



Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards 2026

Consultation Report

**Australian
Nursing & Midwifery
Accreditation Council**

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The intellectual input, collective wisdom and critical thinking provided through the consultations exemplified the goodwill and professionalism of those committed to advancing the nursing profession in Australia. This was vital to the result and quality of the Standards.

Anmac also acknowledges the support of the NMBA in their review and revision.

1. Introduction

The Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards 2026 (the Standards) will be used to assess education programs leading to accreditation of a nurse practitioner program of study approved by the NMBA.

The Standards allow registered nurses who have completed programs approved against the Standards to apply to the NMBA for endorsement as a nurse practitioner (NP) (1).

These Standards replace the Anmac Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards 2015 (2).

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 (the National Law) (3) establishes the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for health practitioners. Section 4 of the schedule in the National Law sets out all six objectives of the National Scheme, these are to:

- a. provide for the protection of the public by ensuring that only health practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner are registered
- b. facilitate workforce mobility across Australia by reducing the administrative burden for health practitioners wishing to move between participating jurisdictions or to practise in more than one participating jurisdiction
- c. facilitate the provision of high-quality education and training of health practitioners
- d. facilitate the rigorous and responsive assessment of overseas-trained health practitioners
- e. facilitate access to services provided by health practitioners in accordance with the public interest

- f. enable the continuous development of a flexible, responsive and sustainable Australian health workforce and innovation in the education of, and service delivery by, health practitioners.

These objectives (as relevant), combined with the guiding principles of the National Law and the Procedures for the development of accreditation standards (4), underpin the Standards.

Wide-ranging consultation informed the development of the Standards. Stakeholders could contribute through two separate consultation stages via an online survey, by written submission or by providing a face-to-face contribution.

The development of the Nurse Practitioner Standards for Practice and the Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards was undertaken concurrently. The NMBA, Ahpra and Anmac worked together to progress the projects.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet regulatory impact analysis guide for ministers meetings and national standard setting bodies (5) was considered during the development of the Standards. The need for a regulatory impact statement was assessed by the Office of Impact Analysis within the Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (previously the Office of Best Practice Regulation). Due to the collaborative working arrangement between the NMBA, Ahpra and Anmac, the regulatory impact statement was progressed by Ahpra and the NMBA. Anmac was not required to complete a separate regulatory impact analysis statement.

2. Background

2.1 Review of the Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards

Anmac reviews and develops accreditation standards based on:

- Anmac’s accreditation standards development and review processes, aligned to contemporary best-practice regulation
- Ahpra’s Procedures for the development of accreditation standards (4) which includes the Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Regulatory Impact Analysis Guide for Ministers’ Meetings and National Standard Setting Bodies (2021) (5).

The Health Regulatory Policy Framework (6) requires regulations to be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain contemporary and fit for purpose. In line with this requirement, Anmac accreditation standards. Are reviewed periodically. The current Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards were approved by the NMBA and published in 2015.

In 2021, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care commenced the development of a NP Workforce Plan (the Plan). During this process issues were raised about the current approach to reviewing the Accreditation Standards and their link to the Registration standard: Endorsement as a NP (Registration Standard) (7). The issues identified during this process highlighted the need to review the Accreditation Standards and Registration Standards concurrently.

Anmac and the NMBA, in an innovative project, worked together to plan for the revisions of both the NP Accreditation Standards and NP Standards for Practice. To oversee the project, a joint Regulatory Advisory Group (RAG) was established.

In late 2021, a literature review was commissioned by the NMBA. This explored peer reviewed journals and relevant secondary resources, including key reports and competency and practice standards at a national and international level. It reviewed content relevant to nurse practitioner education, regulation, pathways to practice, and expected nurse practitioner graduate attributes. It informed the work of the RAG to oversee the review and provide informed opinion and advice to Anmac and the NMBA on the review of both sets of standards.

Consultation was conducted in two stages with each stage being 30 business days.

2.2 Consultation stage one

At the direction of the NMBA, Anmac conducted a targeted preliminary consultation on the proposed revisions to the Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards 2015. The consultation stage one was open from 14 August 2023 to 9 October 2023.

The consultation paper posed five questions. 15 written submissions were received from key stakeholders, including state and territory nursing offices, universities, professional associations and government agencies. Responses to each question are summarised below and helped to inform Stage two: public consultation.

Do you consider the proposed program entry requirements in terms of length of experience as a registered nurse working at advanced practice level, to be appropriate for a program of study leading to endorsement as a nurse practitioner?

Most respondents disagreed that the proposed entry requirements – specifically the length of experience as a registered nurse at an advanced practice level – were appropriate for a program leading to nurse practitioner endorsement. The main concern was that the timeframe did not allow sufficient consolidation of knowledge and skills for advanced practice. Some respondents noted that expressing requirements in hours rather than years, and reducing them by half, was intended to encourage greater enrolment and completion of NP programs. This approach aligns with the Nurse Practitioner Workforce Plan (8) by reducing barriers to program entry.

Do you consider the proposed program entry requirements which remove the requirement for the registered nurse to be working at advanced practice level in a specified clinical context, to be appropriate for a program of study leading to endorsement as a nurse practitioner?

Most respondents agreed that removing the requirement for registered nurses to be working at an advanced practice level in a specific clinical context is appropriate for a program leading to nurse practitioner endorsement. Key themes included greater flexibility in practice contexts, expanded opportunities, and benefits

to the workforce by addressing the evolving needs of healthcare consumers. One respondent suggested that advanced clinical practice should still occur in a complementary clinical field.

Has the new five-domain format retained the essential requirements that are present in current standards? If you answer 'no' please identify what elements you consider are missing.

Overall, most respondents agreed that the new five-domain format preserves the essential requirements found in the current standards. They described the format as clear, concise and free from duplication. One respondent emphasised the importance of understanding how these domains will be mapped and implemented within the curriculum.

Will education programs accredited against the draft revised Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards prepare students to meet the NMBA Nurse Practitioner Standards for Practice on graduation?

Overall, most respondents agreed that the revised accreditation standards would adequately prepare students to meet the standards for practice upon graduation. Respondents noted that the standards address contemporary nursing issues and reflect a sound approach to program development. However, one respondent expressed concern that graduates may not achieve the required level of systems literacy, reflective practice and complex critical thinking. They suggested introducing an 'exit' examination or assessment or implementing more rigorous screening prior to program entry.

Are there any other issues that you wish to comment on? If so, please respond below.

In responding to this question, participants recommended adding wording to strengthen support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety and provided suggestions for additional content. They emphasised the inclusion of sustainability, clinical reflective supervision and a designated primary care unit with associated interprofessional practice hours.

2.3 Consultation stage two

The second consultation was distributed to a wider audience of organisations and individuals with an interest in nurse practitioner education and/or regulation. This consultation stage opened on 30 January 2024 and closed 4 April 2024.

Feedback from consultation paper one indicated that program admission requirements needed further exploration. Therefore, the first two questions from the first consultation paper on this subject were repeated in the second consultation paper, as were questions on the five-domain standard format and preparation to meet the NMBA NP Standards for Practice (9).

A total of 171 stakeholders were invited to respond to the second consultation paper via the online survey 40 responses were received.

Respondents reflected a wide range of stakeholders, including nurse practitioners, students, academics, national organisations, program providers and health service providers.

Anmac reviewed and collated all feedback. Which informed the version of the NP accreditation standards to be submitted to the NMBA for approval.

Do you consider the proposed program entry requirements – in terms of length of experience as a registered nurse working at advanced practice level – to be appropriate for a program of study leading to endorsement as a nurse practitioner?

The current accreditation standards admission requirements stipulate that applicants must have ‘a minimum of two years (full time equivalent [FTE]) as a registered nurse in a specified clinical field and two years (FTE) of current advanced nursing practice in this same clinical field’.

The proposed accreditation standards removed reference to a ‘specified’ clinical field. The RAG considered that this would promote greater focus

on a generalist approach to becoming a NP and is in keeping with the recommendations from the Educating the Nurse of the Future Report (10).

90 percent of respondents indicated that the proposed entry requirement –specifically the length of experience as a registered nurse at an advanced practice level – was inappropriate. They considered the existing requirements to be more suitable.

Many respondents expressed concern that the proposed requirement (12 months FTE as a registered nurse and 6 months FTE in advanced practice) would not provide students with sufficient knowledge or clinical competency.

Respondents argued that students would struggle to meet the Nurse Practitioner Standards for Practice (9) with this level of experience and it would increase the risk to patient safety.

Do you consider the proposed program entry requirements – which remove the requirement for the registered nurse to be working at advanced practice level in a specified clinical context – to be appropriate for a program of study leading to endorsement as a nurse practitioner?

Many respondents noted that maintaining robust entry requirements are essential to upholding the integrity and quality of the NP role and ensuring the safety and effectiveness of NP-led health care delivery. Respondents expressed concern that lowering entry requirements could reduce the quality and expertise of future NPs and risk diluting the NP role, particularly when highly specialised care is needed. Conversely, those who agreed the current entry requirements are appropriate viewed a generalist approach as suitable for primary health care and rural or community settings. They noted that this model would provide NPs with transferable skills, greater flexibility and expedite their integration into the health system.

Has the new five-domain format retained the essential requirements that are present in current standards? If you answer 'no' please identify what elements you consider are missing.

Most respondents agreed the five-domain framework reduced duplication across the accreditation standards. Moving to this format would help to enhance clarity and consistency across approved programs of study.

Will education programs accredited against the draft revised Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards prepare students to meet the NMBA Nurse Practitioner Standards for Practice (9) on graduation?

Overall, respondents saw alignment and uniformity in language and presentation as crucial for the effective implementation of the Standards. Most agreed that the draft revised Standards prepare students to meet the standards for practice upon graduation.

2.4 Finalisation of the draft Standards

Following review of the feedback from the second consultation, a third meeting of the RAG was held in April 2024. At this meeting, key issues identified during consultation were considered and discussed.

The resolutions included:

- increasing clinical practice hours as a registered nurse to 3600 hours (2 years FTE)
- increasing advanced practice hours to 2000. This meant two-fifths of the advanced practice hours would be completed before entry into the Master's program with the remaining 3000 advanced practice hours undertaken during or after entry; alignment with the original intent of the RAG in shifting a higher percentage of the advanced practice pre-requisite hours for endorsement to be undertaken during the program)

- adding 'current' advanced nursing practice to align with the NMBA's Recency of Practice Registration Standard
- removing 'specified' clinical context. The RAG supported a more generalist approach to registered nursing practice rather than a specified area of practice
- adding cultural safety to criteria wording.

These issues were discussed with the RAG and amendments to the Standards made accordingly.

2.5 Regulatory impact assessment

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Regulatory Impact Analysis Guide for Ministers' Meetings and National Standard Setting Bodies (5) requirements were taken into account during the review of the Standards. As this was a collaborative project between the NMBA, Ahpra and Anmac, carriage of the assessment with the Office of Impact Analysis was progressed by Ahpra and the NMBA.

2.6 Ratification and approval

Section 47 of the schedule in the National Law (3) requires the NMBA to approve, refuse to approve, or ask Anmac to review the Standards.

3. Reference list

1. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. Guidelines: for nurses applying for endorsement as a nurse practitioner. 2022. Available from: <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines/Guidelines-on-endorsement-as-a-nurse-practitioner.aspx>
2. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council. Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards 2015. 2015. Available from: <https://anmac.org.au/accreditation-standards/nurse-practitioner>
3. Queensland Government. The Health Practitioner National Law Act 2009. 2009. Available from: <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2009-hprnlq>.
4. Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. Procedures for the development of accreditation standards. 2023. Available from: <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Resources/Procedures.aspx>
5. Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Regulatory Impact Analysis Guide for Ministers' Meetings and National Standard Setting Bodies. 2021. Available from: <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-06/regulator-analysis-guide.pdf>
6. Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. Health Regulatory Policy Framework. 2020. Available from: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/health-regulatory-policy-framework>
7. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. Registration standard: Endorsement as a nurse practitioner. 2016. Available from: <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards/Endorsement-as-a-nurse-practitioner.aspx>
8. Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. Nurse Practitioner Workforce Plan. 2023. Available from: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/nurse-practitioner-workforce-plan>
9. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). Nurse practitioner standards for practice. 2021. Available from: <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards/nurse-practitioner-standards-of-practice.aspx>
10. Schwartz, S. Educating the Nurse of the Future. Commonwealth of Australia. Department of Health and Aged Care, 2019. Available from: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/educating-the-nurse-of-the-future>

Additional resources used in the development of these accreditation standards can be found in the complementary documents:

- Anmac Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards 2026
- Anmac Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Standards 2026 Evidence Guide

The logo for Anmac features a stylized letter 'A' on the left, composed of two overlapping curved lines in shades of purple and blue. To the right of the 'A', the word 'nmac' is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

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