

Want to work as a health practitioner in Australia?

What international practitioners must do before they can start practising

December 2023

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) has developed this flyer to help internationally qualified health practitioners understand which agencies they must engage with (and when) before they can practise their profession in Australia.

How to help avoid delays to you being registered

It is important that you read the information in this flyer. Incomplete applications for registration will extend the time needed for Ahpra to assess your suitability to be registered. Ensuring all required documents are submitted to Ahpra will avoid delays to you being granted registration.

Before you apply for registration as a health practitioner

Visa applications

Visa applications for skilled workers to work in Australia may take up to seven months to process, depending on the type of visa applied for.¹

So, you may need to apply to the Department of Home Affairs for the appropriate visa well in advance of submitting your registration application to Ahpra.

Go to the [Department of Home Affairs website](#) for information on:

- visa options (including permanent residency, temporary skilled migrants or sponsored work)
- how to get a visa and processing times.

Certificates – good standing or registration status

If you have been registered in your profession outside of Australia, you must arrange for a Certificate of Good Standing or Certificate of Registration Status from the registration authority in every jurisdiction in which you are, or have previously been, registered as a health practitioner.

Certificates must be sent directly from the registration authority to Ahpra and be dated within three months of your application for registration being received.

Check when your qualifications will be assessed

Ensure you check whether an assessment of your qualifications needs to be carried out **before or after** you apply for registration. The assessment can be done by an accreditation authority or by Ahpra. The assessment pathway that applies to each regulated health profession is outlined on the [Information for international practitioners](#) page on the [Ahpra website](#).

¹ Median processing time published on <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au> (accessed 26 April 2023).

How to apply for registration as a health practitioner

Before applying for registration, ensure you have taken the necessary steps regarding your visa and certificates. Ahpra cannot finalise assessing your application for registration without the required documents.

Ahpra's [Information for international practitioners](#) webpage has general information about applying for registration and includes a helpful flow chart identifying what you need to do which you should read carefully. Applying for registration has different steps depending on your circumstances, qualification/s and profession. You can also download a reference guide and checklist.

Your application will be reviewed within seven to 14 days and Ahpra will contact you if information is missing. Once Ahpra has everything needed to assess your application against the requirements for registration, your application will be assigned to a dedicated case officer who will contact you to confirm the assessment has started. It may take four to six weeks before you are notified of the outcome.

External factors that may delay Ahpra's assessment of your application include how long it takes for the approved supplier to complete your international criminal history check or for an accreditation authority to assess your qualifications. Such delays are outside of Ahpra's control. It is recommended that you apply for the international criminal history check and submit your application for registration at the same time.

Include an employment start date in your application

If an employment start date has been set in agreement with your employer, please include this information in your application. Ahpra aims to assess and provide an outcome for your application before that date. If you would like to authorise your employer or another third party to act on your behalf, please include their details in your application. Ahpra will contact the authorised agent, ensuring you are both aware of progress in the assessment of your application for registration.

If you are granted registration, Ahpra will email your registration details to the nominated email address and to your authorised agent.

How to get your provider or prescriber number

Health practitioners in Australia must be registered before they apply for Medicare provider or Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) prescriber numbers.

Medicare provider number

Most Medicare provider number applications take up to 19 calendar days to process from the date they are lodged with [Services Australia](#).²

You will need a unique provider number to claim, bill, refer or request Medicare services. You can't access Medicare services until you have a provider number, and you cannot use another health professional's provider number.

You will need more than one Medicare provider number if you deliver health services in different locations and/or are registered in more than one regulated health profession.

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme prescriber number

Unique PBS prescriber numbers identify that you are eligible to prescribe medication under the PBS and aren't location specific. If you provide services in multiple health professions, you will need more than one PBS prescriber number.

² Processing time published on www.servicesaustralia.gov.au (accessed 26 April 2023).