

Human Resources Policy

Continuing education accelerated advancement (qualifications) entitlement – Nurses and midwives

Policy Number: C58 (QH-POL-213)

Publication date: June 2020

Purpose: To outline the continuing education accelerated advancement (qualifications) entitlement payment arrangements for nurses and midwives.

Application: This policy applies to Queensland Health nurses and midwives classified at levels Nurse Grade 5 to 7 inclusive and Nurse Grade 9.

Delegation: The 'delegate' is as listed in the relevant Department of Health Human Resource (HR) Delegations Manual or Hospital and Health Services Human Resource (HR) Delegations Manual, as amended from time to time.

Legislative or other authority:

- Nurses and Midwives (Queensland Health and Department of Education) Certified Agreement (EB10) 2018
- Nurses and Midwives (Queensland Health) Award – State 2015 (the Award)

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1 Policy statement

This entitlement applies to employees classified at levels Nurse Grade 5 to Nurse Grade 7 inclusive and Nurse Grade 9 who hold a valid credential directly relevant to the skills and competencies required for their position when:

- the Hospital and Health Service (HHS)/division receives an application in the appropriate format (available in the Resources section on the Queensland Health HR Policy internet site) and with appropriate documentation
- the HHS/division makes a determination regarding whether the employee is at an appropriate level (i.e. Nurse Grade 5 to Nurse Grade 7 or Nurse Grade 9)
- the HHS/division determines the employee has obtained a valid continuing education credential or continuing education advanced credential in accordance with clause 1.2 or 1.3 of this policy
- the employee has qualifications directly relevant to the skills and competencies being used
- the qualification is additional to the basic qualification required for registration.

1.1 Types of credentials

There are two types of credentials.

A **continuing education credential** is a graduate certificate, graduate diploma, or a qualification of equivalent value recognised by the employer, or a second degree relevant to the employee's current position. A continuing education credential is to be a university qualification or another qualification of equivalent value approved by Queensland Health.

A **continuing education advanced credential** is a master or PhD qualification relevant to the employee's current position.

Bachelor degrees are only acceptable for recognition if they are a second degree. All degrees which provide eligibility for registration are considered as first degrees and are not recognised for the purposes of the Award provisions. First and second degrees do not necessarily relate to the order in which the qualification was undertaken.

Examples of first degrees are:

- Bachelor of Nursing or Midwifery
- Bachelor of Nursing (post registration)
- Bachelor of Nursing Science
- Bachelor of Health Care Nursing
- Hospital based training providing registration as a nurse.

Certificates and diplomas are to be at the level of either graduate or post-graduate level. Certificates and diplomas that are not graduate or post-graduate are not acceptable for the purpose of the Award provisions, e.g. Certificate of Gerontology, Certificate of Peri-operative Nursing, or Diploma Applied Science Clinical Nursing Studies.

When a nurse or midwife studying for a master's degree has successfully completed the courses/subjects necessary to be awarded a graduate certificate or diploma, approval for payment of advancement of increment is subject to whether it is relevant to the employee's position. The employee is to provide written confirmation (an original or certified copy) from the university that they meet this criterion.

1.2 Other credentials to be recognised by Queensland Health

Queensland Health will recognise non-university qualifications as a credential of equivalent value to a graduate certificate or graduate diploma provided that the qualification is:

- a minimum of 12 months duration
- accredited by a registration board within Australia
- formalised by a Nursing and Midwifery Board examination.

All post-registration qualifications for midwifery, mental health and rural isolated practice endorsed registered nurses (RIPERN) that offer midwifery, mental health, or rural and isolated practice endorsement are recognised by Queensland Health.

Employees in a child health area who have a child health or maternal and child health certificate when a midwifery certificate was a prerequisite, are to have both qualifications assessed as one qualification on the criteria above. If successful, the combined qualification is then to be considered as to whether it is relevant to the employee's position.

All other child health certificates not requiring a midwifery certificate as a prerequisite are to be assessed in line with the criteria above, including an assessment of whether the qualification is relevant to the position of the employee.

1.3 Accelerated advancement of increment

An employee who qualifies under these provisions and is not at the maximum pay point of their classification is to be advanced by one pay point. Employees granted an accelerated advancement under these provisions, and who are still not at the maximum pay point of their classification, retain their existing increment date.

Employees at nurse grade 5 level who have advanced at commencement of duty under the provisions of the award (for holding a bachelor degree) are able to advance a further pay point in accordance with the above provisions.

Part-time employees continue to be required to have either 12 months service or 1200 hours, whichever is the greater.

1.4 Payment of allowance

1.4.1 Employees at the maximum classification pay point

An employee who qualifies under these provisions and is at the maximum pay point of their classification is entitled to receive an allowance. There is no requirement for such an employee to be at the top pay point for 12 months.

The continuing education credential allowance is calculated on the basis of 3.5% of the Nurse Grade 5 paypoint 7 wage. The continuing education advanced credential allowance is calculated on the basis of 5.5% of the Nurse Grade 5 paypoint 7 wage.

The percentage allowances payable under these provisions are payable for all purposes, i.e. the allowance attracts shift penalties, weekend penalties, overtime, leave payments, leave loading and superannuation benefits. Leave payments and loading only attract payment when the allowance is being paid at the time of taking the leave. Partial periods of the year when the allowance is being paid are not applied to leave loading.

1.4.2 Employees not at the maximum classification pay point

An employee, who qualifies under these provisions and is not at the maximum paypoint and has received advancement of an increment, becomes entitled to the respective allowance upon the completion of 12 months service at the maximum paypoint.

Part-time employees are required to have either 12 months service or 1200 hours, whichever is the greater.

1.4.3 Employees at the second last increment

When an employee is on the second last increment at the time of receiving the accelerated advancement which would place them on the final increment, the payment of the allowance is payable from their existing increment date, and not upon the completion of 12 months service (or 1200 hours for part-time employees whichever is the greater) at the final increment.

Example

A registered nurse on Nurse Grade 5 paypoint 6, and due to increment to Nurse Grade 5 paypoint 7 from 28 November 2018, receives accelerated advancement to Nurse Grade 5 paypoint 7 for holding a valid qualification as from 1 July 2018. In this case the employee is to receive the appropriate allowance as at 28 November 2018 and not 1 July 2019.

1.5 Date of advancement/payment of allowance

Employees are to be advanced one paypoint or paid the appropriate percentage allowance from the date the qualification is accepted by the nurse executive of the HHS/division.

When a determination has taken an unreasonable amount of time, payment is to occur from the date of application. For all current and future applications, a period of a fortnight from the receipt of an application is an acceptable timeframe for a determination.

1.6 Application form

An employee is to submit their application for continuing education accelerated advancement entitlement to the nurse executive of the HHS/division for consideration.

Casual employees are to identify the areas in which they would elect to work when the qualification is relevant. This application is to be accompanied by a certified copy of the qualification being sought for recognition.

When a determination has been made, the nurse executive is to sign the application certifying that the qualification referred to in the application is relevant to the employee's current position. Once approved, the endorsement of the qualification is to be recorded for validation against periods of employment when the employee is engaged to work relevant to the qualification. The line manager is to then endorse the payment.

1.7 Entitlements upon promotion and higher duties

When an employee has already received advancement under this provision and is subsequently promoted to a higher level (at Nurse Grade 7 or lower) or undertakes higher duties, the employee automatically becomes eligible for the respective percentage allowance, on condition the qualification remains relevant to the higher level position. The allowance is payable irrespective of the fact that the employee may not be in receipt of the allowance at their previous (lower) level.

Any employee in receipt of a percentage allowance under these provisions keeps that allowance upon promotion to positions at Nurse Grades 5 to 7 (inclusive) on condition the qualification remains relevant to the higher level position.

An employee in receipt of a qualification allowance who relieves in a higher position which does not attract the allowance is to be placed on the increment of the higher position which does not reduce the current paid rate of the employee (including the qualification allowance but excluding penalty rates).

1.8 Requirements when changing positions

When an employee has changed their position through transfer or recruitment to a new position, either within the same or another HHS/division, the employee is required to make a further application for continuing education accelerated advancement entitlement (available on the Related Resources section of the Queensland Health HR Policy intranet site) to the nurse executive of the HHS/division for consideration.

This application is to be accompanied by a certified copy of the qualification being sought for recognition. When determined, the nurse executive is to sign the application certifying that the qualification referred to in the application is relevant to the employee's current position.

1.9 More than one credential

Once an employee has advanced a paypoint under these provisions, they are not eligible for any further advancement within the level they have already been advanced or at any higher level.

An employee who has been advanced for a continuing education credential at a lower level may also be advanced at a higher level when the employee attains a continuing education advanced credential. In such cases the employee also retains the 3.5% allowance.

Following 12 months service at the maximum pay point of the higher level, the employee forfeits the 3.5% allowance and an allowance of 5.5% of the Nurse Grade 5 paypoint 7 wage is payable. Only one allowance is to be paid at any one time.

1.10 Employees relieving in other areas

When an employee, who possesses a qualification that is not considered relevant to the employee's current position, relieves in a different area to which the qualification is relevant, upon application and acceptance of the qualification by the nurse executive, the employee may receive the allowance (not advancement) for the period of relief.

The HHS/division is to immediately implement a system which accommodates the requirement to pay an employee the appropriate entitlement for short periods of relief. This system is to include the noting on the employee's time and attendance sheet of the entitlement to allow the

appropriate pay adjustment on condition prior approval has been received to recognise the qualification.

To ensure consistency in the application of this arrangement an employee is to receive the entitlement on the following basis:

- When an employee who possesses a qualification that is accepted by the HHS/division:
 - leaves an area in which they receive the entitlement
 - relieves in a different area in which the qualification is not relevant or
 - relieves at a level to which the allowance is not payable, the HHS/division is to cease any accelerated advancement or allowance when the period is in excess of one week.
- When the employee is required to work across multiple areas and is entitled to the allowance in some but not others, Queensland Health is to pay the entitlement when one full shift is completed in the area where there is entitlement (only when prior approval received to recognise the qualification). Once approved, the endorsement of the qualification is to be recorded for validation against relief periods when the line manager has endorsed payment.
- When a casual with an approved and recorded qualification relieves in an area where the qualification is relevant, the line manager is to instigate payment through authorisation on the appropriate time and attendance notification to the HR management area.

The HHS/division is to formally advise the employee in writing.

1.11 Credentials no longer relevant

When the qualification is no longer directly relevant to the skills and competencies being used for the duties of the employee's position, any accelerated advancement or allowance payable under these provisions is to be ceased. A qualification may become no longer directly relevant when an employee accepts a permanent transfer or promotion away from the area to which the qualification is acceptable.

The HHS/division is to advise the employee in writing that the advancement or allowance is no longer relevant to the new position.

The date of discontinuing any allowance is the date that the HHS/division formally advised the employee of such in writing.

1.12 Grievances

An employee may raise a grievance within 21 days of the receipt of the decision of the HHS/division, if aggrieved by any decision made under this provision.

When a grievance relates to the refusal to grant an application, the grievance procedure outlined in the Award is to be used.

1.13 Entering credentials data on the payroll system

HHSs/divisions are to ensure that the appropriate data is entered onto the payroll system.

1.14 United Kingdom university qualifications

University qualifications are to state post graduate certificate, post graduate diploma, master, or identify that the qualification is at least a level 4 to be regarded as equivalent to a graduate certificate, graduate diploma or master respectively. United Kingdom PhD qualifications are deemed as equivalent to Australian PhD qualifications.

A four year master degree program equates to a continuing education credential (second degree and graduate certificate or graduate diploma). When determining a second degree, the employee is required to demonstrate that they obtained a relevant bachelor degree and then completed either a second full degree or a level 3 course (honours level) in a different speciality with course credit being given for levels 1 and 2.

In the UK, nursing registration can be achieved through diploma level study. This level of study does not allow a UK registered nurse or midwife to obtain reciprocal registration with Australia.

A bachelor degree (bachelor degree with honours) consists of:

- Year 1: level 1 or certificate level, consisting of 120 credits. A certificate level qualification is equivalent to this year.
- Year 2: level 2 or diploma level, consisting of 120 credits. A diploma level qualification is equivalent to this year.
- Year 3: level 3 or honours level, consisting of 120 credits. An honours level qualification is equivalent to this year.

Post-graduate qualifications consist of:

- Post graduate certificate: level 4 consisting of 60 credits.
- Post graduate diploma: level 4 consisting of 120 credits.
- Master degree: level 4 consisting of 120 credits from the post graduate diploma plus a 60 credit dissertation.

Documents from the English National Board (ENB) for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting do not provide a university qualification, nor state the level of study and/or credit obtained. ENB recognition can be provided for qualifications at level 1, 2, 3 or 4. These documents cannot be used for the purpose of granting the qualification allowance. Documentation is required from a higher education provider to determine the qualification undertaken and the academic level of study achieved.

A range of UK boards (e.g. the Central Midwives Board) do provide certificates for hospital based training as the board is the responsible body setting and assessing the examination. These qualifications are to be assessed in line with section 1.2.

Definitions:

Credential	A Qualification
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History:

June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – formatted as part of the HR Policy review – amended to update references and naming conventions – application amended as a result of changes outlined in the Hospital and Health Boards (Changes to Prescribed Services) Amendment Regulation 2019.
June 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy formatted as part of the HR policy simplification project. • Policy amended to update references and naming conventions. • Policy reviewed as part of the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) HR Policy Integration project. • Policy not applicable to QAS employees.
March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed as a result of the HR policy consolidation project.
Previous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRM 2.1-29 Registered Nurses' Continuing Education Accelerated Advancement (Qualifications) Entitlement