

# **Internationally Qualified Nurses Theoretical Examination Handbook**

Approval date: 13 March 2024

Version 1.3 published 8 April 2025

Review date: September 2026



# Contents

Contents .....	2
Introduction .....	4
The Internationally Qualified Nurses (IQN) Theoretical Examination .....	4
Exam registration.....	5
Invitation to sit the examination .....	5
Eligibility period .....	5
Extenuating circumstances .....	5
Locations .....	5
Booking and costs.....	6
Rescheduling or cancelling your examination .....	6
Pearson VUE cancellation .....	6
Non-attendance due to extenuating circumstances .....	6
Before the examination .....	7
Special accommodations .....	7
Examination structure .....	7
Sample questions .....	7
Take an online tour of a Pearson Professional Centre.....	7
What to expect in a Pearson VUE test centre.....	7
Useful resources .....	7
Day of the examination.....	8
Arrival and registration .....	8
Identification .....	8
Name changes .....	9
Test centre rules .....	9
Confidentiality.....	9
Personal belongings .....	9
Entering the testing room .....	9
In the testing room .....	10
Completing the examination .....	10



Breaks .....	10
Time limit.....	10
Misconduct and cheating.....	10
After the examination .....	11
Results .....	11
Pass and next steps.....	11
Candidates who do not pass .....	11
Resitting the examination .....	11
Procedural review/appeal .....	12



# Introduction

The Nursing Council of New Zealand (“the Council”) is the regulatory authority responsible for the registration of nurses in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Council’s primary function is to protect the health and safety of members of the public by ensuring that nurses are competent and fit to practise. A key element of this process is the registration of all nurses, both domestic graduates and internationally qualified nurses (IQNs). The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) outlines the role and responsibilities of the Council.

In 2023, the Council introduced a new process for those IQNs who require a test of competence before being registered. IQNs applying now to the Council will, at the direction of the Council, undertake the following tests of competence:

- a. an online theoretical examination
- b. a clinical competence assessment.

This handbook has been prepared to assist eligible candidates in completing the theoretical examination.

## The Internationally Qualified Nurses (IQN) Theoretical Examination

The IQN Theoretical Examination (“the examination”) is a computer-based multi-choice examination for internationally qualified nurses seeking registration as a registered nurse in Aotearoa New Zealand. The purpose of the examination is to enable internationally qualified nurses to demonstrate the knowledge required to practise safely as a nurse.

If you are required to complete the competence assessment, you will be emailed an invitation to enrol in the IQN Theoretical Examination. You will have six (6) months from the date of the invitation to successfully complete the examination.

The examination is delivered through Pearson VUE test centres available in Aotearoa New Zealand and in many countries around the world.

All questions in the examination are multi-choice with one correct answer. All questions are scored as either correct or incorrect and there is no partial credit awarded.

The examination will contain 120 multi-choice questions to be completed within 180 minutes. The examination is split into two parts:

- **Part A: Medication Safety** – has 12 questions to be completed in 30 minutes
- **Part B: Nursing Knowledge** – has 108 questions to be completed in 135 minutes



A total of 15 minutes is allocated to read the introduction information and complete a software tutorial before completing the examination. For questions requiring a calculation, a calculator is provided as part of the software.

On your first attempt, you must complete both Parts A and B. If you fail one part of the examination, you are only required to re-sit that part.

## Exam registration

### Invitation to sit the examination

The Council will advise you if you are required to complete a test of competence. You will be sent an email inviting you to apply for the examination. The email will include a link to book your examination. This link will also be available on your Nursing Council MyIQN portal.

### Eligibility period

You will have six (6) months from the date of the invitation email to successfully complete the examination. Pearson VUE will only offer available examination appointments that are within your eligibility period.

If you have **not** successfully completed the examination within the six (6) month period, your eligibility expires and your application for registration will close.

The Council will send you a reminder eight (8) weeks before your eligibility expires.

### Extenuating circumstances

If you cannot meet the six (6) month timeframe due to extenuating circumstances, please contact the Council as soon as possible, as you may be eligible for an extension of time to complete the examination. Examples of extenuating circumstances are accidents, sudden illnesses, bereavement or similar emergency. You will need to provide the Council with evidence of your extenuating circumstances, such as a medical certificate, and also how much time you would need to complete the examination if the request were approved.

Applications for consideration of extenuating circumstances must be submitted in writing to the Council within seven (7) days after your eligibility expires.

### Locations

You must undertake the examination in person at an accredited Pearson VUE test centre. You can schedule an appointment to take the examination at a time and location that suits you. Pearson VUE test centres are available in many countries, including Aotearoa New Zealand.

You can search for available test centres for the examination on the [Pearson VUE website](#).



## Booking and costs

You will be sent an email inviting you to apply for the examination which will include an exam booking link. This link will also be available in your Nursing Council [MyIQN](#) portal. You can access the Pearson VUE online booking system and schedule your examination appointment through this link, or you can call Pearson VUE to schedule your appointment.

Pearson VUE will send you a confirmation email when your appointment is confirmed. The email will include your appointment information and directions to the testing centre. Pearson VUE will also send you a reminder seven (7) days before your appointment.

Waiting to schedule your examination appointment may limit the selection of available appointment times. If you wait until your eligibility period is close to expiring, test centres may not have any available appointments before your eligibility expires.

The current fees for the examination are detailed on the [Nursing Council website](#).

## Rescheduling or cancelling your examination

You can reschedule or cancel your examination appointment on the Pearson VUE online booking system, or you can call Pearson VUE to make changes to your booking. You can make changes to your scheduled booking up to 48 hours before the appointment with no penalty.

Exams cannot be rescheduled or cancelled less than 48 hours before your appointment. Failure to reschedule in time or failure to appear for your appointment may be counted as a failed attempt (one of the three attempts allowed). Fees for the missed examination will not be refunded.

## Pearson VUE cancellation

If your appointment is cancelled due to unexpected circumstances, Pearson VUE will notify you as soon as possible and provide a reason for the cancellation. You will be offered another examination time without additional cost.

## Non-attendance due to extenuating circumstances

If you are unable to attend the appointment (for example, due to an accident, sudden illness, bereavement or similar emergency) and you were unable to give prior notice, you can apply in writing to the Council for extenuating circumstances. If your application is approved, your non-attendance will not be counted as a failed attempt. Your application for extenuating circumstances must be submitted in writing to the Council within seven (7) days of your examination appointment.



# Before the examination

## Special accommodations

No additional time allowances are granted for the examination. The Council has provided a generous time allocation for candidates to complete the examination.

Please refer to [Pearson VUE's approved comfort aids list](#) for items that are allowed to be taken into the testing room (e.g. medicine & medical devices, mobility devices, and other approved items).

## Examination structure

The examination questions are designed to assess knowledge which is required to practise safely as a nurse in Aotearoa New Zealand. The scope of the questions in each part of the examination are:

- **Part A: Medication Safety** – medication and fluid safety questions including medicine calculations.
- **Part B: Nursing Knowledge** – questions are closely linked to the Council's standards of competence for registered nurses.

The standards of competence are available on the [Nursing Council website](#).

## Sample questions

Sample test questions are available on the [Nursing Council website](#).

The questions provide examples of the style and format of the examination. The correct answers for the sample questions are not provided. These questions are examples only and will not be used in the actual examination.

## Take an online tour of a Pearson Professional Centre

Pearson VUE provide a photo tour of a test centre on their [website](#).

## What to expect in a Pearson VUE test centre

Pearson VUE provide a video on what to expect at a test centre on their [website](#).

## Useful resources

To prepare for your examination, the Council recommends you familiarise yourself with the following:

- [Registered nurse standards of competence](#)
- [Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights](#)



- [Code of Conduct for nurses](#)
- [Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act \(HPCA\) 2003](#)

## Day of the examination

### Arrival and registration

There will be directions to your testing centre in the booking confirmation email from Pearson VUE. Please arrive at the testing centre 15 minutes before your scheduled appointment time. This will allow you enough time to complete the check-in procedures before beginning your examination. You will be required to show two valid forms of personal identification.

### Identification

You must present primary and secondary identification.

*Table 1 – Primary and secondary identification*

Primary identification	<p>The only accepted primary identification is your <b>current passport</b> which must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be government-issued</li> <li>• have your name, photo and signature</li> </ul> <p>Note that the name used on application to the Council needs to match your current passport ID.</p>
Secondary identification	<p>The secondary identification must have your name and signature <b>OR</b> your name and a recent recognisable photo. Examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• driver's license</li> <li>• national/state/province identification card</li> <li>• bank card (credit/debit/ATM)</li> </ul>

It is important that the names on your two forms of identification match the name held by the Council. If these names do not match, your identity will not be verified, and you may be denied entry to the examination.

Any requested name changes must be communicated to the Council prior to your enrolment in the examination.

If your secondary ID has part of your name abbreviated, the Council recommends that you contact Pearson VUE prior to your exam to clarify if it will be accepted as a valid form of ID.

Test takers in India can present an Aadhaar ID for their secondary ID, however certain conditions apply. The Aadhaar ID must meet the Pearson VUE Aadhaar ID Policy which is available [here](#).





## Name changes

You must contact the Council to make any name changes prior to your enrolment for the examination.

The name on your application to the Council must match the name on your identity documents. The Pearson VUE testing centre staff will be unable to confirm your identity if the names do not match and you may be denied entry to the examination.

If you have changed your name/s, the Council requires **one** of the following documents to be verified as a true copy of the original (stamped and signed by a solicitor/lawyer, notary public or Justice of the Peace (JP)).

Accepted documents:

- Marriage certificate
- Name change document
- Birth certificate
- Passport

## Test centre rules

When you arrive at the test centre the testing rules will be provided. You must read and agree to the testing rules before you begin your examination.

## Confidentiality

The examination is made available to you, as a candidate, solely for the purpose of your assessment. You are expressly prohibited from disclosing, publishing, reproducing or transmitting the exam, in whole or in part, in any form or by any means including visual, verbal, written, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose, without the prior express written permission of the Nursing Council of New Zealand.

## Personal belongings

You are not allowed to take any personal items with you into the testing room. This includes all bags, books, notes, phones, watches, other smart devices, and wallets. The test centre will have a locker or other secure area for you to store your belongings.

If you wear prescription glasses you can take these into the testing room, however, these must be removed for visual inspection by the test centre staff.

## Entering the testing room

Test centre staff will check for personal items carried on your person before you enter the testing room. Staff will request that you turn out your pockets and roll up your sleeves for any hidden items. You will then be escorted to your computer in the testing room.



## **In the testing room**

When the exam starts you will be monitored throughout the examination by test centre staff, either in person or through a live video feed.

If you need to take an unscheduled break or have any issues during the exam, raise your hand and test centre staff will assist you.

You can leave early if you complete the examination before your total allowed time has elapsed. Please follow the prompts on the screen and raise your hand to quietly alert the test centre administrator that you have completed the examination.

In the testing room there may be other people sitting different types of exams. Their examination timings may be different from yours and they may arrive and depart at different times. Test centre staff will always maintain a quiet test environment.

## **Completing the examination**

Answer all examination questions as if you were working as a registered nurse. You can review and change your answers at any point during the examination.

## **Breaks**

There are no scheduled breaks in the examination. Toilet breaks are permitted as necessary, however, these are included in your total examination time and the timer will not be paused.

## **Time limit**

The computer will automatically submit your answers when you reach the end of your total allowed time. A pop-up alert will appear on the screen when you have 10 minutes remaining. When you have five (5) minutes remaining, the countdown timer on the screen will change colour. When the examination ends, please follow the prompts on the screen and raise your hand to quietly alert the test centre staff that you have completed the examination.

## **Misconduct and cheating**

Misconduct and cheating are against the rules and are treated seriously by the Council. Misconduct means doing something that harms the fairness, safety or reputation of the examination.

If there's evidence of misconduct or cheating, penalties may apply to you as a candidate. Serious misconduct could lead to immediate disqualification from the nursing registration process in Aotearoa New Zealand. Any criminal activities will be reported to the appropriate authorities.



# After the examination

## Results

You will receive an email notification from Pearson VUE when your results are available, within 24 hours after the examination.

To access your examination results, you will need to go to your Nursing Council [MyIQN](#) portal and click on the link to the theory exam. This will take you to your Pearson VUE dashboard to check your results under 'score report'.

Your examination results on the score report will be communicated as a 'Pass' or 'Fail'. No further feedback will be provided about your individual performance, regardless of whether you pass the examination or not.

## Pass and next steps

If you have successfully passed both parts of the examination, the Council will be in touch with you within six (6) weeks to confirm your final result. The email from the Council will invite you to enrol in the clinical competence assessment which includes the Orientation and Preparation Course and the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE).

## Candidates who do not pass

If you have failed both parts of the examination, you must attempt the whole examination again on the next attempt.

If you have failed only one part of the examination, you only need to re-sit the part that you have failed.

Each examination sitting counts as an attempt.

You have three (3) attempts as part of your application. If you have not passed the examination after three (3) attempts, the Council will be in touch within six (6) weeks to confirm your final result and that your application for registration with the Council will be closed.

If you wish to apply for a procedural review/appeal this may be granted in exceptional cases a further examination attempt may be offered.

## Resitting the examination

If you need to re-sit the examination, you can schedule your next attempt with Pearson VUE immediately. Go to your Nursing Council [MyIQN](#) portal and click on the link to the theory exam which will take you to your Pearson VUE dashboard where you can schedule your next examination.



Waiting to schedule your examination appointment may limit the selection of available appointment times. If you wait until your eligibility period is close to expiring, test centres may not have any available appointments before your eligibility expires. It is recommended that you reschedule your examination as soon as possible.

For your next examination attempt the structure of the examination will be the same but it will contain different questions.

### **Procedural review/appeal**

Only procedural matters are eligible for appeal of the examination process as well as for impairment. The Council does not accept applications based on examination failure.

You may request a procedural review/appeal, within seven (7) days of receiving your examination result, if there is evidence that you were significantly disadvantaged if:

- the instructions and procedural requirements set out in the handbook are not being followed.
- the instructions and procedural requirements as specified in correspondence to the candidate are not being followed.
- a temporary impairment occurred closed to, or during your examination and which affected your performance.

The following are not reasons for a procedural review:

- disagreement about the standards set by the Council for the examination.
- disagreement by the candidate about the marking for any part or whole of the examination.
- personal or other reasons that impacted on the candidate's ability to undertake or prepare sufficiently for the examination.

