



Board Update: English language skills registration standard

13 August 2010

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (the National Board) met on 12 August 2010 to discuss a number of issues raised by stakeholders about the Board's English Language Skills registration standard.

The National Board is aware that during the transition to national registration, a number of internationally qualified nurses have completed requirements for registration set down by previous nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities (NMRAs) before 1 July 2010. The Board is keen to reassure these applicants that the National Board will honour any written commitments made by NMRAs about requirements for registration. These applicants will now be eligible for registration with the National Board when they provide to AHPRA the relevant evidence from the appropriate NMRA and proof they have successfully completed the approved program of study.

The National Board has discussed the challenges facing the cohort of international students who have recently completed an entry to practice pre-registration program. The Board agreed that applicants who have successfully completed pre-registration nursing (registered nurse or enrolled nurse) or midwifery programs and whose visas are due to expire on or before 30 August 2010 will be entitled full registration, with conditions. The role of the Board is to protect the public and the conditions applied to the registration of these nurses are designed to ensure this.

Nurses or midwives who have conditions applied will still be required to meet the National Board's English language skills registration standard (IELTS 7 or equivalent), but will have until 31 May 2011 to do so and provide this evidence to the Board. Any nurse or midwife who is unable to meet this standard by 31 May 2011 will not have their registration renewed. They will be entitled to renew their registration when they can provide evidence of reaching the required standard.

Until the nurse or midwife meets the English language skills registration standard by 31 May 2011, they will have the following conditions on their registration. They will be required to:

- work under the supervision of a registered nurse or midwife
- advise their employer of the conditions imposed on their registration
- advise AHPRA of the name and contact details of their employer
- authorise their employer to notify AHPRA if the employer holds any concerns about the nurse or midwife's English language competence.

The National Board agreed that all other international applicants and students will be required to meet the Board's English language registration standard. Students completing their program of study at the end of the academic year will be required to provide evidence that they meet this Standard when they apply for registration.



The National Board and AHPRA have worked with representatives of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to assist international students who may not be able to sit the English language proficiency tests to meet the evidence requirements of the registration standard before their student visa expires. International students are reminded that they are still able to contact DIAC for information about their visa options to provide them with extra time to allow them to meet the formalities of registration.

The National Board is committed to providing accurate and consistent information about its registration standards and is concerned that information available on its website may not have provided the guidance required by applicants and other stakeholders. The National Board intends to review its English language registration standard to make it clear and ensure that all education providers and students understand the requirements of the standard. The requirement for IELTS academic level 7 or equivalent will not be reviewed.

The English language skills registration standard applies to everyone applying for registration as a nurse or midwife for the first time. It does not apply to students entering into a nursing or midwifery program of study. However, all students graduating from an approved program of study and then applying for registration as a nurse or midwife in Australia must meet the requirements of this standard.