

5 August 2010

Professor Patrick Crookes  
Chair, Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery  
Head, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Indigenous Health  
Dean, Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences  
University of Wollongong  
Northfields Avenue  
WOLLONGONG NSW 2522

Dear Professor Crookes,

### **English Language Skills Registration Standard**

It has come to the attention of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (the Board) that there are some concerns regarding the Registration Standard for English Language Skills.

As you are aware, the Board recently received correspondence from Professor Gerald Farrell, Chair of the Victorian and Tasmanian Deans of Nursing and Midwifery regarding a number of Victorian international students and their ability to meet the English Language Skills Registration Standard. The Board was concerned by the suggestion that there had been any undue haste or lack of consultation in the implementation of the requirement for an IELTS of 7 in all bands at one sitting or equivalent. As previously discussed with you, this requirement was implemented by the State and Territory Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authorities (NMRAs) on 1 July 2009, as a result of a determination through the then Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC).

The Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (CDNM) was active in its role as a member of the ANMC Professional Reference Group and was also active in consultation with ANMC around these standards at that time. With the introduction of national registration and accreditation, the Board was required to consult in October 2009 about the same registration standard prior to commencement of the scheme in July 2010. CDNM also responded to the Board's consultation in October 2009 about this standard.

We do not wish to interfere with the universities' autonomy to establish entry requirements for students into its programs, other than the requirements to be imposed under the National Law on student registration which relate to criminal record checks and health. Similarly, the standards for approval of courses leading to registration as a nurse or midwife are set by the accreditation body and allow for a degree of flexibility and autonomy in the way that the universities develop and administer these programs. However, the completion of an approved Australian program of study is but one of a number of standards required to be met for

registration as a nurse or midwife. Other standards include criminal record checks, a requirement for professional indemnity insurance if intending to practise and of course, the English language standard if the student has not completed their secondary education in Australia. We are aware that many universities work with students to meet the English language requirements for registration which are over and above the requirements to complete an approved course. We are also advised that, since the introduction of the English language standard in 2009, a number of universities have made this requirement quite explicit to their students.

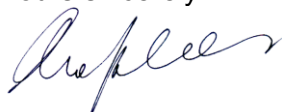
After consultation with varying stakeholders, the Board at its meeting on 29 July 2010 noted the issues being raised, but agreed that the English Language Skills Registration Standard which was approved by the Ministerial Council will remain in place. As such, all applicants from 1 July 2010, are required to meet this standard. This is in accordance with the fact that this is the lowest standard across all the health professions and indeed, some health professional groups have opted for a higher minimum standard.

Varying helpful strategies have been put in place to assist this group of Victorian students in achieving the standard. These include:

- Negotiating with Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to assist those students to meet the requirements for registration with AHPRA after their student visa expires, which will allow them a further three months to complete the registration requirements, including meeting the English language registration standard;
- Consulting with IELTS to ensure that there are test places available for these students within the timeframe.

The Board would appreciate your assistance in communicating to your members that the English Language Skills Registration Standard is remaining in place and all applicants for registration from 1 July 2010 are required to meet this standard. Should any of your members require further information please contact Anne Morrison, Executive Officer on (03) 8708 9106 or e-mail: [anne.morrison@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:anne.morrison@ahpra.gov.au) who will be happy to assist in any way possible.

Yours sincerely



Anne Copeland  
Chair  
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia