

C.3 Competencies in the assessment of overseas trained practitioners

C.3.1 Pathways for assessment of overseas trained practitioners

The assessment of overseas trained health professionals who wish to practise in Australia is undertaken by the accreditation authority or professional association for that profession. For registration purposes, this function is assigned by the respective National Board under the National Law. For migration purposes (e.g. Skilled Migration and Temporary Activity visa programs), this function is specified by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection.

The assessments undertaken by these bodies vary depending on:⁷²

- The competencies or capabilities specified for that profession
- The methods of assessment chosen.

C.3.2 Competency frameworks that support the assessment of overseas trained practitioners

Competency frameworks are reported to be used to support the assessment of overseas trained practitioners by facilitating such things as:

- Consideration of equivalence of qualifications awarded by overseas institutions with those awarded by accredited Australian programs;
- Consideration of equivalence of accrediting bodies in overseas jurisdictions with those in Australia; and
- Development of assessment blueprints and tools/exams for assessing overseas trained practitioners.

For the health professions regulated under the National Law, some competency frameworks explicitly state that supporting the assessment of overseas trained practitioners is a key function. However, it is often not specifically identified within the competency framework how they have been (or are being) used.

The Australia and New Zealand Osteopathic Council and Osteopathic Council of New Zealand published a report following a review of their assessment process for overseas osteopaths to practice in Australasia. One aspect of the report considers a map of the osteopathic capabilities against the assessment tools in all stages of their overseas assessment process, to consider the appropriateness of each assessment tool for assessing the particular capabilities, the frequency that capabilities were assessed across the tools, and adequate coverage by the assessment as a whole.⁷³

To inform an accelerated process for assessing overseas qualified pharmacists ('Stream B'), the Australian Pharmacy Council uses a comparison of competencies (or equivalent) required for pharmacy practice in other countries.

In addition to competencies, the accreditation standards, examinations and clinical placement activity; registration standards; pharmacy practice standards and practice environment are also compared. Standards to underpin this process have been developed and approved by the Pharmacy Board of Australia.

For some professions, guidance material has been developed to support the use of the respective competency framework for assessment of competence, e.g. the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia has published a *Framework for assessing national competency standards*.⁷⁴

Consultation questions: Competencies in the assessment of overseas trained practitioners

24. Would you like to provide a response relating to this Section? (Yes or No)
25. In the past 5 years, how have you used the current competency framework in the context of assessing overseas trained practitioners?
26. Consider an example(s) of how the current competency framework has *facilitated* (or can facilitate) an activity or desired outcome:
- Please describe an example(s).
 - What features of the current competency framework were (or are) important in *facilitating* the activity or desired outcome?
 - Would the incorporation of any of the features described in Part A of this consultation paper have *hindered* the activity or desired outcome?
27. In considering how the current competency framework has *hindered* (or may hinder) an activity or desired outcome:
- Please describe an example(s).
 - What features of the current competency framework *most hindered* (or were most likely to hinder) the activity or desired outcome?
 - Would the incorporation of any of the features described in Part A of this consultation paper have *better facilitated* the activity or desired outcome?
28. With consideration of the features of competency frameworks in Part A, to what extent do you support the following statements as they relate to the assessment of overseas trained pharmacists for eligibility to practise in Australia? (Please explain your rating where possible.)
[Likert scale: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree]
- 'Competent' should be identified as one level of performance along a continuum from Incompetent through to Mastery (i.e. the modified Dreyfus model). [Refer to Section A.1 – The relationship between competence and performance]
 - A reduction in the level of detail and specificity in the current competency framework would improve the framework's practical value without impacting negatively on the purpose for which it is used. [Refer to Section A.2 – Reducing the level of detail]
 - The development of markers of poor behaviour would be useful in the assessment of performance, providing a basis for support and remediation, in the assessment of overseas trained practitioners.
[Refer to Section A.3 – Markers of poor behaviour]
 - The way in which competencies are grouped affects my use of the competency framework and the way a pharmacist's role is perceived. [Refer to Section A.4 – Grouping competencies]
 - The development of competencies should be supplemented with a consideration of professional identity formation. [Refer to Section A.4 – Grouping competencies]
 - A competency framework that provides a clear mechanism for demonstrating competence in, or capability for, extended scopes of practice should be pursued. [Refer to Section A.5 – Variations in scope of practice]

- g. The milestones in a performance continuum for pharmacist competencies should exist within one competency framework. *[Refer to Section A.6 – Reflecting the performance continuum]*
- h. Assessments of performance would benefit from the existence of performance rating scales that align with milestones in a performance continuum (rather than the dichotomous decision of competent or incompetent). *[Refer to Section A.6 – Reflecting the performance continuum]*
- i. Interpretation and implementation of the competency framework for the assessment of overseas trained pharmacists would be assisted by the development of entrustable professional activities and levels of entrustment. *[Refer to Section A.7 – Supporting implementation with entrustable professional activities]*

29. Please provide any other feedback you have about the competency framework as used for the assessment of overseas trained pharmacists for eligibility to practice in Australia.