

The Education of Enrolled Nurses

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Two broad categories of nurse are recognised in Australia:

- *Registered Nurse* -- with a degree or diploma from a university.
- *Enrolled Nurse* -- with a Certificate 4 or Diploma from a TAFE Institute or a private provider.

This study examines the current arrangements for the education and training of *Enrolled Nurses*. It focuses on differences in the delivery of enrolled nurse education among the States and Territories and among the various providers.

The project includes three major activities:

1. Survey of Coordinators of Courses for Enrolled Nurses

There are 52 providers of courses leading to recognition as an enrolled nurse. Interviews were conducted with coordinators of 26 of those courses, selected in order to adequately represent providers by State and Territory, metropolitan/non-metropolitan, private/public provider and known characteristics of course provision.

The interviews cover the following aspects of the courses: Student selection, enrolments and completion; arrangements for RPL; costs and fees for students; content, structure and staffing of the course, including provision for clinical placement; links with hospitals and employers; employment of graduates; and provision for on-going training. Respondents were also invited to comment on the education, training, preparation and employment of enrolled nurses more generally.

2. Survey of Coordinators of Courses for Enrolled Nurses

Twenty-eight universities offer courses that lead to recognition as a registered nurse. Interviews are presently being conducted with a sample of admission officers selected in order to adequately represent providers by State and Territory and region. The interview focuses on the pathway from Enrolled Nurse to Registered Nurse.

3. Consultation with Interested Parties

The final part of the study involved consultations with a range of other bodies that provided broader understanding of issues relating to the education of enrolled nurses. These included various state and territory training authorities, health departments, Industry Training Boards and peak nursing bodies, as well as a review of the relevant legislation.

Findings

From the Survey of Coordinators of Courses for Enrolled Nurses

1. Courses mainly require 12 months equivalent full-time study for an AQF Certificate 4 except for WA and Qld which require 18 months study and Qld which grants a Diploma.
2. Courses usually require students to undertake classroom instruction supplemented by clinical placement. In NSW all students are employed by the Area Health Service as part of their program and therefore have no outside employment. Traineeships have been introduced in Victoria and Tasmania.
3. TAFE is the main provider of Enrolled Nurse education. There are several private providers in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. Traineeships require part-time study over four semesters and concurrent appropriate employment for a minimum of 16 hours per week.
4. Students can study either full- or part-time in all States except NSW and WA. The employment model used in NSW requires full-time study/employment. In WA courses are only available full-time.

Some institutes in SA and Qld offer modules by distance education. Teaching and learning is supported through the use of videoconferencing facilities in outlying areas.

5. Total course contact hours vary -- 756 (NT), 850 with a minimum of 610 classroom hours (Vic, ACT) and 1200 hours (WA). From 2002 classroom and clinical hours will increase substantially in NT. In the majority of courses full-time students spend four full days per week on-campus engaged in classroom learning.

In NSW there are 420 classroom hours delivered in two blocks, one of eight weeks at the start of the course, and another block of six weeks later in the course. Visits to specialised clinical areas are undertaken during blocks. Students undertake clinical nursing practice for the other 38 weeks of their 52 week employment contract.