

## Re-entry to practice policy

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October 2013

### Who this policy applies to

The *Re-entry to practice policy* sets out the requirements for individuals who previously held registration as a nurse and/or a midwife in Australia, including those who:

- are seeking general registration following a lapse in practice of five or more years
- have held non-practising registration for five or more years, and are seeking general registration
- have a sole qualification in mental health nursing or paediatric nursing or disability nursing and no longer hold registration or have held non practising registration for five or more years.

This policy does *not* apply to:

- recent graduates from Board-approved entry to practice nursing or midwifery programs in Australia applying for registration for the first time, or
- persons holding student registration.

### About the re-entry to practice policy

The role of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (National Board or NMBA) is to protect the public by making sure that a person who is registered is safe and competent to practise.

A key requirement to practice is that the nurse and/or midwife is able to demonstrate that they meet Board-approved national competency standards for the enrolled nurse or registered nurse or registered midwife. All applications for registration must demonstrate the relevant National Board competency standards have been met.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the National Board [registration standards](#), in particular, the recency of practice and continuing professional development registration standards for nurses and midwives.

The National Board-approved *Recency of practice registration standard* annually applies to nurses and midwives when they apply to renew registration. Previously registered nurses and/or midwives in Australia who have not practised in the profession for a period of five or more years are required to undergo an individual assessment of their application.

This assessment is based upon the previously registered nurse and/or midwives:

- qualifications (includes both undergraduate and postgraduate nursing and/or midwifery studies)
- professional practice history, and
- length of time away from practising in the profession/s.

The outcome of this assessment determines whether the person is required to complete one of three re-entry pathways:

1. a Board-approved period of supervised practice (**Pathway 1**)
2. a Board-approved re-entry to practice program (**Pathway 2**), or
3. required studies in a re-entry to practice pathway within a Board-approved entry to practice program of study leading to initial registration, as identified by a Board-approved education provider – following recognition of the individual's prior learning (**Pathway 3**).

## Policy statements

### Requirements to meet the *Recency of practice registration standard*

1. To maintain competence, nurses and/or midwives must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the National Board that they have undertaken satisfactory professional practice, as defined in (2) below, in their respective nursing and/or midwifery profession within the preceding five years.
2. Nurses and midwives will fulfill the recency of practice requirements if they can demonstrate one or more of the following:
  - a. practice in their profession within the past five years for a minimum of 450 hours
  - b. successful completion of a Board-approved program or assessment, or
  - c. successful completion of a supervised practice experience approved by the National Board.
3. Practice hours are recognised if the nurse and/or midwife gives evidence to show:
  - the nurse and/or midwife held valid registration with a nursing or midwifery regulatory authority in the jurisdiction (Australian or overseas) when the hours were worked
  - the role involved application of nursing and/or midwifery knowledge and skills, or
  - the time was spent doing postgraduate education leading to an award or qualification that is relevant to the practice of nursing and/or midwifery.

### Requirements for applicants seeking general registration as a registered nurse, enrolled nurse or registered midwife

The National Board will assess on an individual basis, and against National Board registration standards, the application for registration by a nurse and/or a midwife who no longer holds registration or holds non practising registration for more than five years in Australia.

This assessment is based upon the previously registered nurse and/or midwife's:

- qualifications – this includes undergraduate and postgraduate nursing and/or midwifery studies
- professional practice history, and
- length of time away from practising in the profession.

The National Board's assessment will determine if the individual is required to demonstrate successful completion of:

1. a Board-approved period of supervised practice
2. a Board-approved re-entry to practice program. Re-entry pathways 1 and 2 are for an individual who has not practised as a nurse or midwife for a period of time between 5 - 10 years.
3. a Board-approved entry to practice program of study leading to initial registration (pathway 3). This re-entry pathway is for an individual who has not practised as a nurse and/or midwife for 10 or more years.

The applicant is required to apply directly to a Board-approved education provider for:

- recognition of prior learning<sup>1</sup>, and
- identification of the required studies in an accredited re-entry to practice pathway within a Board-approved entry to practice program of study leading to registration.

### **Specific requirements for previously registered nurses who hold a sole qualification in mental health nursing or paediatric nursing or disability nursing**

The National Board will assess on an individual basis, and against National Board registration standards, the application for registration by a person who:

- was registered on the basis of a sole qualification in mental health nursing or paediatric nursing or disability nursing, and
- no longer holds registration or holds non practising registration for more than five years in Australia.

This assessment is based upon the previously registered nurse's:

- qualifications –includes undergraduate and postgraduate nursing studies
- professional practice history, and
- length of time away from practising the profession – to determine the most appropriate approach to demonstrate competence and be eligible for registration.

Based on assessment, the following are re-entry pathways for an individual who has not practised as a nurse in the area of the mental health nursing or paediatric nursing or disability nursing for a **period of time between 5 - 10 years**.

The individual will be required to demonstrate successful completion of a:

1. a Board-approved period of supervised practice in mental health nursing or paediatric nursing or disability nursing, or
2. a Board-approved re-entry to practice program that includes an accredited pathway in the area of the mental health nursing or paediatric nursing or disability nursing.

Upon successful completion of the National Board-approved period of supervised practice or re-entry to practice program of study that includes an accredited pathway in the area of the mental health nursing or paediatric nursing or disability nursing, the nurse will be eligible for registration to practise in mental health or paediatric or disability nursing.

Upon registration with the National Board, a notation will be applied to the nurse's registration stating: *'solely qualified in the area of mental health nursing / paediatric nursing / disability nursing'*.

Based on assessment, the following re-entry pathway is for an individual who has not practised as a nurse in the area of the mental health nursing or paediatric nursing or disability nursing for a **period of time of 10 or more years**.

The individual will be required to demonstrate successful completion of:

**a Board approved entry to practice program of study leading to general registration - following making an application directly to the education provider for recognition of prior learning\*, and identification of the required studies within a Board-approved entry to practice program of study. Successful completion of a program of study approved by the National Board**

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<sup>1</sup> The National Board anticipates that the Board-approved education provider will review and assess the background and experience of the applicant in relation to recognition of prior learning, in accordance with recognised best practice education standards.

The program may either be:

- a) a Board-approved re-entry to practice program accredited by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) for registration as a nurse or midwife, or
- b) completion of all, or part, of a nursing or midwifery Board-approved entry to practice program of study accredited by ANMAC that leads to registration as a nurse or midwife.<sup>2</sup>

These Board approved-programs of study are for general registration as a nurse or midwife. Where the programs are used as a pathway for re-entry to practice for persons solely qualified in mental health nursing or paediatric nursing or disability nursing, the pathway must be accredited by ANMAC and approved by the National Board.

### Provisional registration requirements

An individual enrolled in a Board-approved re-entry to practice program, or a nursing or midwifery entry to practice program of study leading to registration, will require provisional registration before starting, and during, the relevant program.

An individual doing a Board-approved period of supervised practice will require provisional registration before starting, and during, the period of supervised practice.

### Requirements for applicants holding non-practising registration

An individual who holds non-practising registration is required to hold provisional registration before starting:

- a Board-approved re-entry to practice program
- a nursing or midwifery entry to practice program of study leading to registration, or
- a period of Board-approved supervised practice.

The National Law states that a nurse and/or midwife who holds non-practising registration in a profession *must not practise* the profession.

### Review of this policy

This policy takes effect on <date> and will be due for National Board review within three years of operation.

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<sup>2</sup> A Board-approved education provider is responsible to determine the extent of recognition of prior learning to grant the applicant, according to recognised best practice standards.

## Background information related to this policy

From 1 July 2010, the [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia](#) (National Board or NMBA) has been responsible for the regulation of nurses, midwives and students of nursing and midwifery under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act* as in force in each state and territory ([the National Law](#)).

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council ([ANMAC](#)) is an independent accreditation authority for nursing and midwifery and undertakes the accreditation function in accordance with the National Law. ANMAC is responsible for accrediting the nursing and midwifery entry and re-entry to programs of study that when approved by the National Board lead to registration [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia - Approved Programs of Study](#).

*Section 52 Eligibility for general registration* in the National Law states:

- (1) *An individual is eligible for general registration in a health profession if—*
  - (a) *the individual is qualified for general registration in the health profession; and*
  - (b) *the individual has successfully completed—*
  - (c) *any period of supervised practice in the health profession required by an approved registration standard for the health profession; or*
  - (d) *any examination or assessment required by an approved registration standard for the health*
  - (e) *profession to assess the individual's ability to competently and safely practise the profession; and*
  - (f) *the individual is a suitable person to hold general registration in the health profession; and*
  - (g) *the individual is not disqualified under this Law or a law of a co-regulatory jurisdiction from applying for registration, or being registered, in the health profession; and*
  - (h) *the individual meets any other requirements for registration stated in an approved registration standard for the health profession.*
- (2) *Without limiting subsection (1), the National Board established for the health profession may decide the individual is eligible for general registration in the profession by imposing conditions on the registration under section 83.*

## National Board development of registration standards

Section 38 of the [National Law](#) empowers the National Board to develop, and recommend to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (AHWMC), registration standards relevant to the:

- eligibility of individuals for registration and endorsement in the nursing and midwifery professions, or
- suitability of individuals to competently and safely practise in the profession.

The National Board has previously developed and consulted on a range of registration standards that have now been approved by the AHWMC. Approved registration standards are available under [Registration standards](#) on the National Board website.

## Definitions

**ANMAC** is the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council [www.anmac.org.au](http://www.anmac.org.au)

**Direct supervision** means the supervisor is actually present and personally observes, works with, guides and directs the individual being supervised.

**Entry to practice pre-registration program** means a Board-approved program of study accredited by ANMAC that enables the student to meet the National Board's educational requirement for registration or enrolment.

**Re-entry program** means a Board-approved program of study accredited by ANMAC that prepares nurses and midwives for re-entry to nursing and/or midwifery, after a lapse in practice and removal from the [national register](#) for a period exceeding the requirement in the Recency of practice registration standard. A re-entry program contains theoretical and clinical experience components.

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

**Recent graduate** means an individual applying for registration for the first time. A recent graduate's qualification for registration should have been awarded not more than two years prior to the date of application for registration.

**Non practising registration** is a type of registration available to nurse and/or midwives who have previously held general registration in a profession but who do not wish to practise the profession during the registration period. The National Law states that a nurse and/or midwife who holds non-practising registration in a profession *must not practise* the profession.

**Recognition of prior learning** means a process by which the individual's formal and informal learning is assessed to determine the extent to which the individual has achieved required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards for entry to, and/or partial or total completion of a qualification.

**Supervised practice** means a period of practice under supervision<sup>3</sup> equivalent to the minimum amount of practice required to demonstrate recency of practice (minimum of 450 hours).

Where supervised practice is required, it is the responsibility of the applicant to arrange placement that meets National Board requirements identified in the supervised practice guidelines.

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<sup>3</sup> Levels of supervision are described in the *Supervision Guidelines for nursing and midwifery* published at [www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au)

Supervised practice must take place in a health setting that allows clinical experience placements for education providers delivering Board-approved programs of study leading to registration as a nurse and/or midwife.

## References

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Recency of Practice Registration Standard (2010)

National competency standards for the registered nurse (2006)

National competency standards for the midwife (2006)

National competency standards for the enrolled nurse (2002)

National competency standards for the nurse practitioner (2006)

National framework for the development of decision-making tools for nursing and midwifery practice (2007)