

Fact sheet

Updated February 2020

Recency of practice

Introduction

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) undertakes functions as set by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law). The NMBA regulates the practice of nursing and midwifery in Australia, and one of its key roles is to protect the public. The NMBA does this by developing registration standards, professional codes, guidelines and standards for practice which together establish the requirements for the professional and safe practice of nurses and midwives in Australia.

The NMBA's [Registration standard: Recency of practice](#) requires nurses and midwives to have recent experience practising their profession and make sure their profession skills are current and up to date. For an individual who is registered as both a nurse and midwife, this applies to their skills and experience in both professions.

The following questions address common queries that you might have about the *Registration standard: Recency of practice*.

What is recency of practice?

Recency of practice means that a nurse or midwife has maintained an adequate connection with, and recent practice in the profession/s since qualifying for, or obtaining registration.

What do you mean by practice?

Practice means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a health practitioner in their profession. Practice in this context is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes using professional knowledge (working) in a direct non-clinical relationship with clients, working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, and any other roles that impact on the safe, effective delivery of services in the profession.

What do you mean by clinical practice?

Clinical practice is when the nurse or midwife is directly involved in providing direct clinical care or providing oversight of direct clinical care of patients, or is directly involved in clinical education of either pre-registration or post-registration students, including bridging programs.

Some examples of clinical practice roles are:

- a nurse working in a medical or surgical ward of a hospital
- a midwife working in a post natal care unit

What do you mean by non-clinical practice?

Non-clinical practice is where a nurse or midwife is not directly involved in providing direct clinical care or providing oversight of direct care of patients or is not directly involved in clinical education of either pre-registration or post-registration students, including bridging programs.

Some examples of non-clinical practice roles are:

- a nursing academic at a university undertaking nursing research
- a midwifery policy officer at a health department

What are practice hours?

The NMBA recognises practice hours if the evidence you provide demonstrates that you have practised nursing and/or midwifery, and that you:

- hold or have held current and valid registration with a recognised nursing or midwifery regulatory authority (either in Australia or overseas), or
- your role involves the application of nursing and/or midwifery knowledge and skills, or
- have carried out postgraduate education leading to an award or qualification that is relevant to the practice of nursing and/or midwifery.

What evidence will I need to demonstrate my recency of practice?

You need to provide evidence that you have practised for a period equivalent to a minimum of 450 hours, within the past five years. This applies for both clinical and non-clinical practice roles for nurses and midwives.

The types of evidence you can provide include:

- a service statement from your employer
- pay slips
- income statement for the year, and
- other documents showing the hours and dates that you worked.

The types of evidence that are accepted are at the discretion of the NMBA.

Do the hours I have worked need to be continuous?

No. The hours do not need to be continuous and can be accumulated over the past five years. As long as they are equivalent to a *minimum* of 450 hours, and the type of evidence you provide is accepted by the NMBA, it is sufficient evidence.

If I hold registration as both a nurse and midwife, do I need to meet the recency of practice requirements for both professions?

Yes. You need to declare annually when you renew your registration and, if audited, provide evidence showing that you have completed the equivalent hours in both nursing and midwifery within the past five years.

This means that you need to be able to demonstrate that you have practised for the equivalent of 450 hours in nursing **and** the equivalent of 450 hours in midwifery, over the past five years.

However, if you consider an aspect of your work could provide evidence for both nursing and midwifery practice, you may make a case for that. An example of this could be caring for women who have had a caesarean section, and their babies.

If I have an endorsement, do I need to meet the recency of practice requirements to keep my endorsement?

Yes. You need to maintain recency of practice relevant to the endorsement that you hold and declare annually that you have practised for the equivalent of 450 hours relevant to your endorsement over the past five years.

If you are audited you will need to be able to demonstrate recency of practice relevant to the endorsement that you hold. For example, a midwife with an endorsement for scheduled medicines will need to be able to show recent practice relevant to prescribing and administration of medicines and a nurse practitioner would be required to show recency of practice at the nurse practitioner (advanced practice nursing) level.

If I am working overseas as a registered nurse or midwife, are these hours acceptable evidence of recency of practice?

Yes. You need to provide the same level of evidence needed for practice completed in Australia.

For information on the evidence you need to provide to demonstrate that you have practised nursing and/or midwifery, see section above [‘What are practice hours?’](#).

What happens if I am unable to meet the recency of practice requirements?

If you have not worked sufficient hours over the past five years, you need to contact the AHPRA office in your state or territory, to get advice about your individual circumstances.

You may be asked to successfully complete:

- supervised practice as approved by the NMBA, or
- a re-entry to practice program approved by the NMBA.

What if I am employed at the time of application for renewal but do not meet the 450 hours recency of practice requirement?

You will need to declare at the time of registration renewal that you do not meet recency of practice. Your renewal will go into assessment and you may be requested to provide further information.

For further information, refer to the NMBA’s [Fact sheet: Re-entry to practice](#).

Do I need to keep evidence of my recency of practice?

Yes. You should make sure to keep evidence of your practice for at least five years, in case you are selected for audit by the NMBA.

Do I need to submit evidence of my recency of practice to the NMBA each year when I renew my registration?

No. When you renew your registration you are making a declaration to say that you have met the requirements. Evidence will only be requested if you are selected for audit. Remember to keep your evidence for at least five years in case you are selected for audit by the NMBA.

What if I have never practised since graduation and do not meet the recency of practice registration standard?

If you do not meet the recency of practice registration standard, you will need to contact your local AHPRA office, in your state and territory, to get further advice.

The scenario below provides an example of what may happen when the NMBA assesses an application for registration with respect to clinical and non-clinical recency of practice.

Please note that each individual application is considered on its merits and circumstances by the NMBA.

Nurses and midwives are reminded that as professionals they have a responsibility to ensure that they are safe and competent to practice. This is particularly important when nurses and midwives transition from non-clinical to clinical practice and/or change their scope of practice.

Scenario:

Gabby is a registered nurse with 10 years of clinical experience. She takes a role in a different area of the health sector, where she is not required to be registered. Gabby lets her registration lapse and is no longer on the register. After a period of time, Gabby’s employment circumstances change and she is now required to be registered again.

Potential outcomes:

1. If Gabby wants to apply for a nursing research role (**non-clinical**) and she has practised 450 hours within the past five years – will she meet the recency of practice registration standard?

Yes, Gabby will meet the standard if she has 450 hours of clinical or non-clinical practice in the past five years.

2. If Gabby wants to apply for a nursing **clinical role** and has practised 450 hours within the past five years – will she meet the recency of practice registration standard?

Yes, Gabby will meet the standard if she has 450 hours of clinical or non-clinical practice in the past five years.

Note: If Gabby has not recently practised in a clinical role, the NMBA would expect her to take steps to ensure she is educated, trained, competent and confident to practise in her new clinical role.

3. If Gabby wants to apply for a nursing research role (**non-clinical**) and has not practised 450 hours within the past five years – will she meet the recency of practice registration standard?

No. However, if Gabby is able to meet all of the NMBA's other mandatory registration standards she may be registered with provisional registration. Gabby would undertake a period of supervised practice in order to demonstrate competence in her chosen area of non-clinical practice. She would not be expected to undertake a clinical re-entry to practice program.

4. If Gabby wants to apply for a nursing **clinical role** and has not practised 450 hours within the past five years – will she meet the recency of practice registration standard?

No. However, if Gabby is able to meet all the NMBA's other mandatory registration standards she may be registered with provisional registration. Gabby would be required to undertake an NMBA-approved clinical re-entry to practice program or a period of supervised practice in order to demonstrate competence in clinical nursing and enable her to be eligible for general registration.

For more information

- [Registration standard: Recency of practice](#)
- [Re-entry to practice](#) information on the NMBA website
- [Decision-making framework for nursing and midwifery](#)
- [Audit](#) information on the NMBA website
- Visit www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au under *Contact us* to lodge an online enquiry form
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (in Australia) +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers)

Document control

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