

ONP briefing for overseas-trained nurses who have decision letters dated from 1 September 2005

Q: Why is a new overseas nursing programme being introduced?

A: The NMC has found that the quality of supervised practice placements varies enormously. In order to produce a uniformly high standard for achieving registration, the NMC has created a new programme that every applicant from overseas will have to undertake successfully before they are able to register in the UK. This is known as the Overseas Nurses Programme (ONP).

Q: When will the new programmes start?

A: On 1 September 2005

Q: To whom will the new programme apply?

A: All overseas applicants (except those from EEA States) who receive a decision letter dated after 31 August 2005 will have to enrol onto the new ONP. The programme comprises two parts: 20-days protected learning time and, if deemed necessary, a period of supervised practice in a clinical setting. All applicants, including those from South Africa, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and all other Commonwealth countries, will have to meet the standards of the new ONP in order to register as a nurse in the UK.

Q: What does this mean for applicants who previously gained direct access to the register?

A: All overseas nurses who receive a decision from 1 September 2005 will have to complete the ONP. There are no exceptions and there will no longer be direct access to the nursing register in the UK. Applicants will not be able to request exemption from this standard.

Q: How do I apply for the ONP?

A: Before you send in your application form to the NMC, you will have to take an international English language test (IELTS). Only overseas-trained nurses who have achieved an average score of 6.5 on the academic level IELTS run by the British Council are able to apply for the ONP.

Q: But my first language is English. Do I still need to take the test?

A: Yes you do. This is a new development and is designed to ensure a high standard of English while removing any element of discrimination or unfairness in our processes.

Q: How will I find a supervised practice placement in order to complete the ONP?

A: Approved NMC educational institutions and their affiliated service providers who have had their programmes approved by the NMC are permitted to run the programme. A list of all approved educational institutions will be available on the NMC web site. You will have to contact an approved educational institution direct. They and a service provider will organise a supervised practice placement for you.

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Q: Does this mean that the approved educational institutions will now control the programme and assess suitability for registration?

A: No. Approved educational institutions will work in partnership with service providers to deliver the programme. However, approved educational institutions will enrol applicants onto their programme and will allocate them to a practice setting in partnership with the appropriate service provider. The 20-day protected learning period may be undertaken in practice and/or approved educational institution settings. The practice setting will be either in a NHS Trust, nursing home or other

approved practice setting and will be affiliated to the approved educational institution. If applicants meet all the requirements of the ONP the approved educational institution will refer them for registration. Approved educational institutions will work closely with the NMC and the placement provider.

Q: If I only have a decision to complete the 20-days protected learning time, whom do I contact?

A: All overseas-trained nurses will have to undertake the protected learning time. If you have a decision only to complete the 20-days protected learning time, then you must contact an approved educational institution directly.

Q: What is protected learning time?

A: The period of protected learning time is designed to enable overseas-trained nurses to gain an understanding of working in the UK healthcare system. The content will include aspects of health care in the UK such as the law, record-keeping, ethics, administration of medicines, inter-professional relationships and so on.

Q: What if I fail my programme?

A: From 1 September 2005 one decision letter will cover one attempt at the programme. If you fail your first attempt you are required to contact the NMC immediately. If you have failed because of misconduct you will not be allowed a further attempt. If your failure was not for reasons of misconduct then you may be given a second decision letter allowing you to undertake a second attempt. If you fail your second attempt then you will not be registered and will be allowed no further attempts.

Q: If I have successfully completed an approved programme how will I ensure that I gain registration?

A: If you have completed an approved programme, the approved educational institution will submit to the NMC a declaration of good health, good character and competence. Where you are required to complete the 20-day protected learning time and a period of supervised practice, the approved HEI must both ensure that you satisfied all of the competencies for supervised practice and the outcomes of the 20-days protected learning time. When the NMC has received this information, you will be eligible to register.

Q: If I have a decision to complete a six-month supervised practice and the 20-days protected learning time, does this mean that it will take me seven months to get registered?

A: No. The 20-days protected learning time will be part of the six-months supervised practice period.

Q: Will the NMC continue to publish on the web site a list of approved nursing homes that provide supervised practice?

A: The list will continue to be published on the NMC web site, but this will only apply to applicants who have received a decision letter dated before 1 September 2005. From 1 September 2005, all overseas-trained nurses will receive a decision to undertake the ONP. In order to access the ONP, you must contact an approved educational institution. A list of approved educational institutions will be published on the NMC web site.