



Consultation on the qualifications prescribed by the Midwifery Council for the Midwifery Scope of Practice under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003

Introduction

Te Tatau o Te Whare Kahu / the Midwifery Council (the Council) is consulting with interested individuals, midwives, representatives of midwives, midwifery educators, and others in health and education sectors (stakeholders) on the prescribed qualifications for the Midwifery Scope of Practice. The Council is considering an alternative pathway to registration as a registered midwife - a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree.

The Council's primary responsibility is to protect the health and safety of the public by ensuring that midwives are competent and fit to practise midwifery. The Midwifery Scope of Practice provides that midwives work in partnership with women to give women the necessary support, care and advice during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period up to six weeks, to facilitate births and to provide care for the newborn.

There have been many health changes since the Council was formed in 2003, which include:

- Changes to the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the HPCAA) in 2019
- The findings of the Waitangi Tribunal in Wai 2575 - the Health Services and Outcomes Inquiry
- Other legislation that has been introduced or amended

A preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree may appeal to graduates from other health disciplines seeking to become registered midwives.

Under the current prescribed qualifications, a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree is not identified for entry to the Midwifery Scope of Practice. The proposed change would mean that an additional qualification is prescribed for registration as a midwife, that is, completion of an approved Masters in Midwifery Practice degree provided by an accredited educational provider in New Zealand, by a person registered with one of the responsible authorities appointed under the HPCAA.

Prior to entry to the Register of Midwives, applicants would also need to demonstrate that they meet the competencies for entry to the Register of Midwives; and pass the National Midwifery Examination set by the Council.

The entry criteria for the proposed Master of Midwifery Practice Degree would be any person registered with one of the responsible authorities appointed under the HPCAA who is in good standing with the relevant registration body. That acknowledges and effectively utilises the transferable skills and knowledge that a more mature student cohort brings from their previous academic and professional experiences.

One of the focuses for a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree is a critical shortage of midwives in Aotearoa, which is further compounded by a low proportion of Māori and Pacific midwives. A preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree may assist in building a culturally competent and responsive midwifery workforce that continues to serve the needs of Māori and Pacific communities. Increasing the number of Māori midwives is another step toward achieving equity.

It is also difficult to retain internationally qualified midwives, so increases in the number of domestic midwifery students may help with the workforce shortages. The introduction of a graduate-entry midwifery programme may provide a complementary pathway to the existing direct-entry midwifery programmes. Collectively, the two pathways may enable more people to study to become registered midwives.

Graduate-entry master's degrees provide an accelerated pathway to becoming a registered health professional for students with an existing bachelor's qualification. Internationally, they are a model of education for a wide range of health professions, including midwifery.

This consultation document outlines and discusses the background issues; and the issues related to a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree. That includes information and consultation questions on title of programme, length of programme, programme hours, education programme standards, AND entry criteria.

How to make a submission

The Council values the views of stakeholders and encourages you to respond to this consultation. Submissions close Monday **31 May 2024**.

Submissions can be made via online survey.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LX9B5D8>

Alternatively, written submissions can be made as outlined in Appendix Two. Please email your submission to lesley.clarke@midwiferycouncil.health.nz

Background

Under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the HPCAA) the Council is required to prescribe the qualifications leading to registration in a scope of practice and to accredit and monitor tertiary education institutions offering the prescribed qualifications. Refer to Appendix 1 for relevant excerpts of the HPCAA.

The regulated midwifery workforce in New Zealand consists of midwives registered in one scope of practice. The current requirements for registration as a midwife in New Zealand are:

1. *New Zealand midwifery graduates*
 - (a) *Completion of an approved bachelor's degree in midwifery (minimum of three years duration) provided by an accredited educational provider in New Zealand; and*
 - (b) *demonstration of the competencies for entry to the Register of Midwives; and*
 - (c) *a pass in the National Midwifery Examination set by the council.*

2. *Registered midwives applying from all other countries*
 - (a) *A midwifery qualification, post registration practise in midwifery, post registration midwifery education and midwifery competence portfolio, which, considered as a whole, are deemed by the Midwifery Council as equivalent in content and competencies to the current New Zealand qualifications for registration; and*
 - (b) *current or past registration as a midwife with a midwifery registration authority in the same country of registration as where that midwife's initial qualification was completed.*

Te Tatau o Te Whare Kahu / the Midwifery Council (the Council) is considering an alternative pathway to registration as a registered midwife - a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree. A preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree may appeal to graduates from other health disciplines seeking to become registered midwives. Under the current prescribed qualifications, a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree is not identified for entry to the Midwifery Scope of Practice.

The proposed change would mean that an additional qualification is prescribed for registration as a midwife, that is, completion of an approved Masters in Midwifery Practice degree, provided by an accredited educational provider in New Zealand, by a person registered with one of the responsible authorities appointed

under the HPCAA. Prior to entry to the Register of Midwives, applicants would also need to demonstrate the competencies for entry to the Register of Midwives; and pass the National Midwifery Examination set by the Council.

The entry criteria for the proposed Master of Midwifery Practice Degree would be any person registered with one of the responsible authorities appointed under the HPCAA who is in good standing with the relevant registration body. That acknowledges and effectively utilises the transferable skills and knowledge that a more mature student cohort brings from their previous academic and professional experiences.

One of the focuses for a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree is a critical shortage of midwives in Aotearoa, which is further compounded by a low proportion of Māori and Pacific midwives. A preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree may assist in building a culturally competent and responsive midwifery workforce that continues to serve the needs of Māori and Pacific communities. Increasing the number of Māori midwives is another step toward achieving equity.

It is also difficult to retain international qualified midwives, so increases the number of domestic midwifery students may help with the workforce shortages. The introduction of a graduate-entry midwifery programme may provide a complementary pathway to the existing direct-entry midwifery programmes. Collectively, the two pathways may enable more people to study to become registered midwives.

Graduate-entry master's degrees provide an accelerated pathway to becoming a registered health professional for students with an existing bachelor's qualification. Internationally, they are a model of education for a wide range of health professions, including midwifery. This proposal may create a much-needed pathway for already experienced health professionals to transition into the midwifery profession. This supports Te Whatu Ora's initiatives to increase midwifery numbers through the development of accelerated midwifery pathways and improve support and flexibility for health staff at career transition points, including steps up in work, and transitions back from time with whānau, both of which have been identified as key priorities for the health system.

Currently there are five accredited schools of midwifery in New Zealand offering a bachelor's degree in midwifery leading to registration in the Midwifery Scope of Practice. The schools of midwifery include two university-based bachelor's degree programmes and three institute of technology/polytechnic (ITP) based programmes.

The programmes are accredited by the Council and either the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) for ITPs or the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) for universities.

The Council's Standards of pre-registration midwifery education programmes and accreditation of tertiary education organisations (3rd edition) 2019 detail the standards for curriculum content, including the theory and clinical experience within the bachelor's degree in midwifery programme. Please refer to <https://midwiferycouncil.health.nz/common/Uploaded%20files/Registration/20231211%20Pre-reg%20standards%20final%20for%20publication.pdf> for a copy of the current standards.

Within the Master of Midwifery Practice Degree, it is proposed that students are required to complete a minimum of 1500 hours of clinical experience and 900 theory hours to have a clear midwifery focus.

The Council is required to consult on any changes to its Standards of pre-registration midwifery education programmes and accreditation of tertiary education organisations (3rd edition) 2019 and the consultation questions are seeking your input on possible changes to the standards if the Council agrees that a preregistration Master's of Midwifery Practice Degree is seen as an alternative prescribed qualification.

For Internationally Qualified Midwives (IQMs) applying for registration as a registered midwife in New Zealand, there is the requirement to meet the same standards, including educational equivalency, as New Zealand graduates applying for registration. As with all applications for registration from IQMs, the Council reviews each application on an individual basis and registration decisions are made based on meeting all the registration requirements.

Title of the programme

Currently in New Zealand, the prescribed qualification for the Midwifery Scope of Practice is a bachelor's degree in midwifery of no less than three years duration from an accredited education provider in New Zealand; demonstration of the competencies for entry to the Register of Midwives; and a pass in the National Midwifery Examination set by the council.

The introduction of a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree has the potential to cause confusion amongst the public, midwives, and the wider healthcare workforce if the titles of the two programmes are not clearly differentiated.

NZQA master's degree definition

NZQA identifies that a master's degree qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research, a pathway for future learning, professional practice and/or scholarship (NZQA, 2016).

NZQA also identifies that a master's degree usually builds on a bachelor's degree, graduate diploma, bachelor honours degree or a postgraduate diploma and are constituted in one discipline or coherent programme of study. They may also build on extensive professional experience of an appropriate kind. Their outcomes are

demonstrably in advance of undergraduate study and require individuals to engage in research and/or advanced scholarship. The master's degree may be undertaken by taught courses or research or a combination of both.

The credit requirements for a master's degree are at least 240 credits except where:

- it builds on a bachelor's degree or an equivalent qualification, or significant relevant professional experience, in which cases it can be fewer than 240 but no fewer than 120 credits
- it builds on a three-year bachelor's degree or an equivalent qualification, in which cases it can be fewer than 240 but no fewer than 180 credits.

The master's degree must comprise a minimum of 40 credits at level 9 with the remainder at level 8.

A traditional master's degree includes advanced study in the same subject area as a student's undergraduate degree and includes a large research project that is usually written as a thesis.

Graduate-entry master's degrees are primarily taught by coursework, with a small research component that usually relates to a student's final placement. They build on more generic graduate attributes common to all undergraduate degrees.

Entry criteria

NZQA require providers of master's degree programmes to be responsible for establishing entry requirements. The minimum entry criterion as identified by NZQA is a bachelor's degree or equivalent at level 7 on the NZQF. NZQA also specify that admission as an individual to a master's degree is based on evaluation of documentary evidence (including the academic record) of the individual applicants' ability to undertake postgraduate study in a specialist field of enquiry or professional practice.

ICM global Standards for Midwifery Education

For post-registration programmes the ICM global Standards for Midwifery Education (Revised 2021) has the following standard:

4.5 The minimum length of a post-nursing/healthcare provider (post-registration) midwifery education programme is eighteen (18) months or longer to permit vacation/break periods. The enrolment time must be sufficient for students to acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours to be a competent midwife.

The ICM standards also include a footnote stating an estimated number of hours for a post-registration education programme to be 3600 but the proposers stress that these standards also clarify that study hours and calculations of credit hours vary from region to region. The ICM standards include the following footnote regarding midwifery education:

“The length of the programme is a recommendation based on input from a review of midwifery programmes across a variety of contexts. Calculating the cumulative experience does not in itself provide a measure of quality or competence. Provision of sufficient time for the student to achieve the Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice is the most critical factor in determining programme length”.

Benchmarking

The table below lists some international postgraduate pre-registration midwifery courses for comparison of learning hours and length of programme. The Master of Midwifery programme offered by Curtin University in Perth is the only postgraduate midwifery course in Australia that does not require a nursing qualification and is the most comparable to a pre-registration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree.

Education facility	Programme name	Entry criteria	Prog length Points/credits	Clinical hours
	<i>MMidPrac (Proposed)</i>	<i>Bachelor’s degree Registered health practitioner regulated under HPCAA</i>	<i>2 years fulltime 240 pts</i>	<i>1500</i>
Curtin University, Perth, Australia	Master of Midwifery	Bachelor’s degree to include research unit and human biology unit at tertiary level	2 years fulltime 400 credits	>1000
University of Derby, UK	MSc Midwifery	BSc in Nursing ‘or any other health or social care related programme’ grade of 2.1 or above Must be registered general nurse with Nursing and Midwifery Council for a minimum of 6 months and be currently employed	2 years fulltime 180 pts	1800
University of Cork, Ireland	Midwifery HDip (Level 8 NVQ)	BSc Nursing Registered General Nurse with Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland	18 months fulltime	?1900 hours

		6 months post-registration experience within the last 3 years		
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Current Education programme standards for the registered midwife scope of practice

The current standards would require some changes to accommodate a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree as a prescribed qualification.

Please refer to

<https://midwiferycouncil.health.nz/common/Uploaded%20files/Registration/20231211%20Pre-reg%20standards%20final%20for%20publication.pdf>

for a copy of the current standards.

The sections of the standards that would require changes include:

- Where the terminology ‘bachelor’s degree in midwifery’ is used this would need to be changed to include ‘bachelor’s degree in midwifery or preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree; and
- Requirements for recognition of prior learning (RPL) as the current standards identify that:
 - In any case where a student is granted more than 75 credits (equivalent to 750 hours) through RPL, the midwifery school must submit the proposed programme of study to the Council for approval within two months of the student entering the programme. The Council reserves the right to decline or amend the programme if it is not assured that the proposed programme will enable the student to meet the graduate profile and Competencies for Entry to the Register of Midwives. This submission must be accompanied with details of the credits granted and the supporting evidence.
 - No more than 200 practice hours may be credited without prior approval of the Midwifery Council.
- The length of time to complete the Master of Midwifery Practice Degree, as the current standards refer to the bachelor’s degree in midwifery being three years in duration and the length of time to complete is six years.

The principle underlying possible changes to the prescribed qualifications for New Zealand graduates and IQMs is to ensure that all applications for registration in the Midwifery Scope of Practice demonstrate educational equivalence with the programme requirements detailed in the Standards of re-registration midwifery education programmes and accreditation of tertiary education organisations (3rd edition) 2019.

Consultation Questions

The Council is consulting on changes to the prescribed qualifications for the Midwifery Scope of Practice.

The following questions ask for your feedback on an additional prescribed qualification of a Master of Midwifery Practice Degree in the New Zealand midwifery and healthcare context.

Specific questions on the Master of Midwifery Practice Degree title, credit and level of the Master of Midwifery Practice Degree, possible changes to the Education programmes standards for the registered midwife scope of practice and entry criteria for the Master of Midwifery Practice Degree have been included.

Change to the prescribed qualifications for the Midwifery Scope of Practice

1. Do you support a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree becoming an additional prescribed qualification for entry to the registered midwife scope of practice?
 - Yes
 - NoComments:

Programme Title

2. Do you support the requirement for a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree to have a standardised title e.g. Master of Midwifery Practice?
 - Yes
 - NoComments:

Programme credit

3. Do you support the preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice being a 240-point qualification?
 - Yes
 - NoComments:

Programme completion time

4. Do you support the preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree being equivalent to two years full time study and students having a maximum of four years to complete it?
 - Yes
 - NoComments:

Specified hours

5. Do you support a requirement for the preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree to meet certain clinical experience hours (1500 hours)?

Yes

No

Comments:

6. Do you support a requirement for the preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree to meet certain theory hours (900 hours)?

Yes

No

Comments:

Entry criteria

7. Do you support the Council requiring additional entry criteria for a preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree? e.g. specifying the requirement for an undergraduate degree in a health, health science or science related area?

Yes

No

Comments:

8. Do you consider that applicants for the proposed preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree should have gained their bachelor's degree within a certain timeframe e.g. in the last 10 years?

Yes

No

Comments:

9. Do you consider that applicants for the proposed preregistration Master of Midwifery Practice Degree should have a certain number of years' experience as a registered health practitioner?

Yes

No

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to complete the consultation questions. The Council values your feedback.

Appendix One

Relevant sections from the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003

Te Tatau o Te Whare Kahu / the Midwifery Council (the Council) is required by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the HPCAA) to prescribe the qualifications for registration of registered midwives to protect public safety.

Section 12 of the HPCAA, states:

- (1) Each authority must, by notice, prescribe the qualification or qualifications for every scope of practice that the authority describes under section 11.*
- (2) In prescribing qualifications under subsection (1), an authority may designate 1 or more of the following as qualifications for any scope of practice that the authority describes under section 11:*
 - (a) a degree or diploma of a stated kind from an educational institution accredited by the authority, whether in New Zealand or abroad, or an educational institution of a stated class, whether in New Zealand or abroad*
 - (b) the successful completion of a degree, course of studies, or programme accredited by the authority*
 - (c) a pass in a specified examination or any other assessment set by the authority or by another organisation approved by the authority*
 - (d) registration with an overseas organisation that performs functions that correspond wholly or partly to those performed by the authority*
 - (e) experience in the provision of health services of a particular kind, including, without limitation, the provision of such services at a nominated institution or class of institution, or under the supervision or oversight of a nominated health practitioner or class of health practitioner.*
- (3) A notice under subsection (1) may state that 1 or more qualifications or experience of 1 or more kinds, or both, is required for each scope of practice that the authority describes under section 11.*
- (4) An authority must monitor every New Zealand educational institution that it accredits for the purpose of subsection (2)(a) and may monitor any overseas educational institution that it accredits for that purpose.*

Under section 15(1) of the HPCAA the Council may register an applicant as a midwife permitted to practise within a scope of practice if the applicant:

(a) is fit for registration in accordance with section 16; and

(b) has the qualifications that are prescribed, under section 12, for that scope of practice; and

(c) is competent to practise within that scope of practice.

Appendix Two

How to make a submission

We value the views of stakeholders and encourage you to respond to this document. The closing date for submissions is **31 May 2024**.

The questions in this document are designed to help you to focus your response and make it easier for us to analyse submissions. However, you do not have to answer every question and you may add additional comments. Feedback can also be provided via online survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LX9B5D8>

Please note that you do not have to provide personal information if you would prefer not to.

This submission was completed by:

Name:

Address:

Email:

Organisation:

Position:.....

I/we do not wish the submission to be made publicly available Yes/No

You are making this submission:

- as an individual
- on behalf of a group or organisation
- other (please specify).....

Please indicate which part of the sector your submission represents:

- Individual midwife
- Individual other
- Consumer group
- Regulatory authority
- Primary health organisation
- Māori health provider
- Pacific health provider
- Government agency
- Education provider
- Professional organisation
- Private hospital provider
- Aged care provider
- Non-governmental organisation
- Te Whatu Ora District
- Internationally qualified midwife
- School of Midwifery
- Other (please specify)