Notes
Nurse and midwife graduate handbook 2014

Your employment diary
At a glance

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| April 12: Australian College of Nursing Expo | May 26: Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria (PMCV) Graduate Nurse Midwife Program Match (GNMP Match) opens for you to apply online | \- Do your research on available graduate programs  
- Decide if you want a graduate program  
- If you want a graduate program, review information PMCV Graduate Nurse/Midwife Program (GNMP) Match website |
| **JUNE**       | **JULY**                | **AUGUST**                    |
| July 24: Candidate’s priority list submission closing date  
Closing date for your priority list (your preferences). | Make note of your interview dates and times |  |
| **SEPTEMBER**  | **OCTOBER**             | **DECEMBER**                  |
| September 18: Last day to make changes to your preferences on GNMP Match | October 1: Check with Nursing and Midwifery Board Australia (NMBA) for your online pre registration  
October 14: Computer matching (GNMP Match) results available  
October 17: GNMP Match list with available positions is posted on the website | \- Get your registration details together  
- If you don’t have a graduate position keep applying |
Why you need to read this handbook

If you are a final year nursing or midwifery student, you need to read this handbook.

Each year more than 2200 students graduate from nursing and midwifery courses in Victoria (and about 11,000 across Australia) and most are looking for a job at the same time.

Employers can only take on so many graduates, so you need to stand out from the crowd.

The challenge you are facing is finishing your studies and getting a job in the nursing and midwifery workforce. It is a very busy year, so to help you get organised and stay on track this handbook is divided into three sections:

1. Getting organised - from May 2014
2. Getting on with the job hunt - from June to November 2014
Welcome

We have put together this handbook to help you get your first job as a nurse or midwife.

Making the transition from a student to a registered health professional actually starts over the next few months. You will be putting together your resume and going for interviews and we want you to have the best information to help you make the right decisions for your future.

It’s going to be a busy time for the next few months but it’s the beginning of your career as a nurse or midwife. Being a nurse or midwife is one of the most exciting, challenging and personally rewarding jobs you can have. We look forward to welcoming each of you to your first year of practice and hope this handbook helps you.

Merrin Bamert
Manager Nursing and Midwifery Workforce
Department of Health
1. Getting organised May 2014

It is never too soon to start getting organised for your employment search. During this time you need to:

✓ start a job hunt file
✓ decide if you want a graduate program
✓ decide if you want to participate in the Graduate Nurse and Midwifery Program (GNMP) Match.

A good place to start is to compile a job hunt file that includes the certificates and information you’ll need throughout the next six months.

Your job hunt file
Start a file now
Include:
✓ Your birth certificate
✓ Police check clearance
✓ Immunisation status
✓ Transcript of course grades/academic record
✓ Referee contact details

Leave spaces for:
✓ Your resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)
✓ NMBA Registration application documents

Before you can begin to work as a nurse or midwife, including in a graduate program, you must be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). To find out when and how to register, turn to Getting registered nurse or midwife, page 14.

Once you are registered with the NMBA you are authorised to practise anywhere in Australia.

Graduate programs
Many, but not all, nurses or midwives start their professional careers by undertaking a graduate program.

Graduate programs are formalised education programs offered by employers for those in their first year of practice. They are workplace-based programs designed to consolidate knowledge, skills and competence, and transition graduates to practise as safe, confident and accountable professionals while being employed.

Graduate programs go beyond normal orientation and induction and offer graduates formal education time (including study days), supernumerary time and clinical support including preceptorship and supervised clinical education.

They may include opportunities for rotations, that is to work in more than one area of the organisation or to have short periods of observation in specialised areas of care.

For more information, see: www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing/furthering/graduate or visit health service websites to find out what they offer in a graduate program.
Graduate programs are not mandatory

Graduate programs are not mandatory; however they do offer new graduates a structured and supported approach to the first year of practice. They may not suit everybody and some people may not get an opportunity to enter a graduate program (see section 3 Getting a job - from November 2014, page 15).

For example, if you’re an enrolled nurse making the transition to become a registered nurse, you may already be well acquainted with professional practice, although in a different role and at a different level. Your current or potential employer may be happy to appoint you to a registered nurse role and you may not want to do a full graduate program – it’s up to you and your employer. People who already have qualifications may not want to complete a full graduate program and others may consider deferring. Our advice is to find out all the options and consequences and work out what is best for you.

Finding the graduate program for you

As soon as you are registered as a nurse or midwife, you are licensed to work in those professions and are accountable for your care and actions. However, in your first year of employment, you may need a supportive environment to help you make the transition from student to professional in a planned, collaborative way.

Graduate programs offer a range of experiences and opportunities. Some give graduates a single ward where they can consolidate their skills and professional integration with a stable team over the full 12 months. Others offer rotations to different areas that allow you to experience different things. No one program is right.

The size of the organisation and number of rotations is not a guarantee that a program is suited to you. Some people prefer smaller organisations and need more time to settle in and become confident – it’s what’s right for you.

Many nurses and midwives believe that the most important aspect of their graduate year is to work in a clinical area that offers good support. This support may include access to debriefing sessions, supernumerary time, ‘buddying’ with more experienced staff or ongoing education.

Your first year is about consolidation and learning to be a professional; it’s not another student clinical placement. It is important that you are in a team where you feel like you are practising safely and know where to go for answers.

Before choosing your graduate program, do some research to find out what is offered and think about what you personally need in a workplace.

Many health services arrange an information evening to welcome nursing and midwifery graduates considering a graduate program. More news about ‘information sessions’ will be available on the individual health service website usually under the nursing/midwifery graduate programs.
How to access graduate programs in Victoria

There are two main ways to find a graduate program in Victoria:

1. Through Graduate Nurse/Midwife Program (GNMP) Match - an online matching service that most public health services and some private employers use for their initial offers. 
2. Applying directly to employers. Employers that do not use GNMP Match may advertise their programs on their websites or through local media.

Using GNMP Match

The GNMP Match simplifies the appointment of graduate nurses and midwives into graduate programs by matching the preferences of students (known as ‘candidates’) and employers (the health services).

The first step in being employed in a graduate program is to register with GNMP Match at: http://computermatching.pmcv.com.au

This site includes program rules and Frequently Asked Questions that cover all program details – make sure you read these carefully.

Please be aware that:

✓ You are not guaranteed a place if you go in the match. It’s competitive, with more candidates than places, particularly for the more popular programs or employers. To give yourself the best chance of success, take a proactive and professional approach.

✓ You will have four choices of where to do your graduate program. To have the best chance of gaining a place you need to provide four different preferences - don’t choose the same place and put all your eggs in one basket!

Key dates for GNMP Match

✓ Online registration begins on 26 May 2014 and closes on 24 July 2014
✓ Results are available from 17 October 2014
✓ You can withdraw and make changes to your preferences until 18 September 2014.

Being part of GNMP Match doesn’t get you a job.
You get yourself a job – by your achievements, your well presented resume/CV and good interview skills!
Postponing your graduate year

In the past, some nursing/midwifery graduates who have not got the match they wanted have considered waiting until the next year for a better offer. You should think seriously before postponing your graduate year. Deferral will create a long gap between completing your course and starting a graduate program. It may make you ineligible to apply for next year’s GNMP Match and may disadvantage your employment prospects compared to more recently graduated nurses and midwives.

Over the past few years the number of graduate places offered by employers has been close to the number of graduates. This situation is likely to continue, so you should start your nursing/midwifery career as soon as possible.

If you decide not to go into the match or don’t accept an offer, you really need to focus on getting a nursing or midwifery job within the first six months of graduating (see our advice in section 2 Getting on with the job hunt, page 11).

Remember that your first year of employment is a time to consolidate your skills and education, and to understand how to practise consistently at the level expected of a health professional. The setting you work in is not the most important aspect of this year.

Resources to help you:

If you need assistance during your final semester at university, you could discuss your academic progress and employment issues with your course co-ordinator. Sometimes it is necessary to negotiate extensions for your work.

There are other resources that might be able to assist you including:

Melbourne Uni: www.services.unimelb.edu.au/index.html

Monash Uni: www.monash.edu.au/students/services/

Deakin Uni: www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/services.php

RMIT: www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=b3mism7rz4jd


Nursing and midwifery are practice-based professions, so it’s really important that you consolidate your undergraduate learning through regular employment in the first year of being registered.
2. Getting on with the job hunt - June to November 2014

From May or June you need to be preparing your CV and getting ready to attend interviews. It can be a busy time as you will also be studying; but it is important to stay focused, organised and flexible. During this time, you need to:

- prepare a winning CV
- arrange referees
- practise and prepare for your interviews
- pre-register with NMBA.

Putting together your CV

In putting together your CV, carefully consider what employers might want from a graduate and the traits and abilities they would value. Your CV is a way of marketing yourself.

Here are some tips:

- Include transferable skills that you have gained through study, part-time work or volunteering. Transferable skills demonstrate your capacity to do the job and are important in the current job market.
- Avoid words that are over used such as dynamic, innovative – hundreds of other graduates are describing themselves in similar ways. Replace overused terms with descriptions of specific projects and outcomes, for example you could say:
  - As a volunteer, I did ……
  - As a student I experienced……
  - I worked outside of nursing as a ……
  - In a school project I was responsible for ……
- There are many CV styles but always use a specific CV if suggested by the employer.
- Be truthful and accurate and provide all information requested.
- Emphasise how you intend to contribute to the organisation.
- Ask permission of your referee before including their name in your CV.

Your CV

The basic information required is:

- personal details
- education and employment history
- skills
- referees
Professionalism and credibility can be measured by your attention to detail and following through on commitments. For example, if your letter of application or resume states that you have good written communication and organisation skills, then make sure it is well written and includes all of the information and documentation required.

Everyone hates interviews

Most of us find interviews stressful but performing well at interview is a learned process and so practise will help.

- Find out if the interview is one-on-one or a group interview.
- Most questions will follow the selection criteria or job description for graduate nurses and midwives, which may be found on the health service website.
- Practise interviews by creating your own questions and answers. It is helpful if you can be articulate about yourself.
- Interviews are also about building a relationship with your potential employer. Consider what a director of nursing might want in a graduate nurse or midwife, such as:
  - being interested in the patients’ welfare
  - knowing when and where to seek guidance
  - displaying professionalism.
- Take advantage of the interview to sell yourself, but remain realistic and truthful.

We asked some people responsible for assessing final year students what they are looking for in graduate applicants.

Carole Maddison, Associate Director of Nursing Centre for Nursing Practice Education & Research at Goulburn Valley Health says when she is interviewing graduate nurses she looks for:

- good interpersonal skills – and graduates who discuss communication and team work
- graduates who show enthusiasm
- graduates who have the ability to problem solve and discuss strategies to seek help when needed
- graduates who have given consideration to their future nursing/midwifery career
- graduates who display an enquiring approach to nursing practice and show initiative in choosing ongoing learning strategies
- academic progress as undergraduate.
Surviving group interviews

Group interviews usually take a couple of hours and are different to one-on-one interviews which are more relaxed and intimate. Group interviewers give strong direction usually because there are so many people to manage in the process. The interviewers observe all the candidates in the activities.

Like all interviews, you are assessed from the moment you enter the room. The interviewers pay attention to everything. Here are some tips for group interviews:

• When you have the opportunity to tell the group about yourself and your experiences, be confident, maintain eye contact and speak in a clear voice.
• The group interview may include role-playing scenarios. Standing out during a group interview is important so you need to consider how you can impress the interviewers.
• Try to discuss your experience and education whenever possible.
• No matter how qualified or experienced you are, it's easy to get overwhelmed at a group interview. Remain calm, take your time, and express yourself clearly.

Resources to help you:

Some useful sites that can help you with your CV and interviews are:


International nursing and midwifery graduates

This section is written specifically for non-resident international nursing and midwifery graduates who have studied in Australia. It is suggested you also read the other sections as this advice is written in conjunction with the rest of the handbook.

Would you like to apply for a graduate year in Victoria?

As previously explained GNMP Match is one way to apply for nursing and midwifery graduate programs in Victoria. Whilst international graduates do not meet the eligibility criteria there are still options to be employed on a graduate program. You can apply for unmatched positions directly by contacting hospitals that have unmatched places after the 14th October 2014. You can also apply directly to private health services before this date, by checking their websites.

You will need to meet the criteria for registration as a Registered Nurse (Division 1)/Registered Midwife with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and hold a current working visa.
The Registration Standards for nurses and midwives are very important to international graduates in relation to English language requirements. The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia website provides this information. International graduates are urged to start the registration process early (at least six months before completion of the course) http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx

What to do if you are unsuccessful in your applications for nursing and midwifery positions

If you are receiving rejections without being offered an interview, you may need to review the type of jobs you are applying for and the quality of your written application. If you think you’re doing all the right things, it might simply be a case of persevering.

Here are some hints to consider when submitting your application.

• Your résumé and application should be well-presented and professional
• Employers DO notice spelling mistakes in job applications!
• Match your terminology and language to the job advertisement to ensure your application is identified by keyword software that some employers use.
• Demonstrate you have researched the organisation and know where it is, what it does and what services it has.
• Address the selection criteria, with reference to relevant experience, skills and knowledge.
• Don’t apply for management or senior roles when you have recently graduated.
• Find out the correct title of the person you are applying to.
• Write a separate application for each job you apply for.

If you are unsure about your application style, consult an expert for feedback. This could include a university or private careers consultant, or a recruiter.

If you are being invited to interviews, you can assume that your written application is adequate.

A word about social media

Social media has created a very sociable environment but it has also blurred the boundary between our personal and professional lives. A recent survey of more than 400 managers found that 36 per cent of Australian employers admit to checking potential candidate’s Facebook profiles before offering them the job!

So, as a general rule, it is best not to put information on Facebook or other sites that you do not want your employer to know. Remember to list and adjust your privacy settings so you can effectively separate your professional life from your personal life.
More about interviews

Those undertaking a Graduate Masters in Nursing will have completed only some of their clinical placements by the time the interviews are being held and they may not feel confident in a competitive interview process. You should take every opportunity to develop confidence for the interview process. Seek advice from your course co-ordinator or nurse educators at your clinical placements; they will advise you on what employers might want from a Masters level graduate and the type of interview questions you may be asked.

Getting registered as a nurse or midwife

Before you can begin to work as a nurse or midwife you must be registered with the NMBA.

Many nursing and midwifery graduate programs in Victoria commence in February, so it is important that you do not delay your application for registration. The registration process can take one to two months even if the NMBA has all the documentation. The NMBA will review your application and the recommendation of your training provider -so you need to complete all your assignments.

You are able to pre-register online but your application will not be successfully completed until you have passed your course and the NMBA have received and assessed all the documentation.

Find out about the registration process at: www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Graduate-Applications.aspx

To ensure you are ready to start your graduate program you must:

✓ complete all academic requirements by the time the academic progress committee at your institution meets
✓ commence your on-line pre registration to NMBA 4-6 weeks before end of academic year
✓ pay the NMBA application fee on time
✓ ensure you have all the correct and complete documentation for NMBA including evidence that you meet the English Language registration standards.

You cannot start your graduate program if you are not registered – no exceptions!
If you were in GNMP Match you will know by October if you have employment in a graduate program.

If you got a place, congratulations you can relax!

Many graduates worry they will reduce their skills and competency over the Christmas holidays, but be reassured that your employer will provide a comprehensive orientation and you will be much more focused if you have a break.

If you don't get matched to a graduate program

As there are many graduates participating in the match, not all graduates get a match immediately. If you find yourself in this situation, there are still options. You can seek a graduate program place by doing the following:

• After the match, look at the list of health services that have available places (on the GNMP Match website) and consider doing a graduate program at one of those services.
• Look at the health service's website to find out the full range of services they provide – you may be surprised at the opportunities.
• Contact the health service directly by ringing the course co-coordinator to confirm your interest in their program.
• Consider a rural or regional graduate program as there are amazing experiences on offer.

We have talked to some nurses who have found working in a rural setting the best choice they made, so have a look yourself at:

• Living in country Victoria
  www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcDFj8xmdH8
• Working in country Victoria
  www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpuTsyB6vs4
Finding a job

If you have not been successful in gaining employment through the match we suggest you rethink your career plan. We strongly recommend you take a job if one is offered. It may not be your dream job but it will give you an entrance to the profession and may open up many opportunities.

Remember, graduate programs are not mandatory. There are many ways to enter the nursing and midwifery workforce. You need to approach the task with commitment so that not too much time elapses between completing your study and being in employment as a nurse or midwife.

You may need to consider clinical fields and geographic areas that are not your first, second or even twentieth choice, so that you ‘get your foot in the door’. You may also need to consider working fewer hours, with the intention of proving yourself and being available to leap at any opportunities that arise.

Consider all employment options, such as public and private health services, doctors’ surgeries and Multi Purpose Services (MPS), health clinics, aged care facilities and the Defence forces – these are all options that could provide employment opportunities for graduates.

Please remember that some graduates don’t start their programs, drop out or postpone their start, so it is good to check with health services (especially those where you have been interviewed) in late January or February to see if any places have become available at short notice.

Additionally, Health Workforce Australia provides a Graduate Information Portal to assist graduates who don’t get an initial graduate place.

This site gathers information from around Australia and is available after the GNMP Match. Visit the Nursing and Midwifery Graduate Jobs website at http://nmgj.org.au for more information.

What to look for in an employer if they don’t have a formal graduate program:

- a good orientation process
- support for study leave
- partnerships with education providers
- supernumerary time for you to work with a preceptor.
Relationships and networking

Professional relationships can help you through the application process and link you to employment opportunities. Many employers use their networks and rely on referrals from employees or organisations in their community, rather than advertising. Networking to find employment can be through professional nursing and midwifery organisations, your nursing friends and online sources.

You have a great opportunity to create a good impression while on your clinical placements. Consider the clinical placement as the beginning of your relationship with a potential employer, especially if you are interested in working at that health service. Clinical placements also provide an opportunity to network within the organisation and foster relationships. Many health services have an employment website where you can apply for vacancies.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

While looking for a job, show prospective employers that you are engaged with your profession. Attend workshops and lectures (especially those that build on clinical skills and practices or those relevant to the area you are seeking work in). Continue to read nursing and midwifery journals and complete online learning packages.

Some graduates continue their studies, undertaking an honours year or post-graduate studies while they look for employment in nursing and midwifery.

Finishing studies mid-year

If you finish your degree mid-year, think about applying for a graduate program that starts mid-year or applying for a job. You can apply through GNMP Match the year before for a mid-year intake.

Waiting for a graduate program that starts at the beginning of the following year may put you at a disadvantage in a competitive environment, as you may no longer be considered a ‘new grad’.

International nursing and midwifery graduates

If you are an international graduate seeking career opportunities in Australia there is a “Graduates Career” website which has specific information for international students that have undertaken their study in Australia.

http://www.graduateopportunities.com/career_advice/international_student_opportunities

The careers booklet found on the above website outlines many processes including how to apply for a visa. It has now become easier for graduating international students to trial the Australian workplace. For further details of other eligibility requirements, see www.immi.gov.au
Other assistance

- There are many professional associations and industry bodies that can assist you to chat to colleagues and stay abreast of Australian trends. You might like to consider joining an interest group, college or specialty group in your area.
- If you, like many other graduates, find interviews stressful you may consider taking a course in conversational English. Academic skills alone may not get you a job, but good communication and interpersonal skills can help. Conversational English can polish your communication and improve your interview skills.

Achieving work-life balance

Before you start your graduate year, consider your work-life balance. Achieving a healthy balance can help you by increasing motivation, job satisfaction and performance, whether you are a university student, graduate employee or mature person with a family.

Work-life balance is often defined by the overlapping domains of work/learning roles, relationships and personal wellbeing. Many people who have completed their professional qualifications still have work-life pressures.

During the first year of practice, graduates may face pressures at work, such as the weight of constantly being assessed, the impact of moving away from home, the need to manage practical life matters such as finances and accommodation, working with other employees and being part of large impersonal institution, to name a few.

As you build your career you may feel the need to work additional hours or spend extra time studying. Sometimes we need to sacrifice the optimal work-life balance for the long-term good; but this should only be for short periods, like doing exams and attending interviews. Overall, maintaining a realistic work-life balance will have benefits for you.

Remember that the transition period is always the hardest!
We hope this information has helped you understand the current employment environment and given you some strategies for your transition into the profession.

Nursing and midwifery are careers that offer terrific opportunities and experiences. Yours is just beginning – good luck!

To find out more go to: www.nursing.vic.gov.au