

Frequently Asked Questions

(A) General

1) What are the core competencies of an advanced practice nurse?

An advanced practice nurse should take up additional roles and possess competencies of a higher level compared to a registered nurse at entry level. He/she should possess the core-competencies for advanced practice nurses, and the specific competencies for his/her respective specialty.

2) Does an advanced practice nurse have any legal responsibility?

While the Scheme is on a voluntary basis, an advanced practice nurse who is also a registered nurse should possess the competencies of advanced practice nurses commensurate with experience and is accountable for practising nursing according to the code of professional conduct, the scope of professional practice as well as the legal and ethical requirements defined by the Nursing Council of Hong Kong (“the Council”) under the regulation of the Nurses Registration Ordinance, Cap. 164, Laws of Hong Kong.

3) How many specialties of advanced nursing practice are there under the Scheme?

At present, there are 16 specialties under the Scheme:

- i) Cardiac Nursing
- ii) Community, Primary & Public Health Nursing
- iii) Critical Care Nursing
- iv) Education and Research in Nursing
- v) Emergency Care Nursing
- vi) Gerontology Nursing
- vii) Gynaecology Nursing
- viii) Infection Control in Nursing
- ix) Management in Nursing
- x) Medical Nursing
- xi) Mental Health Nursing
- xii) Oncology Nursing
- xiii) Orthopaedic Nursing
- xiv) Paediatric Nursing
- xv) Perioperative and Anaesthesia Nursing
- xvi) Surgical Nursing

4) Is there a mapping guide to fit all nursing specialties into the 16 specialties under the Scheme?

As patient groups and nature of duties in different institutions are situational, it is impractical to have a mapping guide to fit all nursing specialties. Applicants and current employers should decide the optimal specialty for the applications with justifications, based on the situation of their own institutions. They may make reference to the mapping method by the Hong Kong Academy of Nursing.

5) Where can the public obtain information on the lists of advanced practice nurses?

Lists of advanced practice nurses in each specialty are available on the website of the Council.

6) Will the Council devise a mechanism for regulation / accreditation of the training institutes and/or the programmes leading to recognition of advanced practice nurses in the future?

Yes. To facilitate the organisation of training programmes, the Council will devise a mechanism by setting training standards and recognising training institutes offering training for advanced practice nurses at a later stage.

(B) Eligibility

7) Who is eligible to be recognised as an advanced practice nurse under the Scheme?

A currently employed **registered nurse (“RN”)** in Hong Kong meeting the following criteria should be eligible to apply for recognition as an advanced practice nurse:

- (a) obtained a post-RN registration Clinical Master in Nursing / Health Science in the related specialty; **or**
- (b) obtained a post-RN registration Master degree in health related stream AND completed the Post-registration Certificate Course (“PRCC”) / Hospital Authority’s Specialty Nurse Recognition Scheme Certificate / recognised in-service training for at least 80 hours; **or**
- (c) is a Fellow of the Hong Kong Academy of Nursing or equivalent; **AND**
- (d) possessed six years of **full time post-registration nursing experience immediately prior to his/her application** in which at least the most recent four years must be serving in the related specialty area.

8) Is an applicant with cumulative full time post-registration nursing experience of six years and cumulative full time post-registration nursing experience in the related specialty area of four years eligible to apply for recognition as an advanced practice nurse?

Eligible applicants should have possessed six years of full-time post-registration nursing experience immediately prior to the application, in which at least the most recent four years must be serving in the related specialty area. In other words, the **nursing experience should be continuous prior to application.**

9) Which master programmes are recognised under the Scheme?

Clinical Master programmes in Nursing / Health Science and Master programmes in health related stream organised by the eight universities funded by the University Grants Committee and self-financing institutions in Hong Kong are recognised under the Scheme. Lists of recognised master programmes are uploaded onto the website of the Council for reference. The lists are subject to regular review and update. For non-local qualifications which are not included in the lists, applicants are required to apply for assessment services from the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (“HKCAAVQ”), in order to certify the master degree level.

10) If an applicant who has obtained a Master of Nursing offered by local tertiary institutions was uncertain about the category of his/her Master’s degree under the Scheme, what should he/she do?

If the applicant is in doubt, he/she should consult the respective Master’s degree awarding tertiary institution to obtain the qualifications proof for supporting his/her application under the Scheme.

11) Is an applicant who has obtained a Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing without a Master’s degree eligible to apply for recognition as an advance practice nurse?

Eligible applicants should have at least obtained a post-RN registration Clinical Master in Nursing / Health Science and/or Master degree in health related stream. Applicants with higher academic qualifications proven to be at a level equivalent or above the Master level will be considered.

12) Is an applicant who has obtained a Clinical Master in Nursing / Health Science, which is not in the same specialty he/she is applying for, but fulfilled the relevant specialty training by completing PRCC / Hospital Authority’s Specialty Nurse Recognition Scheme Certificate programme / recognised in-service training for at least 80 hours eligible to apply for recognition as an advanced practice nurse under the Scheme?

Yes. If the clinical master programme is not in the same specialty that the applicant is applying for, it is classified as a health-related master programme. If the concerned applicant has also completed the PRCC / Hospital Authority’s Specialty Nurse Recognition Scheme Certificate programme / recognised in-service training (recognised by the employers) for at least 80 hours in the specialty that he/she is applying for, he/she will meet the criterion (b) in Question 7 above and be eligible to apply for recognition as an advanced practice nurse.

13) What documents should be provided by an applicant with non-local qualifications which are not on the lists of recognised master programmes?

An applicant with non-local qualifications which are not on the lists of recognised master programmes is required to provide the qualifications assessment report issued by the HKCAAVQ, so as to ascertain that the non-local qualifications are comparable to Hong Kong Qualifications Framework Level 6 or above.

14) What kind of in-service training is recognised under the Scheme?

“Recognised in-service training” should be specialty training with structured content and clear learning outcomes, and have interaction as well as assessment components. Applicants should complete at least 80 hours of recognised in-service training if they obtained a post-RN registration Master degree in health related stream without having completed the PRCC or Hospital Authority’s Specialty Nurse Recognition Scheme Certificate programme.

15) Can the “recognised in-service training” be provided by academic institutions, instead of employers?

While the recognised in-service training is more intended to be provided by employers, other training organised by academic institutions recognised / invited by employers as in-service training may also be recognised.

16) Please clarify whether recognised in-service training hours refer to theoretical training and/or clinical practice.

Recognised in-service training should be specialty training with structured content and clear learning outcomes, and have interactions as well as assessment components. The training should include at least 80 hours of theoretical training with respect to the specialty area the applicant is applying for.

17) If an applicant has completed multiple training programmes for a total of 80 hours, is he/she considered to have completed “recognised in-service training for at least 80 hours” as set out in the eligibility criterion (b)?

The recognised in-service training should be specialty training with structured content and clear learning outcomes, and have interactions as well as assessment components. In view of the requirement of structured content, the training should preferably be a single programme rather than multiple programmes.

18) Is an applicant who has possessed six years of full time post-registration nursing experience in other settings instead of a hospital eligible to apply for recognition as an advanced practice nurse? Does he/she need to undergo any assessment in order to fulfill the eligibility criteria for recognition as an advanced practice nurse?

An applicant should possess six years of full time post-registration nursing experience immediately prior to his/her application in which at least the most recent four years must be serving in the related specialty area. The employer should ascertain the eligibility of its employees based on the situation of its own institution. No additional assessment is required.

19) Can an applicant apply for exemption from any of the eligibility criteria?

No exemption will be granted.

20) Is a part-time nurse / agency nurse / self-employed nurse / unemployed nurse eligible to be recognised as an advanced practice nurse under the Scheme?

Applicants must be registered nurses who are currently employed in Hong Kong and have possessed six years of full time post-registration nursing experience immediately prior to their applications. Applications should be submitted via their current employers for the Scheme.

(C) Application Procedures

21) How does a registered nurse apply for the Scheme?

An applicant should submit the duly completed application form for recognition as an advanced practice nurse together with the required supporting documents to his/her current employers. Current employers should certify the application and submit the application to the Council on behalf of their employees who are interested in joining the Scheme.

22) Can an applicant submit application directly to the Council?

No. Only submission via current employers will be accepted.

23) Can an applicant apply for recognition as an advanced practice nurse for more than one specialty?

No. At this stage, an applicant may only apply for recognition as an advanced practice nurse for one specialty under the Scheme.

24) Is an applicant required to pay any application fee?

No application fee is required for the Scheme at this stage. However, in the long run, nurses are expected to bear the operating cost by paying fees upon the implementation of a statutory registration system.

(D) Vetting Procedures

25) Can the Nursing Administration of an institution, instead of the human resources management, certify and complete the application form for its employees?

Yes. Authorised person(s) appointed by the current employers, including but not limited to human resources management and supervisors who are responsible for handling matters relating to qualifications of RNs, should certify the corresponding documents and complete the application form as appropriate.

26) Given that current employers should certify applicants' full time post-registration clinical experience by signing the declaration at Part B of the application form, is it still necessary for the employers to issue Certification for Clinical Experience for their employees?

Yes. Employers should issue Certification for Clinical Experience for its employees, in order to ascertain the applicant's full time post-registration clinical experience immediately prior to the application and in the related specialty area respectively.

27) How long does it take before an applicant receives the result of his/her application?

Upon receipt of the applications submitted by the current employers, the Council conducts checking on the information and seeks clarification with the employers when necessary. It is expected that employers will be notified of the result in three to four months, subject to submission of completed and correct applications.

28) If an application is not successful, what can the applicant do?

Employers should only submit applications which are supported by them to the Council. Applicants whose applications are not supported by their employers may appeal to the Council in 30 days upon receipt of notification by the employers. Such applications for appeal should be submitted with a letter issued by the employers setting out details of the reasons for not recommending the applications, and full set of supporting documents provided by the applicants in support of the applications.

(E) Timeframe

29) When will the Scheme be launched for all the 16 specialties?

The Council invited the Hong Kong Academy of Nursing and its Colleges to set up panels for formulating the relevant core competencies for each individual specialty. Respective specialty panels had submitted proposals to the Council via the Working Group on Advanced and Specialised Nursing Practice. The sequence of specialties which launch the Scheme and receive applications will depend on the sequence of proposals to be endorsed by the Working Group and approved by the Council. As of October 2021, the Scheme has been launched for all the 16 specialties.

30) Will there be another call for applying for recognition as advanced practice nurses if the first call for applications is missed due to changing jobs, being out of town, and etc.?

The Scheme aims to promote the advancement of professional competence of nurses and pave the way for setting up a statutory registration system in the long run. At present, it operates as a voluntary scheme to recognise advanced practice nurses in Hong Kong. The Scheme will continue until transition to a statutory regime.

31) Will the Council conduct briefings / forums to RNs for the promotion of the Scheme?

As applicants are required to submit their applications to their current employers, the Council appeals for the employers' support by inviting their employees to submit applications according to the work schedule of the employers, and stay tuned for further updates and announcements on the Scheme.

(F) Others

32) What are the benefits for joining the Scheme?

The Scheme aims to promote the advancement of professional competence of nurses and pave the way for setting up a statutory registration system in the long run. Successful applicants will be issued a Certificate of Recognition, which will be valid until the implementation of statutory registration of advanced practice nurses. Their names will be included in the lists of advanced practice nurses, which will be maintained and uploaded to the Council's website for public reference.

33) Does an advanced practice nurse need to renew the Certificate of Recognition as an advanced practice nurse?

The Certificate of Recognition as advanced practice nurse will be valid until the implementation of statutory registration of advanced practice nurses.

34) Is an advanced practice nurse responsible to update the Council when he/she has changed jobs or has been transferred away from the specialty area he/she has been recognised under the Scheme?

Given that the Scheme is rolled out as a pilot scheme on a voluntary basis for paving the way for setting up a statutory registration system in the long run, the Certificate of Recognition issued under the Scheme will be valid until the implementation of statutory registration of advanced practice nurses. The Council will review the validity of certificate under statutory registration at a later stage.

35) Will a registered nurse be eligible for the statutory registration as an advanced practice nurse if he/she does not join the Scheme at this moment?

A registered nurse who has not joined the Scheme may also apply for registration as an advanced practice nurse upon the implementation of statutory registration of advanced practice nurses.

36) Is an advanced practice nurse under the Scheme entitled to the Specialty Nurse Allowance (“SNA”) of the Hospital Authority?

The Scheme aims to promote the advancement of professional competence of nurses and pave the way for setting up a statutory registration system in the long run. Remuneration of nurses is not under the purview of the Council.

37) Is the recognition of advanced practice nurses one of the job requirements for some ranks of nurses?

The Scheme aims to promote the advancement of professional competence of nurses and pave the way for setting up a statutory registration in the long run. Job requirements for different ranks of nurses or employment terms are not under the purview of the Council.