

Fact sheet

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Scope of practice of nurse practitioners

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) recognises that nurses obtain and develop specialist qualifications and expertise throughout the course of their careers. It is an expectation that nurse practitioners are competent in the specific area of practice required to meet the needs of their client group.

Nurses seeking endorsement as nurse practitioners must have completed three (3) years' advanced practice in their specific area of practice before applying for endorsement. While the area of practice will not be notated on their endorsement¹, it is nevertheless an expectation that the nurse practitioner will only practise in that specific area, and in accordance with the Safety and Quality Framework (SQF) included in the *Guidelines on endorsement as a nurse practitioner* under [Registration-and-Endorsement](#) on the NMBA website at www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au.

Employers should be aware of the nurse practitioners' scope of practice and ensure that they are employed appropriately.

Given the dynamic nature of health care and the evolving role of nurse practitioners, a scope of practice notation will not be included on the endorsement of nurse practitioners.

The NMBA has approved the following standards and guidelines:

- *Registration standard endorsement as a nurse practitioner*, available under [Registration Standards](#)
- *Guidelines on endorsement as a nurse practitioner*, available under [Registration & Endorsement](#), and
- *Nurse practitioner standards for practice*, available under [Codes, Guidelines and Statements](#).

These provide clear direction and guidance to ensure that all nurse practitioners are practising to a professional standard that protects the health and safety of the public.

Changes to scope of practice

Should nurse practitioners choose to expand or change their scope of practice to meet the needs of their client group, the nurse practitioner would need to undertake further post graduate education and skill development to meet those needs. The SQF, contained in the NMBA's *Guidelines on endorsement as a nurse practitioner*, makes it clear that a nurse practitioner is required to be competent in his or her scope of practice.

¹ Due to a requirement under Victorian drugs and poisons legislation, nurse practitioners in Victoria are required to nominate an area of practice to be able to prescribe a specified range of drugs. The National Board does not endorse these areas of practice but recognises that they are a local requirement.

Nurse practitioners planning to change scope are required to use the NMBA-approved [*National framework for the development of decision-making tools for nursing and midwifery practice*](#) published under [Codes, Guidelines and Statements](#); this will ensure that they are competent in their proposed expanded or new scope of practice.

Nurse practitioners are also required to meet the NMBA's requirements for annual renewal of registration and endorsement. Failure to comply with the SQF will incur disciplinary action by the NMBA that, if proven, carries considerable disciplinary consequences for nurse practitioners.

If a nurse practitioner is required to expand or change his or her scope of practice to meet the needs of a client group, it is incumbent that any employer ensures that the nurse practitioner has undertaken relevant post graduate education and skill development to be able to do so. It is possible that some professional colleges may establish professional programs that set benchmarks for their relevant nurse practitioner scopes of practice.