



Australian Government
Australian Skills Quality Authority

Ms Jan Barham MLC
Committee Chair, General Purpose Standing Committee No 3
Legislative Council, NSW Parliament
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

By email to: gpsc3@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Barham

Thank you for inviting the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) to provide input into the Inquiry into registered nurses in New South Wales nursing homes.

As the national regulator of Australia's vocational education and training (VET) sector, ASQA is charged with ensuring that registered training organisations (RTOs) are providing training services that produce graduates who possess the skills and knowledge required by industry.

ASQA regulates RTOs against a set of national standards, the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015*, using a risk based approach.

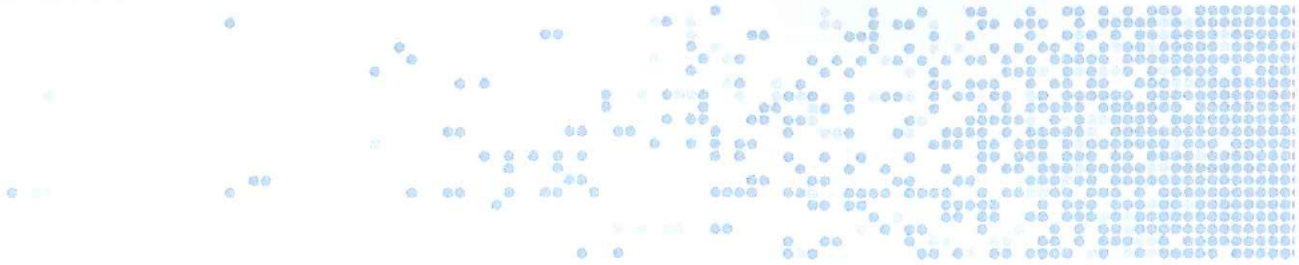
ASQA has provided, where possible, information in response to the specific questions posed. However, many of the questions relate to matters which are not within ASQA's regulatory jurisdiction, particularly questions in relation to minimum education requirements for nurses, prescribed requirements of training or in relation to regional VET data.

While ASQA regulates RTOs, it does not develop or approve the content of qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework. Similarly, ASQA also does not prescribe educational entry requirements for employment in specific industry areas such as nursing – those issues are the domain of licensing bodies.

While unable to provide specific responses to the questions posed, ASQA has endeavoured to assist with some more general information about these matters and advice to the Standing Committee as to the bodies which may be in a position to give the committee more detailed information.

ASQA also has mechanisms to collect information about VET sector concerns, be those concerns about a particular RTO or more general issues about a particular part of the VET sector. Such information is used to either examine a particular RTO (or group of RTOs) or more generally to inform ASQA's risk system, for example in conducting a Strategic Review of a particular sector. It

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might interest the committee to know that ASQA has now published four Strategic Review Reports, specifically:

- Training for aged and Community Care;
- Marketing and advertising practices of Australia's RTOs;
- Training for the 'White Card' for Australia's construction industry; and
- Training for early childhood education and care in Australia.

These reports are available on ASQA's website (www.asqa.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/strategic-review-reports.html)

ASQA's response to these questions is attached.

Yours sincerely

CHRISTOPHER ROBINSON
**Chief Commissioner and
Chief Executive Officer**

October 2015

ASQA responses to questions posed by the Inquiry into registered nurses in New South Wales nursing homes

a) *What are the minimum education requirements for these employees to be able to practice?*

ASQA RESPONSE:

As the national regulatory for the Australian vocational education and training (VET) sector, ASQA is responsible for the regulation of registered training organisations (RTOs).

ASQA regulates RTOs against a set of national standards, the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015* (the Standards), using a risk based approach.

The arrangements, including minimum education requirements, related to licensing or registration of a person to undertake a specific job are managed by a range of industry regulators (programs of study that qualify a person in nursing are approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law).

ASQA's role is to ensure that graduates possess the skills and knowledge detailed in the qualification.

ASQA responds where it finds a RTO is not providing training and assessment services which leads to that outcome. ASQA can, and has, taken the extreme step of cancelling a RTOs registration where critical non-compliance with the Standards is identified.

b) *What sort of courses under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the minimum requirement for these employees? (Certificate II Course, Diploma, Bachelor Degree?)*

ASQA RESPONSE:

As responded to in the above question, ASQA does not establish minimum training requirements for nurses or other professionals, it regulates the operations of RTOs against the Standards.

The training needs of industry in vocational education and training are prescribed in national Training Packages, the set of nationally endorsed standards, qualifications and guidelines to recognise and assess vocational skills and knowledge people need to perform effectively in the workplace.

VET qualifications and courses that provide training towards job roles in the health industry are contained in Training Packages that are developed by the Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council.

Currently, there are two training packages groups which contain units of competency that make up qualifications related nursing professionals:

- the Community Services training packages; and
- the Health training packages.

Further information about the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council can be found at www.cshic.com.au

- c) **What is the shortest duration of these courses?**
- d) **What is the longest duration of these courses?**
- e) **How many hours of study are required?**
- f) **Do these courses include clinical practicum or clinical placements? If so, what's the minimum amount of time for these?**

ASQA RESPONSE:

While ASQA does not develop courses (and, as such, does not mandate minimum requirements), it is keenly interested in ensuring that VET sector graduates possess the skills and knowledge required by industry.

Typically, the qualifications contained in Training Packages do not currently mandate minimum durations for courses, rather, RTOs develop their training and assessment strategies based on the number and type of units of competency that make up the qualification.

The AQF, being the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training, does provide guidance in respect of volume of learning:

| Australian Qualifications Framework volume of learning durations | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Certificate I | Certificate II | Certificate III | Certificate IV | Diploma | Advanced Diploma | Graduate Certificate | Graduate Diploma |
| 0.5–1 year | 0.5– 1 year | 1 – 2 years | 0.5 – 2 years | 1 – 2 years | 1.5 – 2 years | 0.5 – 1 year | 1 – 2 years |
| 600–1200 hours | 600–1200 hours | 1200–2400 hours | 600–2400 hours | 1200–2400 hours | 1800–2400 hours | 600–1200 hours | 1200–2400 hours |

ASQA is currently working to strengthen regulation of course duration to ensure that the amount of training provided to a learner is sufficient to ensure the learner does acquire the specified skills and knowledge.

With respect to the question related to course content, some qualifications provide that a relevant work placement is a necessary component of the training, however not all courses and qualifications mandate such a placement. Details about the structure of specific qualifications are available through the national VET register (www.training.gov.au)

- g) **Is a first aid qualification required? What's the minimum classifications required?**
- h) **Is cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) covered in this first aid qualification?**
- i) **Is the operation of an automatic external defibrillator (AED) covered in this first aid qualification?**
- j) **Is the administration of oxygen and other gases covered in this first aid qualification?**
- k) **Is the administration of intravenous fluids covered in this first aid qualification?**

ASQA RESPONSE:

ASQA's role in relation to these questions is to ensure that RTOs are delivering qualifications in accordance with the Standards (and the training product itself), ASQA does not have a role in the design of the product itself.

It should be noted that “first aid” is not itself a qualification under the AQF, rather, first aid courses (and first aid certificates) are ‘skill sets’ composed of units of competency relevant to providing first aid in a number of settings - specific units of competency (such as providing cardiopulmonary resuscitation) may be a component towards a first aid certificate depending on the area of training and the intended application of the particular course.

ASQA does not have responsibility for determining the components of these skill sets or minimum classifications for professional health workers.

- l) Can these employees administer any medications?***
- m) What restrictions are placed on them for medication administration?***
- n) Can they administer Schedule 2 medications?***
- o) Can they administer Schedule 4 medications?***
- p) Can they administer Schedule 4 (Appendix D) medications?***
- q) Can they administer Schedule 8 medications?***
- r) What forms of pain relief can these employees administer?***

ASQA RESPONSE:

While ASQA regulates RTO’s, it does not develop or approve the content of qualifications under the AQF, nor does it have a role in determining the appropriate qualifications for workers (including nurse registration or the duties and responsibilities of health workers).

As mentioned earlier, the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council is the body best able to comment on the design of specific health related training products. Details about the licencing requirements (i.e. who is able to administer certain classes of medications) is similarly not a matter upon which ASQA can comment – that is a matter for licensing bodies, such as the Nurses and Midwives Board.

- s) How many of these employees are currently employed or “registered” within New South Wales?***
- t) How many were trained in New South Wales in 2012?***
- u) How many were trained in New South Wales in 2013?***
- v) How many were trained in New South Wales in 2014?***
- w) How many have been trained in New South Wales this year?***

ASQA RESPONSE:

ASQA does not collect or maintain data collections about student enrolments or completions, however, RTOs are required to report certain information about VET in accordance with the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) National Standards, and this data is reported either to State Training Authorities or directly to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). AVETMISS data is published by the NCVER and can be found at www.ncver.edu.au