

VISA PAK ISSUE 566 — 19 DECEMBER 2023

NURSING COUNCIL CHANGES TO COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

Introduction — Information for immigration staff that outlines the new assessment requirements for International Qualified Nurses (IQNs) applying through the Nursing Council New Zealand.

This Visa Pak supersedes previous advice given to staff.

Over the last year, the Nursing Council of New Zealand (NCNZ) has been working on a new competence assessment for internationally qualified nurses (IQN). The Competency Assessment Programme (CAP) is being replaced by a competency examination. These changes have been confirmed and will take effect from 4 December 2023.

New requirements

IQNs will now be issued an eligibility letter by the NCNZ and will have 18 months to complete the new competence examination in full. After 18 months the application to complete the new competence examination will close. All IQN's applying to the NCNZ from 4 December 2023 will undertake the following objective examinations of competence:

- An **online theoretical exam** that tests nursing knowledge, taken at an accredited exam centre overseas or in New Zealand. Details of the exam centres will be sent out upon confirmation from the NCNZ.

It is a 180-minute, multiple choice exam. IQNs will have three attempts in total to pass the exam before the application is closed.

- A **two-day orientation and preparation course** followed by a **clinical examination known as an OSCE** (Objective Structured Clinical Examination). The OSCE tests clinical and professional skills.

This orientation and preparation course takes two days and can only be taken in New Zealand. The OSCE examination takes half a day. The clinical exam will be completed at a designated facility (details to be provided once confirmation received from the NCNZ). IQNs will manage their booking of the orientation/preparation course and OSCE directly with the designated facility. IQNs will have three attempts to pass the New Zealand OSCE.

IQNs travelling to New Zealand may need at least 10 days to enable the completion of the course and OSCE first attempt. If an IQN fails the first OSCE, at least six weeks between resits may be



needed, bearing in mind the scheduling, and booking availability of the OSCE. Therefore, IQNs should be issued a 3-month visa under Occupational Registration.

18-month transition period of the existing CAP to the new competency examination

The NCNZ anticipates there will be an 18-month transition period where both the existing CAP and the new competence examination will be offered. Existing IQN's who have an open CAP letter will, in the first instance, continue to complete a CAP, however, applicants may be given the opportunity to transfer from the CAP to the examination. The NCNZ anticipate most IQN's will opt to continue with the existing CAP.

For IQN's who have already applied to the NCNZ for registration or will do so before the new process is implemented, these changes will have no immediate effect and they may undertake an existing CAP. The existing CAP requirements will continue to run in parallel with the new CAP until 25 June 2024.

Under the existing CAP, IQNs will continue to apply for a Visitor Visa General. Immigration officers should continue to assess these applications as per normal. IQN's applying under the new examination will apply under Occupational Registration with a maximum length of 3 months.

Accompanying evidence

IQN's who have successfully completed the new competency examination will be issued a registration confirmation letter from the NCNZ. The NCNZ are still drafting the letter however once they confirm the content, we will provide updated advice on what a genuine registration letter will look like.