

# National Accreditation Guidelines

## Nursing and Midwifery Education Programs

Under

Version 2.0

January 2019

# National Accreditation Guidelines

## Nursing and Midwifery Education Programs

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# Purpose of the National Accreditation Guidelines

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The purpose of the National Accreditation Guidelines (the guidelines) is to explain the principles and processes associated with the accreditation of nursing and midwifery education programs that lead to eligibility for registration or endorsement with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). The guidelines are designed for stakeholders of accreditation of nursing and midwifery education.

The principles and processes have been informed by national and international best practice accreditation models for health practitioner education.

Under Review

# 1 Background

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## 1.1 Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) is the independent accreditation authority responsible for accrediting education providers and programs of study for the nursing and midwifery professions under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme and the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 (the National Law).<sup>1</sup>

ANMAC is responsible for determining whether programs of study for nurses and midwives seeking to practice in Australia meet required accreditation standards. ANMAC is also responsible for monitoring education providers and programs of study that provide a qualification for the purpose of registration in nursing and midwifery. In addition, through a process of cyclical review, ANMAC maintains the integrity and effectiveness of accreditation standards that underpin the accreditation of programs of study under its mandate<sup>2</sup>.

Professional education accreditation is concerned with the quality of the profession and its work, from the perspective of public interest and community safety. It is part of a broader process of assuring the community that, having completed an approved program of study, beginning practitioners have achieved agreed professional outcomes and are able to practise in a safe and competent manner because they are equipped with the necessary foundation knowledge, professional attitudes and essential skills. This process, however, relies on two fundamental principles:

1. That the education providers themselves are authorised to issue the relevant qualification and are evaluated to assure continued quality learning outcomes for their graduates.
2. That there is a set of agreed and contemporary practice standards for the profession, against which the capability of graduates of programs is assessed.

All Australian education providers of nursing and midwifery programs that lead to eligibility for registration or endorsement with the NMBA are subject to the national accreditation process.

## 1.2 National Registration and Accreditation Scheme objectives and guiding principles

The objectives of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme are:

- a) to 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; and
- b) to 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; and

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<sup>1</sup> Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009

<sup>2</sup> Quality Framework for the Accreditation Function:  
<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/documents/default.aspx?record=WD18%2f26047&dbid=AP&checksum=IB%2fqATU8Otr6CcGqmr8ZSw%3d%3d>

- c) to facilitate the provision of high-quality education and training of health practitioner; and
- d) to facilitate the rigorous and responsive assessment of overseas-trained health practitioners; and
- e) to facilitate access to services provided by health practitioners in accordance with the public interest; and
- f) to enable the continuous development of a flexible, responsive and sustainable Australian health workforce and to enable innovation in the education of, and service delivery by, health practitioners.

The guiding principles of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme are that:

- a) the scheme is to operate in a transparent, accountable, efficient, effective and fair way
- b) fees required to be paid under the scheme are to be reasonable having regard to the efficient and effective operation of the scheme
- c) restrictions on the practice of a health profession are to be imposed under the scheme only if it is necessary to ensure health services are provided safely and are of an appropriate quality.

### 1.3 Relevant documents

The following documents support the accreditation process and should be read in conjunction with the guidelines:

- [Accreditation standards:](#)
  - [Enrolled Nurses](#)
  - [Registered Nurses](#)
  - [Midwives](#)
  - [Nurse Practitioners](#)
- [Assessor Handbook](#)
- [Policies and Explanatory Notes](#)

## 2 Governance

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This section outlines the governance structures and personnel involved in meeting ANMAC's responsibilities as the independent accrediting authority for nursing and midwifery.

In addition to the ANMAC Board (the Board), several committees fulfil key roles in the accreditation and monitoring processes. These include ANMAC's:

- Strategic Accreditation Advisory Committee
- Enrolled Nurse Accreditation Committee
- Midwife Accreditation Committee
- Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Committee
- Registered Nurse Accreditation Committee.

### 2.1 Strategic Accreditation Advisory Committee

The Strategic Accreditation Advisory Committee provides high-level strategic advice to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in all areas of ANMAC's accreditation function.

The terms of reference and membership for the Strategic Accreditation Advisory Committee are in ANMAC's [Committees Policy and Terms of Reference](#).

### 2.2 Accreditation committees

Four accreditation committees review the accreditation assessment outcomes for nursing and midwifery programs leading to eligibility to apply for registration and make recommendations to ANMAC's CEO. These are the Enrolled Nurse Accreditation Committee, Midwife Accreditation Committee, Nurse Practitioner Accreditation Committee and Registered Nurse Accreditation Committee.

Each accreditation committee comprises members with academic, education or clinical experience and expertise.

The terms of reference and membership for each accreditation committee is included in the [Committees Policy and Terms of Reference](#).

### 2.3 Associate Director Accreditation Services

The Associate Director Accreditation Services leads the assessment team and oversees all phases of the accreditation process for each program they are allocated.

### 2.4 Director Accreditation Services

The Director Accreditation Services oversees all functions of ANMAC's Accreditation Services and delegates the following functions, where appropriate, to other Accreditation Services' staff:

- allocating accreditation and program changes and monitoring projects to Associate Directors to coordinate the accreditation assessment

- reviewing and maintaining policies and processes for accrediting and monitoring education providers and programs of study, to ensure fair and consistent outcomes
- supporting the assessment team throughout the process of accreditation or monitoring an education provider or assessing a program.

## 2.5 Chief Executive Officer

The CEO receives and finalises the accreditation recommendation. The CEO also includes the final accreditation recommendation in ANMAC's report to the NMBA.

## 2.6 ANMAC assessment teams

An ANMAC assessment team is formed for:

- the accreditation assessment of all programs
- complex or significant program changes
- complex or significant monitoring functions.

An assessment team generally comprises four members:

- Associate Director
- two academics
- a clinician, manager or a nurse and/or midwife working in policy or regulation roles.

One member of the assessment team will be appointed as Chair. The number of team members is determined by the Director Accreditation Services in conjunction with the allocated Associate Director Accreditation Services.

ANMAC will notify the education provider of the names and current places of employment of proposed assessment team members.

The education provider has three working days to advise ANMAC of acceptance of the proposed team. If notification of acceptance is not received within this timeframe, the proposed team is deemed to be accepted.

The education provider has the right to object to the selection of one or more team members on grounds of potential or perceived conflict of interest of a personal or professional nature.

Examples:

- Personal conflicts could include private, professional or business interests of a person, or between an assessor and staff of the education provider.
- Professional conflicts could include affiliations with the institution or associations with an institution competing with, or aligning with, the provider or program being accredited.

Accreditation Services administration staff provide support to the team. This includes accessing documents and making travel arrangements.

## 3 Accreditation process

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This section provides an overview of regulatory requirements for programs of study and the accreditation process.

### 3.1 Registration as an education provider

Education providers must provide evidence of their current higher education or vocational education and training (VET) provider status. For the higher education sector, this is with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). For the VET sector, this is with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) or state VET sector regulatory authority. The education provider must notify ANMAC immediately if their accreditation status changes, has conditions applied or is under investigation from the TEQSA, ASQA or state VET regulator.

VET organisation who do not have the Diploma of Nursing qualification (currently HLT54115) on scope should submit an application to ANMAC for accreditation of the program prior to applying to ASQA. When accreditation is granted by ANMAC, it will be conditional on the qualification being added to the VET organisation's scope of delivery.

### 3.2 Accreditation timeframe

The process of accreditation usually takes six to 12 months depending on the complexity and quality of the submission. Timeframes are managed by negotiating key dates with the education provider.

Once ANMAC accredits or modifies a program, that program progresses to the NMBA for approval. A program or, modifications to approved programs *must not start* until the program or modification is listed on the NMBA Approved Programs of Study (APoS) list. For example, teaching from a new campus must not start until the campus is added to the APoS list. Retrospective accreditation is not possible.

### 3.3 Accreditation process

ANMAC's accreditation process includes submission of evidence, accreditation assessment and monitoring activities as demonstrated in figure one.

ANMAC considers each program submission as a new accreditation and therefore does not re-accredit programs.

Accreditation is not transferable between organisations regardless of change of ownership or legal identity.

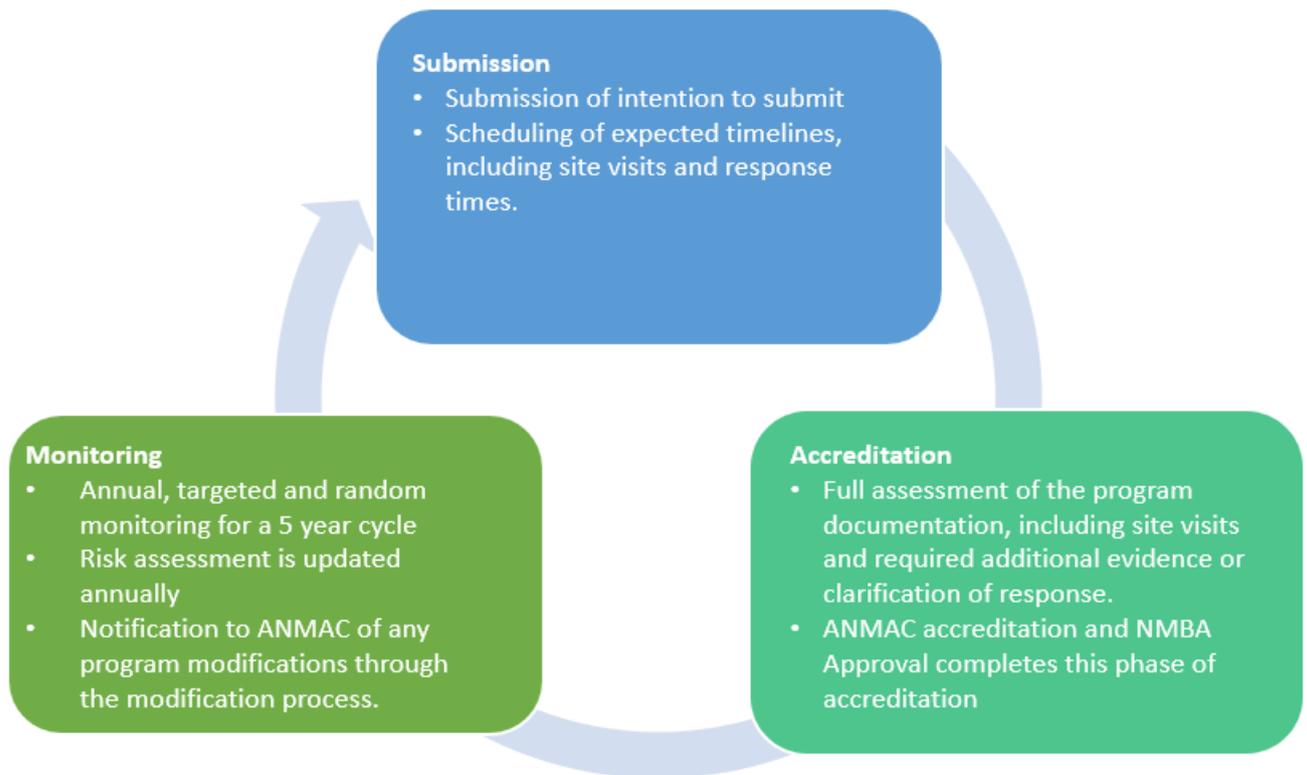
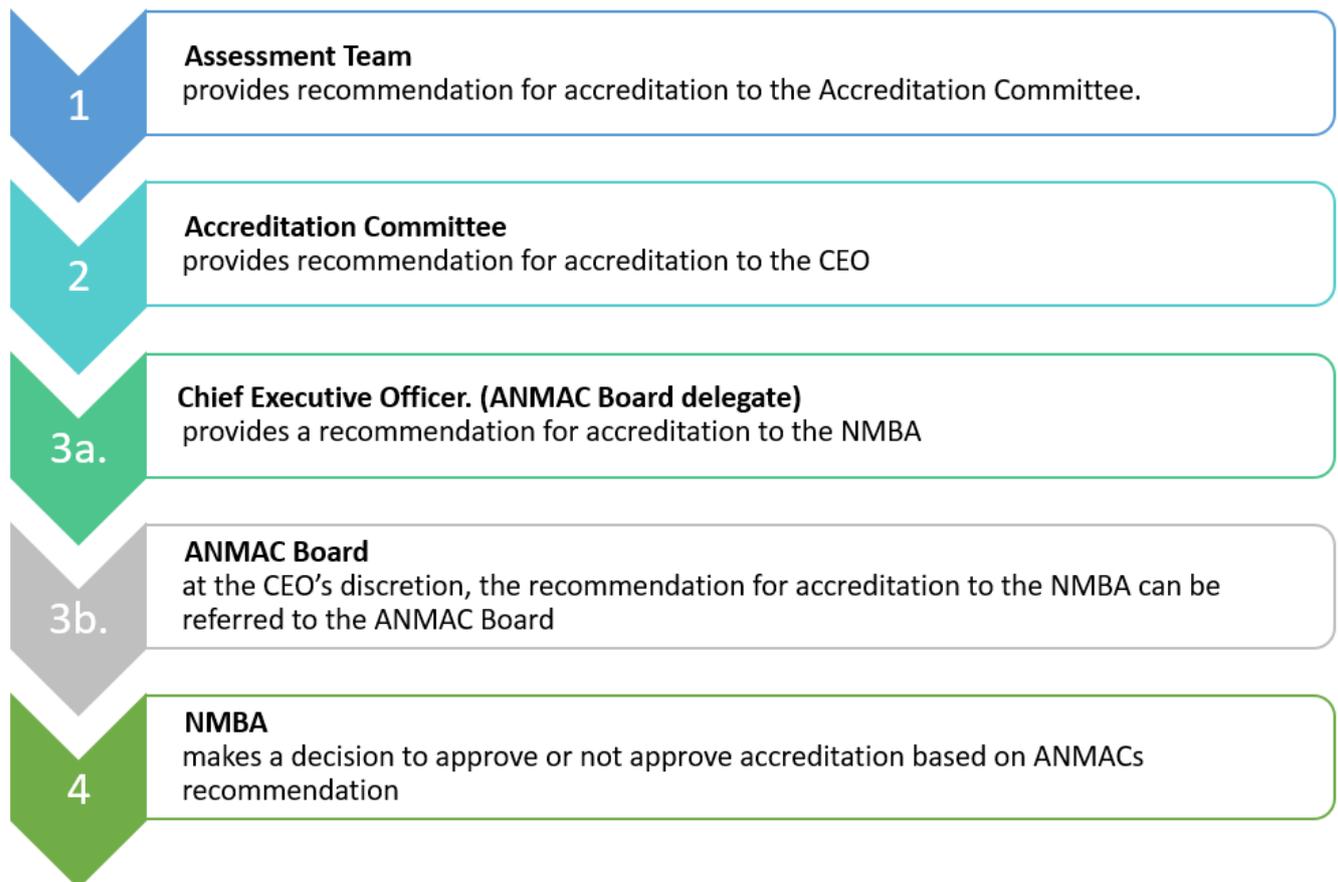


Figure 1: ANMAC's accreditation process

### 3.4 ANMAC accreditation recommendation

The ANMAC Board delegates the responsibility of the accreditation recommendation to ANMAC's CEO. The CEO makes ANMAC's accreditation recommendation based on the recommendation from the relevant accreditation committee. The CEO has the discretion to refer to the Board to make the accreditation recommendation. Figure 2 outlines the levels of accreditation recommendations for each program of study.



**Figure 2: Levels of accreditation recommendations for each program of study**

The outcomes of the accreditation assessment are based on meeting the accreditation standards. Three recommendations are possible:

- accreditation
- accreditation with conditions
- refusal of accreditation.

#### Accreditation

Accreditation is recommended when ANMAC is satisfied the program meets the accreditation standards. Accreditation is usually granted for five years.

### Accreditation with conditions

Accreditation with conditions is recommended when a program substantially meets the accreditation standards and the imposition of conditions ensures the program meets the accreditation standards within a reasonable timeframe.

If the conditions are not met within the reasonable timeframe, ANMAC reviews the education provider's accreditation status to determine if it should be revoked.

### Refusal of accreditation

ANMAC may refuse accreditation under Section 48 of the National Law if the program does not meet the accreditation standards. If ANMAC refuses to accredit a program of study, it must provide written notice of its decision to the education provider. The written notice must state:

- reason for the decision
- that, within 30 days after receiving the notice, the education provider may apply to the accreditation authority for an internal review of the decision
- how the education provider may apply for a review.

## 3.5 Review of accreditation recommendation

Under Section 48(4) of the National Law, ANMAC is required to have an internal process that facilitates review of accreditation decisions.

An education provider may apply for an internal review after a decision is made by ANMAC to:

- refuse to accredit a program of study or
- revoke the accreditation of a program of study.

ANMAC must conduct an internal review of an accreditation decision to refuse or revoke accreditation if an education provider lodges a written appeal within 30 days of receiving notice of the final NMBA decision.

Refer to the [Accreditation Internal Review Policy](#) for more information on ANMAC's internal review processes.

## 3.6 Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia approval

The NMBA approves the accredited program of study as providing a qualification for the purpose of registration in nursing and/or midwifery professions.

If the NMBA approves

- program details are noted on the NMBA's APoS list
- ANMAC notifies the education provider detailing the outcome, accreditation monitoring requirements and relevant dates.

If the NMBA does not approve:

- ANMAC is given written notice outlining the NMBA's reasons for refusal (in accordance with Section 49 of the National Law)
- ANMAC is entitled to publish information or advice it gave the Board about the program and its recommendation.

### 3.7 Program modifications

ANMAC supports innovation and continuous quality improvement and works with education providers to ensure program modifications meet accreditation standards. Notification of program modifications are reported retrospectively in the program monitoring report (PMR) and prospectively according to the list below.

Immediate notification is required if TEQSA, ASQA or state VET regulator propose or commence an investigation, impose conditions or change the education providers accreditation status.

Prospective notification is required for these program modifications:

- number of and/or location of campuses
- introduction of a third-party provider
- program delivery, including program length or mode of study
- changes in approved student and/or cohort numbers
- enrolment of international students
- offshore component
- pathways affording block credit
- Head of Discipline.

To report a prospective modification, the education provider completes an Intention to Submit form or contacts the Accreditation Services administration staff for further direction regarding the required documentation. ANMAC may require an education provider to report all program changes prospectively.

The assessment of program modifications may incur a fee.

### 3.8 Monitoring

Section 50 of the National Law requires ANMAC to monitor programs of study approved by the NMBA to ensure the program and education provider continue to meet approved ANMAC accreditation standards. ANMAC undertakes routine and targeted monitoring of education providers and programs. Programs that have reached their accreditation expiry date and are in teach-out remain subject to monitoring.

#### Routine monitoring

Routine monitoring is undertaken through the PMR. These reports are completed annually to confirm that a program continues to be delivered as accredited and to report all program changes not required prospectively.

When an education provider does not submit its PMR, conditions may be imposed, or accreditation of the program may be revoked.

#### Targeted monitoring

Targeted monitoring addresses a specific concern relating to a program or an education provider. It includes the submission of specified program information, written reports and additional site visits.

Targeted monitoring can be placed on a program at the time of accreditation, during routine or existing targeted monitoring and/or as a result of managing a complaint. Targeted monitoring can also be applied ad-hoc to address an immediate concern relating to a program or an education provider.

Should monitoring requirements be changed during a program's accreditation cycle, the education provider will be formally notified.

### **Complaints management**

ANMAC values complaints, recognising that effective complaints management fosters an environment of safety and continuous quality improvement. It also promotes accountability and transparency.

ANMAC works cooperatively with all stakeholders to manage and resolve complaints in an impartial and confidential way. ANMAC recognises that those administering a program are often best placed to decide how to resolve a grievance. However, compliance with accreditation standards remains a key focus of ANMAC's strategy for managing complaints.

Refer to Accreditation Services [Complaints Handling Policy](#) for more information on ANMAC's complaints management processes.

### **Programs or education providers that no longer meet the accreditation standards**

If ANMAC reasonably believes that a program and education provider no longer meet approved accreditation standards, ANMAC must decide to:

- impose conditions on the accreditation that are considered necessary to ensure the program of study will meet the accreditation standards within a reasonable time or
- revoke the accreditation of the program of study.

ANMAC then provides the NMBA with written notice of the decision.

## 4 Advertising a Program of Study and the Approved Program of Study List

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### 4.1 Advertising a program of study

Education providers must ensure that all advertising material used to inform potential students contains accurate information on the accreditation status of the education provider and program being advertised.

Advertising before the accreditation process is complete must include a notation that:

‘This program of study is not yet accredited by ANMAC or approved by the NMBA and will not lead to registration as a nurse or midwife in Australia under the approved qualification pathway, National Law Section 53a.’

Education providers can choose to plan, develop and acquire the necessary resources to offer a program of study before receiving accreditation from ANMAC. This is at their own risk.

### 4.2 NMBA Approved Programs of Study list

An education provider should only commence students into a program once the program appears on the NMBA’s Approved Program of Study<sup>3</sup> list. Accredited programs no longer being delivered by the education provider or programs in teach-out are on the NMBA Inactive Programs of Study list. Students that have completed a program on the inactive list may still apply for registration, endorsement or notation. This is provided the student -commenced the program before the program became inactive.

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<sup>3</sup> Approved Programs of Study, AHPRA

## 5 Quality cycle for accreditation standards and guidelines

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This section outlines ANMAC's quality cycle which includes the regular review of accreditation standards, policies and processes relating to accreditation. This includes the review of the:

- National Accreditation Guidelines
- ANMAC's accreditation standards
- policies, processes and procedures that relate to ANMAC's responsibilities under the National Law.

### 5.1 Review of National Accreditation Guidelines

The National Accreditation Guidelines are reviewed every two years, to ensure they are contemporary and transparent.

### 5.2 Review of accreditation standards

A formal review of ANMAC's approved accreditation standards for nursing and midwifery education programs in Australia takes place generally every five years.

The review is concerned with the quality of the profession and its work, from a public interest and community safety perspective. It is part of a broader process of assuring the community that, having completed an accredited program of study, beginning professional practitioners have achieved agreed professional outcomes and can practise in a safe and competent manner because they are equipped with the necessary foundation knowledge, professional attitudes and essential skills.

ANMAC's review of the accreditation standards relies on two fundamental principles:

1. education providers are authorised to issue the relevant qualification and are evaluated to assure continued quality learning outcomes for their graduates (TEQSA, ASQA and the Australian Qualifications Framework)
2. a set of agreed and contemporary competency standards exist for the profession, against which the capability of intending graduates of entry to practice programs can be assessed (against standards for practice).

For more information on the review of nursing and midwifery standards, refer to ANMAC's [Protocol for the Review of Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Standards](#).

### 5.3 Review of policies and processes

A formal review of ANMAC's policies and processes, including those relating to accreditation, takes place every two years. This review is undertaken through formal planning and with relevant accreditation staff. Information is gathered through research and wide-ranging stakeholder consultation. Collated information is provided to ANMAC for discussion and action.

## 6 Accreditation fees

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ANMAC charges education providers to accredit programs of study. The cost is determined by factors including:

- length of program—over 12 months, between 6 and 12 months, or under 6 months
- type of accreditation—full submission or changes to an existing program
- complexity of accreditation—examples: if a program is offered from more than two sites; if dual degrees are involved; if a joint site visit is required
- program modifications—determined by the complexity of change and level of assessment required.

The fee schedule is on [ANMAC's website](#).

### Monitoring and complaint management

If ANMAC receives a concern or complaint relating to an education provider or approved program of study and needs to undertake a site visit as part of its monitoring process, ANMAC will invoice the education provider to recover costs.

### Refunds

An education provider may be eligible for a refund if they withdraw a program after the assessment process has started. Any refund is determined by how much work ANMAC has already completed. This is at the CEO's discretion. Generally, an education provider is not eligible for a refund after ANMAC has conducted a site visit.

### Invoice

Education providers are invoiced when ANMAC conducts the preliminary review of their submission.

## 7 Glossary

Term	Definition
Approved program	Program of study that has been accredited by ANMAC and approved by the NMBA. Approved programs appear on AHPRA's APOS list. Students can be enrolled once a program is on the list.
Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency	Organisation responsible for the implementation of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme across Australia. AHPRA supports the 15 National Health Practitioner Boards in implementing the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. AHPRA manages the registration and renewal processes for health practitioners and students around Australia.
Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council	Independent accrediting authority for nursing and midwifery under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. In this role, ANMAC is responsible for developing the content of accreditation standards and determining whether programs of study for nurses and midwives seeking to practice in Australia meet the required education standards. This contributes to protecting the health and safety of the community.
Australian Qualifications Framework	National policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework.
Australian Skills Quality Authority	National regulator for Australia's VET sector that regulates courses and training providers to ensure nationally approved quality standards are met.
Curriculum	Incorporates the nursing or midwifery program's total planned learning experience including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educational and professional philosophies</li> <li>• subject outlines</li> <li>• links between subject learning outcomes, their assessment and national competencies or standards for practice</li> <li>• teaching and learning strategies</li> <li>• professional practice placement plan.</li> </ul>
Delivery mode	Means by which programs are made available to students—on campus, blended, distance or e-learning.
Education provider	Organisational entity responsible for the design and delivery of a program of study from which graduates are eligible to apply for nursing and/or midwifery registration or endorsement.
Graduates	Those who have successfully undertaken a program of study that enables them to apply for registration or endorsement with the NMBA.

Term	Definition
Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 (the National Law)	Legislation, contained in the schedule to the Act, that provides for the full operation of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for health professions from 1 July 2010. It covers the more substantial elements of the national scheme, including registration arrangements, accreditation arrangements, complaints, conduct, health and performance arrangements, and privacy and information-sharing arrangements. Its purpose is to protect the public by establishing a national scheme for regulating health practitioners and students undertaking programs of study leading to registration as a health practitioner.
Higher education provider	Tertiary education provider who meets the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) as prescribed by the <i>Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011</i> (Cwlth) and is registered with TEQSA.
Learning outcomes	Skills, knowledge and attitudes identified as the requirements for satisfactory program or unit of study completion including, but not limited to, relevant NMBA standards for practice.
Monitoring	Systematic process of observation to determine that the education program continues to meet the relevant accreditation standards.
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia	National regulator for the nursing and midwifery professions in Australia. It is established under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as enacted in each state and territory. Its primary role is to protect the public and set standards and policies that all nurses and midwives registered within Australia must meet.
Professional experience placement	Component of nursing education that allows students to put theoretical knowledge into practice within the consumer care environment.
Program modifications	Change to an approved program of study against the relevant standard the program is accredited against. Program changes are notifiable to ANMAC prospectively or retrospectively depending on the change according to the list provided at Item 3.7 of this document.
Program monitoring report	Report completed by the education provider that notifies retrospective program changes and declares that the program and education provider continue to meet relevant accreditation standards.
Program or program of study	Full program of study and experiences required to be undertaken, such as a statement of completion or attainment, before a qualification can be awarded.
Prospective program change	Change that must be notified to and approved by ANMAC before it is implemented. See list at Item 3.7 of this document.
Retrospective program change	Change that may be notified to ANMAC after it occurs. Are notified to ANMAC through the PMR.

Term	Definition
Routine monitoring	Undertaken in the PMR and forwarded to the education provider annually 30 days before the anniversary of the NMBA approval of the program.
Targeted monitoring including ad-hoc	Monitoring that addresses a specific concern relating to a program or an education provider.
Teach-out	Describes the timeframe allocation to an 'expiring/expired accredited program' for current students to complete the program they initially enrolled in.

Under Review

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