



Registered Nurse –

Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) Examination (NCLEX-RN)
Candidate Handbook

14 February 2023

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
National Boards

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Ahpra and the National Boards regulate these registered health professions: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, chiropractic, dental, medical, medical radiation practice, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathy, paramedicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology.

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Introduction

Following completion of the Self-check, candidates will be advised which stream they are in. Candidates assigned to Stream B are required to complete the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (NMBA) outcomes-based assessment (OBA). The OBA includes a multiple-choice question (MCQ) exam and an objective structured clinical exam (OSCE).

The National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) is the computer-based MCQ exam for internationally qualified nurses seeking registration in Australia as a registered nurse. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) develops and delivers the NCLEX-RN through Pearson VUE test centres.

This guideline has been prepared to assist Stream B candidates who are required to complete the NCLEX-RN.

The National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN)

The National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN) is a computer-based exam and is provided in the computerised adaptive testing (CAT) format. The NCLEX-RN is delivered at dedicated Pearson VUE test centres in most countries around the world.

The majority of NCLEX-RN items are multiple-choice but there are other formats as well. All item types are scored as either right or wrong and there is no partial credit. The NCLEX-RN is designed to test knowledge, skills and abilities essential to the safe and effective practice of nursing at the entry level.

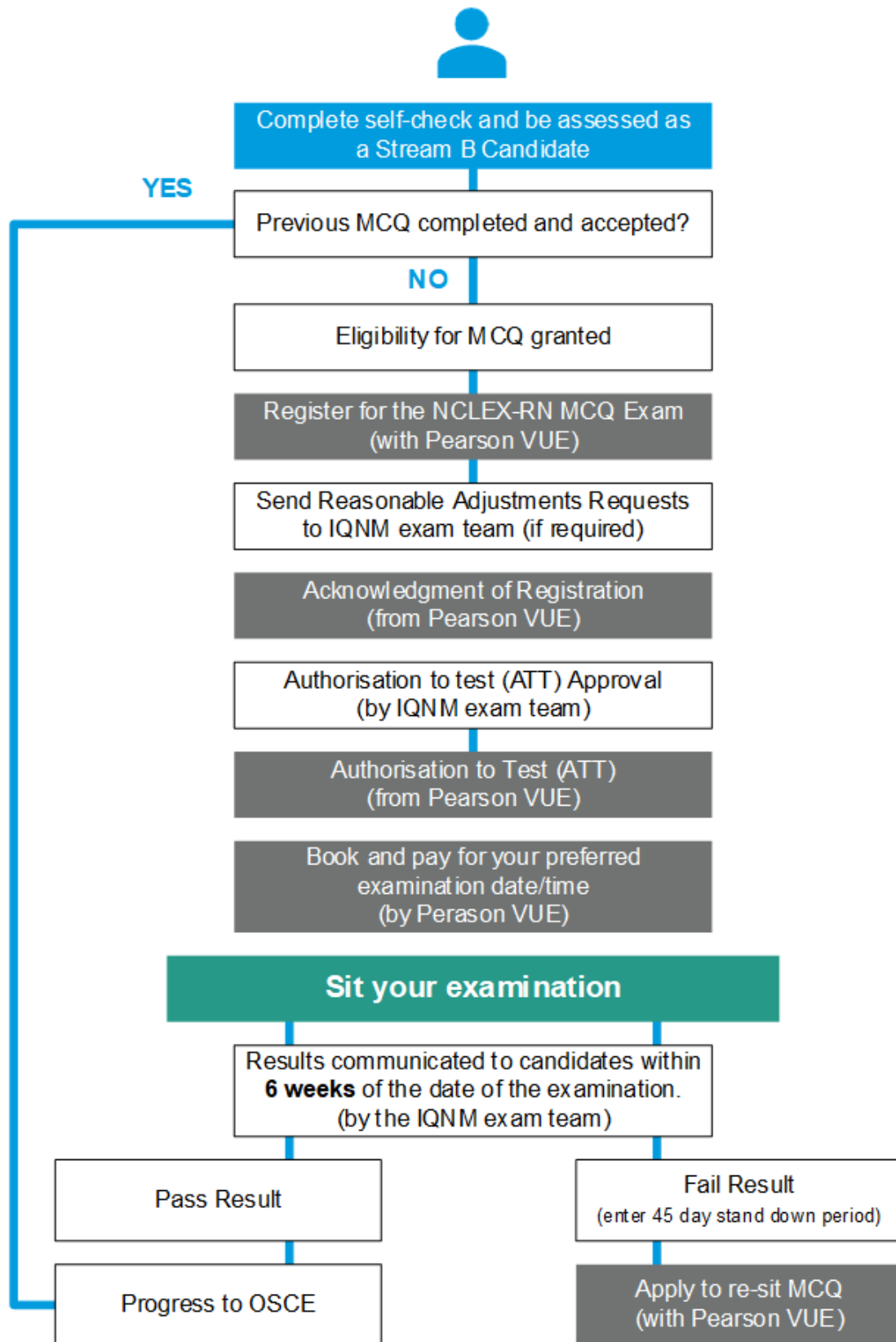
Candidates will be given a short tutorial on how to use the computer before starting the exam. The NCLEX-RN can be anywhere from 75 to 265 items. Of these items, 15 are pre-test items that are not scored. Regardless of the number of items administered, the time limit for the exam is six hours.

NCLEX-RN related contacts

Type of Contact	Who to contact
Scheduling or changing your appointment online	Pearson VUE website
Scheduling or changing your appointment via telephone	
United States & Canada	1866 49NCLEX (1866 49 62539) (toll free)
Asia Pacific Region	+852 3077 4923 (not toll free)
Europe, Middle East, Africa	+44 161 855 7445 (not toll free)
India	+91 120 439 7837 (not toll free)
All other countries not listed above	1952 905 7403 (not toll free)
Reasonable Adjustment Requests	IQNM exams team
Authority to test (ATT) Enquiries	
Release of ATT, changes to dates	Pearson VUE website
Processing and Extensions*	IQNM exams team
Results	
Release of Results (after 6 weeks)	IQNM exams team

*Extensions are only available to candidate affected by COVID-19 travel restrictions and/or the unavailability of centres during the current Pandemic.

NCLEX-RN MCQ Candidate Process



Exam registration

Registering for the NCLEX-RN

Candidates who have been confirmed as a Stream B candidate and have established their portfolio, are then advised by Ahpra that they are eligible to sit the NCLEX-RN examination. Candidates must register and pay the fee for the NCLEX-RN with Pearson VUE.

Fee and payment information are available on the [NCSBN website](#). Candidates must pay an NCLEX registration fee to Pearson VUE and if sitting the exam in a test centre outside of the U.S., will be liable to pay an additional non-refundable international scheduling fee. If applicable, a Value Added Tax (VAT) may also be charged for this examination.

Once Ahpra authorises eligible candidates to sit the exam, candidates will receive an 'Authorization to Test' (ATT) e-mail from Pearson VUE, enabling the candidate to book their exam. The ATT is valid for 90 days, so candidates must sit their exam within this timeframe. If candidates fail to sit their exam within the 90 days, they will need to re-register and pay the fees.

Examination Fees

The current fee structure for sitting the NCLEX-RN is as follows:

Fee type	Fee Amount
Registration Fee	\$200 USD
Additional International Scheduling fee (+ value assess tax where applicable)	\$150 USD

Scheduling or changing your examination

Scheduling your examination

You may not schedule your exam appointment until you have received an Authorization to Test (ATT). Please note, the ATT will only be sent to the email address you provided when registering.

Waiting to call to schedule an exam appointment may significantly limit the selection of dates from which you can choose to schedule. Additionally, if you wait until your ATT is close to expiring, test centres may not be able to seat you prior to its expiration. If this occurs, you will be required to reregister and pay another exam fee.

First-time test takers will be offered an appointment within 30 days of the request to schedule an appointment. Repeat candidates will be offered an appointment within 45 days. If you wish, you may decline the appointment offered and schedule later than the 30 or 45 days. If your first-choice date or time is unavailable, you will be offered an alternative as close to your first choice as possible.

Changing an appointment

If you need to change your appointment date, time or location, you will need to contact Pearson Vue Candidate Services by phone at least **one full business day (24 hours)** before your scheduled exam date and time as described below:

- For exams scheduled on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, call Pearson VUE at least 24 hours in advance of the date and time of your appointment local standard time.
- For exams scheduled on Saturday, Sunday or Monday, call Pearson VUE no later than Friday and at least 24 hours in advance of your appointment time local standard time.

- National holidays should also be considered when rescheduling an appointment, as offices may be closed.

NOTE: Leaving a message on an answering machine does not constitute giving the required notice for rescheduling or unscheduling your exam appointment. You must either reschedule or unschedule your appointment on the Pearson VUE website or by speaking with an agent at Pearson VUE NCLEX Candidate Services and receive a confirmation of unscheduled/rescheduled appointment email.

Changing an International Exam Appointment

If your appointment is located at an international test centre*, you must call Pearson VUE NCLEX Candidate Services to change your appointment. It is possible to reschedule to another international test centre without forfeiting your international scheduling fee. If you choose to reschedule your exam to a domestic test centre, you will forfeit the international scheduling fee.

If your appointment is located at a domestic test centre and you choose to reschedule to an international test centre, you will be charged a non-refundable scheduling fee and any applicable Value Added Tax.

More Information: *[Definitions of Domestic and International Test Centers](#)

Changing an Exam Appointment with Testing Accommodations

If you have been approved for testing accommodations, you should call Pearson VUE NCLEX Candidate Services and ask for the NCLEX Accommodations Coordinator in order to change your appointment.

Missing an Exam Appointment

If you fail to arrive at your exam appointment or fail to reschedule/unschedule without giving the appropriate notice, you will forfeit your exam fee (and scheduling fee if applicable) and your ATT will be invalidated. You will be required to reregister and pay another exam fee. Failure to take the exam will be noted in your registration as an incident report and will be made accessible to the IQNM exams team.

Withdrawals and Refunds

There will be no refund of registration fees (telephone, or via the Internet) for any reason, including but not limited to:

- Duplicate Registrations (candidates cannot have more than one active registration for the same exam)
- Failure to reschedule and/or cancel an exam appointment outside of 24 business hours
- Failure to appear for an exam appointment

If you have not received a confirmation of your registration within two weeks of submitting your registration, you should contact NCLEX Candidate Services to check the status of your registration. You should not submit another registration and fee before calling. If you decide to submit an additional registration, you should first stop payment on the original payment submitted.

There will be no refund of the international scheduling fee for any reason.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments (also known as testing accommodations) are special arrangements for the administration of the exam to provide candidates with disabilities (physical or mental impairment) full access to the exam where possible. Adjustments will only be made in line with the inherent requirements for nursing and midwifery practice in Australia and must not compromise the integrity of the exam. The expected level of competence is the same for all candidates and cannot change as part of a reasonable adjustment arrangement.

If candidates wish to request reasonable adjustments to the NCLEX-RN, they must submit the request to Ahpra at the time of registering for the NCLEX-RN with Pearson VUE, or as soon as practicable after registering. Appropriate documentation supporting the request for adjustments must be provided by the

candidate at the time of the request and include results of appropriate diagnostic testing, submitted by a qualified professional with expertise in the areas of the diagnosed disability.

If you have any question in relation to the request of reasonable adjustments, or require more information please refer to the IQNM Reasonable adjustments and special consideration for examination candidate's policy.

More Information: [Reasonable adjustments and special consideration for examination candidates](#)

Before the Exam

Examination Preparation

Test Plans

You are encouraged to review the NCLEX test plans before your exam appointment. The test plans serve as blueprints to outline the content to be tested and guide the item writing process.

The details of the test plan for the NCLEX-RN can be found below. This is updated every three years to reflect fair, comprehensive; current; and entry-level nursing competencies. The test plan contains in-depth information regarding exam content, exam administration and item writing exercises. Prior to 2019, multiple versions of the Test Plan were created and available. The information contained in the previous versions can now all be found in one Test Plan.

Purpose of the Test Plans

- Guide candidates preparing for the exam
- Inform the direction for item development
- Facilitate classification of exam items

The Test Plan also includes

- Definition of each Client Needs Categories
- Nursing activity statements
- Detailed content examples
- Sample NCLEX items
- Item writing guide

RN Test Plans

The NCLEX-RN test plan provides a concise summary of the content and scope of the exam. It serves as a guide for both exam development and candidate preparation. The current test plan is valid from 1 April 2019 through to 31 March 2023.

The NCLEX-RN examination test plan includes an in-depth overview of the content categories along with details about the administration of the exam as well as NCLEX-style item writing exercises and case scenario examples.

The NCLEX-RN test plan includes reference to the use of restraints, while candidates are expected to correctly respond to any questions in the NCLEX-RN on restraint, candidates should note that the use of restraints is not usual in clinical practice in Australia.

The NCLEX-RN test plan also refers to ante/intra and postpartum care, again candidates are expected to correctly respond to any questions in the NCLEX-RN on ante/intra and postpartum care, candidates should note that while registered nurses in Australia are educated to care for people across the lifespan they do not usually provide ante/intra and postpartum care. This care is normally provided by midwives in Australia.

More Information: [RN NCLEX Examination - Test Plan Brochure](#)

Test centre rules

All candidates take the NCLEX-RN under formal standardised exam conditions in a Pearson VUE test centre. All candidates are required to adhere to the candidate and test centre rules in the test centre and while sitting the exam.

If candidates do not follow the rules or the instructions of the test administrator (TA), the candidate's exam result may be withheld or cancelled, and the exam fee may not be refunded. The test centre will always inform Ahpra if a candidate does not comply with the rules and they may be subject to a misconduct investigation.

Before sitting the NCLEX-RN, candidates need to provide a digital signature agreeing to the full list of candidate rules presented to them at the time of testing. The current version of the candidate rules at the time of publication are as follows:

Personal items

All personal items must be placed in provided, lockable storage, the test centres are not responsible for lost, stolen or misplaced items. The following items may not be accessed at all during your examination appointment (including breaks and until leaving the test centre at the conclusion of the exam):

- Any educational, test preparation or study materials
- Cell/mobile/smart phones, tablets, smart watches, MP3 players, fitness bands, jump drives, cameras or any other electronic devices
- Weapons of any kind

At check in, candidates are required to store their electronic devices (cell/mobile/smart phones, tablets, smart watches or other electronic devices) in a sealable, plastic bag provided by Pearson VUE. If candidates refuse to store their electronic devices in the bag, they will not be allowed to test. Candidates will also be required to reregister and pay another exam fee for any additional NCLEX appointments.

After the exam, candidates must return their unopened Pearson VUE bag to the Administration Desk to be opened and examined by the TA. Any tampering with the bag before check-out could result in an incident report.

The following items are **not allowed in the testing room**, but may be accessed while on break (unless otherwise instructed):

- Bags/purses/wallets/non-smart watches
- Coats/hats/scarves/gloves
- Medical aids/devices (if these are essential, candidates must inform Ahpra when registering for the NCLEX-RN).
- Food or drink, gum/candy
- Lip balm

Candidates can ask the TA any questions regarding what they can and cannot access outside the testing room.

Confidentiality

- You may not disclose or discuss with anyone, including instructors, information about the items or answers seen in your examination (this includes posting or discussing questions on the internet and social media websites).
- You may not reconstruct exam items using your memory of your exam or the memory of others.
- You may not seek help from any other party in answering items (in person, by phone, text or by email) during your examination (including breaks).
- You may not remove examination items and/or responses (in any format) or notes about the examination from the testing room.
- You may not copy or reconstruct exam items during or following your exam for any reason.
- You will comply with any investigation that needs to be conducted.
- Note: If you witness any of the above behaviour, or any irregular behaviour that is in violation of the NCLEX Candidate Rules, you are required to report it to NCSBN and comply with any follow up investigation.
- Suspicious behaviours may be reported to NCSBN by calling the NCLEX Test Security Group at 866.293.9600 or emailing examssecurity@ncsbn.org.

Test Administration

- You may not take the exam for somebody else.
- You may not tamper with the computer or use it for any function other than taking the exam.
- You may not engage in disruptive behaviour at any time while in the test centre.
- The TA will provide you with an erasable note board and marker before you enter the testing room.
- You may not use the note board to cover any part of the screen during your examination.
- A clean note board can be requested during your exam by **raising your hand**. The erasable note board and marker may not be removed from the testing room during the exam except by the TA, and these items must be returned to the TA after the exam.
- Writing on any materials other than the note board is strictly prohibited and will result in an incident report and results will be placed on hold.
- If you experience hardware or software problems during the exam, notify the TA immediately by **raising your hand**.
- Earplugs are available from the TA upon request; it is not acceptable to bring your own earplugs.

Break Procedures

- You will be given the opportunity to take a "scheduled" break after approximately two hours, and again after approximately three and a half hours of exam testing time. Instructions will appear on your computer screen at the appropriate times.
- To request a break, or to exit the testing room for any other reason, **raise your hand** for the TA and wait to be escorted out of the testing room. A palm vein scan will be taken when you leave, and again when you re-enter the testing room. The TA will resume the exam for you upon your return. The exam clock will not stop while you are on a scheduled or unscheduled break.
- Exam data is encrypted and transferred electronically to your nursing regulatory body. Please refrain from asking the TA about exam content and/or results. If you have questions about the exam, please contact NCSBN.

Grounds for Dismissal or Cancellation of Results

A candidate who violates the test centre regulations or rules, or engages in irregular behaviour, misconduct and/or does not follow the TA's warning to discontinue inappropriate behaviour may be dismissed from the test centre and their exam fee will not be refunded.

Additionally, your exam result may be withheld or cancelled, and your nursing regulatory body may take other disciplinary action such as denial of a license/registration and/or disqualifying you from future NCLEX registrations for licensure/registration. Behaviours that constitute irregular behaviour or misconduct include but are not limited to:

- Giving or receiving assistance of any kind.
- Using, accessing, or attempting to access any prohibited aids. Prohibited aids are any devices or materials that will be helpful in taking the NCLEX. Examples of aids that are prohibited are electronic devices (e.g. cell/mobile/smart phones, tablets, smart watches, etc.), handheld calculators, conversion tables, dictionaries, etc.
- Attempting to take the examination for someone else.
- Failing to follow testing regulations or the instructions of the test administrator.
- Creating a disturbance of any kind.
- Tampering with the operation of the computer or attempting to use it for any function other than taking the examination.

On Examination Day

Arriving at the test centre

Candidates are advised to consider the following points prior to presenting at the examination centre on examination day:

Check-In

- Candidates will be required to store electronic devices (cell/mobile/smart phones, tablets, pagers or other electronic devices) in sealable plastic bags provided by Pearson VUE at the test centre. Candidates who refuse to store their electronic devices in the Pearson VUE provided plastic bag upon check-in will not be allowed to test. They will be required to reregister and pay another exam fee for any additional NCLEX appointments.
- You should plan to arrive at the test centre at least 30 minutes before your testing time. If you are more than 30 minutes late, you may be required to forfeit your NCLEX appointment and will be required to reregister and pay another exam fee.
- Occasionally, technical problems may require rescheduling of your exam. If circumstances arise causing you to wait more than 30 minutes after your scheduled appointment time or a restart delay lasts longer than 30 minutes, you will be given the choice of continuing to wait or rescheduling your appointment without an additional fee.
- Friends, relatives or children are not allowed to wait in the test centre or contact you while you are taking the examination.
- You will be directed to read the Candidate Statement below and provide an electronic signature, agreeing to the terms and conditions of the NCLEX.

Identification

- You will be required to present a valid, acceptable form of identification.
- You must provide your digital signature, a palm vein scan and will have your photograph taken. You cannot be tested without having these biometrics taken.
- For admittance to the NCLEX, you will be required to present one form of acceptable identification. The first and last names printed on your identification must match exactly the first and last names found on your Authorization to Test (ATT) email. If the name on your ID does not match exactly the name you provided when registering, you will not be admitted to the exam and will be required to reregister and pay another exam fee.

More information: [NCSTB's Acceptable ID process](#).

Personal Belongings

- You will be required to leave your personal belongings outside of the testing room. Small, lockable storage is available; however, you are not allowed to access any prohibited personal items at any time during your exam, including breaks. Test centers assume no responsibility for candidate's personal belongings.
- Hats, scarves, gloves and coats are not allowed in the testing room; however, provisions have been made for specific religious/cultural apparel.
- You will be asked to remove any large jewellery or other accessories before entering the testing room.

In the Testing Room

- The test administrator (TA) will provide you with an erasable note board that may be replaced as needed during testing. You may not take your own note board, scratch paper or writing instruments into the exam.
- You will have up to four hours to complete the RN exams: total exam time includes a short tutorial, two pre-programmed optional breaks and any unscheduled breaks you may take.
- The first optional break is offered after two hours of testing. The second optional break is offered after three and one-half hours of testing.
 - You must leave the testing room during all breaks.
 - All personal items accessed during breaks (including purses, wallets, etc.) may be inspected by the TA.
 - You will be required to provide a palm vein scan before and after your break.
 - All breaks count against testing time.
- Test centres administer many types of exams including some that require essay-type responses. Test centres have no control over noises made by candidates typing during another exam. Earplugs are available upon request.
- After your exam is finished, you will be asked to complete a brief computer questionnaire about your testing experience. When you have finished the questionnaire, you should raise your hand to summon the TA who will collect, and inventory all note boards and dismiss you when all requirements are fulfilled.

Candidate Statement

By providing a digital signature, I give Pearson VUE my explicit consent to retain and transmit my personal data and test responses to Pearson VUE, my nursing regulatory body, and to NCSBN (any of which may be outside of the country in which I am testing). I also agree to the terms and conditions of the NCSBN Biometric Data Policy outlined on pages 3 through 6*. **I understand the information provided and agree to follow the NCLEX® Candidate Rules.**

I agree to cooperate with the Test Administrator's investigation of any suspected irregular behaviour, including the surrender of any suspected test preparation or study materials. Any incident of suspected irregular behaviour, such as, but not limited to, falsifying my identification, tampering with the computer, engaging in disruptive behaviour (including disclosure of examination content), will be reported to Pearson VUE, NCSBN, and my nursing regulatory body. In the event NCSBN and/or Pearson VUE determines that I have engaged in irregular behaviour, my examination may be invalidated, and the nursing regulatory body may take other action and I will not be refunded my examination fee.

More information: [NCSBN Data Biometric Policy](#)

After the exam

Getting Your Exam Results

Although the exam is scored as you complete each item, no results are released at the test centre. In fact, test centre staff do not have access to the exam results.

Exam results will be made available to you via direct correspondence from the IQNM Exams team and will be sent to you approximately six weeks after taking the exam. If more than six weeks have passed and you have not received your results, contact the IQNM exams team on IQNMexams@ahpra.gov.au.

- Do not call Pearson VUE NCLEX Candidate Services, the test centres or NCSBN for exam results.
- Some states allow you to access your results after 48 business hours through the quick results service. The quick results service is not available for candidates seeking licensure/registration in Canada and Australia.

Double Checking Your Results

For quality control purposes, every NCLEX is scored twice; once by the computer at the test centre and then after the exam record has been transmitted to Pearson VUE.

Test Security & Invalid Results

NCSBN strives to report results that accurately reflect the ability of each test taker. Accordingly, our standards and procedures for administering exams have two related goals: giving test takers comparable opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and preventing any test takers from gaining an unfair advantage over others.

To promote these objectives, NCSBN reserves the right to cancel or withhold any test results when, in its judgement:

- a testing irregularity occurs
- there is an apparent discrepancy in, or falsification of, a test taker's identification
- a test taker engages in misconduct or irregular behaviour
- a test taker violates the candidate rules or otherwise breaches his/her Confidentiality Agreement
- the results are believed to be invalid for any other reason, notwithstanding the absence of any evidence of a candidate's personal involvement in irregular activities

NCSBN may cancel or withhold a candidate's results if, in NCSBN's judgment, there is a good faith basis to question the validity of the results for any reason, notwithstanding, the absence of any evidence of a candidate's personal involvement in irregular activities. Evidence of invalid results may include, but are not limited to, unusual answer patterns or unusual score increases from one exam to another. If a candidate's result is cancelled, revoked or invalidated without a finding that the candidate engaged in irregular behaviour, the candidate may appeal the decision and/or will be offered a free retest. An appeal is a candidate's exclusive means of redress regarding NCSBN's decision to take this action.

Candidates Who Do Not Pass

If you didn't pass the exam, you'll receive a NCLEX Candidate Performance Report (CPR). The CPR is an individualized document that shows how a candidate performed in each of the test plan content areas.

Candidates who fail the exam can use the CPR as a guide to prepare them to retake the exam.

Candidate Performance Report

What is the Candidate Performance Report (CPR)?

The NCLEX CPR is an individualized, two-page document sent to you if you fail the NCLEX-RN or NCLEX-PN. If you did not answer at least the minimum number of questions (60 for NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN), then you receive an abbreviated CPR, which tells you how many questions were answered and how many are required to be evaluated. No further diagnostic information is provided.

What can the CPR tell me about my exam?

On the front side of the CPR, you are given a brief explanation of how Computerized Adaptive Testing (CAT) works, how many items you answered, and some suggestions on how to use the information on the second side of the page. The number of questions you answered is an indication of how close you were to the passing standard. Only those candidates whose performance was close to the passing standard had to answer the maximum number of questions (130 for NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN). For candidates whose performance was further away from the passing standard, fewer items were required before a confident pass or fail decision could be made.

The second page (backside) of the CPR provides information regarding your performance within the 8 NCLEX Test Plan content areas of the exam. The content areas are grouped by the quality of your performance (ability): "Below the Passing Standard," "Near the Passing Standard" or "Above the Passing Standard." Next to each content area (called "Client Subneed") is a description of the content area, its percentage of the test, and a list of topics related to the content area. These descriptions can be used to determine in which areas of the Test Plan you have shown the greatest weakness and as a guide to prepare you to retake the exam. You should concentrate first in those areas listed under "Below the Passing Standard" and work up to those areas listed in "Near the Passing Standard." Furthermore, even though your ability for a given content area may indicate that it is above the passing standard, these areas should be studied as well in order to maintain proficiency.

This report is only intended to provide indications of your strengths and weaknesses. The NCLEX is not graded in sections - only overall performance on the exam determines your pass/fail status.

More information: [Sample NCLEX RN CPR](#)

Retaking the NCLEX

Do the following if choosing to retake the NCLEX:

- Contact your External Link NRB and notify them that you plan to retake the exam. Determine what fees or materials you need to submit to the NRB.
- Reregister with Pearson VUE and pay the fee.
- Wait to receive your new ATT.
- Schedule your new exam.
- Per NCSBN policy, you'll need to wait a minimum of 45 days between each exam. This length of time is determined by the NRB and will be reflected in the new ATT's validity dates.

More information: [NCSBN Retake Policy](#)

Results FAQs

For those candidates who have just completed the NCLEX, but still have question relating to how their results are processed, what happens if they don't pass the exam, the NCLEX Quick Results Service, and who they can contact if they have a problem with the NCLEX or its administration, you'll find more information available in the [NCLEX Results FAQ Brochure](#).

NCLEX score transfers

The NCLEX-RN Score Transfer Process allows candidates who have passed the NCLEX-RN to transfer their score from one nursing regulatory body to another.

Candidates will only be able to have their NCLEX-RN score transferred from the NMBA to another nursing regulatory body if they:

- Complete the [Application to transfer a NCLEX-RN score – ATNS-40](#),
- Pay the [NCLEX-RN score transfer fee](#), and
- Upload the application to the [Online Upload Service](#).

Please note that if you transfer your score to another nursing regulatory body, your IQNM case will become inactive. If your case is inactive, you are unable to continue with the OBA pathway with the

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. Once your case becomes inactive, if your circumstances change and you would like to continue with the OBA pathway, you can contact Ahpra to have your case reactivated.

More information: [Information for Registered Nurses](#)