



## Position statement: Graduate programs for nurses and midwives

### 1. Context

Graduate programs are available in numerous health services and settings and are fundamental in:

- facilitating transition to practice for early career nurses and midwives by enabling them to consolidate, expand and apply their knowledge and skills in a safe and supportive environment
- ensuring health services have a sustainable and well-prepared workforce
- ensuring the community has access to skilled and safe nursing and midwifery care for optimum health outcomes.

### 2. Purpose

This position statement outlines the ANMF (Vic Branch) expectations for graduate nursing and midwifery programs.

### 3. Key definitions

**Graduate program:** A formal transition to practice program designed to support and guide newly registered nurses and midwives during the early stage of practice as a registered health professional.

### 4. Branch position

It is the position of the ANMF (Vic Branch) that:

#### 4.1 Access

- Every new nursing and midwifery graduate should have access to a transition to practice program that aligns with the evidence-based framework in the [2018 Victorian Nursing and Midwifery Transition to Practice Programs Guidelines](#)
- When graduate nurses and midwives are unable to obtain access to a formal graduate program, their employer should provide appropriate support by implementing the best practice principles outlined in [2018 Victorian Nursing and Midwifery Transition to Practice Programs Guidelines](#)

#### 4.2 Key principles

- Graduate programs must address the individual transition needs of each graduate and:
  - be provided in a positive learning environment that values the contribution of graduates and supports and safeguards their professional development
  - provide a clear and transparent mechanism to ensure each graduate receives timely, targeted, and tailored clinical support from a nurse educator, preceptor, or clinical support nurse (however titled)
  - ensure all employers, nursing leaders, nurses and midwives involved in supporting graduates have realistic expectations of the graduate's scope of practice and respect and understand the learning process.

#### 4.3 Key practices

- Graduate programs should provide a structured outcome-based framework that includes:
  - a handbook which outlines the requirements and expectations of the graduate program
  - transparent and agreed individual learning goals which are realistic, objectively measurable, and achievable
  - appropriate supernumerary time to meet the graduate's individual learning needs
  - study days for structured professional development
  - structured opportunities for facilitated reflection and debriefing, including support to identify stressors, and raise and address concerns
  - support for wellbeing and strategies to reduce stressors in the workplace
  - a fair and transparent mechanism to provide formal and informal constructive feedback
  - structured ward orientation
  - rotations that are suited to the individual graduate and support the graduate to develop confidence and competence and reduce 'transition shock'
  - gradual or staggered introduction to working a [forward rotating roster](#) and varying shifts to help graduates acclimatise to shift work while retaining good access to clinical support staff
  - opportunities to gain clinical experience in all areas of pregnancy, birth and post-natal care for graduate midwives
  - opportunities to participate in specialist mental health graduate programs where appropriate
  - performance appraisals that are collaborative, non-punitive and constructive
- New graduates should not be required to perform 'in charge' roles that are beyond the scope of practice of a beginning practitioner.

#### 4.4 ANMF (Vic Branch) support

- The ANMF (Vic Branch) is committed to supporting final year students in gaining employment in a graduate program as well as assisting registered nurses and midwives currently undertaking a graduate program
- We encourage members to contact our dedicated graduate and final year student support officers through [ANMF \(Vic Branch\) Member Assistance](#)

### 5. Related documents and references

Department of Health, Victorian Government 2021 [Nursing and midwifery new graduate guide](#)  
Shwartz, S 2019, [Educating the Nurse of the Future – Report of the Independent Review of Nursing Education](#)