

Nurse and midwife graduate
handbook 2012

Your employment diary

{NURSE & MIDWIFE GRADUATE HANDBOOK} 2012*



* YOUR EMPLOYMENT DIARY

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At a glance

Getting started	MAY	<p>May 30: PMCV Graduate Nurse Midwife Program Match (GNMP Match) opens for you to apply online</p>
	JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do your research on available early graduate programs (EGP)• Decide if you want an EGP• If you want an EGP, review information on Postgraduate Medical Council Victoria (PMCV) Graduate Nurse/Midwife Program (GNMP) Match website
Getting on with the job June to November	JULY	<p>July 8: Royal College of Nursing Australia (RCNA) Expo www.rcna.org.au</p> <p>July 27: Health services selection process for graduates begins</p>
	AUGUST	<p>Make note of your interview dates and times</p>
Getting a job November onwards	SEPTEMBER	<p>September 20: Last day to make changes to your preferences on GNMP Match</p>
	OCTOBER	<p>October 1: Check with NMBA for your online pre registration</p> <p>October 15: GNMP Match results are available</p> <p>If you don't have a graduate position and want one, review GNMP Match site for places still available</p>
	NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get your registration details together• If you don't have a graduate position keep applying
	DECEMBER	



Why you need to read this handbook

If you are a final year nursing or midwifery student, you need to read this handbook.

Each year more than 2000 students graduate from nursing and midwifery courses in Victoria (and about 11,000 across Australia) and most are looking for a job at the same time.

Employers can only take on so many graduates, so you need to stand out from the crowd.

The challenge you are facing is finishing your studies **and** getting a job in the nursing and midwifery workforce. It is a very busy year, so to help you get organised and stay on track this handbook is divided into three sections:

1. Getting organised - from May 2012
2. Getting on with the job hunt - from June to November 2012
3. Planning for 2013 - after November 2012

Welcome

We have put together this handbook to help you get your first job as a nurse or midwife.

Making the transition from a student to a registered health professional actually starts over the next few months. You will be putting together your resume and going for interviews and we want you to have the best information to help you make the right decisions for your future.

It's going to be a busy time for the next few months but it's the beginning of your career as a nurse or midwife. Being a nurse and midwife is one of the most exciting, challenging and personally rewarding jobs you can have. We look forward to welcoming each of you to your first year of practice and hope this handbook helps you.

**Katy Fielding
Manager Nursing and Midwifery Policy**

1. Getting organised June 2012

It is never too soon to start getting organised for your employment search.

During this time you need to:

- ✓ Start a job hunt file
- ✓ Decide if you want an Early Graduate program
- ✓ Decide if you want to participate in the GNMP Match

A good place to start is to compile a job hunt file that includes the certificates and information you'll need throughout the next six months.

Your job hunt file

Start a file now

Include:

- ✓ Your birth certificate
- ✓ Police check clearance
- ✓ Immunisation status
- ✓ Transcript of nursing course grades/academic record
- ✓ Referee contact details

Leave spaces for:

- ✓ Your resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- ✓ NMBA Registration application documents

Before you can begin to work as a nurse or midwife, including in an Early Graduate program, you **must** be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). To find out when and how to register, turn to *Getting registered nurse or midwife*, page 14.

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

Graduate programs

Many, but not all, nurses or midwives start their professional careers by undertaking an early graduate program.

Early graduate programs (EGPs) for registered nurses and midwives are formalised education programs offered by employers for those in their first year of practice. EGPs are workplace-based programs designed to consolidate knowledge, skills and competence, and transition graduates to practise as safe, confident and accountable professionals while being employed.

EGPs go beyond normal orientation and induction and offer graduates formal education time (including study days), supernumerary time and clinical support including preceptorship and supervised clinical education.

EGPs may include opportunities for rotations, that is to work in two or three areas of the organisation or to have short periods of observation in specialised areas of care.

For more information, see: www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing/furthering/graduate or visit health service websites to find out what they offer in an EGP.

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, go to: www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au

Graduate programs are not mandatory

Graduate programs are not mandatory; however they do offer new graduates a structured and supported approach to the first year of practice. They may not suit everybody and some people may not get an opportunity to enter a EGP (see section 3. *Getting a job - from November 2012*, page 15).

For example, if you're an enrolled nurse making the transition to become a Registered nurse, you may already be well acquainted with professional practice, although in a different role and at a different level. Your current or potential employer may be happy to appoint you to a Registered nurse role and you may not want to do a full EGP – it's up to you and your employer. People who already have qualifications may not want to complete a full EGP and others may consider deferring. Our advice is to find out all the options and consequences and work out what is best for you.

Finding the Early Graduate Program for you

As soon as you are registered as a nurse or midwife, you are licensed to work in those professions and are accountable for your care and actions. However, in your first year of employment, you need a supportive environment to help you make the transition from student to professional in a planned, collaborative way.

Graduate programs offer a range of experiences and opportunities. Some give graduates a single ward where they can consolidate their skills and professional integration with a stable team over the full 12 months. Others offer rotations to different areas that allow you to experience different things. No one program is right.

The size of the organisation and number of rotations is not a guarantee that a program is suited to you. Some people prefer smaller organisations and need more time to settle in and become confident – it's what's right for you.

Many nurses believe that the most important aspect of your graduate year is to work in a clinical area that offers good support. This support may include access to debriefing sessions, supernumerary time, 'buddying' with more experienced staff or ongoing education.

Your first year is about consolidation and learning to be a professional; it's not another student clinical placement. It is important that you are in a team where you feel like you are practising safely and know where to go for answers.

Before choosing your EGP, do some research to find out what is offered and think about what you personally need in a workplace.

You can research EGP by attending the nursing and health expos organised by the Royal College of Nursing. These are held on different dates for each state, for further information go to:

www.rcna.org.au/Events/Expos/rcna/events/nursing-and-health-expos/information

Many Health Services arrange an information evening to welcome nursing and midwifery graduates considering an EGP. More news about "information

Graduate years are about consolidation and learning to be a professional, being accountable for your actions and practice and being part of health team. It's not another clinical placement as a student so look for a Early Graduate Program that will offer you a supportive work environment.

"sessions" will be available on the individual health service website usually under the nursing/midwifery graduate programs.

How to access early graduate programs in Victoria

There are two main ways to find an EGP in Victoria:

1. Through Graduate **Nurse/Midwife Program (GNMP) Match** - an online matching service that most public health services and some private employers use for their **initial** offers
(see: <http://computermatching.pmcv.com.au/public/howto/index.cfm>)
2. **Applying directly to employers.** Larger employers that do not use GNMP Match may advertise their programs on their websites or through local media.

Using GNMP Match

The GNMP Match simplifies the appointment of graduate nurses and midwives into EGPs by matching the preferences of students (known as 'candidates') and employers (the health services).

The first step in being employed in a public health service's EGPs is to register with GNMP Match at: <http://computermatching.pmcv.com.au>

This site 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 match. It's competitive, with more candidates than places, particularly for the more popular programs or employers. To give yourself the best chance of success, take a proactive and professional approach.
- ✓ You will have **four** choices of where to do your EGP. To have the best chance of gaining a place you need to provide four different preferences - don't choose the same place and put all your eggs in one basket!
- ✓ Competition for places means eligibility for GNMP Match 2012 is restricted to graduates completing their courses between **June 2012** and **June 2013**. This ensures that support goes to new graduates when they need it - that is, in the first few months of registration, not 12 months after registration.

Being part of GNMP Match doesn't get you a job.

You get yourself a job – by your achievements, your well presented CV and good interview skills!

Key dates for GNMP Match

- ✓ Online registration begins on 30 May 2012 and closes on 26 July 2012
- ✓ Results are available from 15 October 2012
- ✓ You can withdraw and make changes to your preferences until 20 September 2012.

Postponing your graduate year

In the past, some nursing/midwifery graduates who have not got the match they wanted have considered waiting until the next year for a better offer. You should think seriously before postponing your graduate year. Deferral will create a long gap between completing your course and starting a EGP. It may make you ineligible to apply for next year's GNMP Match and may disadvantage your employment prospects compared to more recently graduated nurses.

Over the past few years the number of graduate places offered by employers has been close to the number of graduates. This situation is likely to continue, so you should start your nursing/midwifery career as soon as possible.

If you decide not to go into the match or don't accept an offer, you really need to focus on getting a nursing or midwifery job within the first six months of graduating. (See our advice in section 2. *Getting on with the job hunt*, page 11).

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.

Resources to help you:

If you need assistance during your final semester at university, you could discuss your academic progress and employment issues with your course co-ordinator. Sometimes it is necessary to negotiate extensions for your work.

There are other resources that might be able to assist you including:

Melbourne Uni: www.services.unimelb.edu.au/index.html

Monash Uni: www.monash.edu.au/students/services/

Deakin Uni: www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/services.php

RMIT: www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=b3mism7rz4jd

www.lifeline.org.au/Find-Help/Helpful-Links-to-other-services/Helpful-links-to-other-services-and-information/default.aspx

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

2. Getting on with the job hunt - June to November 2012

From May or June you need to be preparing your CV and getting ready to attend interviews. It can be a busy time as you will also be studying; but it is important to stay focused, organised and flexible. During this time, you need to:

- ✓ prepare a winning CV
- ✓ practise and prepare for your interviews
- ✓ pre-register with NMBA.

Putting together your resume

In putting together your resume, carefully consider what employers might want from a graduate and the traits and abilities they would value.

Your resume 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, 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 school project I was responsible for
- There are many resume styles but always use a specific resume if 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 referee **before** including their name in your resume.

Creating a great CV or resume is very important in a highly competitive environment like the nursing graduate one.

Your CV

The basic information required is:

- ✓ personal details
- ✓ education and employment history
- ✓ skills
- ✓ referees

Professionalism and credibility can be measured by your attention to detail and following through on commitments. For example, if your letter of application or resume 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.

Everyone hates interviews

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

- Find out if the interview is one-on-one or a group interview.
- Most questions will follow the selection criteria or job description for graduate nurses and midwives, which may be found on the health service website.
- Practise interviews by creating your own questions and answers. It is helpful if you can be articulate about yourself.
- 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 patients' welfare
 - knowing when and where to seek guidance
 - displaying professionalism.
- Take advantage of the interview to sell yourself, but remain realistic and truthful.

We asked some people responsible for assessing final year students what they are looking for in early graduates participants.

Carole Maddison, Associate Director of Nursing Centre for Nursing Practice Education & Research at Goulburn Valley Health says when she is interviewing graduate nurses she looks for:

- good interpersonal skills – and graduates who discuss communication and team work
- graduates who show enthusiasm
- graduates who have the ability to problem solve and discuss strategies to seek help when needed
- graduates who have given consideration to their future nursing/midwifery career
- graduates who display an enquiring approach to nursing practice and show initiative in choosing ongoing learning strategies
- academic progress as undergraduate.

Surviving group interviews

Group interviews usually take a couple of hours and are different to one-on-one interviews which are more relaxed and 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.

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 you need to 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 spooked at a group interview. Remain calm, take your time, and express yourself clearly.

Resources to help you:

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

www.vu.edu.au/facilities-and-services/career-and-employment-services

www.careerone.com.au/

www.seek.com.au/jobs-resources/

<http://career-advice.careerone.com.au/job-hunting-strategy/getting-started/beware-facebook-friending-your-boss/article.aspx>

International nursing and midwifery graduates

This section is written specifically for non-resident international nursing and midwifery graduates who have studied in Australia. It is suggested you also read the other sections as this advice is written in conjunction with the rest of the handbook.

Would you like to apply for an early graduate year in Victoria?

As previously explained GNMP Match is one way to apply for nursing and midwifery early graduate programs in Victoria. Whilst international graduates do not meet the eligibility criteria there are still options to be employed on a graduate program. You can apply for unmatched positions directly by contacting hospitals that have unmatched places after the 15th October 2012. You can also apply directly to private health services before this date, by checking their websites.

You will still need to meet the criteria for registration as a Registered Nurse (Division1)/Registered Midwife with the [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboardofaustralia.gov.au) and hold a current working visa.

There are Registration Standards for nurses and midwives that can be very important to international graduates in relation to English language requirements the [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx) website provides this information. International graduates are urged to start the registration process early (at least six months before completion of the course) <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx>

What to do if you are unsuccessfully applying for nursing and midwifery positions

If you are receiving rejections without being offered an interview, you may need to review the type 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 résumé and application should be well-presented and professional
- Employers DO notice spelling mistakes 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.
- Demonstrate you have researched the organisation and know where it is, what it does and what services it has.
- 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 or private careers consultant, or a recruiter.

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

A word about Facebook

Social media has created a very sociable environment but it has also blurred the boundary between our personal and professional lives. A recent survey of more than 400 managers found that 36 per cent of Australian employers admit to checking potential candidate's Facebook profiles before offering them the job!

So, as a general rule, it is best not to put information on Facebook or other sites that you do not want your employer to know. Remember to list and adjust your privacy settings so you can effectively separate your professional life from your personal life.

More about interviews

Those undertaking a Graduate Masters in Nursing will have completed only some of their clinical placements by the time the interviews are being held and they may not feel confident in a competitive interview process. You should take every opportunity to develop confidence for the interview process. Seek advice from your course co-ordinator or nurse educators at your clinical placements; they will advise you on what employers might want from a Masters level graduate and the type of interview questions you may be asked.

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 EGPs in Victoria commence in **February**, so it is important that you do not delay your application for registration. The registration process can take one to two months 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 complete all your assignments.

You are able to pre-register online from the 1st October 2012 but your application will not be successfully completed until you have passed your course and the NMBA have received and assessed all the documentation.

Find out about the registration process at:
www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Graduate-Applications.aspx

To ensure you are ready to start your EGP you must:

- ✓ Complete all academic requirements by the time the academic progress committee at your institution meets
- ✓ Commence your on-line pre registration to NMBA 4-6 weeks before end of academic year
- ✓ Pay the NMBA application fee on time
- ✓ Ensure you have all the correct and complete documentation for NMBA including evidence that you meet the English Language registration standards

*You cannot start your EGP
if you are not registered –
no exceptions!*

3. Getting a job - from November 2012

If you were in GNMP Match you will know by October if you have employment in a EGP.

If you got a place, congratulations you can relax!

Many graduates worry they will reduce their skills and competency over the Christmas holidays, but be reassured that your employer will provide a comprehensive orientation and you will be much more focused if you have a break.

If you don't get matched to an EGP

As there are many graduates participating in the match, not all graduates get a match immediately. If you find yourself in this situation, there are still options. You can seek a EGP place by doing the following:

- After the match, look at the list of health services that have available places (on the GNMP Match website) and consider doing a EGP at one of those services.
- Look at the health service's website to find out the full range of services they provide – you may be surprised at the opportunities.
- Contact the health service directly by ringing the course co-coordinator to confirm your interest in their program.
- Consider a rural or regional graduate year, there are amazing experiences on offer.

We have talked to some nurses who have found working in a rural setting the best choice they made, so have a look yourself at:

- Living in country Victoria
www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcDFj8xmdH8
- Working in country Victoria
www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpuTsyB6vs4

Finding a job

If you have not been successful in gaining employment through the match we suggest you rethink your career plan. We strongly recommend you take a job if one is offered. It may not be your dream job but it will give you an entrance to the profession and may open up many opportunities.

Remember, EGPs are not mandatory. There are many ways to enter the nursing and midwifery workforce. You need to approach the task with commitment so that not too much time elapses between completing your study and being in employment as a nurse or midwife.

You may need to consider clinical fields and geographic areas that are not your first, second or even twentieth 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 leap at any opportunities that arise.

Consider all employment options, such as public and private health services, doctor’s surgeries and Multi Purpose Services (MPS), health clinics, aged care facilities and the Defence forces – these are all options that could provide employment opportunities for graduates.

Please remember that some graduates don’t start their EGP, drop out or postpone their start, so it is good to check with health services (especially those where you have been interviewed) in late January or February to see if any places have become available at short notice.

Additionally, Health Workforce Australia provides a Graduate Information Portal to assist graduates who don’t get an initial graduate place.

This site gathers information from around Australia and is available after the GNMP Match. Visit the Nursing and Midwifery Graduate Jobs website at <http://nmgi.org.au> for more information.

What to look for in an employer if they don’t have a formal early graduate program:

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

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

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

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 nursing journals and complete online learning packages.

Some graduates continue their studies, undertaking an honours year or post-graduate studies while they look for employment in nursing.

Finishing studies mid-year

If you finish your degree mid-year, think about applying for a EGP that starts mid-year or applying for a job. You can apply through GNMP Match the year before for a mid-year intake.

Waiting for a EGP that starts at the beginning of the following year may put you at a disadvantage in a competitive environment, as you may no longer be considered a ‘new grad’.

International nursing and midwifery graduates

If you are an International graduate seeking career opportunities in Australia there is a “Graduates Career” website which has specific information for international students that have undertaken their study in Australia.

http://www.graduateopportunities.com/career_advice/international_student_opportunities

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 trial the Australian workplace. For further details of other eligibility requirements, see www.immi.gov.au

Other assistance

- There are many professional associations and industry bodies that can assist you to chat to colleagues and stay abreast with 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 you may 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 you by increasing 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, especially women who juggle demanding jobs and personal lives.

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 large impersonal 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, like doing exams and 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 in Victoria*, go to:
www.nursing.vic.gov.au



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