

Fact sheet

1 October 2018

Transition to a new assessment model for internationally qualified nurses and midwives

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 standards, codes and guidelines which together establish the requirements for the professional and safe practice of nurses and midwives in Australia.

As part of its public protection role, the NMBA in partnership with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) is responsible for assessing registration applications from internationally qualified nurses and midwives (IQNMs) to ensure they are suitably trained and qualified for registration in Australia.

Background

Prior to the commencement of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in 2010, the assessment of IQNMs was undertaken by the state and territory boards. In 2010, AHPRA developed a national model for the assessment for IQNMs.

In 2013, legal advice provided to the NMBA confirmed that under the National Law, the NMBA could only consider the qualifications of an individual applying for registration and not their professional experience. In response to this advice, AHPRA and the NMBA developed an interim model of assessment for IQNMs which has been in place since 2014. The interim model is based on eight qualification assessment criteria and has resulted in a more equitable and consistent assessment of IQNM applications.

Transition to a new model of assessment for IQNMs

In 2019, the NMBA is moving to a more permanent approach in the assessment of IQNMs. Changes under the new model will include reducing the current eight assessment criteria to three criteria.

This change will streamline the assessment process; however, the outcomes from assessments will remain the same as under the current eight criteria.

In the second half of 2019, the NMBA will also transition to an outcomes-based assessment (OBA) for IQNMs who hold relevant but not substantially equivalent qualifications (and who meet the mandatory registration standards), replacing the current need for bridging programs for these applicants.

The NMBA undertook an extensive research project to explore the factors and requirements to establish an OBA which made recommendations that:

- the overall assessment process includes both a cognitive and behavioural component
- the cognitive assessment must be passed before the behavioural component is attempted, and
- an orientation program is established to orientate nurses and midwives to working in the Australian healthcare context. (Based on this recommendation, the NMBA will establish an orientation program for **all** IQNMs applying for registration in Australia.)

The following sections answer common queries about the new model of assessment for IQNMs applying for registration in Australia.

When will the new model of assessment for IQNMs commence?

The NMBA will continue to assess applications against the current eight criteria until early 2019 when revised assessment criteria will take effect.

IQNM applicants who hold relevant but not substantially equivalent qualifications (and who meet the mandatory registration standards), will continue to be referred to bridging programs until the outcomes-based assessment pathway commences in the second half of 2019.

Why is the NMBA reducing the number of assessment criteria?

Extensive research by AHPRA and the NMBA has resulted in the eight qualification assessment criteria in the current model of assessment of IQNMs being revised to three criteria. This change will streamline the assessment process; however, the outcomes from assessments will remain the same as under the current criteria.

The evidentiary requirements for the revised criteria will be published on the NMBA website in 2019. The revised assessment criteria will apply to all IQNMs seeking registration as a nurse and/or midwife in Australia.

Do I still need to meet the NMBA's mandatory registration standards?

Yes. All IQNM applicants will need to provide evidence of meeting the NMBA registration standards.

Will all IQNMs need to complete the orientation program?

Yes. There are three parts to the orientation program.

Part one will be an online assessment to introduce IQNMs to Australia and the Australian healthcare system.

Part two will cover the diversity of the Australian culture and will be completed once registered with the NMBA and will be a condition of your registration until it is completed.

Part three will be provided by the IQNM's employer, based on NMBA guidelines.

Will all IQNMs have to go through the outcomes-based assessment?

No. All IQNMs will have their qualifications assessed and only IQNMs qualifications that don't meet all the required assessment criteria will be directed to the outcomes-based assessment pathway. Some IQNMs may need to complete an NMBA approved program of study if they do not hold a relevant qualification (under section 53 of the National Law).

What will be the costs of the new outcomes-based assessment?

Costs are yet to be determined and information will be available on the NMBA website as soon as possible.

What will the cognitive assessment in the outcomes-based assessment involve?

The cognitive assessment will be a computer-based multiple choice questionnaire.

What will the behavioural assessment in the outcomes-based assessment involve?

The behavioural assessment will be in the form of an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE). The OSCE has been developed to assess the behavioural skills of an IQNM that reflect the knowledge and skills of an entry level Australian nurse or midwife.

Will there still be bridging programs available for IQNMs?

This pathway to registration will continue until the new OBA assessment commences. Information regarding the commencement date of the new model will be provided on the NMBA website soon.

For more information

- View the [information for internationally qualified nurses and midwives](#) on the NMBA website
- View the [NMBA registration standards](#)
- 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)