

CDNM Position Statement on Registered Nurse Entry to Practice Education October 2025

CDNM supports the minimum qualification for entry to practice as a registered nurse remaining at the bachelor degree level. These degrees must be delivered in research-rich institutions that meet both higher education (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency) and professional (Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council) accreditation standards. We support quality, mandatory professional experience placements in health service and acknowledge their importance in registered nurse education.

We do not support the delivery of a health service-based higher apprenticeship as an entry qualification for registered nurse practice. Health service expertise lies in health care delivery. Higher education providers are experts in education delivery. They are best placed to deliver registered nurse education linked to relevant research while working with health services to provide the hands-on clinical experiences required.

Preamble

Higher education providers are critical to building the nursing workforce and to developing the research evidence-base that supports safe, effective and innovative nursing care. The quality and level of nursing education, and the context in which it is delivered, are key to ensuring a safe and competent nursing workforce.

Recent developments have proposed the possible introduction of a health service-based higher apprenticeship qualification to become a registered nurse. Higher education providers already work closely with health services in delivering the clinical experience aspects of nursing degrees. While supervised clinical experiences in health services are important, we do not support the delivery of a health service-based higher apprenticeship as an entry qualification for registered nurses. Our position on these matters is outlined below.

Entry-to-practice registered nursing education must remain at the bachelor degree level or above.

There is a strong global evidence-base showing the benefits to patient outcomes, the system, professional practice and uptake of new technologies when nursing care is delivered by bachelor degree-educated nurses. Anything less than this level of education or qualification for a registered nurse is detrimental to patient and system outcomes.

Rural Education Delivery

Bachelor of Nursing degrees are already delivered by higher education providers across a range of urban, regional, rural and remote settings. Building further on the existing educational infrastructure in rural areas will enhance the provision of a well distributed, appropriately-qualified nursing workforce.

Enrolled Nurse to Registered Nurse Pathways

We recognise that some registered nurses start their career journey by attaining an Enrolled Nurse qualification. A number then elect to attain a Bachelor of Nursing degree to become a registered nurse. Well established pathways for moving between enrolled nurse Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education registered nurse attainment are in place and we support their continuation and greater harmonisation.

We recognise that Professional Experience Placements (PEP) in health services are also critical to such education. While future evidence may lead to variations in the amount needed, CDNМ supports the continued, compulsory inclusion of PEP in all Bachelor of Nursing degrees.

Bachelor degrees for entry-to-practice in nursing must be delivered in institutions that clearly meet both higher education (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency) and professional (Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council) accreditation standards.

Institutions delivering entry-to-practice registered nursing degrees must meet both the higher education and the professional accreditation standards required to ensure knowledgeable, safe and competent nursing professionals. The relevant body overseeing higher education standards is the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). The body overseeing professional standards is the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC). Both are well-established and recognised standards agencies that work closely with other organisations to ensure standards are continuously reviewed and updated.

Bachelor or postgraduate entry-to-practice registered nursing degrees are best delivered in research rich higher education settings.

Health care delivery – and nursing practice within it – is continually changing as new evidence comes to light. Building this evidence base and connecting it to education delivery is critical for instilling best-practice care in future practitioners. For this reason, CDNМ supports nursing education being undertaken in research-rich higher education environments. Such environments:

- reinforce the important link between evidence and practice;
- help maintain currency of knowledge;
- prompt critical thinking, innovation and a culture of inquiry;
- help strengthen clinical-research roles which support growth of the clinical academic workforce – a recognised component of our nursing workforce need; and
- contribute to and support the uptake of new technologies in healthcare.