Fact sheet

Date 24 March 2020

COVID - 19

Employment of students in NMBA-approved midwifery programs of study

Introduction
The Midwifery 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 midwifery 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.

COVID-19
As demands on healthcare resources escalate, students in NMBA-approved programs of study may be required to work as employed students of midwifery to support the COVID-19 response.

The NMBA knows it is critical at this time to be flexible in our approach to the provision of care, although safety of both the workforce and the public remains our first priority.

By working together, we can support each other to increase the workforce supply in a safe way. The NMBA will be relying on health services, health leaders, registered health practitioners, supervisors and others to support us to maintain public safety in instances where individuals, from outside or from different parts of the health service, are needed to support the workforce at this time. In many instances, how these individuals’ knowledge and skills are utilised will be dependent on context.

Who is this fact sheet for?
This fact sheet applies to all health service employers, education providers, professional associations and students in NMBA-approved midwifery programs.

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information on the employment of student midwives and the difference between this and working as an Assistant in Midwifery or Personal Care Worker.

Due to the evolving nature of COVID-19, the NMBA acknowledge that advice and management plans for the COVID-19 response may change quickly. Users of this fact sheet are advised to review the NMBA website regularly for updated information and current advice.

Students in NMBA-approved programs of nursing study should refer to the Fact sheet: COVID-19 Employment of students enrolled in NMBA approved nursing programs of study.

Employment of midwifery students
Some states and territories have established employment models specifically for students in NMBA-approved midwifery programs of study. These employment models are separate to student professional practice experience and operate in addition to Assistant in Midwifery (AIM) and Personal Care Worker (PCW) roles.
Where midwifery students in NMBA-approved programs of study are engaged in an employed student role, it is important that they are appropriately employed, supervised and that they work within the scope of their education and competence. In some states and territories, the employment of students is addressed in the relevant Enterprise Agreement (EA) or Award (however titled). Employers need to ensure they have considered the requirements of the relevant EA prior to employing students.

**Role of employed students**

The role of the employed student is to provide delegated clinical midwifery care to assist midwifery teams to provide safe, high quality care.

Employed students must always work under the delegation and supervision of a midwife, in addition to their employing organisations defined scope of practice and individual scope of practice.

Employed midwifery students may accept a delegated midwifery activity only if it is within their level of education preparation and competence. The midwife delegator should only delegate clinical midwifery care to an employed student after performing an assessment of their competence to do so, in line with the NMBA’s *Decision-making framework for nursing and midwifery*.

**Can students work as an assistant in midwifery or a personal care worker?**

Many states and territories have implemented Assistant in Midwifery (AIM) roles and continue to employ personal care workers (PCW) in healthcare settings. Midwifery students may be employed in these roles however these employment opportunities are also available to those with vocational qualifications as determined by an employer.

Working as an AIM or a PCW is different to being employed as a student midwife. Students enrolled in NMMA-approved midwifery programs of study can work as an AIM or PCW at any time subject to usual employment arrangements.

Students enrolled in midwifery programs who work as an AIM or PCW are reminded they must work in accordance with their position description.

**Which midwifery students can be employed?**

Only students who are currently enrolled in an NMBA-approved midwifery program of study and registered as a student with the NMBA can be employed as a student midwife as part of the COVID-19 response.

NMBA-approved midwifery programs of study include:

- Bachelor of midwifery (direct entry)
- Bachelor of nursing/Bachelor of midwifery (double degree)
- Diploma of midwifery (postgraduate) and
- Master of midwifery program (entry to practise).

Students should be required to provide evidence of successful completion of the first, second or third year of their relevant program.

Students enrolled in NMBA-approved midwifery programs and employed as a student midwife in response to COVID-19 are reminded they must work in accordance with their position description at all times.

**Bachelor of midwifery (direct entry) students**

The Bachelor of midwifery (direct entry) program is a three-year program of study. Students enrolled in the second and third year of an NMBA-approved direct entry midwifery program are likely to have the level of skill and competence to work as employed student midwives and are considered appropriate to employ as employed students.

**Bachelor of nursing/Bachelor of midwifery (double degree) students**

The Bachelor of nursing/Bachelor of midwifery (double degree) is a four-year program of study. Students enrolled in the second, third and fourth year of an NMBA-approved double degree program are likely to
have the level of skill and competence to work as employed student midwives and are considered appropriate to employ as employed students.

**Diploma of midwifery and Master of midwifery students**

The Diploma of midwifery and Master of midwifery (entry to practice) programs are postgraduate programs designed for students who have successfully completed an NMBA-approved program of nursing study. These students may or may not have applied for general nursing registration with the NMBA or consolidated their nursing practice in the acute care setting.

Midwifery students who are already registered with the NMBA as a Registered nurse are encouraged to seek/continue employment as a Registered nurse in response to COVID-19. They may however, also be employed as a student midwife subject to the routine provisions contained in this fact sheet.

Diploma of midwifery and Master of midwifery (entry to practice) students who do not hold general registration as a registered nurse are encouraged to apply for general registration as a Registered nurse. Alternatively, they may be employed as a student midwife subject to the routine provisions contained in this fact sheet.

**Where can employed student midwives work?**

The NMBA recommends that there should be clear organisational policies and procedures in place to support the employment of midwife students and ensure appropriate supervision is provided.

The NMBA does not recommend students in NMBA-approved midwifery programs be employed in facilities where access to supervision may be limited.

Employed midwifery students must not practise outside of the maternity context.

**Who do I need to contact if I want to employ students?**

Further advice will be provided with respect to this.

**I am a midwife and have employed students in my organisation, how do I know what midwifery activities they can do?**

The NMBA’s *Decision-making framework for nursing and midwifery* will assist midwives on how to approach and delegate aspects of care to employed students.

Only midwives can delegate activities to employed midwifery students. Employed midwifery students may accept a delegated midwifery activity only if it is within their level of education preparation and competence.

The midwife delegator should only delegate clinical midwifery care to an employed student after performing an assessment of their competence to do so, in line with the NMBA’s *Decision-making framework for midwifery and midwifery*.

To support the provision of safe care there should be a clear position description for the employed midwifery student that addresses essential knowledge and skills required to be an employed student and the care activities that may be delegated to the student.

**If I work as an employed student will this count towards clinical placement hours?**

The NMBA will work with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) to determine if work as an employed student can be included in meeting clinical placement hours.

**When will this fact sheet cease to operate?**

This fact sheet will cease to operate on 31 December 2020 unless otherwise specified.

**Document control**

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