



Specialty nursing practice position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement sets out the criteria the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) considers should apply to all areas of speciality nursing practice. It should be read with the ANMF positions statements: *Professional practice framework and standards for nurses and midwives*; and *Credentiailling for nurses and midwives*.

2. Definitions

Generalist nursing practice is directed toward diverse people with different health needs. It occurs in a wide variety of healthcare settings and requires nurses to have a broad nursing knowledge base and skillset.¹

In contrast, **specialty nursing practice** focuses on a specific area of nursing. It is directed towards a defined group of people or a specific area of practice and is enriched by nurses who have advanced knowledge and skills in the specific area on top of their broad nursing knowledge base and skillset.² See position for more criteria.

3. Context

A variety of mechanisms are employed internationally to recognise and regulate speciality practice. However, there is no evidence to show that formally regulating speciality groups for the purposes of registration reduces risk to the public or that regulation of speciality practice improves patient and client outcomes.³ The ANMF therefore recommends the following approach.

4. Position

It is the position of the ANMF that any specialty nursing practice must meet the following criteria:

1. The specialty describes itself as an area of nursing practice – for example mental health nursing – and subscribes to the overall purposes, functions, practice and ethical standards of nursing.
2. The specialty focuses on a defined population and a defined area of nursing practice and there is a demonstrated demand for the specialty.
3. The defined area of nursing practice:
 - is based on a core body of nursing knowledge that is expanded and refined by research
 - has established mechanisms for supporting, reviewing and disseminating such research
 - is advanced by practitioners applying specific evidence-based knowledge and skills.

¹ National Nursing Organisations. 2004. *Glossary of terms: Criteria for specialties in nursing | Principles of credentialling for nurses*. Available at http://www.connmo.org.au/images/PDF/NNO_Glossary_of_Terms.pdf.

² Ibid.

³ Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. 2020. Fact sheet: *Advanced nursing practice and specialty areas within nursing*. Available at: <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/codes-guidelines-statements/faq/fact-sheet-advanced-nursing-practice-and-specialty-areas.aspx>.



4. Nurses gain specialty expertise through formal education programs, experience in the practice area and continuing professional development.
5. Educational programs related to the specialty:
 - are guided by the specialty's practice standards
 - are prepared and administered by the nursing professions.

Credentialling to recognise specialty nursing practice

It is the position of the ANMF that:

6. Private credentialling to recognise specialty nursing practice is an unnecessary waste of nurses' resources.⁴
7. Australia's statutory regulation regime for nurses and midwives already protects the public and assures quality nursing and midwifery practice by ensuring individuals, programs of study, and education providers meet agreed standards.⁵

5. Position statement management

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⁴ For more information, see the ANMF position statement: *Credentialling for nurses and midwives*.

⁵ Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. 2020. Fact sheet: *Advanced nursing practice and specialty areas within nursing*. Available at: <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/codes-guidelines-statements/faq/fact-sheet-advanced-nursing-practice-and-specialty-areas.aspx>.