

Fact sheet

Updated 31 March 2020

COVID-19

Employment of students in NMBA-approved nursing programs of study

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 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 nursing programs of study may be required to work as employed students of nursing 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, nursing education providers, professional associations and students in NMBA-approved nursing programs.

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information on the employment of student nurses and the difference between this and working as an Assistant in Nursing 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.

A [fact sheet for midwifery students in NMBA-approved programs of study](#) is also available on the NMBA website

Employment of students enrolled in an NMBA approved program of study

Some states and territories have established employment models specifically for students in NMBA-approved nursing programs of study. These employment models are separate to student professional practice experience and operate in addition to Assistant in Nursing (AIN) and Personal Care Worker (PCW) roles.

Where nursing 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.

The role of the employed student is to provide delegated clinical nursing care to assist the nursing teams to provide safe, highquality care.

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

Employed nursing students may only accept a delegated nursing activity if it is within their level of education preparation and competence. The Registered nurse delegator should only delegate clinical nursing 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 nursing or a personal care worker?

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

Working as an AIN or a PCW is different to being employed as a student nurse. Students enrolled in NMBA-approved nursing programs of study can work as an AIN or PCW at any time subject to usual employment arrangements. Students who work as an AIN or PCW are reminded they must work in accordance with their position description.

Which nursing students can be employed?

Only students who are currently enrolled in an NMBA-approved Bachelor of Nursing program or entry to practise Master of Nursing program **and** registered as a student with the NMBA can be employed as a student nurse as part of the COVID-19 response.

Students enrolled in the second or third year of an NMBA approved nursing program are likely to have the level of skill and competence to work as employed students. Given the timing of the evolving COVID-19 situation and that first year nursing programs have only just commenced, it is recommended that second or third year students would be the most appropriate to employ as employed students. Students should be required to provide evidence of successful completion of the first (if applicable) and second year of the program.

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

Can double degree nursing students be employed? i.e. Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Midwifery; Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Paramedicine.

The Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Midwifery and Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Paramedicine double degrees are both four-year programs 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 nurses and are considered appropriate to employ as employed students.

Midwifery students who wish to practise as employed student midwives should refer to the [midwifery students in NMBA-approved programs fact sheet](#)

Can Diploma of Nursing students be employed?

Diploma of Nursing programs are between 18 months to two years in duration and the NMBA considers that it students enrolled in an NMBA-approved Diploma of Nursing program are unlikely to have the level of skill and competence to work as employed students.

Students in Diploma of Nursing programs are able work as an AINs or PCWs and are reminded that if they are working in these roles that they must work in accordance with their position description.

Where can employed students work?

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

The NMBA does not recommend students in NMBA-approved nursing programs be employed in facilities where access to supervision may be limited. Specialist COVID-19 response units i.e. fever clinics and quarantine stations may not be appropriate for employed student nurses for this reason.

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

Please contact your closest education provider who provide [NMBA-approved programs of study](#)

I am a registered nurse and have employed students in my organisation, how do I know what nursing activities they can do?

The NMBA's [Decision-making framework for nursing and midwifery](#) will assist registered nurses on how to approach and delegate aspects of care to employed students.

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

The registered nurse delegator should only delegate clinical nursing 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*.

To support the provision of safe care there should be a clear position description for the employed nursing 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

Approved by	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
Date approved	March 2020
Date commenced	March 2020
Date modified	