

Question on notice no. 10

Portfolio question number: Ahpra-079

2023-24 Supplementary Budget estimates

Community Affairs Committee, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency Portfolio

Senator Linda Reynolds: asked the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency on 26 October 2023—

- (1.What percentage of IQNM candidates receive their stream assessment decision immediately on registering with AHPRA and uploading their portfolio?
- 2.What is the criteria built into the AHPRA IT system that enables an immediate stream assessment to be given?
- 3.Is AHPRA investing further into its systems to enable more immediate stream assessment decisions to be made?
- 4.What is the criteria used by AHPRA for determining that a portfolio must be assessed by an AHPRA employee?
- 5.What are the criteria used by an AHPRA employee to determine a:
A.Stream A decision?
B.Stream B decision?
C.Stream C decision?
- 6.Does AHPRA have an internal deadline in which stream assessment decisions must be made?
- 7.Can you please provide supporting internal checklist sheets that are used for portfolio assessments.
A.What is the timeframe for stream assessment decisions currently:
B.As at 30 September 2023?
C.As at 30 March 2023?
D.As at 31 August 2022?
- 8.Is AHPRA benchmarking itself against other international equivalents (e.g., UK, USA, Ireland, Canada, EU and New Zealand) for timeliness of assessment decisions?
a.If no, in a globally competitive market for nurses, why is it not benchmarking?
b. If yes, please provide for benchmarking details being undertaken.
- 9.Does AHPRA provide a point of contact to an IQNM immediately on registration?
a.If not, why not?
b.If yes, please provide the details?

10. Is AHPRA working to streamline its assessment processes to enable more timely decision and registration outcomes?

11. Is AHPRA building a publicly available international list of Stream A degrees, like the World Federation of Occupational Therapists has, to facilitate ease of assessment decision making?

A.If not, what is the rationale behind that?

Answer —

Please see attached.

Senate Committee: Community Affairs Committee

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2023-2024

Question Subject: IQNM candidates and streaming decisions and timelines

Type of Question: Written

Senator: Linda Reynolds

Questions:

Q1. What percentage of IQNM candidates receive their stream assessment decision immediately on registering with AHPRA and uploading their portfolio?

Answer

100%.

Q2. What is the criteria built into the AHPRA IT system that enables an immediate stream assessment to be given?

Answer

All candidates are assessed against the three Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia IQNM qualification criteria available [here](#).

The current Ahpra IT system has a number of pre-loaded qualification types and combinations (over 14000) that allow for immediate results to be given at the self-check stage.

If the qualification or qualification combination is not recognised by the system it is redirected to manual assessment by an Ahpra officer. When a decision is made on that specific qualification/combination it is also added to the system for future access by applicants.

Q3. Is AHPRA investing further into its systems to enable more immediate stream assessment decisions to be made?

Answer

Per our answer to Q1 above, the stream assessment decision is immediate at self-check. Per our answer to Q2 above, the qualification types and combinations are pre-loaded and we continue to grow this list as new or previously unseen qualifications/combinations are assessed and uploaded to the system. The system is able to remember the qualification/combination outcome and have this available for selection for the next applicant for an immediate outcome.

Q4. What is the criteria used by AHPRA for determining that a portfolio must be assessed by an AHPRA employee?

Answer

If an IQNM candidate is given a stream B outcome, their portfolio is assessed by Ahpra to confirm that the information submitted by the candidate meets the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (NMBA) IQNM qualification assessment criteria available [here](#).

Q5. What are the criteria used by an AHPRA employee to determine a:

- A. Stream A decision?
- B. Stream B decision?
- C. Stream C decision?

Answer

All candidates are assessed against the three NMBA IQNM qualification criteria available [here](#):

- Stream A (substantially equivalent qualifications) are immediately invited to apply for registration
- Stream B (relevant qualifications) and unknown qualifications are invited to submit a portfolio
- Stream C (not relevant qualifications) outcomes are advised to upgrade their qualification.

Q6. Does AHPRA have an internal deadline in which stream assessment decisions must be made?

Answer

The streaming outcome at self check is immediate. If a candidate goes down Stream B and needs to submit a portfolio for assessment, the outcome is dependent on the completeness and accuracy of the information that the candidate provides.

Q7. Can you please provide supporting internal checklist sheets that are used for portfolio assessments.

- A. What is the timeframe for stream assessment decisions currently?
- B. As at 30 September 2023?
- C. As at 30 March 2023?
- D. As at 31 August 2022?

Answer :

Stream A does not need portfolio assessment as these candidates are invited to apply for registration.

A portfolio assessment is relevant to Stream B candidates. Ahpra staff use internal operational procedures and work instructions for assessments.

The timeframe for stream B decisions to refer to the Outcomes Based Assessment are:

- A. As at 30 September 2023?
 - a. Average of 21.02 days
- B. As at 30 March 2023?

- a. Average of 33.10 days
- C. As at 31 August 2022?
 - a. Average of 39.97 days

Averages are count of calendar days from submission of the candidate's portfolio for assessment to receiving the assessment outcome.

Q8. Is AHPRA benchmarking itself against other international equivalents (e.g., UK, USA, Ireland, Canada, EU and New Zealand) for timeliness of assessment decisions?

- a. If no, in a globally competitive market for nurses, why is it not benchmarking?
- b. If yes, please provide for benchmarking details being undertaken.

Answer

Yes.

The NMBA is a member of the International Nurse Regulatory Collaborative (INRC), which comprises the nursing regulators from like jurisdictions. Research completed for the INRC on the comparative processes for the assessment of IQNs demonstrates that Australia has very similar assessment processes to other like regulators. The timelines for decisions are very similar to other regulators.

Q9. Does AHPRA provide a point of contact to an IQNM immediately on registration?

- a. If not, why not?
- b. If yes, please provide the details?

Answer

Once an application for registration is received, a case officer is assigned. If the application is not complete and does not meet all the NMBA registration standards on receipt, then an information notice is sent to the applicant advising them of what is missing. The notice is sent via email that includes the direct contact details of the regulatory officer (phone and email). The applicant is invited to contact the case officer if they have any queries about the information requested to complete the application. Once registration is finalised the applicant is advised that they are now registered and their name appears on the public register.

Q10. Is AHPRA working to streamline its assessment processes to enable more timely decision and registration outcomes?

Answer

Our current regulatory operating system is more than 13 years old and supports all our core regulatory functions, including the registration of over 850,000 health practitioners and the management of over 10,000 complaints each year. Ahpra is building a new regulatory operating system to replace the current aged system and it is expected to provide a better experience for IQNMs and other health practitioner applicants and also help streamline some processes which should result in even more timely decisions. We anticipate the new system will be ready to deploy during 2024.

A second venue for conducting the examination for IQNMs will come online in February 2024. A successful pilot of the new site was conducted in December 2023. In the first 2 months of 2024 we have 720 candidates listed to undertake the exam.

Q11. Is AHPRA building a publicly available international list of Stream A degrees, like the World Federation of Occupational Therapists has, to facilitate ease of assessment decision making?

A. If not, what is the rationale behind that?

Answer

There are no current plans to have a publicly available list of Stream A nursing and midwifery qualifications, as the volume of nursing and midwifery programs offered around the world is considerably higher than for Occupational Therapy. The resourcing required to maintain an accurate and up to date list of qualifications for publication would be significant and very costly.