

IQNM: Assessing your application under the new model

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Contents

- [How we apply the new model to applications](#)
- [Important information about migration](#)
- [Accreditation in your country](#)
- [How we use the AQF to assess your qualification](#)
- [Processing time for existing applications](#)
- [Processing time for new applications](#)
- [Stages: assessing your application](#)

On 10 February 2014, the National Board implemented a new model to assess the qualifications of international nurses and midwives to make sure they are comparable to Board-approved Australian nursing or midwifery qualifications.

Find out about this new model on [Internationally qualified nurses and midwives](#) (IQNM) on our website.

How we apply the new model to applications

Under the new model, in order to qualify for registration under section 53(b) of the National Law, an IQNM's qualification must meet eight qualification assessment criteria.

The criteria establish whether an international qualification is substantially equivalent to a Board-approved Australian nursing or midwifery qualification for registration.

The [National Law](#) requires consideration of the qualification(s) only. This means we do not consider nursing or midwifery work experience when assessing your qualifications. However, we consider work experience when assessing whether you meet the requirements of the National Board's *Recency of practice registration standard*.

You must show that your qualification(s) meet *all* eight qualification assessment criteria to achieve eligibility for registration under the National Law. This means you must provide all documentation as detailed on [the National Board website](#) for your qualification(s) that are relevant to your nursing or midwifery registration.

To make sure that the new model for assessing the qualifications of IQNMs is fair and consistent to all applicants, the National Board has established a national panel of nursing and midwifery education experts (panel of experts) to review evidence of qualifications against the eight qualification assessment criteria. These experts are external to AHPRA, and convene from all over Australia on a fortnightly basis.

Currently, the NSW Board of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia makes the final decision on each IQNM application requiring a board decision. The NSW Board (local board) also meets fortnightly, and reviews each IQNM application presented to decide on the outcome.

Composite qualifications

Where your qualification leading to registration does not meet all eight qualification assessment criteria, the local board will take into account any relevant subsequent nursing and midwifery qualifications that may allow you to meet all requirements.

Composite qualifications are considered for a registered nurse where the applicant has:

- an initial qualification at AQF level 5 or 6 leading to registration as a registered nurse, and
- a relevant subsequent qualification at AQF level 7 or higher.

Taken together, composite qualifications should satisfy all eight qualification assessment criteria for the applicant to be considered eligible.

[It is important that you take time to consider the qualification assessment criteria requirements under the new model so you can assess the likelihood of the National Board granting you registration.](#)

Important information about migration

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) is an independent organisation gazetted by the Minister for Immigration (pursuant to the *Migration Act 1958, Regulations Amendment 1999, 2.228*) to perform skills assessment for migration purposes. ANMAC assesses the skills of overseas nurses and midwives who want to migrate to Australia under a general skilled migration program – see [International services](#) on the ANMAC website.

The National Board, in partnership with AHPRA, assesses eligibility for registration as a registered nurse, enrolled nurse or midwife in Australia in accordance with the National Law.

Acceptance for skilled migration by ANMAC does not guarantee that you will be registered with the National Board. We advise that you do not make any irreversible decisions – such as resigning from current employment or moving to Australia – while waiting for a decision on your application for registration with the National Board.

If you were approved for skilled migration by ANMAC before 10 February 2014, and you meet specific registration requirements, you may be eligible for registration. To find out more, read the following:

- [IQNM – Migration FAQ](#)
- Media release - [National Board and AHPRA response for applicants approved for skilled migration before new model](#)

Accreditation in your country

The new model requires that the education institution where you studied be externally accredited during the period your program of study was undertaken (criterion 2) and that your program of study is accredited by the relevant nursing and/or midwifery regulatory authority or agency (criterion 3). The National Board is aware that some countries may not meet these evidentiary requirements. We may be able to help you. To find out more, read the following:

- [IQNM – Accreditation FAQ](#)

How we use the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) to assess your qualification

See also:

- [IQNM – Australian Qualification Framework FAQ](#)

Criterion 4 of the qualification assessment criteria requires that your qualification(s) must be equivalent to an Australian:

- Bachelor degree for registered nurses and midwives (AQF7), and
- Diploma for enrolled nurses (AQF5).

The National Board uses the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) to benchmark international qualifications against Australian qualifications. The AQF is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework.

AHPRA assesses overseas applications on behalf of the National Board, which is responsible for the final decision on each application. As part of the assessment process, each overseas qualification is independently assessed to determine its educational level relative to the AQF framework.

The AQF level is an indication of the relative complexity, depth of achievement and autonomy required to show a qualification achievement, with AQF level 1 representing the lowest complexity and level 10 the highest.

We would like to emphasise that our assessment of international qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) remains consistent and has not changed as a result of the [new model](#).

What has changed is that the previous *Framework for the assessment of internationally qualified nurses and midwives for registration* took into account work experience when determining whether an applicant met qualification requirements for registration; the new model focuses on qualification(s) only and is aligned with the [National Law](#). The change was necessary after reviewing decisions from Australian tribunals, among other things, and supports robust and transparent decision making that is nationally consistent.

This means that, in the previous framework, an applicant with a Diploma of Higher Education assessed at AQF level 6 would be eligible to meet the requirements for registration as a nurse or a midwife if they had sufficient work experience. In the new model, that applicant may only be eligible for registration as a nurse or a midwife after completing a Board-approved [bridging program](#), unless they have a relevant subsequent qualification in nursing or midwifery at Bachelor level or higher that will enable them to meet the qualification requirements.

More information about the AQF and its alignment with international qualifications frameworks is available at the [Australian Qualifications Framework website](#).

General guidelines for AQF equivalence*:

Qualification	AQF level
Bachelor degree	AQF 7
Advanced Diploma, Diploma of Higher education, Associate Degree	AQF 6
Diploma, Hospital Certificate	AQF 5
Certificate IV	AQF 4

* Please note this is a guideline only and may differ for certain education institutions.

Bridging programs

The National Board has put in place a transitional arrangement whereby an applicant with a registered nursing qualification at AQF level 6, who meets all other requirements for registration, may be referred to a National Board-approved bridging program.

A bridging program is a program of study specific for IQNMs, offered by an education provider in Australia and approved by the National Board.

Bridging programs are only available to IQNMs to whom the National Board has given a letter of referral, after their application has been assessed and a decision made. These programs do not lead to a recognised qualification nor do they cover the full content of an approved program of study leading to registration.

Find out more about Board-approved programs of study under [Accreditation](#) on our website.

Once you complete the bridging program, you can re-apply to AHPRA and, if nothing else has changed since the original application, you are eligible for registration with the National Board.

Processing time for existing applications

If you are an IQNM who has already applied for registration and are wondering how long it will take to process your application, we regret that we are generally unable to give a reliable estimate of processing time. We will provide clearer timeframes individually where they are available.

This is because we assess and process each application on an individual basis. The unique circumstances of your application will determine how long we take to process it.

Your application may have significant processing delays if:

- your application form is incomplete, or
- you have not included with your application all supporting documents that we need as evidence of your qualifications.

We recognise that the new model for assessing IQNM qualifications has led to significant delays for applicants, particularly those whose applications were either incomplete on 7 October 2013, or were submitted between 7 October 2013 and 10 February 2014.

The reason for delay was that assessment of qualifications went on hold during the transitional period while the new model was being implemented. As all other requirements for registration remain unchanged in the new model, assessment of these requirements of the application still progressed during this time.

Assessment of qualifications resumed on 10 February 2014 and a dedicated national processing team is working hard to process outstanding applications.

It is important to note that the National Board and its delegates carefully review all documentation submitted before making a decision on each application to ensure fair and consistent assessment of applications under the new model. This means that the assessment process takes time.

The National Board and AHPRA recognise the difficulties experienced during this initial period of substantial change. We continue our work to improve the communications, timeliness, systems and processes relating to our implementation of the new assessment model of qualifications for IQNMs.

Our goal is to resume our previous target of 4-6 weeks as soon as possible to assess and determine applications from internationally qualified nurses or midwives that are both complete and straight forward. Applications that are complex and require a local board decision may take longer.

Processing time for new applications

Due to the backlog, you may experience delays in the processing of your application for registration. To avoid any unnecessary delay, it is important that you submit all relevant documentation required for the qualification assessment criteria (as published on our website) as well as for all other requirements for registration listed in the application form.

Reasons why you may experience delays with your application for registration

Below are some reasons why your application for registration may be delayed:

- We are processing a high volume of international applications.
- Information you supplied is incomplete or insufficient and we are waiting for you to provide the outstanding information.
- Your education provider and professional nursing and/or midwifery regulatory authority are taking time to provide the accreditation information direct to AHPRA.
- Your qualifications require an independent individual assessment to determine the appropriate AQF level.
- Your initial qualification leading to registration is not sufficient to meet the requirements of IQNM qualification criteria 1-8, and we need to assess any subsequent nursing or midwifery qualifications.

What we are doing to support you

Our dedicated national processing team is currently assessing all qualifications of IQNM applicants to make sure the model is consistently applied and to streamline processes.

The local board and the panel of experts are currently meeting on a fortnightly basis to speed up IQNM application processing.

Stages: Assessing the application of a registered nurse, a midwife or an enrolled nurse

To make sure the new model is robust and responsive there are several stages involved when assessing IQNM applications.

Stage 1: Review of general suitability requirements

A Registration Officer in the AHPRA office of the state or territory where you lodged your application (local office) reviews your application for documentary evidence required to assess all general suitability requirements for registration.

The Registration Officer will contact you if there is any outstanding documentation related to this part of the application review. Once this is complete, the Registration Officer transfers the application to the national processing team to review your qualification(s).

Note: If you have outstanding documentation that we need in order to review your application, we will send you a letter requesting the additional information. You have 30 days to provide the missing information.

If we do not receive this information within the required timeframe, we will take it that you have withdrawn your application and will close it.

If you anticipate any delay in sending us the additional information, you may request us for additional time through your assigned Registration Officer.

Stage 2: Review of qualifications

A Registration Officer in the national processing team reviews the documents provided for your qualification(s) against the IQNM qualification assessment criteria and prepares necessary assessment papers. The Registration Officer will contact you if there is any outstanding documentation related to the qualification review.

Note: As in Stage 1, if there is outstanding documentation that we need to review your application, we will request the additional information and give you 30 days to provide it. If we receive no response in this timeframe, we will close your application.

Registered nurse and midwife - AQF level 5 or below

If your qualification leading to registration falls at AQF level 5 or below, and you do not have subsequent nursing or midwifery related qualifications that we can consider, your application will go straight to the local board for a decision.

A qualification at AQF level 5 or lower does not meet the minimum requirements of qualification assessment criterion 4 for a registered nurse or a midwife.

Registered nurse and midwife - AQF level 6 and above, AQF 5 with subsequent qualifications

All other applications undergo a comprehensive review process, including:

- referral to the panel of experts for review, and
- recommendation on whether an applicant's qualifications are substantially equivalent to an Australian Bachelor degree.

Enrolled nurse

With effect from 1 July 2014, the minimum requirement for registration as an enrolled nurse is AQF level 5.

If your qualification leading to registration falls at AQF level 4 or below, and you do not have subsequent nursing related qualifications that we can consider, your application will go straight to the local board for a decision.

A qualification at AQF level 4 or lower does not meet the minimum requirements of qualification assessment criterion 4 for an enrolled nurse.

What happens when an application meets all requirements

Where an applicant clearly meets all registration requirements, the national processing team progresses the application to registration as quickly as possible.

Stage 3: Decision by local board

The local board decides on the outcome of all complex applications. It takes into account the review of all registration requirements and the recommendations of the panel of experts.

The local board will decide to:

- register you, or
- request more information, or
- propose to refuse your application on the basis that you have failed to meet one or more of the requirements for registration.

Stage 4: Communicating the outcome

Registration

If the outcome of your application is registration, we will:

- inform you by email if your residential address is in Australia, or
- send you a letter of eligibility for registration if you are currently residing overseas.

If you are residing overseas, you must provide final proof of identity when in Australia before we will register you with the National Board, and (if time has lapsed) you may also need to provide a new Certificate of Registration Status or Good Standing.

Proposal to refuse

If the outcome of your application is that you fail to meet any of the requirements for registration, the local board will send you a letter proposing to refuse your registration and including the reasons for this decision.

You have 30 days to make a submission to the local board in response to their decision. If you do not make a submission, your application for registration will be refused after 30 days and we will close your application.