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LINKING LEARNING WITH LIFE

PATHWAYS TO NURSING

[TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-TWO]

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A guide to a career in nursing explained - from university programs offered in Australia for students commencing study in 2023, to the steps you'll need to take in order to be a nurse.

Created by Study Work Grow Pty Ltd in 2022.

Version 1

The programs in this guide may be subject to change at any time. In our experience, programs may change at short notice, and you should always check directly with the provider before applying. We have verified the information in this guide, but in some cases the information may differ from that provided on third party websites or printed material.

terms you need to know

Nursing and Healthcare have some specific words and terms that you'll need to learn if you want to work in the field.

Enrolled Nurse (EN) - An EN usually works with a Registered Nurse to provide patients with basic nursing care, but perform less complex procedures than RNs.

Registered Nurse (RN) - RNs work independently and operate as part of inter-dependant teams. RNs are accountable and responsible for their own actions and for the delegation of care to ENs and other healthcare workers. As an RN you may also choose to specialise in a specific area of care.

Midwife - Midwifery is a separate specialist study to nursing. Midwives specialise in giving the necessary support, care and advice to people during pregnancy, labour, birth and the postnatal period

Nurse Practitioner - Nurse practitioners are the most senior clinical nurses, and are involved in diagnosing and treating complex patient illnesses alongside doctors and specialists.

DipN - Diploma of Nursing

BN - Bachelor of Nursing

BMid - Bachelor of Midwifery

MN - Master of Nursing

MMid - Master of Midwifery

NMBA - Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia

AHPRA - Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

ANMAC - Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council

This is just the tip of the iceberg; if you come across any other terms you want to remember, note them down here:

levels of nursing

ENROLLED NURSE

Enrolled Nurses provide care to patients under the supervision of Registered Nurses and other medical professionals. They are generally qualified to perform basic care and medical procedures, such as observing patients' vital signs, providing physical and emotional support, assisting with personal hygiene, and wound care.

REGISTERED NURSE

Registered Nurses are a step above Enrolled Nurses, and provide more comprehensive and complex care to patients. They usually work in teams with other specialist health care professionals, such as doctors, surgeons, physiotherapists, and more.

NURSE PRACTITIONER

Registered Nurses might choose to become Nurse Practitioners after many years of experience and completion of a Master's degree. They are capable of providing complex care to patients independently, similar to a doctor.

MIDWIFE

Midwives specialise in everything to do with childbirth and pregnancy. From conception to post-natal care, a Midwife is able to provide support and advice at every step of the journey.

where nurses work

Before you delve any deeper into the world of nursing, let's start by looking at where nurses and midwives work. This is important because if you become a nurse, then you'll be working like this, and if you don't think you would enjoy this kind of work environment then you may need to rethink being a nurse.



Jobs available across Australia



Limited opportunity to work from home or online



Opportunities in rural and remote areas

NURSES ARE FOUND ANYWHERE PEOPLE ARE

You'll find nurses from the middle of the city through to remote communities at the tip of Australia. Nurses are also needed all around the world, and your skills will make you a valuable employee wherever you go.

TEAMWORK

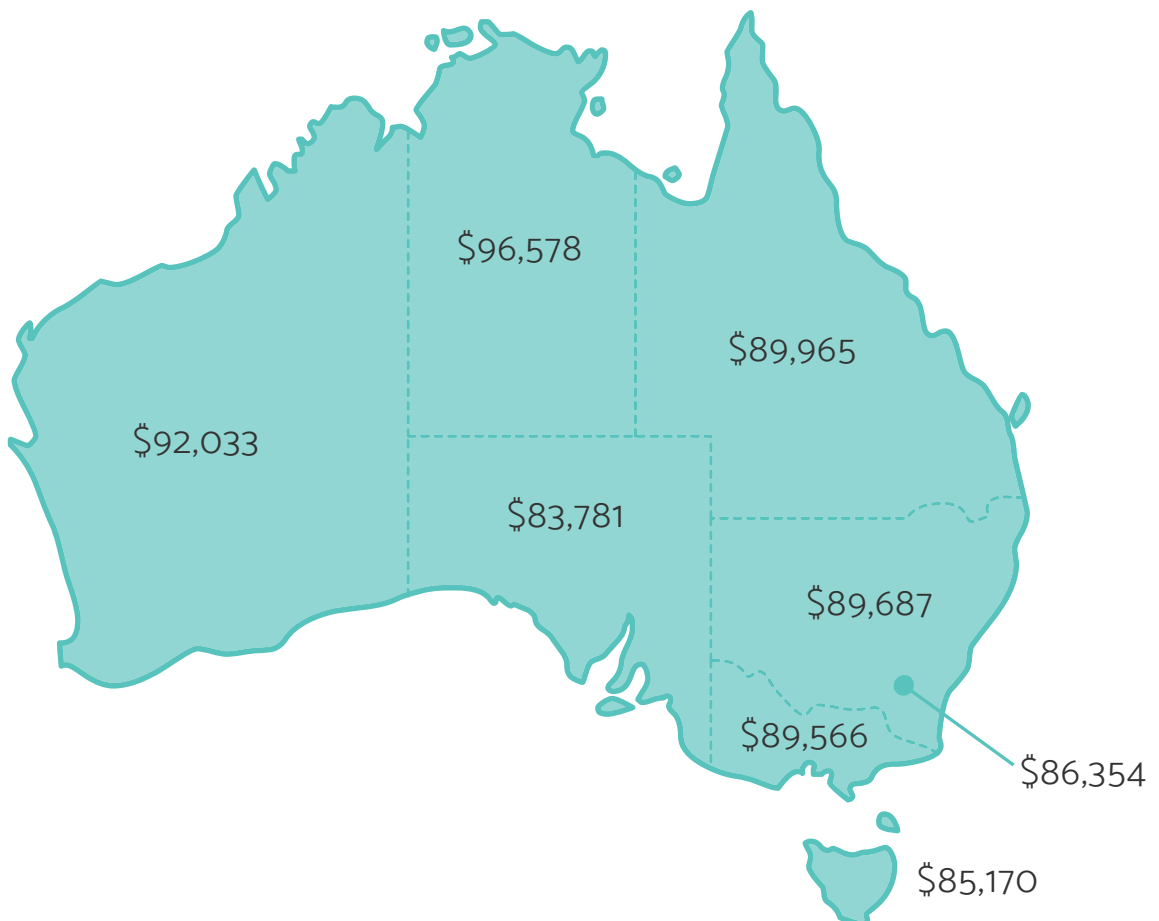
Most nurses work in teams, from huge hospital departments with hundreds of medical professionals and staff, through to small group nursing practices. Some nurses work independently, for example as community aged care nurses, travelling from home to home to deliver care wherever it is needed.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

There are only a few limited opportunities to work from home - most jobs require specialised equipment and direct contact with patients, and very few nurses feel comfortable with bringing patients into their homes. Nurses also often work in shifts, which means they work nights, early mornings, weekends and holidays - people don't stop getting sick just because it's the weekend.

what nurses earn

Salaries for nurses and midwives vary across the country, and also depend on whether you are an EN or RN. Salaries for RNs and midwives are usually the same as they require the same qualification level (Bachelor's degree), while an EN's salary is lower (you only require a Diploma). However, each level of nursing and midwifery offers the chance for salary increases with experience and further training.



Does this meet your earning expectations?

- Yes, this salary looks good to me
- No, I'd like to earn more

work-life balance

Have you thought about what life will be like when/if you become a nurse? Your career will have an impact on your lifestyle, and nurses often have to adjust their lifestyle to suit their job. Are you willing to change your lifestyle if you need to?



Nurse Average

Work Hours

Average - nurses and midwives work on average 42 hours per week



Job Security

High - jobs in nursing and midwifery have strong growth and demand into the future



Job Flexibility

High - around 50% of nurses and midwives work in part-time or casual roles

Nurses and midwives have a relatively average working week at 42 hours. However, depending on where you work, you might expect to work long shifts and at odd hours (such as overnights, early mornings and weekends).

This means you may not have a lot of flexibility in when and where you work. On the plus side, it can be easier to get flexible work and work part-time as a nurse, so you can work less when you have other things you want to be doing, then go back to full-time later on.

Jobs in healthcare have some of the strongest growth going forward into the future, so you can expect that there will always be plenty of jobs available.

Do you think you could handle the impact on your lifestyle?

- Yes, it sounds like it would suit me
- No, I'm not so sure this is sounding like me

key tasks

As a nurse, you're responsible for the care and wellbeing of your patients. This means that you'll likely be performing similar tasks on a regular basis.

Each patient is different and has different needs, but you'll find that most of your tasks are the same from day-to-day. You'll be performing clinical tasks, including taking temperature, administering medication, collecting samples, and measuring heart rate and blood pressure.

Nursing is a service-based profession, which means that you will probably not be working on long, complex projects too often. This also means that you'll need to deal with people on a regular basis; including your patients, their families, other doctors and health workers, as well as the wider community.



Automation Risk

There is a very low risk of your job being automated



Service Tasks

You'll provide a similar service each day



People Facing

The majority of your work puts you in contact with other people

You'll also be responsible for other tasks, such as supporting the emotional wellbeing of your patients, writing up reports, and creating care plans.

You will need to liaise with other healthcare professionals, and ensure you meet all the mandatory ongoing registration requirements.

What do you think of the key tasks of this career pathway?

- I'm excited to get started
- I'm not so sure about these tasks and responsibilities

skills and attributes

Nurses require a particular skill set to help them manage patients, handle pressure, and solve problems on their feet.

You don't need to match all these attributes right now, but it would be good if you meet some of them and are willing to work towards the others.



Active indoor work

You will be on your feet most of the day and may have to perform physical activities such as lifting patients.



Attention to detail

Giving your patients good care, taking notes and making accurate records are all very important as a nurse or midwife.



Tough under pressure

You might have to deal with people when they aren't at their best and see things that may be confronting.

Circle the attributes you feel you have:

Empathetic	Patient
Calm	Resilient
Caring	Adaptable
Compassionate	Reliable
High energy	Thorough
Excellent communicator	Attentive

How many did you circle?

0 to 3 - you and nursing may not be a good fit

4 to 6 - there could be potential

7 and up - sounds like you could make a great nurse

thoughts so far

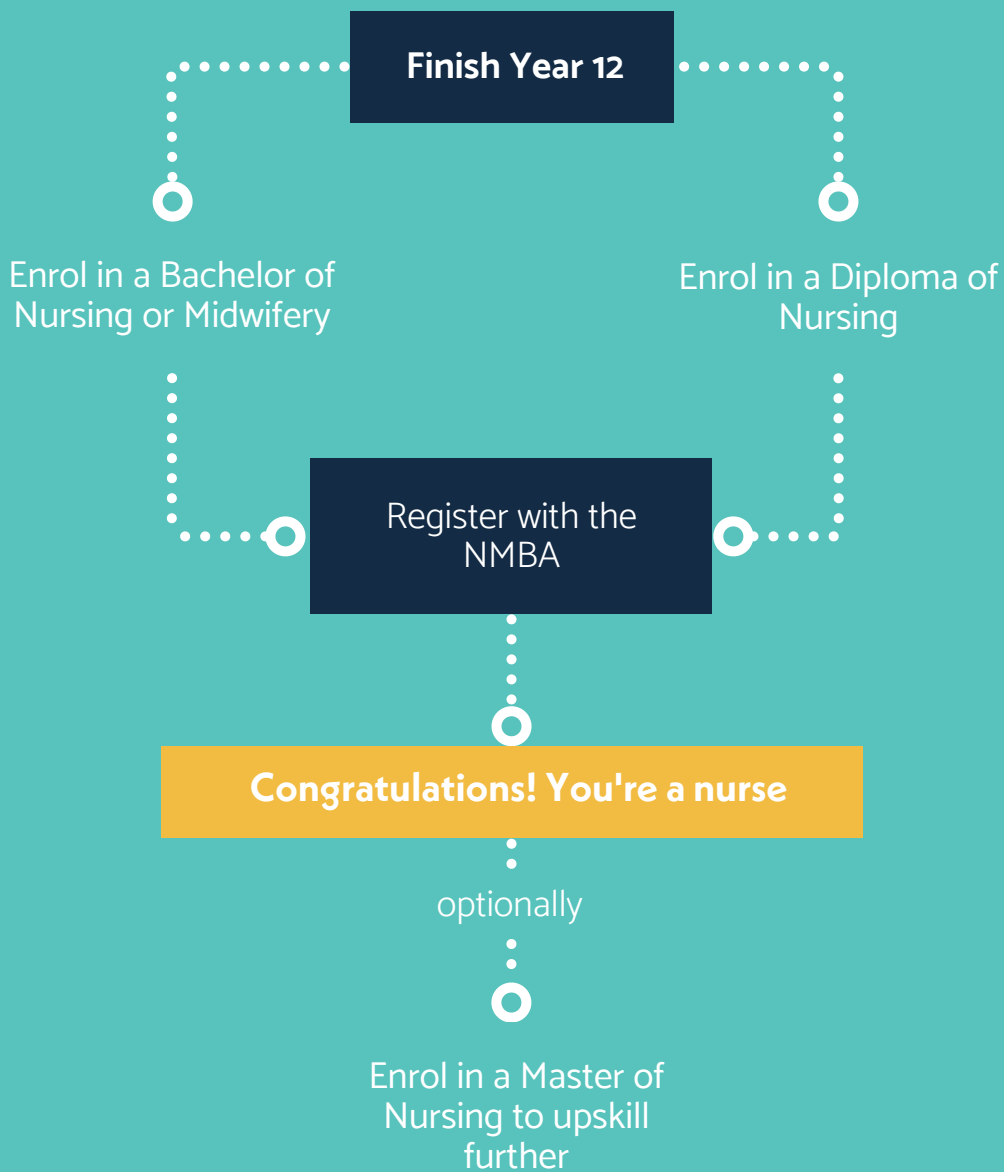
Do you think you could become a nurse? It's an important job, and people will be relying on you for critical care, which means you'll need to commit to the role. Next we're going to look at pathways to becoming a nurse, but before we go on ask yourself these three questions:

What are you most looking forward to if you become a nurse?

What do you think you will struggle with most as a nurse?

Do you think the lifestyle, pay, and conditions would suit you?

pathways to nursing



your study options

In Australia, the nursing or midwifery course you complete must be accredited by ANMAC and approved by the NMBA. This is to ensure that the courses stay up to date with the latest developments in health and medical care, and graduates are getting the best education possible.

It is important to check whether the course you are undertaking has been approved. If not, you may not meet the requirements for registration when you start working. Only approved courses have been provided in this guide.

Once you leave school, you have a few options:

Don't want to go to uni?

Enrol in a Diploma of Nursing at a TAFE or RTO. These generally have the lowest entry requirements for students who do not have an ATAR or don't meet the requirements for a Bachelor's degree.

Once you finish your Diploma of Nursing, you can then register as an EN and start practicing.

Happy to go straight to uni?

You can also start studying a Bachelor of Nursing or Midwifery straight out of school. Completing a Bachelor's degree will allow you to register as an RN or midwife straight after graduation.

WHICH PATHWAY ARE YOU LEANING TOWARDS?

1

If you are thinking about a role as an Enrolled Nurse, then read through the next section about Diploma Programs.

2

If you're keen to go to university, skip the next section and move onto the section about Bachelor Degrees.

becoming an enrolled nurse

Becoming an Enrolled Nurse is generally the first and most basic step towards your career in nursing.

STEP ONE

To become an EN, you will need to complete a Diploma of Nursing, which is usually offered by RTOs and TAFEs. Some universities may also offer this course.

Generally you will not need an ATAR or any other subject prerequisites to gain entry into a Diploma of Nursing. Most of the time, you will simply need to have finished grade 12, and be able to show competency in English and some numeracy.

A Diploma of Nursing usually takes on average 18 months to two years to complete.

You will need to complete your Diploma of Nursing face-to-face, as there are often work placements and practical experiences that you need to undertake as part of the course. However, you may be able to study some of the other theory subjects online.

FIND A COURSE

You can find course providers and more info about the Diploma of Nursing on the MySkills website.

STEP TWO

Once you finish your Diploma, you can register with the NMBA and start practicing as an Enrolled Nurse.

As an EN, you can expect to be performing basic nursing and care duties for patients, often under the supervision of an RN.

You can stay as an Enrolled Nurse, or you could use your qualifications to enter a Bachelor of Nursing or Midwifery, and become an RN or midwife.

[search for courses](#)

becoming a registered nurse or midwife

For students who want to go to uni straight out of school, becoming an RN or midwife is a great choice.

STEP ONE

To become an RN or midwife, you will need to complete a Bachelor of Nursing or Bachelor of Midwifery, which are usually offered by universities.

Generally you will need an ATAR and some subject prerequisites to gain entry into a degree.

The requirements are different for each university, so make sure to check with the institution you want to go to.

A Bachelor of Nursing or Midwifery takes on average 3 years to complete.

Most of your study will be done face to face, as you'll often be working with your hands or completing practical units. Some of the theoretical learning may also be online.

FIND A COURSE

You can find course providers and more info about undergraduate courses on [Course Seeker](#).

STEP TWO

Once you finish your degree, you can register with the NMBA and start practicing as an Registered Nurse or Midwife.

As an RN, you can expect to be performing and supervising more complex patient operations and cases. You may even work directly alongside a doctor or surgeon, and supervise ENs.

As a midwife, you will specialise in the care of pregnant people before, during and after birth. This is a specialised area and you will most likely focus on this in your day-to-day job.

[search for courses](#)

understanding registration

Finishing your course is just the first step towards being able to work as a nurse or midwife.

After you finish your course, you will need to gain registration with the NMBA. You must be registered before you can start to practice as a nurse or midwife.

There are different kinds of registration, but most nurses and midwives will apply for general registration in order to practice.

In order to gain registration, you need to meet the registration standards set out by the NMBA.

These are:

- Criminal history
- English language skills
- Health impairments
- Continuing professional development
- Indemnity insurance
- Recency of practice

You must apply for registration within two years of finishing your qualification, otherwise it will not be valid and you may have to undertake it again.

During your studies, you will automatically be registered by your education provider under a student registration.

This will allow you to undertake work experience and placements, etc. However, once you finish your studies, you must apply for general registration, as your student registration lapses once your course is complete.

The process for registration is the same across Australia.

First, you will need to fill out a form supplied by the NMBA. This is where you will list the details of your education, work experience, criminal history, and any health impairments. You will also need to pay a registration fee.

Once the form has been supplied to the NMBA, they will contact you to advise whether or not your registration is successful. Depending on your circumstances, you may also be asked to provide additional information to ensure you meet the registration standards.

Once your registration has been approved, you will be added to the public register of practitioners, and are able to work as a nurse or midwife in Australia.

In order to continue practicing, your registration must be renewed by 31 May each year.

other pathways to nursing

It's a great idea to have a Plan B for which course or pathway you'll take if you don't get an offer for your first preference. You can still become a nurse or midwife even if you miss out on an offer in the first round of university applications, so don't worry.

Some universities also offer nursing and midwifery courses specifically for university graduates, which means that you could apply with a Bachelor of Arts, Engineering, Science, Accounting, or IT.

What if you don't want to become a nurse or midwife right away? There are plenty of other career choices in health that will let you upskill down the track if you do decide to become a nurse or midwife.

You could work in the aged care sector, which often only requires a qualification such as a Certificate III in Aged Care. This is a great way to build up your experience, and see if a career in healthcare is right for you.

You could also complete a course like a Diploma in Health Science. Then, down the track, you could use this qualification to work in areas like nutrition and allied health.

The best part is most of these courses will provide a direct pathway into either a Diploma or Bachelor of Nursing or Midwifery, if you do decide you would like to become a qualified nurse or midwife one day.

DO YOU HAVE A PLAN B?

It could be wise for your Plan B to include career options other than 'nurse', in case you don't get into your dream nursing course, or you change your mind during your studies. Having a solid backup career option with good job prospects, even if you never get into nursing or midwifery, is a very sensible move.

Write down some Plan B (or C, or D...) ideas here:

how else can you use a nursing degree?

Just as with any career, there are lots of reasons why you might change your mind about nursing once you've finished your degree or even after a few years in the job.

If a lifetime of nursing isn't for you, that's OK. Your qualifications, skills, and experience could open the doors to careers in lots of other areas.

If you love healthcare but you're just not passionate about nursing, then you could stay in the field and consider other roles such as aged or disability care.

Depending on the work experience you've gained, you might even like to consider moving up the ladder and becoming a doctor, dentist, or other medical specialist. Your nursing studies and work experience might even fast-track any future study you might like to do.

There are also lots of jobs within health that you've probably never even thought about, from pharmaceuticals to nutrition and dietetics, emergency services, psychology, medical manufacturing, and more.

With a nursing degree under your belt and experience working with young people, you could be well placed to move into counselling, community, or youth work roles too.

For a completely fresh start, your skills could provide a great basis to work in a host of other industries such as administration, education, not for profit organisations, government roles, and more.

You may need to undertake some additional training or registration, but your qualifications could be a good head start and help you to fast track your way there.

SKILLS STRENGTHS

What transferrable skills do you think you'd gain from a nursing degree and work experience as a nurse? They'll be useful in other careers and lots of other industries other than nursing. Have a think and write some of the core skills below, then research other jobs where they'd be useful.



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Since 2006, we've been committed to supporting Australian schools with quality, researched information that can help make the transition to post-school life more successful.

Finishing school is a big step in your life, and it can be stressful thinking about what's next. We want to help make the transition from school to further study, work, or whatever you wish to do as smooth as possible.

Remember, you can always ask your family, friends, teachers, and other support people in your life for advice and guidance as well. We wish all students the best of luck with their planning and hope that you have amazing experiences that enrich your lives, no matter what you do.

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