

Public Submission on the Implementation and Impact of the National Framework of Qualifications and Access, Transfer and Progression policies: 2008

Respondent's Details

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Date:	17 th November 2008

Is this response a personal view or is it made on behalf of your organisation?

Personal []

On behalf of organisation []

Submissions will be made public on the website of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and attributed to the author and/or their organisation unless you request otherwise.

Do you agree that your submission may be made public?

Yes []

No []

Public submissions on the Implementation and Impact of the National framework of Qualifications and Access, Transfer and Progression policies: 2008

Background

The National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery (National Council) is concerned (not exclusively) with career progression among nurses and midwives working in clinical areas. This is a relatively new development as management and education were the only formally recognised career paths for nurses and midwives prior to 1998.

The National Council approves the qualifying standard in terms of educational and competency attainment required for specialist and advanced practice posts and adjudicates on whether individuals meet these requirements (National Council (2007) *Framework for the Establishment of Clinical Nurse/Midwife Posts – Intermediate Pathway*; (2008) *Framework for the Establishment of Advanced Nurse Practitioner and Advanced Midwife Practitioner Posts and Accreditation of Advanced Nurse Practitioners and Advanced Midwife Practitioners*). The post-registration educational standards for clinical specialist and advanced practice posts have been set at levels 8 and 9 respectively. Most recent figures show that there are 2,025 approved clinical nurse/midwife specialist posts and 114 approved advanced nurse/midwife practitioner posts. From autumn 2006 to spring 2007 14 academic education providers were offering 286 nursing- and midwifery-specific post-registration courses. Sixty-one per cent (n=173) of these courses had an intake, of which 109 (64%) were at level 9 and 47 (28%) at level 8 (Office of the Nursing Services Director, Health Service Executive (2008), *Report of the Post-Registration Nursing and Midwifery Review Group*).

The frameworks for clinical specialist and advanced practice posts have been effective in streamlining the approval process and making it transparent. This has been achieved through leadership from the National Council, the publication of the National Framework of Qualifications, investment by the Department of Health and Children in the professional development of nurses and midwives and effective collaboration between health service and academic education providers. The effect of the National Framework of Qualifications has been to streamline the recognition and provision of educational preparation of specialists and advanced practitioners.

The following themes are suggested as a guide in making your submission. Please feel free to make a free form submission if you wish. Submissions should not exceed 2000 words. The themes are:

- Expectations of the Framework

The National Council welcomed the Framework as it provided a reference point for us and our specialised target audience in relation to the level of academic qualifications required for clinical specialist and advanced practice in nursing and midwifery. It was anticipated that the Framework would enhance the integrity of overall educational programme development in

Ireland and, from our perspective, the development of post-registration/postgraduate nursing and midwifery programmes.

- **Impact on learners**

The National Council has developed its framework for the establishment of clinical nurse/midwife specialist posts since the publication of the National Framework of Qualifications to include a requirement for CNS/CMS post-holders to hold or undertake to obtain a level-8 qualification (2004, 2007).

The positive effects of this requirement include:

1. Development in the level-8 programmes available to nurses and midwives in terms of number, specialised content and academic standing
2. Benefits to individual nurse/midwife practitioners in terms of enhanced specialised clinical knowledge and critical thinking ability, potential and actual career progression
3. Benefits to health service providers in terms of a more highly educated workforce better adapted to meet the changing needs of the health service
4. Benefits to the nursing and midwifery professions as a whole in terms of enhanced credibility as members of multidisciplinary health and social care teams
5. Benefits to users of health services in Ireland in terms of enhanced patient care arising from a nursing/midwifery workforce more capable of implementing evidence in practice
6. Accumulation of experience in developing needs-based education programmes by nurse/midwife academics in negotiation with service providers
7. Education providers provide increasingly transparent and user-friendly materials about their courses, enabling potential applicants to make more informed course choices.

The negative effects possibly include:

1. Raising of unrealistic expectations and hopes concerning the provision of specialised courses for very small numbers of students.

- **Key strengths and key weaknesses of the Framework**

Key strengths:

1. Information has generally been presented in a user-friendly format
2. Appears applicable to various disciplines and branches of knowledge
3. Provides a standard reference point for discussion and source of information

- **Impact on programmes and qualifications**

See 1 and 6 under *Impact on Learners* above.

– standards, learning outcomes, assessment, quality assurance

Appears to have contributed to the viable development of course that can meet the needs of health service providers, the requirements of academic providers and the expectations of students.

- Access, transfer and progression

- Expectations –

In its annual review of postgraduate prospectuses, especially since 2006, the National Council has observed that a growing number of education providers have included increasingly consistent and coherent information about access, transfer and progression. In particular, information about progression from postgraduate diploma to masters' degree programmes has been particularly explicit.

While progress has been made in relation to recognition of prior learning, modularisation of postgraduate programmes and accumulation of credits, the National Council would welcome further development of these activities and options.

- Impact on learners –

An indirect effect of the Framework has been the increase in numbers of nurses and midwives undertaking post-registration education at a nationally recognised academic standard.

Learners have been enabled to make realistic career and personal development plans.

- Key strengths and key weaknesses

- Relevance of the Framework to employment

See 2, 3 and 5 under *Impact on Learners* above.

- Use of the Framework in public funding

Development of the clinical career pathway and the increase in the number of appropriately qualified nurses and midwives was facilitated by the Department of Health and Children (DoHC Circulars 150/2000 and 47/2001).

- Impact on the international recognition of qualifications

The National Council has had some experience in dealing with nurses and midwives who have undertaken specialist primary degrees in the United Kingdom and have subsequently sought recognition of these qualifications at level 8 on the NFQ. We have depended on information from the British higher education sector for advice, for example, the leaflet *Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries – A Rough Guide to Comparing Qualifications in the UK and Ireland* (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2005).

Thank you.

Please return your response to nfqstudy@nqai.ie or to

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