistive technology in the home, community and or workplace

Financial management

- Handling money, banking, financial transactions

Presentation and writing skills

- Writing and journalism courses
- Public speaking courses
- Speech and presentation courses

Community development and engagement

- Advocacy training
- Community development
- Volunteering opportunities

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact the Scholarships team to discuss their area of interest, intended courses, course provider and training options. Contact us at: Scholarships@fas.org.au or on 02 8741 5702.

3. Use of Scholarship Program Funds (allowable items)

Scholarship funds may be used to cover items not covered by NDIS or other funding schemes.

These include:

- Course, program and tuition fees
- Course excursion funds or residential expenses on campus
- Carer's allowance contribution not funded by another source
- IT requirements; for example: laptop, computer, hardware / software, voice recognition programs, IT tuition
- Introductory computer-use training tailored to the specific needs of the individual
- Textbooks and reference material (including online resources)
- Stationery and other study / workplace supplies not provided by an employer, including art supplies
- Additional support; for example, tuition, scribe and typing services
- Travel costs up to \$500 to cover transport costs to and from place of study
- Equipment required for courses and training
- Professional fees involved in career counselling / planning, resume services, interview coaching, portfolio development
- Any request for an item over \$2000 should be accompanied with a letter outlining the reason for the purchase.

Other needs not identified above can be discussed.

4. Scholarship Eligibility Requirements

4.1 General Requirements

Recipients are selected on the following criteria as defined by Forward:

- A member of Forward (membership forms available at: www.fas.org.au/get-involved/membership)
- Australian Citizens (or Permanent Residents) residing in NSW, the ACT or NT
- Must be 16 years of age or over. Any exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis
- A person with spinal cord injury or other related physical neurological disability
- For applicants intending to use funds for education:
 - Level of academic record appropriate to the proposed study;
 - Evidence of enrolment in study course and/or acceptance letter



- For applicants intending to use funds for internship or mentoring programs:
 - Evidence of application to the relevant program
 - Applicants may apply for a Scholarship while awaiting the outcome of application to an internship, graduate or mentoring program
- Preference will be given to applicants on a low income (please refer to 'Low Socio-economic Background Criteria')

4.2 Low Socio-economic Background Criteria

Low socio-economic background is defined as:

- Being in receipt of a pension or allowance under the Social Security Act 1991, or Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986, or ABSTUDY and / or:
- Having family income that does not exceed \$120,000 per annum.

4.3 Additional Scholarship Eligibility Requirements

- Forward Scholarships may only cover supports which have not already been covered by the NDIS or other funding schemes.
- Successful applicants must accept the conditions of the Scholarship and agree to provide personal information relevant to assessing their ongoing eligibility for the Scholarship funds.
- Scholarship payments are made on proof that the recipient maintains a satisfactory rate of academic progress or continuation with the relevant program. Where a recipient enrolled in study needs to repeat a session due to academic failure then the Scholarship will be suspended until the failed subject(s) have been passed and the student progresses to the next session within that academic year.
- Should a student in receipt of a Scholarship, want to change their mode of study, for example from full-time to part-time, they must notify Forward in writing. This may affect their continuing eligibility.
- Should a Scholarship be awarded and at some later stage it is found that the recipient no longer satisfies the Scholarship criteria, the Scholarship will be withdrawn

5. Conditions of Scholarship

5.1 Ongoing Eligibility Requirements

Forward requires recipients enrolled in study to maintain an overall passing grade throughout the course to continue to be eligible for the Forward Scholarships. Recipients engaged in other programs are required to fulfil the requirements of that program to continue to be eligible for Scholarship funds.

Forward is responsible for monitoring the ongoing eligibility of the Scholarship recipients by:

- Monitoring the current Forward membership of recipients
- Monitoring the receipt of signed agreement forms
- Ensuring photo identification has been supplied
- For scholars enrolled in a program of study:
 - Ensuring the provision of twice-yearly reports, in June and December of the academic year, including the provision of a paragraph written by each recipient, describing their study progress and how the Scholarship has assisted them. Forward may choose to use all or part of this material for promotional purposes.
- For scholars engaged in internships, mentoring programs, career planning, or another course or program:
 - Ensuring the provision of twice-yearly reports, in June and December – or once in the case of shorter courses – including the provision of a paragraph written by each recipient, describing their progress and how the Scholarship has assisted them Forward may choose to use all or part of this material for promotional purposes
- Scholarship recipients are encouraged to be involved in Forward activities, including articles for the Forward magazine, website, social and other media, to promote the Forward Scholarship program.

6. Deferral of Forward Scholarships

Forward may approve requests for periods of deferral in the recipient's study and funding, once Forward has received a full report from the educational institution through which the recipient is studying. The recipient should resume study or program participation within the academic or calendar year for the Scholarship funds to continue. The Scholarship funds will not roll over to the following academic or calendar year.

7. Termination of the Forward Scholarships

Forward may terminate the Forward Scholarship in the following circumstances:

- Once the full value of the Scholarship has been paid
- If the student ceases to meet the eligibility criteria specified under 'Scholarship Eligibility Requirements' and 'Conditions of Scholarship' of these guidelines, excluding during a period in which the Scholarship has been deferred
- If the student does not continue study or program participation
- If the student fails to maintain satisfactory progress as determined by the educational institution / program provider and Forward



- If an educational institution determines that a student is guilty of serious academic misconduct
- If the recipient engages in criminal misconduct, or if criminal activity prior to the Scholarship period becomes known to Forward

A decision to terminate a Scholarship will be made by Forward.

8. Payment of Scholarship Funds

Scholarships funds will not be paid until after the recipient has commenced attendance at the first day of the first term / semester OR the first date of a program to which the Scholarship funds apply.

Payments will be made by electronic funds transfer directly to the recipient, the educational institution, carer, tutor, or supplier only when receipts or invoices have been received by Forward.

Payments will be made no more than twice per year (in June and December), and to ensure swift payment recipients must:

- Submit receipts to Forward showing proof of payment
- Accompany these receipts with a completed claim form stating the amount they wish to claim and including bank details
- Forward will then process payments within one week of receiving the receipts and completed claim form

Scholarship recipients should contact the Scholarship team if they have any questions or problems regarding their reimbursements by calling (02) 8741 5702 or by email to: scholarships@fas.org.au

9. Rollover of Unspent Funds

All recipients must spend all allocated funds within the period of the Scholarship i.e. from February to December. All claims must be received by Forward no later than close of business, 13th December 2024.

Forward will not accept any request to rollover unspent funds to the following year.

10. Application Process

After reading the Scholarship Criteria and Terms and Conditions, and if you would like to apply for the Forward Scholarship:

- Complete the Application form available by request at www.fas.org.au/get-involved/forward-scholarship
- Once completed and signed, scan and email the form to: scholarships@fas.org.au
OR post to:
Forward Scholarship Applications
PO Box 6347
Silverwater DC NSW 2128

Please note that 2024 Scholarship Applications must be received by 16th February 2024

11. Enquiries

If you have any questions or queries, please contact us:

Email: scholarships@fas.org.au

Phone: 02 8741 5702