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## Position statement on the provision of neonatal nursing education (2014)

The Australian College of Neonatal Nurses (ACNN) considers that appropriate preparation of specialist neonatal nurses is vital for the provision of quality care to neonates and their families and for the facilitation of nationally recognised neonatal nursing qualifications. There is a pressing need for higher education sector providers, health care providers and neonatal intensive and special care clinicians to develop consensus on neonatal intensive and special care course graduate outcomes. Collaboration between the health care and higher education sectors is crucial to ensure a standard of postgraduate neonatal intensive and special care nursing education that meets the expectations of both sectors.

### Key principles

- The ACNN endorses the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Codes of Ethics and Professional Conduct (Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council 2008).
- The ACNN endorses the principles and recommendations of the Declaration of Madrid on the Preparation of Critical Care Nurses in relation to curriculum content (World Federation of Critical Care Nurses 2005).
- Neonatal intensive and special care course graduates must demonstrate a sound theoretical knowledge based on reliable up-to-date evidence, and clinical capability.
- A strong emphasis on the application of theory to practice, and valid and reliable assessment of clinical capability, should be an integral component of postgraduate neonatal intensive and special care courses.
- Postgraduate courses for neonatal intensive and special care nurses must provide a balance between clinically oriented and broader generic content that enables the specialist nurse to critically review literature and contribute to the profession through processes such as research, practice development and leadership.

### Recommendations

Where possible the recommendations for the provision of neonatal intensive and special care nursing education are based on evidence from research in neonatal nursing and allied fields. Where current research-based evidence is not available, the recommendations are informed by the expert opinion of neonatal intensive care nurses in Australia (Australian College of Critical Care Nurses 2006).

1. Programs preparing neonatal intensive and special care nurses to function at a specialist level of practice should be provided at postgraduate level and conducted through collaborative arrangements between higher education sectors and health care providers (for example, a university or equivalent provider).



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2. The curricula of post-registration neonatal intensive and special care nursing courses must provide an appropriate mix of theory and clinical experience, to prepare nurses to meet the challenges of clinical practice.
3. ACNN's *Australian Standards for Neonatal Nurses 2012* should be used to inform neonatal intensive and special care curriculum development and assessment of clinical practice (Australian College of Neonatal Nurses 2012).
4. The provision of appropriate clinical experience to facilitate the development of clinical capability should be a collaborative responsibility between the higher education sectors and health care providers. Neonatal intensive and special care nursing students should have access to support and guidance from appropriately experienced staff such as clinical educators and nurse preceptors.
5. Clinical educators and nurse preceptors for postgraduate neonatal intensive and special care nursing students should be appropriately qualified and supported in their role by both education and health care providers.
6. Neonatal intensive and special care education providers should have in place policies and processes for granting advanced standing or credit transfer (recognition of prior learning), and alternative entry pathways into formal postgraduate specialist courses, in order to create more flexible yet consistent means for students to attain recognition of capability.
7. Innovative strategies need to be implemented to address the deficit of qualified neonatal intensive and special care nurses. Such strategies may include comprehensive neonatal care workforce planning, innovative retention strategies, refresher re-entry neonatal intensive and special care education, professional development programs and the provision of greater support for nurses undertaking postgraduate neonatal intensive and special care courses.
8. Health care and higher education providers need to establish strategies to help reduce the financial burden faced by nurses undertaking postgraduate neonatal intensive and special care courses.
9. Health care providers and Health Departments should implement strategies to provide financial and/or career incentives that will encourage neonatal nurses to complete postgraduate neonatal intensive and special care courses.
10. Education providers should implement strategies to facilitate flexible access to postgraduate neonatal intensive and special care courses for nurses from diverse geographical locations.



11. The following topics should be included in programs to prepare neonatal intensive and special care nurses. The topics are grouped into categories and are not hierarchical<sup>1</sup>.

- Anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology
- Pharmacology
- Nursing therapeutic interventions
- Developmental care strategies
- Clinical assessment
- Neonatal resuscitation
- Nutritional and fluid management
- Family education and support addressing cultural, emotional and spiritual needs
- Palliative care
- Discharge planning; follow-up and ongoing care
- Legal and ethical issues
- Professional nursing issues
- Clinical teaching
- Team leadership, communication and management
- Delivery of evidence-based multidisciplinary care
- Use of technology
- Debriefing, managing stress and peer support
- Global neonatal intensive and special care perspectives

## References

Australian College of Critical Care Nurses 2006, *ACCCN Position Statement (2006) on the Provision of Critical Care Nursing Education*, Australian College of Critical Care Nurses,

<[http://www.acccn.com.au/images/stories/downloads/provision\\_CC\\_nursing\\_edu.pdf](http://www.acccn.com.au/images/stories/downloads/provision_CC_nursing_edu.pdf)>.

Australian College of Neonatal Nurses 2012, *Australian Standards For Neonatal Nurses*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn

<<http://www.acnn.org.au/>>.

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council 2008, *Code of Ethics for Midwives in Australia*, Australian Nursing & Midwifery Council, Canberra, <<http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines.aspx#codesofprofessionalconduct>>.

World Federation of Critical Care Nurses 2005, *Position Statement on the Provision of Critical Care Nursing Education - Declaration of Madrid*, <[http://en.wfccn.org/pub\\_education.php](http://en.wfccn.org/pub_education.php)>.

This statement was coordinated by Patricia Bromley with expert input from Dr Trudi Mannix. This Statement was approved by the national committee of ACNN on 14 April 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> Categories were developed from the World Federation of Critical Care Nurses 2005, *Position Statement on the Provision of Critical Care Nursing Education - Declaration of Madrid*,