

## Fact sheet

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October 2016

### Advanced nursing practice and specialty areas within nursing

#### Speciality areas within nursing

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) undertook research in 2014 into which explored the need for regulation of speciality areas within nursing.

Findings from the *Specialist registration for the nursing profession* project identified that:

- a variety of mechanisms are employed internationally to recognise and regulate speciality practice, including licensure, endorsement, credentialing, validation and certification;
- formally regulating speciality groups for purposes of registration did not reduce risk to the public; and
- there was a lack of significant evidence that regulation of speciality practice improves patient/client outcomes.

The project further identified that organisations representing speciality nursing groups in Australia have developed processes for recognising speciality practice. This provides a sufficient means of acknowledging specialist nursing practice in Australia, and may be recognised by employers and the health industry at large.

There are also guidelines released by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (AHWMC), titled [Approval of specialties under section 13 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act, Guidance for National Board submissions to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council](#).

The NMBA has therefore concluded that current systems in Australia provide an appropriate level of public protection, whilst ensuring a dynamic, flexible and responsive workforce.

#### Advanced nursing practice

The NMBA requires applicants for endorsement as a nurse practitioner to have experience at an advanced nursing practice level. The following definitions have been agreed to by the NMBA for regulatory purposes:

**Advanced nursing practice (ANP):** ANP is a continuum along which nurses develop their professional knowledge, clinical reasoning and judgement, skills and behaviours to higher levels of capability (that is recognisable). Nurses practising at an advanced level incorporate professional leadership, education and research into their clinically based practice. Their practice is effective and safe. They work within a generalist or specialist context and they are responsible and accountable in managing people who have complex health care requirements.

Advanced nursing practice is a level of practice and not a role. It is acknowledged that advanced nursing practice is specific to the individual within their context of practice (enrolled nurse, registered nurse or nurse practitioner).

**Advanced practice nursing (APN):** For the purpose of regulation the following statement will be applied for advanced practice nursing as it relates to the Nurse Practitioner in the Australian context. In Australia advanced practice nursing as a nurse practitioner can be delineated from other areas of nursing practice by the additional legislative functions and regulatory requirements of the nurse practitioner endorsement. These requirements include a prescribed educational level, a specified advanced nursing practice experience; and continuing professional development.

These definitions are used by the NMBA to make decisions about applicants for endorsement as a nurse practitioner and information about requirements for ongoing endorsement as nurse practitioner. The NMBA acknowledges that these definitions may differ from a professional definition and that ongoing research by the nursing profession will further shape these definitions.

Advanced practice nursing should not be confused with the term 'practice nurse' that is used colloquially to describe nurses working in the general practice setting.

#### For more information

- [Registration standard: Endorsement as nurse practitioner](#)
- [Guidelines for nurses applying for endorsement as a nurse practitioner](#)
- [Fact sheet: Scope of practice of nurse practitioners](#)
- [Nurse practitioner standards for practice](#)
- Visit [www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au) under *Contact us* to lodge an online enquiry form
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers)

#### Document control

<b>Approved by</b>	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
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<b>Date commenced</b>	October 2016
<b>Notes</b>	This document contains information previously contained within the following retired documents – <i>Position statement: Specialist recognition and the nursing profession</i> and <i>Fact Sheet: Advanced practice nursing</i>