

## Re-entry to practice policy

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### Re-entry to practice – overview

#### Summary

This policy sets out the re-entry requirements for people who previously held registration as a nurse and/or a midwife in Australia, including the requirements for people who previously held registration as a nurse in Australia who have a sole qualification in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing.

This policy does not apply to recent graduates from Board-approved entry to practice nursing or midwifery programs in Australia who are applying for registration for the first time, or people holding student registration.

#### Background

From 1 July 2010, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (the Board) has been responsible for the regulation of nurses, midwives and students of nursing and midwifery under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) is the independent accreditation authority for nursing and midwifery, which undertakes the accreditation function in accordance with the National Law. ANMAC is responsible for accrediting the nursing and midwifery entry and re-entry programs of study and recommending these to the National Board for approval. Once approved, these programs lead to registration. A list of approved programs of study is available from [www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au), under *Accreditation, Approved programs of study*.

Section 52 of the National Law, 'Eligibility for general registration', states:

1. *An individual is eligible for general registration in a health profession if—*
  - (a) *the individual is qualified for general registration in the health profession; and*
  - (b) *the individual has successfully completed—*
    - (i) *any period of supervised practice in the health profession required by an approved registration standard for the health profession; or*
    - (ii) *any examination or assessment required by an approved registration standard for the health profession to assess the individual's ability to competently and safely practise the profession; and*
  - (c) *the individual is a suitable person to hold general registration in the health profession; and*
  - (d) *the individual is not disqualified under this Law or a law of a co-regulatory jurisdiction from applying for registration, or being registered, in the health profession; and*
  - (e) *the individual meets any other requirements for registration stated in an approved registration standard for the health profession.*
2. *Without limiting subsection (1), the National Board established for the health profession may decide the individual is eligible for general registration in the profession by imposing conditions on the registration under section 83.*

Further details about the National Law are available at [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au), under *Legislation and publications*.

### **Registration standards**

Section 38 of the National Law empowers the National Board to develop, and recommend to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (AHWMC), registration standards relevant to the eligibility of individuals for registration and endorsement in the nursing and midwifery professions, or the suitability of individuals to competently and safely practise in the profession.

The Board has previously developed and consulted on a range of registration standards that have now been approved by the AHWMC. The approved registration standards can be accessed on the website under the *Registration standards* tab.

## Re-entry to practice policy

### Introduction

The role of the National Board is to protect the public by ensuring that anyone who is registered is safe and competent to practise.

A key requirement is that the nurse and/or midwife is able to demonstrate that he or she meets the Board-approved *National competency standards* for the enrolled nurse, registered nurse or registered midwife. All applicants for registration are required to demonstrate that the relevant *National competency standards* have been met.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Board's registration standards and, in particular, the recency of practice and continuing professional development registration standards for nurses and midwives.

The Board-approved *Recency of practice registration standard* applies to nurses and midwives when they apply for renewal of registration each year. Previously-registered nurses and midwives in Australia who have not practised in the profession for a period of five years or more will be required to undergo an individual assessment of their application. This assessment will be based on the previously-registered nurse and/or midwife's:

- qualifications (including both undergraduate and postgraduate nursing and/or midwifery studies)
- professional practice history, and
- length of time away from practising in the profession/s.

The outcome of this assessment will determine whether the person is required to complete:

1. a Board-approved supervised practice program
2. a Board-approved re-entry to practice program, or
3. requisite studies in a re-entry to practice pathway within a Board-approved entry to practice program of study leading to initial registration, as identified by a Board-approved education provider following recognition of the individual's prior learning.

### Scope of application

This policy applies to people who have been previously registered as a nurse and/or a midwife in Australia, including those:

- a) who are seeking general registration following a lapse in practice of five years or more
- b) who have held non-practising registration for five years or more and are seeking general registration
- c) who have a sole qualification in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing, and no longer hold registration or have held non-practising registration for five years or more, and
- d) nurses and/or midwives in New South Wales (NSW) who hold registration but do not meet the recency of practice requirements as stated in the Board-approved *Recency of practice registration standard*. This cohort has been receiving particular treatment due to the fact that there was no requirement for recency of practice in NSW as long as a person remained registered. However, as part of a commitment to national consistency, this transitional measure will cease after 31 May 2012.

This policy does not apply to recent graduates from Board-approved entry to practice nursing or midwifery programs in Australia who are applying for registration for the first time, or people holding student registration.

## Requirements to meet the recency of practice registration standard

1. Nurses and/or midwives must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Board, that they have undertaken sufficient professional practice, as defined in (2) below, in their respective nursing and/or midwifery profession within the preceding five years to maintain competence.
2. Nurses and midwives will fulfill the requirements relating to recency of practice if they can demonstrate one or more of the following:
  - a. practice in their profession within the past five years for a period equivalent to a minimum of three months full-time
  - b. successful completion of a program or assessment approved by the Board, or
  - c. successful completion of a supervised practice experience approved by the Board.
3. Practice hours are recognised if evidence is provided to demonstrate that:
  - a. the nurse and/or midwife held a valid registration with a nursing or midwifery regulatory authority in the jurisdiction (either Australian or overseas) when the hours were worked
  - b. the role involved the application of nursing and/or midwifery knowledge and skills, or
  - c. the time was spent undertaking postgraduate education leading to an award or qualification that is relevant to the practice of nursing and/or midwifery.
4. Extended time away from nursing or midwifery practice due to illness or any type of leave will not be counted as practice.

## Requirements for applicants seeking general registration as a registered nurse, enrolled nurse or registered midwife

A nurse and/or a midwife who no longer holds registration, or who has held non-practising registration for more than five years in Australia, will have their application for registration assessed on an individual basis against the Board's registration standards. This assessment will be based on:

- the previously registered nurse and/or midwife's qualifications (including both undergraduate and postgraduate nursing, and/or midwifery studies)
- professional practice history, and
- length of time away from practising in the profession.

The Board will develop a set of criteria to assist with assessing the most appropriate approach to demonstrating competence and being eligible for registration. Based on this assessment, it will be determined whether the person will be required to demonstrate successful completion of a:

1. period of supervised practice approved by the Board
2. a re-entry to practice program approved by the Board, or

[1 and 2 are re-entry pathways for a person who has not practised as a nurse or midwife for a period of between five and ten (10) years]

3. a Board-approved entry to practice program of study leading to initial registration. This re-entry pathway is for people who have not practised as a nurse and/or a midwife for 10 or more years.

The applicant will be required to apply directly to a Board-approved education provider for recognition of prior learning (RPL) and identification of the requisite studies in an accredited re-entry to practice pathway within a Board-approved entry to practice program of study leading to registration. It is anticipated that the Board-approved education provider will review and assess the

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\* It is expected that the Board-approved education provider will review and assess the background and experience of the applicant with regards to RPL, in accordance with recognised best practice education standards.

background and experience of the applicant with regards to RPL\*, in accordance with recognised best practice education standards.

### **Specific requirements for previously-registered nurses who hold a sole qualification in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing**

A person who was registered on the basis of a sole qualification in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing, and no longer holds registration or has held non-practising registration for more than five years in Australia, will have their application for registration assessed on an individual basis against the Board's registration standards. This assessment will be based upon the previously-registered nurse's:

- qualifications (including both undergraduate and postgraduate nursing studies)
- professional practice history, and
- length of time away from practising the profession

The assessment will determine the most appropriate approach to demonstrating competence and eligibility for registration.

Based on this assessment, it will be determined whether the person will be required to demonstrate successful completion of a:

1. period of supervised practice in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing approved by the National Board, or
2. re-entry to practice program approved by the National Board that includes an accredited pathway in the area of the mental health, paediatric or disability nursing.

Both 1 and 2 are re-entry pathways for people who have not practised as a nurse in the area of the mental health, paediatric or disability nursing for a period of between five and 10 years.

Upon successful completion of either the Board-approved supervised practice or re-entry to practice program of study that includes an accredited pathway in the area of the mental health, paediatric or disability nursing, a person will be eligible for registration to practise in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing. Upon registration with the Board, a notation will be applied to the person's registration stating: *solely qualified in the area of mental health nursing / paediatric nursing / disability nursing*.

Those who hold a sole qualification in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing, and have not practised as a nurse in the area of mental health, paediatric or disability nursing for 10 years or more, will be required to demonstrate successful completion of a Board-approved entry to practice program of study leading to general registration. They will be required to apply directly to a Board-approved education provider for recognition of prior learning (RPL)\* and identification of the requisite studies within a Board-approved entry to practice program of study leading to general registration.

### **Successful completion of a program of study approved by the National Board**

Successful completion of a program of study approved by the National Board may be either:

- a) a re-entry to practice program accredited by ANMAC and approved by the National Board for registration as a nurse or midwife, or
- b) completion of all, or part of, a nursing or midwifery entry to practice program of study accredited by ANMAC and approved by the National Board that leads to registration as a nurse or midwife. It is the responsibility of the Board-approved education provider to determine the amount of recognition of prior learning the applicant will be given in accordance with recognised best practice standards.

These Board-approved programs of study provide for general registration as a nurse or midwife. Where these programs are used as a pathway for re-entry to practice for persons solely qualified in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing, the pathway must be accredited by ANMAC and approved by the Board.

## Student registration requirements

Those enrolled in either a Board-approved re-entry to practice program or a nursing or midwifery entry to practice program of study leading to registration, will be required to be registered as a student of nursing or midwifery by the education provider at the commencement of, and for the duration of, the program.

Those undertaking Board-approved supervised practice will be required to be registered as a student of nursing or midwifery by the education provider at the commencement, and for the duration, of the supervised practice. This group is recognised under the National Law as 'Students undertaking clinical training that is not part of an approved program of study'. For the purpose of clinical training, such as supervised practice, 'education providers' include health services, other organisations and, in some instances, individuals.

### People holding non-practising registration

People who hold non-practising registration are required to be registered as a student if they are enrolled in either a Board-approved re-entry to practice program, or a nursing or midwifery entry to practice program of study leading to registration, or if they are undertaking a period of Board-approved supervised practice. The National Law states that a practitioner who holds non-practising registration in a profession *must not practise* the profession.

## Definitions

**Direct supervision:** the supervisor is actually present and personally observes, works with, guides and directs the person who is being supervised.

**Entry to practice pre-registration program:** a program of study accredited by ANMAC and approved by the Board that enables the student to meet the Board's educational requirement for registration or enrolment.

**Re-entry program:** a program of study accredited by ANMAC and approved by the Board as preparation for nurses and midwives for re-entry to the register after a lapse in practice and removal from the register for a period exceeding the requirement in the *Recency of practice registration standard*. It contains both a theoretical and a clinical experience component.

**Recency of practice:** that a practitioner has maintained an adequate connection with, and recent practice in, the profession since qualifying or obtaining registration.

**Recent graduate:** a person applying for registration for the first time whose qualification for registration was awarded not more than two years prior to the date of application for registration.

**Non practising registration:** a type of registration available to practitioners who have previously held general registration in a profession, but who do not wish to practise the profession during the registration period. The National Law states that a practitioner who holds non-practising registration in a profession *must not practise* the profession.

**Recognition of prior learning:** a process by which the individual's formal and informal learning is assessed to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards for entry to, and/or partial or total completion of a qualification.

**Supervised practice:** a period of practice under level 1 supervision<sup>†</sup> that is equivalent to the minimum amount of practice required to demonstrate recency of practice (three months full-time equivalent).

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<sup>†</sup> The new supervision guidelines for nursing and midwifery are being finalised and will be available following approval by the Board.

Where supervised practice is required, it is the responsibility of the applicant to arrange a placement that meets the requirements of the Board, which are identified in the supervised practice guidelines.

Supervised practice must take place in a health setting that provides clinical experience placements for education providers delivering Board-approved programs of study leading to registration as a nurse or midwife.

## References

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. *Recency of practice registration standard* (2010)

ANMC. *National competency standards for the registered nurse* (2006)

ANMC. *National competency standards for the midwife* (2006)

ANMC. *National competency standards for the enrolled nurse* (2002)

ANMC. *National competency standards for the nurse practitioner* (2006)

ANMC. *National framework for the development of decision-making tools for nursing and midwifery practice* (2007)

All Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) (since December 2010, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC)) references adopted and approved by the Board are available on the NMBA website at [www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au).

## Review

This policy will commence on 19/03/2012. The Board will review this policy at least every three years of operation.