

CDNM Position Statement on Registered Nurse and Midwife Entry to Practice Education - May 2026

CDNM supports the minimum qualification for entry to practice as a registered nurse and/or midwife remaining at bachelor's degree level. These degrees must be delivered in research-rich institutions that meet both Higher Education and professional accreditation standards. We support quality, mandatory Professional Experience Placements and Clinical Learning Experiences in Australian and New Zealand health services respectively and acknowledge their importance in registered nurse and midwife education. It is also essential that these learning environments are culturally safe and provide opportunities to grow the number of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori nursing and midwifery graduates.

Preamble

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

Higher Education providers work in close partnership with health services to deliver the clinical experience components of nursing and midwifery degrees. CDNM emphasises that education delivery must remain the responsibility of Higher Education providers, with health services supporting this through supervised clinical experiences. CDNM does not support the delivery of a health service-based higher apprenticeship or similar as an entry qualification for registered nurses or midwives. Our position on these matters is outlined below.

Entry to practice registered nursing and midwifery education must remain at bachelor's degree level or above

There is strong global evidence demonstrating that care delivered by bachelor's degree-educated nurses and midwives leads to improved outcomes for patients, pregnant people and newborns. This level of preparation provides significant benefits to patient health outcomes, the health system, professional practice and the uptake of new technologies (Ryder et al., 2025). Anything less than this level of education or qualification for a registered nurse or midwife is detrimental to patient and system outcomes.

Rural Education Delivery

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

Enrolled Nurse to Registered Nurse Pathways

We recognise that some registered nurses start their career journey by attaining an Enrolled Nurse qualification and some 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) and Clinical Learning Experiences (CLE) in Australian and New Zealand health services respectively 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/CLE in all bachelor-level nursing and midwifery degrees.

Bachelor or postgraduate entry to practice in registered nursing and midwifery degrees must be delivered in institutions that clearly meet both Higher Education (TEQSA, TEC) and professional (ANMAC, NCNZ, MCNZ) accreditation standards requirements.

Institutions delivering entry to practice registered nursing and midwifery degrees must meet both the higher education and the professional accreditation standards required to ensure knowledgeable, safe and competent nursing and midwifery professionals.

Higher Education standards are overseen by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) in Australia and by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) in New Zealand. Professional standards are overseen by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) and the Nursing Council of New Zealand (NCNZ) or Midwifery Council of New Zealand (MCNZ). These are well-established regulatory authorities that work closely with other organisations to ensure standards are continuously reviewed and updated.

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

Health care delivery – and nursing and midwifery practice within it – is continually evolving with the emergence of new evidence. 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 and midwifery 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.

Reference

Ryder, M., Browne, F., Curtin, M., Connolly, M., Furlong, E., Geraghty, S., Larkin, J., Prendergast, M., Meegan, M., Brenner, M. (2025). A National Evaluation of Undergraduate Nursing and Midwifery Curricula, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 81, 2072-2086, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.16430>.