

Nursing and midwifery new graduate guide

OFFICIAL



Department
of Health

Why you should read this document

If you are a final-year nursing or midwifery student, it's time to start thinking about your employment opportunities for next year. Each year, more than 3,000 students graduate from nursing and midwifery courses in Victoria, and most are looking for a job at the same time. Employers will interview many graduates as part of a highly competitive process. You should endeavour to stand out from the crowd!

Your priority for this year will be to finish your studies and to get a job in the nursing and midwifery workforce. This year will be very busy, and this guide will help you get organised and stay on track.

The guide is divided into four sections:

1. Getting organised
2. Getting on with the job hunt
3. Opportunities outside of matching process
4. Professional tips

Please note that your education provider will remind you to register for the Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria (PMCV) graduate nursing and midwifery program match (GNMP Match) via the Allocations and Placement Service website at: <https://allocations.pmcv.com.au/>.

Every year PMCV publish a 'Key Dates' document that will impact your planning – please make sure you are familiar with these dates.

1. Getting organised

It's never too soon to start getting organised for your employment search. During this time, you will need to:

- start a job hunt file
- start thinking about whether a graduate program is for you
- decide if you want to participate in the GNMP Match.

Preparing a job hunt file is a good place to start. Ensure your file includes all the documentation and information you will need for your employment applications.

Your job hunt file

Include your:

birth certificate

police check clearance

immunisation status

transcript of nursing/midwifery course grades or academic record

referee contact details

curriculum vitae (CV), also known as your 'résumé'

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia registration application documents.

Creating a good impression is important when applying for employment. One of the best opportunities for creating a good impression is during your clinical placements. Consider clinical placements 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 to foster relationships. Remember that your preceptor may be an excellent referee for job applications.

Before you can begin to work as a nurse or midwife, you must be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). The NMBA is the only body authorised to register nurses (including enrolled nurses) and midwives in Australia. To find out more visit the [NMBA website](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au) at <<http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au>>.

To find out when and how to register, turn to Section 2 Getting on with the job hunt - *Getting registered as a nurse or midwife*.

Graduate transition to practice programs

Many, but not all, nurses or midwives start their professional careers by undertaking a graduate transition to practice program (graduate program).

Graduate programs for nurses and midwives support graduates during the early stages of practice as registered health professionals. They provide a supportive environment where graduates can consolidate and build on their knowledge, skills and confidence. Graduate programs provide a platform for developing safe, confident and accountable professionals.

For more information visit the department's [Nursing and midwifery graduates webpage](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery/nursing-and-midwifery-graduates) <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery/nursing-and-midwifery-graduates>> or visit health service websites to find out what they offer in a graduate program.

Enrolled Nurses Transition to Practice Programs

In addition to supporting public health services run graduate programs for registered nurses and midwives, the Victorian Government supports Enrolled Nurse Transition to Practice Programs.

If you are interested in these programs, further information and a list of participating public health services is available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery/development-fund>.

Graduate programs are not mandatory

Nursing and midwifery graduates have full registration and can be employed in their first year of practice in any health, community or aged care setting in the private or public sector. Although not mandatory, participating in a formal graduate program is highly recommended. For more information about getting a job outside of the GNMP Match, go to Section 3: *Opportunities outside of the matching process*.

Finding the graduate program for you

In the first year of employment, it's best if you can find a supportive environment to help you make the transition from student to professional in a planned, collaborative way.

Graduate programs can offer a range of experiences and opportunities. Some programs enable a single ward experience where graduates can consolidate their skills and professional integration with a stable team over the full 12-month period. Other programs offer rotations to different areas within the 12 months. These allow the graduate to experience different wards or clinical areas of the health service.

Consider all your options. This could include a rural or regional graduate program where there are more diverse opportunities on offer. Many nurses and midwives seek out a chance to work in a clinical area that offers debriefing sessions, supernumerary time, 'buddying' with more experienced staff or ongoing education.

The graduate year is all about consolidation and learning to transition to professional practice. It is not another student clinical placement. The program enables the graduate to be part of a team as well as the opportunity to practise safely and know where to go for answers.

Before choosing a graduate program, do some fact-finding 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 who are considering a graduate program. More news about information sessions is made available on health service websites, usually under the section on nursing/midwifery graduate programs.

How to access graduate programs in Victoria

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

1. The GNMP Match is an online allocation and placement service that public health services and some private employers use for their initial offers.
2. You can apply directly to employers. Employers that do not use the GNMP Match may advertise their programs on their websites or through local media. For example, some private hospitals, community and aged care services advertise this way.

Aboriginal Graduate Programs

Many organisations offer valuable opportunities to support the transition to professional practice for Aboriginal graduate nurses and/or midwives. These are culturally safe graduate programs that are designed to consolidate knowledge, skills and competence and offer support for graduates who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, to transition to practice as safe, confident and accountable professionals.

If you are interested in taking up a graduate position that offers culturally safe support, please contact your health service of interest directly to find out more information.

Using the GNMP Match

The GNMP Match, run by the Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria (PMCV), simplifies the process of appointing graduate nurses and midwives into graduate programs by matching the preferences of students (known as 'candidates') and employers (the health services).

The first step is to register for an account on the PMCV's Allocation and Placement Service (APS) Website <<https://allocations.pmcv.com.au/>>.

This website 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 GNMP Match. It's competitive, particularly for the more popular programs.

You are only eligible to receive one offer through the GNMP Match. If you are matched to a position at an organisation through the GNMP Match, it is compulsory to accept this offer. If you receive an early offer from an organisation not participating in the GNMP Match and you choose to accept the offer, you are required to withdraw from the GNMP match or notify PMCV by a date published on the APS website every year, so they can remove your details from the GNMP Match.

To give yourself the best chance of success:

- Take a proactive and professional approach.
- Ensure you provide four varying preferences.
- Think carefully about your preferences. Consider preferences across four different health services rather than different campuses across the same health service.
- Be diverse in your preferences (consider rural health services or aged care). However, only preference health services you are prepared to go to.
- Remember, the fewer preferences you provide, the less likely you are to be matched to a graduate program.

Participating in the online matching service does not guarantee employment. You gain employment through your achievements, professionalism, well-presented CV and interview.

Postponing your graduate year

In the past, some nursing and midwifery graduates have considered postponing their pursuit of a graduate year. You should think seriously before postponing your graduate year. Deferral will create a long gap between completing your course and starting a graduate program. Postponing your graduate year will make you ineligible to apply for next year's GNMP Match and may disadvantage your employment prospects compared with more recently graduated nurses and midwives.

A final year nursing and/or midwifery student who is or will be unable to commence in a graduate position in the year immediately after completion of their course, due to compassionate or extenuating circumstances which arise *prior* to the publication of GNMP Match results, should contact the PMCV to discuss their situation. The student **may** be permitted to enter the GNMP Match in the following year. The student will be asked to provide documentary evidence to support the grounds on which they are requesting special consideration to enter the following year's GNMP Match. Requests for special consideration will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

A student who is matched to a graduate program position and is unable to commence in that position, due to compassionate or extenuating circumstances which arise *after* the publication of GNMP Match results, should contact the health service where they have been matched to discuss their situation. The matched graduate may seek an extension or renegotiation of their contract with their matched health service. Accommodation of this will be at the discretion of the individual health service concerned.

NB: A student who participates in the GNMP Match, and is subsequently advised by their university that they have not successfully completed their course, and cannot commence in a graduate program in the following year, may enter the GNMP Match in the following year (assuming that this is the year in which they will complete their course requirements).

If you decide not to go into the GNMP Match or choose not to accept an offer, you should focus on gaining employment within the first six months of graduating (see our advice in Section 2: Getting on with the job hunt)

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.

Nursing and midwifery are practice-based professions, so it's important that you consolidate your undergraduate learning through regular employment in the first year of being registered.

2. Getting on with the job hunt

The best time to start preparing your CV and to practice for interviews is at the start of your final year as a student. It can be a busy time because you will also be studying, but it is important to stay focused, organised and flexible. During this time, you should be:

- preparing a professional CV
- arranging appropriate referees (such as preceptors)
- practising and preparing for your interviews
- registering and setting up your online profile with the NMBA.

Creating an impressive CV is very important in a highly competitive environment.

Putting together your CV

In putting together your CV, carefully consider what employers might want from a graduate nurse or midwife 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 like 'innovative', 'dynamic', 'motivated', 'team player', 'fast-paced' and 'problem solver' – hundreds of other graduates are describing themselves in the same way. 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 university project I was responsible for...*
- There are many CV styles, but always use a specified style if it's 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 referees before including their names in your CV and also as part of your GNMP match registration.

Your CV

The basic information required is:

personal details
 education and employment history
 skills
 referees.

Employers measure professionalism and credibility by assessing your attention to detail and your ability to follow through on commitments. For example, if your letter of application or CV states that you have good written communication and organisation skills, then make sure it is well written and includes all the information and documentation required.

Thinking about the future

As you draft your CV and begin considering your employment options, you should also be looking to the future. Chances are, you haven't decided if you will take a career path that leads to management, education, research or a clinical leadership role like nurse practitioner or endorsed midwife, but these are all options.

You have many years of nursing/midwifery in front of you, so avoid specialising too early. The choices you make in your graduate year should provide broad experiences, ensuring you have a wider range of options later in your career. Consider how important a general medicine or surgical rotation might be in preparation for that future.

Maybe you will be lucky and do a rotation in a specialty that interests you but know that if you never look elsewhere you may miss your true calling and that the best specialists are most likely well-rounded generalists.

The broader your early experience, the wider your career choices later



Interview tips

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

- Find out if the interview is a one-on-one or a group interview. Interview processes will vary across different health services.
- Questions may follow the selection criteria or job description for graduate nurses or midwives, which may be found on the health service's website.
- Practise interview skills by creating your own questions and answers. It is helpful to be articulate when discussing your attributes.
- As part of the GNMP match registration there will be an on-line video interview section for approved candidates. Most health services will use this method, but some may do additional interviews or only do their own.

- Interviews are also about building a relationship with your potential employer. Consider what a Director of Nursing or Midwifery might want in a graduate nurse or midwife such as:
 - being interested in the welfare of patients
 - safe and quality patient care
 - knowing when and where to seek guidance
 - displaying professionalism.
- Use the interview process as an opportunity to sell yourself but remain realistic and truthful.

We asked some people who are responsible for assessing final-year students what they are looking for in graduate program applications.

Directors of Nursing and Midwifery told us they generally look for:

- good interpersonal skills and graduates who discuss communication and teamwork
- graduates who show enthusiasm
- graduates who can problem-solve and discuss strategies for seeking help when needed
- graduates who have considered their future career
- graduates who display an enquiring approach to nursing practice and show initiative in choosing ongoing learning strategies
- academic progress as an undergraduate.

A guide to group interviews

Group interviews may take a couple of hours and are different from one-on-one interviews, which are more 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 at the same time.

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 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 nervous at a group interview. Remain calm, take your time and express yourself clearly.
- If asked as a group to work through a scenario, make sure you listen to everyone's opinion. Try not to dominate the conversation.

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

[Career One – career advice](http://career-advice.careerone.com.au/)

<http://career-advice.careerone.com.au/>

[Seek – career advice](https://www.seek.com.au/career-advice)

<https://www.seek.com.au/career-advice>

Be sure to also check your university's careers page.

International nursing and midwifery graduates

This section is written specifically to support employment opportunities for non-resident international nursing and midwifery graduates who have studied in Australia. This advice is written in conjunction with the rest of the guide, so it is important to read the other sections as well.

International graduates are not eligible to participate in the GNMP Match but still have options to be employed in a graduate program:

1. You can apply directly to health services not participating in the GNMP Match. Check their websites to find out how.
2. You can apply for unmatched positions by directly contacting health services that have unmatched places available. The date you can begin making these enquires is posted on the PMCV APS website in the GNMP Match reading material every year.
3. Look for employment opportunities via employment websites.
4. You will need to meet the criteria for registration as a registered nurse or midwife with the NMBA and hold a current working visa.

International graduates also need to be aware of the English language requirements for registration. The NMBA website provides this information. International graduates are urged to start the registration process early (at least six months before completing the course). Visit the NMBA's [Registration Standards webpage](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards) <<http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards>> for more information.

In addition, there is a [Graduate Opportunities website](http://www.graduateopportunities.com) <www.graduateopportunities.com>. Visit the website for specific information for international students who have undertaken their study in Australia.

The careers booklet found on the above website outlines many processes including how to apply for a visa. For further details about other [eligibility requirements](http://www.homeaffairs.gov.au) see <<http://www.homeaffairs.gov.au>>.

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 begin in January, so it is important that you do not delay your application for registration. The registration process can take time, 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 have completed all your assignments.

You can register online, but your application will not be successfully completed until you have passed your course and the NMBA has received and assessed all the documentation.

Find out about the [registration process](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Graduate-Applications) at <<http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Graduate-Applications>>.

You cannot start working as a registered nurse if you are not registered – no exceptions!

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
- start your online registration with the NMBA six weeks before the end of the academic year
- pay the NMBA application fee on time to ensure your application is processed
- ensure you have all the correct and complete documentation for the NMBA including evidence that you meet the English language registration standards.

3. Opportunities outside the matching process

What to do if you are not matched to a graduate program

If you find yourself in the situation where you are unmatched following the GNMP Match, there are still options:

1. After the GNMP Match results are published, as an unmatched candidate you will receive an email from PMCV with the unmatched positions available to apply for.
2. Look at the health service's website to find out the full range of services they provide – you may be surprised at the opportunities.
3. Contact the health service directly by ringing the graduate program coordinator to confirm your interest in their program.
4. The remaining unmatched positions will be available to the wider public from mid-October (see the PMCV 'key dates' notice for this date, published annually).

Remember to consider a rural or regional graduate program – there are many amazing experiences on offer.

Finding a job

Graduate programs are not mandatory, and there are many other ways to enter the nursing or midwifery workforce. Approach the task with commitment so there is minimal time between completing your study and finding a job as a nurse or midwife.

We strongly recommend you take a job if one is offered. It may not be your first preference, but it will give you an entrance into the profession and may open up other opportunities.

You may need to consider clinical fields and geographic areas that are not your initial 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 take up opportunities.

Consider options such as public and private health services, aged care facilities, doctors' surgeries, multipurpose services, health clinics, justice system and the defence forces – these are all options that could provide employment opportunities.

Remember that some graduates drop out or postpone their start, so it is a good idea to check with health services (especially those where you have been interviewed) in December or January–February to see if any places have become available at short notice.

What to do if all your applications are unsuccessful

If you are receiving rejections without being offered an interview, you may need to review the types 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 CV and application should be well presented and professional. Employers notice spelling mistakes and grammatical errors 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.
- Show you have researched the organisation and know where it is, what it does and what services it provides.
- Demonstrate you know the organisation's values.
- Do your homework – call the contact person and ask questions.
- 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, private careers consultant or a recruiter.

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

What to look for in an employer if they do not have a formal graduate program:

- a good orientation process
- support for professional development
- partnerships with education providers
- supernumerary time for you to work with a preceptor.

4. Professional tips

Social media

Social media has made the world more accessible in many ways. Remember, health services may want employees who have values that align with their own, so it is best to be mindful of what you post online.

You should be aware of and understand your employing organisation's social media policy, including information regarding reasonable and unreasonable personal use.

It's also important to read through the [Codes of conduct for nurses and midwives](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards.aspx) <<http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards.aspx>>, which are available on the NMBA website. These documents contain conduct and professional behaviour expectations for nurses and midwives, and links to the NMBA social media policy.

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. Networking to find employment can be through professional nursing organisations, your nursing friends or 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 to foster relationships. Many health services have an employment website where you can apply for vacancies.

Continuing professional development

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

Some graduates continue their studies, undertaking an honours year or postgraduate studies while they look for employment in nursing/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 the GNMP Match the year before for a mid-year intake for the following year.

Other assistance

There are many professional associations and industry bodies that can give you the opportunity 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, 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 to increase your 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 a large 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, such as when doing exams or 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 about nursing and midwifery in Victoria visit the [department's website](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery) <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery>>.

The Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria

The Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria is a free and confidential support service that has been operating since 2006. The Department of Health now fully fund this program, which provides independent support service and face-to-face case management to nurses, midwives and students of nursing/midwifery experiencing mental health or substance misuse issues.

The program also provides advice for managers and human resources staff that are required to manage these issues in the workplace. Further information on the program can be obtained at the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria website <<http://www.nmhp.org.au>>.

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Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery/nursing-and-midwifery-graduates>.