

Framework for the assessment of internationally qualified nurses and midwives for registration



Acknowledgements

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia acknowledges the work of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council in preparing the *Final report: development of national standards for the assessment of internationally qualified nurses and midwives for registration and migration* from which these criteria are drawn.¹

1. www.anmc.org.au/international_projects.

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Purpose

This document outlines the criteria for assessment of internationally qualified nurses and midwives for registration as a registered nurse, enrolled nurse or midwife by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.

The document does not describe the processes that the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency staff will undertake to assess the applications from internationally qualified nurses and midwives. The document provides the criteria on which these processes will be based.

Abbreviations and acronyms

AHPRA	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
ANMC	Australian Nursing & Midwifery Council
DIAC	Department of Immigration & Citizenship
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
NMBA	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
OET	Occupational English Test
TTMRA	Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement

Background

The primary aim of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (the Board or NMBA), as defined in the National Law², is to protect the public of Australia.

The introduction of the National Law, coupled with the increasing number of applications for registration in Australia from internationally qualified nurses and midwives, calls for a nationally consistent, equitable and transparent assessment process regardless of the country of origin of the applicant.

Prior to the establishment of the NMBA, the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Council (ANMC) developed the *Final report: development of national standards for the assessment of internationally qualified nurses and midwives for registration and migration*. Prior to 1 July 2010, ANMC functioned as a representative of the regulatory authorities and as an assessing authority for the Department of Immigration & Citizenship (DIAC) for assessment of nurses and midwives seeking permanent migration. ANMC is now the independent accrediting authority for nursing and midwifery under the national scheme. It continues to serve as the authorised assessing authority for DIAC.

At its meeting on 29 July 2010, the Board approved standards one through five in the above Report as the basis for the criteria for assessment listed in 'Summary of criteria'. These criteria come into effect immediately.

The criteria for assessment align internationally qualified nurses and midwives with the requirements for Australian-qualified applicants for registration specified in the NMBA's registration standards and the Board-approved course accreditation standards.

Though New Zealand nurses and midwives registered with the Nursing Council of New Zealand and the Midwifery Council of New Zealand may apply for registration under the National Law, they are also eligible to apply for registration under the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA).

The State and Territory offices of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), under the guidance of the State and Territory boards of the NMBA, will undertake work to implement the processes arising out of these criteria. Applicants will not be granted general registration or provisional registration until all the criteria are met. It may be possible for the applicant to have 'limited registration' under s66 of the National Law. This will be determined in the processes developed consistent with the NMBA Instrument of Delegation. If applicants are

concerned about their ability to meet the criteria, there are a number of approaches they may take. They may choose to be initially assessed by NMBA and then make a decision to undertake further education, if required. Depending on their visa status, they may make application through ANMC to be assessed through the Migrant Skills Assessment process.³ Alternatively, they may choose to make direct application to an appropriate education institution to undertake a relevant program of study prior to making application for registration.

The ANMC, as the assigned accreditation authority for the nursing and midwifery professions, may also continue to make recommendations and give advice regarding this matter in accordance with s. 42(e) of the National Law.

2. The National Law is contained in the schedule to the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* (Qld).

3. http://www.anmc.org.au/international_section

Summary of criteria

Criterion one

The applicant establishes their identity

Criterion two

The applicant meets English language proficiency criteria for the nursing and midwifery professions

Criterion three

The applicant is assessed as meeting current Australian nursing and midwifery education standards

Criterion four

The applicant provides evidence of having practised as a nurse and/or midwife within a defined period of time preceding the application

Criterion five

The applicant demonstrates they are 'fit to practise' nursing and/or midwifery in Australia

Criterion one

The applicant establishes their identity

Principle:

The applicant is able to demonstrate that they are the person whose name will be entered onto the register to practise nursing and/or midwifery.

Rationale:

There is a need to establish that only those qualified to practise nursing and/or midwifery are registered in this country. The criterion is met when the applicant's identity is established.

Criteria	Assessment of criteria
The applicant must provide documentary and photographic evidence that they are the person seeking to be registered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents must meet AHPRA Proof of Identity criteria⁴, including the listed criteria for persons applying from overseas or who have recently arrived in Australia. All documents must be an original or certified as per the criteria of AHPRA Certifying Documents.⁵
Documents must be current	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The documents must not have expired
Evidence of current professional registration/licensure, (or eligibility for registration) with an overseas nursing and midwifery regulatory authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of verification of registration/licensure
Evidence that names match verified qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The correct name matches all qualifications with documentation to support evidence of a name change as per AHPRA Proof of Identity criteria

4. <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registration-Process/Proof-of-Identity.aspx>

5. <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registration-Process/Proof-of-Identity.aspx>

Criterion two

The applicant meets English language proficiency criteria for the nursing and midwifery professions

Principle:

English language proficiency is a regulatory criterion for registration, and is essential for safe care and effective communication.

Rationale:

Health care providers, consumers and their families need to be confident that nurses and midwives can communicate effectively. NMBA has determined the standard of English language proficiency for registration as a nurse or midwife in its NMBA English language skills registration standard.

The criterion is met when the applicant can demonstrate they meet the criteria of NMBA English language skills registration standard.⁶

Criteria

Assessment of criteria

The internationally qualified applicant must meet all the criteria of NMBA English language skills registration standard including :

- i) the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination (academic module) with a minimum score of seven in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing and speaking)

or

- ii) completion and an overall pass in the Occupational English Test (OET) with grades A or B only in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing and speaking).

- The applicant must have obtained the results within two years prior to applying for registration
- The results must have been obtained in one sitting
- The applicant can undertake the test either onshore or offshore
- The applicant must make arrangements for test results to be provided directly to AHPRA by the testing authority

6. <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx>

Criterion three

The applicant is assessed as meeting current Australian nursing and midwifery education standards

Principle:

Internationally qualified nurses and midwives must meet the education standards⁷ set for Australian qualified registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives.

Rationale:

Section 47 of the National Law provides for NMBA to approve accreditation standards. The accreditation standards are the determinate of the education standard. An accreditation standard is defined under the National Law as a standard used to assess whether a program of study, and the education provider that provides the program of study, provide persons who complete the program with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes necessary to practise the profession in Australia.

The criterion for a registered nurse or midwife is met when the applicant has a minimum qualification of a Bachelor degree, or qualification combined with experience that is comparable in duration and content to the nationally agreed minimal educational standard for nursing and midwifery in Australia.

The criterion for an enrolled nurse is met when the applicant demonstrates that their education preparation meets the current minimum approved standards for enrolled nurses in Australia, which is a Certificate IV-based program until 1 July 2014. After this date, the entry to practice standard will be at the Diploma level. If the applicant does not hold a relevant Certificate IV qualification, then the applicant must demonstrate an equivalent minimum qualification combined with experience that is comparable in duration and content to the nationally agreed minimum education standard for enrolled nurses in Australia.

Criteria	Assessment of criteria
<p>Applicant must provide documentary evidence that their qualifications, or qualifications and experience meet the accepted education standards for nursing and midwifery in Australia.</p>	<p>For a registered nurse and midwife, the evidence provided by the applicant demonstrates that their education preparation meets NMBA-approved accreditation standards as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For registration as a registered nurse, the minimum qualification must be a university-based⁸ Bachelor degree (or where relevant, a postgraduate qualification) and the minimum length of the course is equivalent to six semesters' full-time study.

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7. The education standards are as defined by the NMBA-approved course accreditation standards. These documents are available on the Board's website at <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Accreditation.aspx>. Users should also review the communiqué from the Board's meeting on 23–24 June 2010 for further clarification on some of the contents of these standards; available at <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/News/Communique-from-Board-meetings.aspx>

8. Users should also review the communiqué from the Board's meeting on 23–24 June 2010 for further clarification on the content of the accreditation standard for courses leading to registration as a registered nurse; available at <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/News/Communique-from-Board-meetings.aspx>

Criterion three cont

The applicant is assessed as meeting current Australian nursing and midwifery education standards

	<p>*For registration as a midwife, the minimum qualification must be a university-based Bachelor degree (or where relevant, a postgraduate qualification) and the minimum length of the course is equivalent to six semesters' full-time study.</p> <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minimum length of the preregistration midwifery course must be at least 12 months⁹ full time, where the midwifery student is a registered nurse. • For an enrolled nurse the evidence provided by the applicant demonstrates that their education preparation meets the current approved standards for enrolled nurses in Australia, which is a Certificate IV-based course until 1 July 2014, at which point the entry to practice standard will be changed to the Diploma level.¹⁰
<p>Documentary evidence to include original or certified copies as per the criteria of AHPRA Certifying Documents.¹¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant provides a transcript of theoretical content of the course, including total hours for each subject and clinical experience. • The applicant provides the certificate gained and evidence of completion of the course.

9. Users should also review the communiqué from the Board's meeting on 23–24 June 2010 for further clarification on the duration of these programs; available at www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/News/Communique-from-Board-meetings.aspx

10. Users should also review the communiqué from the Board's meeting on 23–24 June 2010 for further clarification on the transition arrangements. Available at www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/News/Communique-from-Board-meetings.aspx

11. <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registration-Process/Proof-of-Identity.aspx>

Criterion four

The applicant provides evidence of having practised as a nurse and/or midwife within a defined period of time preceding the application

Principle:

The constantly changing nature of technology, treatment modalities, models of care and expanding roles for nurses and midwives means that nurses and midwives must be able to demonstrate contemporary knowledge, experience and the maintenance of skills in order to practise safely.

Rationale:

The Board is required by s. 38(e) of the National Law to develop and recommend a registration standard that establishes the criteria in relation to the nature, extent, period and recency of any previous practice of the profession by applicants for registration in the profession.

The criterion is met when the applicant can demonstrate that they meet the criteria of the NMBA recency of practice registration standard.

Criteria	Assessment of criteria
<p>The applicant must hold, or be eligible to hold, a current nursing and/or midwifery registration or licence to practise either in their country of residence, and/or their country of origin, and/or their country of initial education, and must have practised within the past five years as defined in criteria of the NMBA recency of practice registration standard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant must provide original or certified documentary evidence of currency of eligibility of registration or licensure in the country from which they last worked • Applicant must provide certified documentary evidence from their current and previous employers that they have practised nursing and/or midwifery within the past five years preceding their application, as defined in criteria of the NMBA recency of practice registration standard • If not currently employed, the applicant must provide certified documentary evidence from their most recent employer • Applicant must have practised nursing and/or midwifery as defined by the definition of 'practice' contained in the NMBA recency of practice registration standard
<p>If the applicant is applying from a country that either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not have a regulatory system • cannot provide evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the State and Territory boards

Criterion five

The applicant demonstrates that they are 'fit to practise' nursing and/or midwifery in Australia

Principle:

Fitness to practise is required to demonstrate to the wider public the integrity of the profession and its processes governing regulation.

Rationale:

A major purpose of regulation is to protect the public. Therefore, having fitness to practise criteria demonstrates to both the profession and the public that adequate measures are in place to protect the public from professional misconduct, or adverse outcomes as a result of a nurse or midwife suffering from a physical or mental incapacity. Only those fit to practise are granted registration.

The criterion is met when the applicant can demonstrate that they are 'fit to practise' nursing and/or midwifery in Australia.

Criteria	Assessment of criteria
The applicant must produce evidence of fitness to practise from a registering authority verifying that the applicant has no previous proven disciplinary proceedings against them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant must provide documentary evidence of fitness to practise in the form of verification, which must be supplied directly from the relevant regulatory authority, or in the absence of a regulatory system, from the highest relevant nursing authority or professional body under which they have previously practised.
The applicant must produce evidence of fitness to practise from a registering authority verifying that the applicant has no restrictions resulting from mental incapacity.	
The applicant must produce evidence of fitness to practise from a registering authority verifying that the applicant has no restrictions resulting from physical incapacity.	
The applicant must attest that they have no criminal history, that would preclude them from practising as a nurse or midwife in Australia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant must provide a statutory declaration attesting to the fact that they have no criminal history, that would preclude them from practising in Australia.
The applicant must attest that they have no professional impediment, or physical or mental incapacity that would preclude them from practising as a nurse or midwife in Australia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant must provide a statutory declaration attesting to the fact that they have no outstanding disciplinary proceedings that would preclude them from practising nursing or midwifery in Australia. The applicant must provide a statutory declaration attesting to the fact that they have no health problems that would preclude them from practising nursing or midwifery in Australia.