

Nurse and midwife graduate handbook 2019



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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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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.

ISBN: 978-1-76069-915-4 (pdf/online/MS word)

Available from the department's website <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/nursing-and-midwifery/nursing-and-midwifery-graduates>>.

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Your journey

A nursing and midwifery student's guide to registration and employment

TIMELINE	KEY EVENTS AND INFORMATION	OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER AROUND THIS TIME
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019	Final year studies begin.	Final year studies begin.
MARCH 2019	<p>Universities participate in graduate careers fairs (career information sessions). Health services are invited to participate in these sessions.</p> <p>Some universities offer an 'introduction to employment' subject, which may include information on registration, the Graduate Nurse and Midwife Program Match (GNMP Match), interviews and leadership.</p> <p>Students begin clinical placements.</p>	<p>Attend these sessions and speak with organisations.</p> <p>Read through the registration process on the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) website <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/registration/registration-process.aspx> and become familiar with the procedure.</p> <p>Visit the Graduate Nurse/Midwifery Program page on the Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria's (PMCV) computer matching website <https://computermatching.pmcv.com.au/public/matches/gnmp.cfm> and read through the GNMP Match business rules.</p> <p>Treat your placement as an extended interview. You may wish to work in that health service or ask them for a reference.</p>
SATURDAY 27 APRIL 2019	Australian College of Nursing (ACN) Nursing and Health Expo	<p>This is an opportunity to speak with health services, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA), PMCV and the Department of Health and Human Services.</p> <p>Information regarding your application for registration can be found at the NMBA booth.</p>
MONDAY 10 JUNE 2019	<p>PMCV GNMP opening date for candidates to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> register for an account on the Computer Matching website <https://computermatching.pmcv.com.au/public/matches/gnmp.cfm> submit eligibility supporting documents (Victorian distance education candidates only) submit health service preferences (Candidate's Priority List) (maximum four preferences) apply to hospitals / health services listed on your Candidate's Priority List. 	<p>Preference up to four health services. The maximum is advised for the best chance of success.</p> <p>Ensure your choices are not campuses of the same organisation. Consider a regional or rural health service.</p> <p>The order of your preferences doesn't matter at this stage. List your top four; you can re-order later on.</p> <p>Also apply directly to your preferred health services when advertisements appear.</p>
MAY–JUNE 2019	<p>Health services request interim transcripts.</p> <p>Health services run graduate program information sessions.</p>	<p>Download your interim transcript from your university's online platform.</p> <p>Attend these sessions. They will include what you need to know and do when applying for a graduate program.</p>
WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 2019	Closing date for Victorian distance education candidates	Submit eligibility supporting documents and form by 4.00 pm.
FRIDAY 19 JULY 2019	<p>Closing date for candidates to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> submit health service preferences (Candidate's Priority List) submit applications to hospitals / health services. 	Candidates cannot add new preferences after 19 July 2019.
MONDAY 22 JULY – FRIDAY 26 JULY 2019	PMCV Administration Week	
MONDAY 29 JULY – FRIDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2019	<p>Hospitals / health services selection process and interviews</p> <p>Health services access their List of Candidates (candidate preference listings are not disclosed to hospitals; this information is confidential).</p>	<p>Hospitals conduct interviews and begin shortlisting and ranking candidates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practise interview skills with fellow students. Look at key selection criteria, job descriptions and health service values to formulate possible questions.
FRIDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2019	<p>Closing date for candidates to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> re-order preferences (via login by 23:59) or withdraw from the matching process (via login by 23:59). 	You must withdraw from the GNMP Match if you accept an offer of employment from an organisation not participating in the process.
MONDAY 16 SEPTEMBER – TUESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2019	<p>Health service ranking and confirmation of positions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health services confirm the final number of graduate places available for matching in the system. Health services submit their list of selected candidates in rank order. 	

TIMELINE	KEY EVENTS AND INFORMATION	OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER AROUND THIS TIME
WEDNESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER – TUESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2019	Computer matching allocation process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer matching algorithm is run to match candidates to health services. • Details are checked and reviewed before publishing. 	
WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2019 APPROX. 10.00 AM	Match results available via login There is only one round of offers. Candidate details are also released to health services with unmatched positions.	If you have been matched to a position, it is compulsory to accept it. You will only receive one offer. If you were unmatched, you will have the opportunity to be matched to one of the unmatched positions for a one-week period. You can contact health services directly, and they may contact you. Note: Candidates who decline their matched offer are not eligible to apply for another position from another health service.
WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER – WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2019	Unmatched candidates and unmatched positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PMCV will email a list of unmatched positions to all unmatched candidates. Unmatched candidates can apply directly to those health services. • A list of unmatched candidates and contact details will be forwarded to health services with unmatched positions. Unmatched health services can <i>only</i> offer vacant positions to unmatched candidates. 	Candidates who accepted an offer from an unmatched hospital cannot accept or apply for another unmatched position from another health service.
THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER 2019 APPROX. 1.00 PM	PMCV posts a revised unmatched list on the Computer Matching website Applicants who were not eligible to register with the Computer Matching website can have access to this list of unmatched positions from the homepage of the Computer Matching website < https://computermatching.pmcv.com.au/public/matches/gnmp.cfm > (registration not required).	One week after the GNMP Match, unmatched positions are made publicly available. This means that if you were ineligible to participate in the GNMP Match, you can now apply directly for advertised positions. Registration on the PMCV computer matching system is not required for these positions.
FROM WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2019	Hospitals / health services continue to report to PMCV with post-match changes.	The names of matched candidates who decline a matched position or names of unmatched candidates who accept vacant positions are reported.
NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER 2019		Students may still be undertaking clinical placements.
NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER 2019	Complete the online application for registration four to six weeks before completing your course. Universities prepare for student graduations. There are three key steps to applying for registration: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create your AHPRA account. 2. Complete your online application and upload the required documents. 3. Pay and submit your application. 	Provide your employment start date if AHPRA requests it to avoid delay with registration. Ensure all documents contain matching and identical spelling of your name and include legal change of name documents < https://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/changes-and-corrections/change-a-name/change-your-name-0 > if necessary. In some instances, AHPRA may also request additional hard copy documents. Visit the Graduate Applications for Registration FAQ page < https://www.ahpra.gov.au/registration/graduate-applications-for-registration-faqs.aspx > for more information about your registration.
NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER 2019	Employment contracts go out.	Complete a police check and/or Working with Children Check for your employer.
NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER 2019	Universities provide a list of graduating students to AHPRA on completion of clinical placements.	Ensure your final clinical appraisal is completed as a priority. Universities close between December and January. If you applied for registration four to six weeks before course completion, this is usually the final requirement for your application to be completed. The process to assess your application may take up to six weeks.
JANUARY–JULY 2020	Most graduates begin their graduate program.	Many nursing and midwifery graduates begin their program in January/February. However, you may be part of a mid-year intake.

Students should note that this timeline of events is an indication only, and timelines may differ across organisations. Students should ensure they collaborate with relevant health services and other relevant organisations to confirm timeframes for the calendar year.

Why you need to read this handbook

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 2,700 Australian students graduate from nursing and midwifery courses in Victoria (and more than 11,000 across Australia), and most are looking for a job at the same time.

Employers will interview many graduates. It is a highly competitive process, so you need 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. Your final year will be very busy, and this handbook will help you get organised and stay on track. The handbook is divided into four sections:

- 1** Getting organised in 2019
- 2** Getting on with the job hunt in 2019
- 3** Opportunities outside of computer matching in 2019
- 4** Professional tips

Welcome

The final year of your studies will be busy, challenging and exciting.

With that in mind, our team at the Department of Health and Human Services has prepared this handbook to support your path towards your first job as a nurse or midwife and beyond.

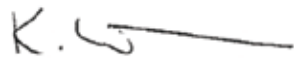
Having chosen a career in nursing or midwifery, you are about to embark on a journey that will be full of exciting opportunities and allow you to make a significant difference to the lives of many. You will be supporting individuals and their loved ones during times of vulnerability.

The value of the role that you will play in the provision of care and support for our community is integral.

As you develop your career you will have the opportunity to mentor, support and guide other health professionals. Enjoy these opportunities. You are our future healthcare leaders!

As well as including some great tips regarding graduate transition to practice programs, curriculum vitae and interview preparation, this handbook provides information about future career and development opportunities.

Please take the time to carefully read this handbook, and all the best for your rewarding career in nursing and midwifery.



Kerryn Eccleston
Manager
Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine Workforce
Department of Health and Human Services

1. Getting organised in 2019

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 Graduate Nurse and Midwife Program (GNMP) Match.

Preparing a job hunt file is a good place to start. Ensure your file includes all of 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.

Leave space for:

- your curriculum vitae (CV), also known as your 'résumé'
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia registration application documents.

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (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>>.

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 NMBA. To find out when and how to register, turn to 'Getting registered as a nurse or midwife' on page 13.

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

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>> or visit health service websites to find out what they offer in a graduate program.

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 computer match, go to section 3: Opportunities outside of computer matching in 2019.

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 definitely 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.

Aboriginal Graduate Programs (Nursing and Midwifery)

The Victorian Government supports health services to deliver culturally safe graduate programs for nurses and midwives. These programs offer valuable opportunities for Aboriginal graduate nurses and midwives to transition to professional practice. Programs are designed to consolidate knowledge, skills and competence and offer support to Aboriginal graduates to transition to practice as safe, confident and accountable professionals.

Since 2013 the Aboriginal graduate programs have been run at Victorian public hospitals including Austin Health, Barwon Health, Bendigo Health, Latrobe Regional Hospital, Monash Health, the Royal Women's Hospital and St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.

In 2019 new health services include Albury Wodonga Health, Central Gippsland Health Service, Eastern Health, Goulburn Valley Health, Kerang District Health, Mildura Base Hospital, Northern Health, Orbost Regional Health, Tallangatta Health Service and Western Health.

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

If you accept an offer through a Aboriginal Graduate Program, you must notify the Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria (PMCV) by 13 September so they can remove your details from the GNMP Match.

How to access graduate programs in Victoria

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

1. The GNMP Match <<https://computermatching.pmcv.com.au/>> is an online matching service that most 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 and aged care not-for-profit services advertise this way.

If you are an Aboriginal student, you are encouraged to participate in the GNMP Match. You should also make contact with your health services of interest, where staff in the Education or Practice Development Unit will be available to provide guidance through the application process and give you more information regarding Aboriginal nurse or midwife graduate programs.

Using the GNMP Match

Run by PMCV, GNMP Match 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 on the Computer Matching website <<https://computermatching.pmcv.com.au/public/matches/gnmp.cfm>>. 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 take part in the 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 notify PMCV by 13 September 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 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).
- 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.

Key dates for the GNMP Match

- Online registration opens 10 June 2019.
- The closing date for candidates to submit their priority list and hospital / health service applications is Friday 19 July 2019.
- Results are available from 9 October 2019. You can withdraw and make changes to your preferences until 13 September 2019.

Postponing your graduate year

In the past, some nursing and midwifery graduates have considered postponing their 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.

If you decide not to go into the 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 in 2019).

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 in 2019

The best time to start preparing your CV and to practise 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 exactly 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.

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 of 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

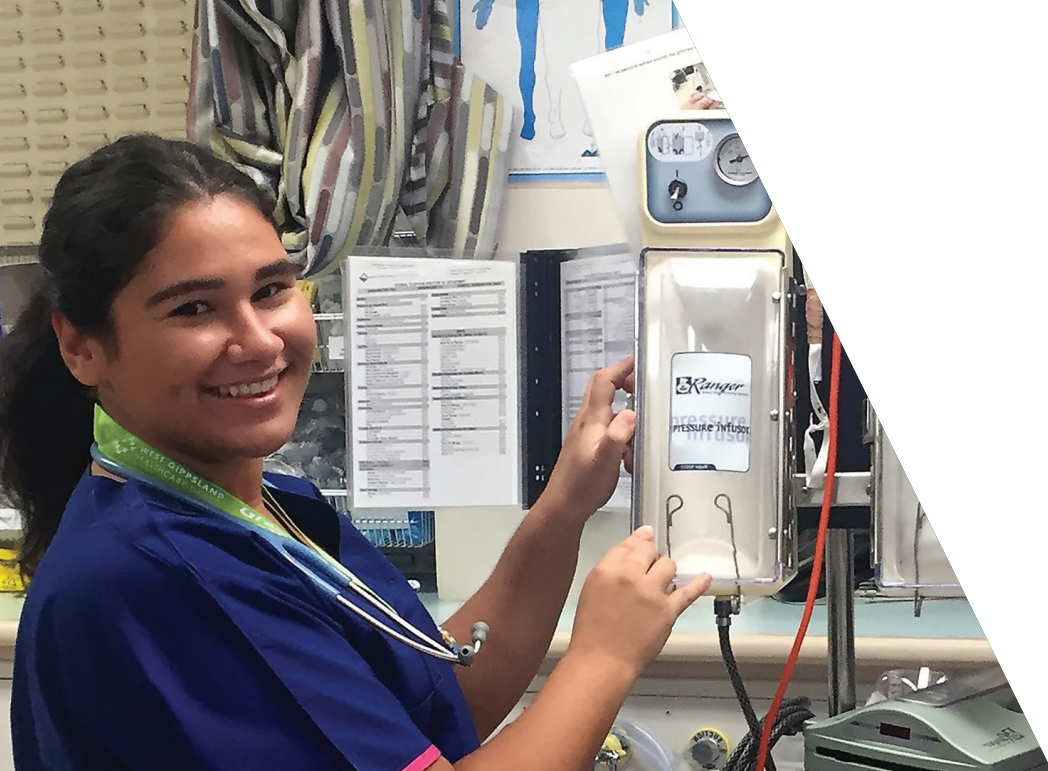
Most of us find interviews stressful, but performing well at interviews is a learnt process and so practise will help.

- 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.
- 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 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 have the ability to problem-solve and discuss strategies for seeking help when needed
- graduates who have given consideration to 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.

Resources to help you

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

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

Seek – 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 handbook, so it is important to read the other sections as well.

International graduates who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the GNMP Match 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 on **17 October 2019** by directly contacting health services that have unmatched places available.
3. Look for employment opportunities via employment websites.

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>> for more information.

In addition there is a Graduate Opportunities website <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. It has now become easier for graduating international students to try out working in Australia. For further details about other eligibility requirements see the Department of Home Affairs website <<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 are able to 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 from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) website <<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 of computer matching in 2019

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 match results are published on Wednesday 9 October 2019, as an unmatched candidate you will receive an email from PMCV with the unmatched positions available to apply for.
2. Look at the websites of health services with unmatched positions to find out the full range of services they provide – you may be surprised at the opportunities.
3. Contact the health service directly by calling the course coordinator to confirm your interest in their program.
4. The remaining unmatched positions will be available to the wider public from Thursday 17 October 2019.

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 first choice to '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, the 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's a good idea to check with health services (especially those where you have been interviewed) in December 2019 or January–February 2020 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 don't 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>>, 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 areas 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>>.



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 and Human Services 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.

More information about the program is available from the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria website <<http://www.nmhp.org.au>>.



