

NURSING+
MIDWIFERY

Psychiatric Clinical Nurse Specialist / RPN 2 Advanced Application Guide

July 2023



Western Health

Purpose

This document applies to Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPN) who qualify for, or are working towards classification as a Psychiatric Clinical Nurse Specialist (PCNS), and aims to provide an equitable and transparent process for the advancement and ensure that all nurses understand the requirements of achieving and maintaining a classification of PCNS.

For the purpose of this document, RPN2 Advanced classification is included within PCNS application process.

Role expectations

The PCNS is an experienced clinician using advanced Mental Health knowledge and skills, demonstrating advanced levels of decision making, in particular, problem identification and solutions, and the analysis and interpretation of clinical data in a mental health setting at a higher level of skill that would be expected of other RPN2 nurses but less than that expected of those in RPN3 positions..

The PCNS accepts responsibility for professional activities that support service delivery and the professional development of self and others. The PCNS serves as a role model and demonstrates leadership in their specialty on their ward / area.

Formal Requirements

An RPN appointed to PCNS:

- Must **meet one** of the **practice** requirements, **and**
- Must demonstrate **at least one criterion from each** of the **eligibility** categories

The criteria for eligibility should be relevant to their current areas or ward and focuses on a specialty or subject matter.

Practice Requirements

An RPN (employed either full or part time) appointed to PCNS must have:

- Attained post graduate course specific to Mental Health Nursing and at least 12 months experience in Mental Health nursing at RPN2 level (PCNS)
- OR**
- Working to unit completion of post graduate course in Mental Health Nursing and has a minimum of two year Mental Health nursing experience at RPN2 level (RPN2 Advanced)
- OR**
- Has completed a minimum of four years experience in Mental Health nursing at RPN2 level (RPN2 Advanced)

Eligibility

The criteria for eligibility (as set out in clause 114.9 section (e) of the *Victorian Public Mental Health Services Enterprise Agreement 2020-2024*) fall into three distinct categories:

1. Clinical skill
2. Professional behaviour
3. Professional development

The applicant must demonstrate at least one criterion from each of the eligibility categories below. Each eligibility criteria relates to subject matter that is relevant to their current area of specialty.

1. Clinical Skill

- Demonstration of a commitment to, and the delivery of a particular Mental Health Nursing role or function within the program
- Maintenance and improvement of clinical standards in Mental Health Nursing practice.

2. Professional Behaviour

- Act as a mentor or preceptor to less experienced Mental Health Practitioners including nurses, nursing students and psychiatric enrolled nurses and Mental Health Officers
- Support of, and contribution to, quality improvement and research projects within Mental Health Nursing practice and ward/unit/department
- Act as a resource person to others in relation to Mental Health clinical practice.

3. Professional Development

- Contribution to the education of other mental health professionals, e.g. active participation in the delivery of in-service education / training program
- Demonstrated undertaking own planned professional development and competence through various forms of continuing education, e.g. conferences; study days, formal study, reading.

Desirable criteria, in addition to above requirements, include:

- Completion of a specialist graduate year in Mental Health nursing
- Membership of a relevant professional body supporting the role and function of Mental Health nursing
- Committee membership and participation requiring Mental Health Nursing skills and expertise
- For PCNS, an RPN2 Advanced who successfully completes a post graduate course of training in Mental Health Nursing

4. Criteria

- A candidate must be permanently rostered to a specific ward/area for the hours that they wish to be considered for a PCNS classification, this includes part-time employees. This does not preclude working hours in another location at another classification.
- Post-graduate qualifications include courses considered to be relevant to the area of expertise, practice and application for which the PCNS applicant is being sought. Such qualifications must be the level of a hospital certificate, graduate certificate or graduate diploma (or equivalent) relevant to the area of expertise in which the applicant works.
- Nurses applying for PCNS (or RPN2 Advanced) classification must meet the criteria to a level deemed satisfactory within Western Health
- Prior to applying for a PCNS (or RPN2 Advanced) role it is important the applicant consider the following
 - A nurse practicing in a specialised field, does not automatically meet the classification of PCNS
 - A nurse who is able to perform some tasks better than other nurses or all tasks competently does not automatically meet the classification of PCNS
 - Leave without pay does not count towards qualifying length of experience
 - Length of service at Western Health does not determine eligibility for PCNS
 - Applicants must be familiar with the PCNS position description
- Nurses who held a PCNS or RPN2 Advanced classification at another health service who commence employment at Western Health (within the same specialty area) can apply to commence in a PCNS or RPN2 Advanced classification. The nurse must demonstrate how they met the criteria prior to commencement on the application form. Alternatively,

RPNs can apply in the next available round and if successful, the classification can be back-dated to their commencement date

- Previous Western Health employees returning after no more than 12 months absence from the relevant specialty may be re-employed at the PCNS or RPN2 Advanced classification – appointment will be in accordance with Western Health Recruitment Policy Guidelines
- Associate Nurse Unit Manager or Unit Managers wishing to transfer to a PCNS position will be considered according to the same eligibility criteria.

Application process

Invitations to apply for PCNS will be advertised on Western Health internal jobs adverts in January, April, July and October each year.

- The applicant submit current Curriculum Vitae and completed application form directly to their direct line Manager (Unit Manager / Program manager).
- The Manager organises a suitable time to interview the applicant, by must be undertaken within 10 days of the closure of applications.
- Interviews will be conducted by the Manager, with other panellists consisting of either an Associate Unit Manager or Clinical Educator or relevant other. The interview will consist of questions relevant to the position description, area of specialty and domains of practice,
- Following the interview the Manager completes the Comment section of the application form, including whether they believe that the staff member meets the criteria.
- The applicant is notified in writing of the outcome of their interview within 7 days.
- If the applicant is successful, an employment variation is completed by the Manager and forwarded to People & Culture utilising the approved Western Health process for variations. Change in classification will apply from the date of application and should occur from the next pay period after the date of notification to the staff member.
- As per all nursing and midwifery positions, the performance as a PCNS (or RPN2 Advanced) will be reviewed annually or as required using the Western Health performance development structure.
- If the applicant is unsuccessful, the Manager should arrange to meet with the applicant to provide feedback and set objectives to assist future applications. The applicant may appeal as outlined in the 'Appeal Process'.

Application checklist

The following documents are required for Western Health PCNS (or RPN2 Advanced) applications:

- Application Form including completed self-assessment
- Curriculum vitae including practice requirements
- Evidence to support self-assessment including certified copies of post registration qualifications
- Copy of most recent performance development plan (PDP)

Appeal Process

Any appeal of the decision must be made by the applicant in writing within two weeks of the decision being made. This should be addressed to the Director of Nursing, Mental Health and Wellbeing Services. The Appeals Committee will be convened to arbitrate on the unsuccessful PCNS (or RPN2 Advanced) application within four weeks.

The Appeals Committee consists of one Director of Nursing and Midwifery, one Unit / Program Manager and one PCNS or RPN2 Advanced nurse or other nominee as appropriate.

All representatives on the Appeals Committee will not have been involved in the original decision.

Ongoing requirements

The PCNS or RPN2 Advanced nurse and the Manager will meet on an ongoing basis to provide feedback and performance will be formally appraised at the annual performance and development review.

Western Health reserves the right to revoke the Psychiatric Clinical Nurse Specialist (Registered Psychiatric Nurse Level 2 Advanced) classification if a staff member fails to continue to meet the criteria during the course of their employment.