



Demonstrating Competence:

Information for Nurses and Midwives Returning to Practice

PURPOSE

This information is intended to provide guidance to nurses and midwives seeking registration / enrolment / authorisation in the Northern Territory but who have not practiced as a nurse or midwife within the last five years.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

This information **MUST** be read in conjunction with the *Entitlement to Registration/ Enrolment/Authorisation Policy*, available at www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards.

THE NURSING AND MIDWIFERY BOARD OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of the Northern Territory (the Board) is the nurse and midwife regulatory authority for the Northern Territory, Australia. In order to practice in the Northern Territory, nurses and midwives must be registered with the Board and hold a current license to practice.

In order to be entitled to registration, an applicant must meet all the requirements of section 22 of the *Health Practitioners Act 2004*, which states that:

- (1) *An applicant is entitled to be registered or enrolled in the category of registration or enrolment to which the application relates if the relevant Board is satisfied that the applicant –*
- (a) *is eligible to apply for the category of registration or enrolment;*
 - (b) *is competent to practise in the category;*
 - (c) *has sufficient physical and mental capacity to practise in the category;*
 - (d) *has an adequate command of the English language;*
 - (e) *has adequate professional indemnity arrangements in place; and*
 - (f) *is of good character.*
- (2) *For the purposes of subsection (1)(b), the relevant Board may take into account evidence of an applicant's recent practice or continued competence in the category of health care practice in addition to anything else the Board thinks fit."*

DEMONSTRATING CONTINUED COMPETENCE TO PRACTISE

The Board has determined that if a person has not practised as a nurse or midwife within the last five years or more, they must provide evidence of their entitlement to registration by demonstrating competence to practice in contemporary clinical settings. The Board has made this determination in order to ensure that the legislative obligation imposed by section 22(1)(b) is met and the public is protected.

The Board values the knowledge, experience and skills of nurses and midwives who, for whatever reason, have not practiced the profession for a period of time

Re-entry to nursing and midwifery is supported by the Board by the following pathways to safe re-entry to nursing and midwifery practice:

[NB: All applications are considered by the Board on individual merit.]

For registered nurses who have not practiced in the last five to ten years

Nurses who have been out of practice between five and ten years may be eligible for conditional registration to participate in the Board accredited Re-Entry to Nursing Program, delivered by the Department of Health and Families at the public hospitals in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs. The program is of three months duration and is designed to support nurses re-entering the profession to refresh their theoretical knowledge of contemporary nursing care, and provides the opportunity for structured, supported practice in the clinical setting.

Applicants successfully completing a Board accredited re-entry program will be eligible to apply for full registration.

For enrolled nurses who have not practiced in the last five to ten years

In the Northern Territory, there is no Board accredited re-entry to enrolled nursing course. Enrolled nurses who have been out of practice for between five and ten years will be required to provide evidence of continuing competence via one of the following pathways:

- The successful completion of Re-Entry to Nursing Program approved by a nursing and midwifery Board of another Australian or New Zealand jurisdiction;
- Evidence of a recent competency assessment against the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Councils (ANMC) *Competency Standards for the Enrolled Nurse*; or
- The Board may also consider, in certain circumstances, granting conditional registration to an applicant so that they may complete a period of supervised practice. The terms and conditions of the supervised practice period would be determined by the Board, on a case by case basis.

Applicants successfully demonstrating continuing competence to practice as an enrolled nurse will be eligible to apply for full enrolment.

For midwives, or registered nurses with authorisation to practice as a midwife, who have not practiced as a midwife in the last five to ten years

In the Northern Territory, there is no Board accredited re-entry to midwifery course. Midwives, or registered nurses with authorisation to practice midwifery, who have not practiced midwifery in the last five to ten years will be required to provide evidence of continuing competence via one of the following pathways:

- The successful completion of Re-Entry to Midwifery Program approved by a nursing and midwifery Board of another Australian or New Zealand jurisdiction;
- Evidence of a recent competency assessment against the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Councils (ANMC) *Competency Standards for the Midwife*; or
- The Board may also consider, in certain circumstances, granting conditional registration to an applicant so that they may complete a period of supervised practice. The terms and conditions of the supervised practice period would be determined by the Board, on a case by case basis.

Applicants successfully demonstrating continuing competence to practice as a midwife will be eligible to apply for full registration as a midwife or authorisation to practice midwifery.

For nurses and midwives who have not practiced for ten years or more

Nursing and midwifery are dynamic professions, and the health care sector is rapidly changing in response to technological advances and economic imperatives. For many nurses and midwives returning to practice after ten years or more, the changes to contemporary roles and responsibilities present a dramatic departure from their previous experiences. For this reason, the Board requires those nurses and midwives who have not practiced within the last ten years are required to renew their entry to practice qualifications. Advanced standing from previous qualifications or prior experience will be a matter for negotiation between the intending student and the educational service provider.

DETERMINATION OF APPLICATIONS

All applications from nurses and midwives seeking to return to practice are considered on their individual merits. The following are factors taken into consideration by the Board when assessing the eligibility of applicants and the most appropriate pathway for re-entry:

- The year the applicant completed their initial nursing qualification;
- How long the applicant worked as a nurse prior to leaving the profession (consolidation period);
- The employment status during the consolidation time, i.e. work full time, part time, casual;
- The breadth of experience while employed as a nurse e.g. where did they work, how long, types of positions held;
- How long since they have been employed as a nurse i.e. how long have they been “out of practise”;
- What type of employment (if any) they have been engaged in since leaving the profession; and
- What type of education they have been engaged in since leaving the profession, if any.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Royal College of Nursing Australia (RCNA) administers a range of scholarships on behalf of the Australian Government. Scholarships under this Scheme are available to registered and enrolled nurses from rural and remote areas, whose registration has lapsed or who are unable to re-enter the nursing workforce as they have not practised in recent years. The scholarships are designed to support nurses from rural and remote areas in participating in a re-entry course. For further information, contact the RCNA at www.rcna.org.au or on free call 1800 061 660.

CONTACTS

To learn more about the requirements of registration / enrolment / authorisation in the Northern Territory, or the role and function of the Nursing and Midwifery Board, please visit the Board's website at www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards or contact the Board at:

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