

Fact sheet

June 2016

Registered nurse standards for 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.

Registration as a registered nurse (RN) requires you to meet the NMBA's mandatory registration standards. RNs are required to practise within the relevant NMBA approved standards, codes, guidelines and frameworks.

The following questions answer common queries about the *Registered nurse standards for practice* (2016) (the standards), which will replace the *National competency standards for the registered nurse* (2010) and are available on the [NMBA website](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au).

What are the standards for?

The *Registered nurse standards for practice* are the core practice standards that provide the framework for assessing RN practice. The standards:

- communicate to the general public the standards that can be expected of RNs
- determine the eligibility for registration of people who have completed an RN program of study in Australia
- determine the eligibility for registration of RNs who wish to practise in Australia but have completed courses elsewhere
- assess RNs who wish to return to work after being out of the workforce for a defined period, and
- assess RNs who need to show that they are competent to practise.

These standards replace the *National competency standards for the registered nurse* that were first published in 2006 by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) and adopted by the NMBA at the start of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) in 2010.

The standards have been developed following extensive literature and evidence reviews, gap analysis, a survey of RNs, interviews with RNs, observations of RNs in practice, and consultation with consumers and other stakeholders including education providers.

Why are the *National competency standards for the registered nurse* being replaced with the *Registered nurse standards for practice*?

Since the introduction of the National Scheme in 2010, the NMBA has established a systematic process to review, consult on and develop all standards, codes and guidelines in keeping with good regulatory practice.

The development of the *Registered nurse standards for practice* incorporated the first review since 2006 of the *National competency standards for the registered nurse*.

The standards now reflect current nursing practice in all contexts and are up to date, relevant and useful.

Why have you removed the term 'competency' from the standards?

Research suggested that confusion existed between the use of the term 'competency-based assessment' in the vocational education and training (VET) sector and use of the term 'competency' in other settings.

When do the new standards come into effect?

The *Registered nurse standards for practice* (2016) take effect on 1 June 2016.

However, to give RNs time to familiarise themselves with the new standards, the NMBA is releasing them early, on 1 February 2016.

During the transition period – 1 February 2016 to 31 May 2016 – the current *National competency standards for the registered nurse* apply.

I am an RN, what do I need to do when the standards come into effect?

You need to familiarise yourself with the standards before 1 June 2016.

The standards will be available on the NMBA website from 1 February 2016. During the transition period (1 February 2016 to 31 May 2016) we encourage you to reflect on your practice using the standards, and complete continuing professional development (CPD) activities that will help you identify and address areas of learning.

What are the main features of the new standards?

The *Registered nurse standards for practice*:

- comprise seven standards that are interconnected
 - each standard has criteria that specify how the standard is demonstrated
 - the criteria are to be interpreted in the context of an individual RN's practice
 - the criteria are not exhaustive and enable rather than limit the development of an individual RN's scope of practice
- are founded on person-centred and evidenced-based practice
- are for all RNs across **all** areas of practice
- are designed to be read in conjunction with NMBA standards, codes and guidelines, and
- the glossary is also important to understanding how key terms are used in the standards.

I work as an RN outside of an acute setting. Do the standards apply to me?

Yes. The standards are for all RNs across all areas and contexts of practice. The standards have been tested through observations of RN practice in a range of locations and settings. They are to be read in conjunction with NMBA standards, codes and guidelines available on the NMBA website.

I work in a specialty area of nursing which has its own specialty standards. Do I still have to use the *Registered nurse standards for practice*?

Yes. The standards are for all RNs and are the core standards expected of an RN regardless of their context of practice. Specialty standards do not replace and should be consistent with the *Registered nurse standards for practice*.

I have submitted an application for registration which is currently being assessed by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). Will the standards affect my application?

If you have completed an [NMBA-approved program of study](#), assessment of your application will not be affected by the standards.

I am completing an approved program of study leading to registration as an RN. Will the standards affect me applying for registration?

If you are enrolled in an NMBA-approved program of study leading to registration as an RN and are due to graduate after 1 June 2016, the standards will not affect you applying for registration.

I enrolled in an NMBA-approved program of study that leads to registration as an RN. Will the course still be recognised after the standards are implemented?

Yes. Your program of study is still recognised if you are enrolled in an NMBA-approved program of study leading to registration as an RN and are due to graduate after 1 June 2016.

Students will not be disadvantaged in any way by the introduction of the standards. The NMBA encourages you to discuss your individual circumstances with your education provider.

Do the standards cover what is expected of an RN in relation to accountability, delegation and supervision?

Yes. The standards clearly indicate the standard of practice expected of an RN in relation to accountability, delegation and supervision. It is essential that the standards, and the definitions taken from the glossary in the standards as provided below, are read in conjunction with NMBA standards, codes and guidelines.

The following definitions are taken from the glossary of the *Registered nurse standards for practice*. These definitions relate to the use of these terms in the standards.

Accountability means that nurses answer to the people in their care, the nursing regulatory authority, their employers and the public. Nurses are accountable for their decisions, actions, behaviours and the responsibilities that are inherent in their nursing roles including documentation. Accountability cannot be delegated. The registered nurse who delegates activities to be undertaken by another person remains accountable for the decision to delegate, for monitoring the level of performance by the other person, and for evaluating the outcomes of what has been delegated.

Delegation is the relationship that exists when an RN delegates aspects of their nursing practice to another person such as an enrolled nurse, a student nurse or a person who is not a nurse. Delegations are made to meet peoples' needs and to enable access to health care services, that is, the right person is available at the right time to provide the right service. The RN who is delegating retains accountability for the decision to delegate. They are also accountable for monitoring of the communication of the delegation to the relevant persons and for the practice outcomes. Both parties share the responsibility of making the delegation decision, which includes assessment of the risks and capabilities. In some instances delegation may be preceded by teaching and competence assessment.

Enrolled nurse is a person who provides nursing care under the direct or indirect supervision of an RN. They have completed the prescribed education preparation, and demonstrate competence to practise under the National Law as an enrolled nurse in Australia. Enrolled nurses are accountable for their own practice and remain responsible to an RN for the delegated care.

Supervision includes managerial supervision, professional supervision and clinically focused supervision.

For more information

- [Registered nurse standards for practice](#)
- [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)