



**SPECIALIST NURSE CREDENTIALING PROGRAM**  
Qualification Framework



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## Qualification Framework

Credentialing is a voluntary professional recognition scheme which recognises nurses practicing in a speciality area. Holding the appropriate qualification is an essential requirement when applying for a Specialty Nurse Credential. Credentialing is in addition to the legislated registration system which is the responsibility of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA).

This framework outlines the minimum qualification requirements for a nurse to be eligible to apply for credentialing with the relevant speciality college. Credentialing also requires that applicants demonstrate additional criteria such as current registration to practice, minimum periods of relevant practice, continuing education and practice development. The additional criteria are outlined in the Specialist Nurse Credentialing Program Application Kit and Instructions.

The qualifications identified in this framework represent the consensus position of the identified nursing colleges. Individual specialist organisations and colleges reserve the right to establish, or maintain educational qualification criteria above the minimum outlined within this framework, and may choose not to accept some pathways available through the framework. The specialist organisations and colleges adopting this framework are:



ACCYPN — Australian College of Children and Young Peoples Nurses



CNSA — Cancer Nurses Society Australia



ACMHN — Australian College of Mental Health Nurses



CENA — College of Emergency Nurses Australasia



PCNA — Palliative Care Nurses Australia

All organisations have agreed that this framework be reviewed within three years of commencement. There are a number of components that have been identified as transitional provisions. The ongoing need for these components to be included in the framework will be considered at this review. The review will also be an opportunity for each specialist organisation or college to review which pathways they will continue accept.



## Qualification Criterion

In order for an applicant to be eligible to apply for specialist nurse credentialing, they must demonstrate at least 100 points of relevant education in their specialty area of nursing practice.

The Qualification Criterion recognises that there have been different pathways over the years by which a registered nurse can undertake educational preparation for specialist nursing practice. There are three pathways included in this framework and each speciality organisation / College will nominate the pathways that they will accept.

This framework will be incorporated into the online credentialing portal so that instructions for applicants are tailored to their speciality.

## Glossary

The following notes are to be read in conjunction with, and form part of the framework.

**Qualification:** Refers to qualifications as recognised through the Australian Qualification Framework ([www.aqf.edu.au](http://www.aqf.edu.au)).

**Specialty Nursing:** Refers to a program of study that is directly relevant to the specialty area of nursing practice in which the applicant is seeking to be credentialed. It does not include a program of study that is restricted to a sub-specialty focus.

**Specialty Nursing Qualification** Refers to a qualification obtained through a program of study that is directly relevant to the specialty area of nursing practice in which the applicant is seeking to be credentialed. It does not include a program of study that is restricted to a sub-specialty focus. It results in a specialty nursing qualification and is delivered by a nursing and midwifery school / faculty or a nursing and midwifery organisation and is clearly described on the testamur as being in the specialty nursing area of practice.

**Other Nursing:** Refers to a program of study that is directly relevant to nursing and midwifery practice, but does not fit within the definition of Specialty Nursing.

**Other Nursing Qualification:** Refers to a qualification obtained through a program of study that is directly relevant to nursing and midwifery but does not fit within the definition of Specialty Nursing Qualification. The course must be a program of study that results in an identified nursing qualification and/or is delivered by a nursing and midwifery school / faculty or a nursing and midwifery organisation.

**Other Qualification relating to the specialty:** Refers to a program of study that results in a qualification in the area of specialty practice in which the applicant is seeking to be credentialed. Applicants who have undertaken research higher degrees must demonstrate that the degree was focussed in the specialty area and directly relevant to the applicant's practice.

**Other Education relating to the specialty:** Refers to a program of study in the area of specialty practice and is delivered by a health/medical or similar school /faculty, or an organisation with expertise in the specialty area of practice.



### Pathway 1: Holds a Specialty Nursing Qualification

The applicant must demonstrate that they have completed a specialty nursing qualification at the minimum level of a Graduate Diploma (as per the Australian Qualification Framework [www.aqf.edu.au](http://www.aqf.edu.au)) worth 100 points from the table below.

**Table 1: Pathway 1**

	Category of Education	Notes:
Australian Qualification Framework Level	Specialty Nursing Qualification	See the Glossary for a definition of Specialty Nursing Qualification.
Graduate Diploma or higher degree	100 points	



## Pathway 2: Holds a combination of qualifications and education related to the speciality

The applicant must demonstrate they have attained 100 points from Table 2. On this pathway, applicants may combine points from postgraduate qualifications and other education attained in various Categories of Education. Definitions of each Category of Education can be found in the Definitions section. This pathway will be reviewed within 3 years of commencement.

**Table 2: Pathway 2**

	Category of Education			Notes:
	I: Specialty Nursing Qualification	II: Other Nursing Qualification	III: Other Qualification relating to the specialty	
Australian Qualification Framework Level	I: Specialty Nursing Qualification	II: Other Nursing Qualification	III: Other Qualification relating to the specialty	
Graduate Diploma or higher degree	NA: Refer to Pathway 1	75 points	75 points	Applicants can only make one claim in Category II and Category III of education at the Graduate Diploma level.
Graduate Certificate	50 points  (N.B. This may increase to 100 points. See note 2.)	50 points	50 points	A speciality College may, allocate an additional 50 points for a specialty nursing qualification at Graduate Certificate level as a transitional arrangement to Pathway 1.  Applicants can only make one claim in Category II and Category III of education at the Graduate Certificate level.
Education course nominated by the specialty college.	Up to 50 points maximum can be claimed.	Up to 25 points max can be claimed.	Up to 25 points max can be claimed.	A maximum of 50 points only can be claimed using Education Courses nominated by the specialty organisation / college.  Specialty organisations / College will allocate the number of points that can be claimed for a course they have nominated.  Courses included must include an assessment to be undertaken to be awarded a certificate of completion.  Specialty organisations / College will provide a list of nominated courses and their allocated points.



### Pathway 3: Nurses who

**(3A) undertook a specialist post basic hospital course recognised by the speciality organisation / college OR**

**(3B) were registered as specialist nurses by previous Australian nursing registration authorities.**

The applicant must demonstrate that they have completed either

**3A.** A post-basic hospital certificate recognised by the specialty college/ organisation OR

**3B.** A post-basic hospital certificate or specialist pre-registration course that led to registration, or specialist registration where that existed.

The continuing need for Pathway 3 will be reviewed 3 years after the commencement of this framework.

**Table 3: Pathway 3**

Registration as a specialist nurse	Points	Notes
3A Post Basic Hospital Course recognised by the specialty organisation /college	Meets the Qualification Criterion as a transition arrangement for nominated specialties.	Applicants under Pathway 3A must demonstrate that they have completed a specialist post basic hospital course recognised by the relevant specialty organisation /college.  Where a course is not recognised for Pathway 3A, the course may still be eligible under Pathway 2.
3B Completed a Hospital Certificate in the specialty area of nursing; or specialist pre-registration course; or specialist registration.	100 points	The applicant must demonstrate they completed the course and were registered as a specialist nurse or their nursing registration endorsed in the speciality nursing area by the relevant nurse regulatory authority at the time of completion;  The onus shall be on the applicant to demonstrate recognition as a specialist nurse by the original nurse registering authority.
3B Completed a pre-registration Specialist Nursing Bachelors degree or diploma; or specialist pre-registration course; or specialist registration.	100 points	The applicant must demonstrate they completed the course and were registered as a specialist nurse or their nursing registration endorsed in the speciality nursing area by the relevant nurse regulatory authority at the time of completion;  The onus shall be on the applicant to demonstrate recognition as a specialist nurse by the original nurse registering authority.



## Appendix 1: Examples demonstrating how the Qualification Framework is applied.

### Pathway 1

- Jane holds a Masters of Mental Health Nursing attained at an Australian University. According to Pathway 1, Jane can claim 100 points for her qualification and meets the Qualification Criterion for the Specialist Nurse Credentialing Program.
- Bill holds a Graduate Certificate in Mental Health Nursing attained at an Australian University. Mental Health Nursing has not been nominated as a specialty accepting a Graduate Certificate so he does not meet the Qualification Criterion through Pathway 1.

### Pathway 2

- Anne is applying for a Mental Health Nurse Credential. The ACMHN requires that at least one of the qualifications presented for Pathway 2 is a specialty nursing qualification\*. Anne holds a Grad Cert in Mental Health Nursing from an Australian University, for which she can claim 50 points. She has also completed a multidisciplinary Graduate Diploma in Mental Health (Child & Adolescent) from an Australian University, for which she can claim 75 points. Anne has a total of 125 points under Pathway 2 and meets the qualification criterion.

*\*The ACMHN has determined that under Pathway 2 a Graduate Certificate in Mental Health Nursing needs to include content on mental health nursing theory and practice, and mental health theory and practice, evident in 3 units/subjects (i.e. 75% of the course/program). The second qualification needs to be at least a Graduate Certificate, awarded in a cognate (related) area and preferably in an area the applicant is working in such as Child and Adolescent mental health, for example, and needs to include 3 units/ subjects related to that specific area of specialty (i.e. 75% of the course/program) within the Graduate Certificate.*

- Doug is applying to be credentialed as a Palliative Care Nurse. He has completed the following courses:
  - a Graduate Certificate in Community Nursing from an Australian University for which he can claim 50 points (as a Graduate Certificate in the area of II: Other Nursing in Table 2).
  - a Specialist Certificate in Palliative Care conducted by the Centre for Palliative Care (Vic). PCNA has nominated this as an “Education course nominated by the specialty college” and allocated it 25 points under column III in Table 2.
  - Palliative care nursing in various contexts, a short course conducted by Queensland University of Technology. PCNA has nominated this as an “Education course nominated by the specialty college” and allocated it 25 points under column I in Table 2.

Under Pathway 2 Doug has achieved the 100 points required, through a combination of 50 points for the Graduate Certificate and a further 50 points under “Education course nominated by the specialty college”. Doug meets the requirements of the qualification criterion using Pathway 2.



### Pathway 3

- Clare is applying to be credentialed as an Emergency Nurse. Clare completed a Post Basic Certificate in Emergency/Trauma Nursing at the Alfred Hospital Melbourne. This course has been recognised by CENA under Pathway 3A. Clare meets the qualification criteria under the transition arrangement approved by CENA.
- Elizabeth has completed a post basic Hospital Certificate in Child Health Nursing. Following completion of this certificate Elizabeth was registered as a Child Health Nurse in Victoria by the Nurses Board of Victoria. Elizabeth can claim 100 points and meets the requirements of the qualification criterion using Pathway 3B.
- Frank completed a pre-registration hospital certificate in mental health nursing. As a result of this certificate, he was registered as a mental health nurse in Queensland by the Queensland Nursing Council. Frank can claim 100 points and meets the requirements of the qualification criterion using Pathway 3B.

