

Working in Australia: an orientation to the health system

These orientation units support internationally qualified health professionals to prepare for safe practice in Australia.

They provide foundational knowledge about Australia's healthcare system and regulatory environment. They also cover professional responsibilities, cultural safety requirements, and the delivery of safe, high quality patient care.

[Access the units here.](#)

These units are suitable for all health professionals, including medical practitioners, nurses, midwives, dental practitioners, and allied health professionals. These self-paced units can be completed independently in any order.

Health professionals are encouraged to complete further training that is relevant and specific to their workplace and profession, which may be delivered or set by employers, professional bodies, or regulators.

Below is a summary of the 22 orientation units. Learners and supervisors can use the checklist to track completion.

Unit	Topic	Description	Duration	Completed
1	Australia and the health of its people	This unit provides an overview of Australia's geography, population, and the health of its people. It explores Australia's unique national context, its diverse and multicultural population, and key trends shaping the health of Australians.	25 minutes	☐
2	The Australian health system	This unit provides an overview of the principles and funding structure of Australia's health system. It outlines the roles of federal, state, territory, and local governments, and highlights key programs that support public health across the country.	25 minutes	☐
3	Medicare	This unit provides an overview of Medicare, including how it operates and who is covered. It also explains Medicare provider numbers, the referral process, and the Child Dental Benefits Schedule, outlining how subsidised healthcare services are accessed.	25–30 minutes	☐
4	Regulating and prescribing pharmaceuticals	This unit provides an overview of pharmaceuticals in Australia, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, regulation and scheduling. It explores the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, prescribing practices, and the acceptable terms, abbreviations, and dose designations used in clinical care.	40 minutes	☐
5	National Disability Insurance Scheme	This unit provides an overview of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), including its purpose and key organisations. It outlines how to work effectively with scheme participants and clarifies the responsibilities of health professionals when interacting with the scheme.	10 minutes	☐
6	Health system funding other than Medicare	This unit provides an overview of health system funding beyond Medicare, including the Department of Veterans' Affairs, private health insurance, workers' compensation, and compulsory third-party insurance. It outlines how these schemes support access to healthcare and interact with clinical practice.	25 minutes	☐

Unit	Topic	Description	Duration	Completed
7	Regulation: maintaining safety and quality in patient care	This unit provides an overview of the Australian health workforce, including its structure and regulation. It outlines the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, professions not covered by it, and the regulation of health practitioners and services. It also covers professional indemnity insurance and key legislative and regulatory requirements, including advertising.	45 minutes	☐
8	Complaints and notifications	This unit provides an overview of the complaints and notifications process for health professionals in Australia. It explains the difference between a complaint and a notification, who can make them, who assesses them, and the responsibilities of health professionals in responding appropriately within legal and professional standards.	15 minutes	☐
9	Consent in Australian healthcare	This unit provides an overview of consent in Australian healthcare, including legal and ethical requirements. It explains capacity, substitute decision-makers, and the responsibilities of health professionals when obtaining and documenting consent.	25 minutes	☐
10	Health information and privacy	This unit provides an overview of health information in Australia, including the principles and legal requirements for its collection, use, and disclosure. It also explores privacy, confidentiality, and My Health Record, and their role in supporting safe and ethical clinical practice.	30 minutes	☐
11	Policies and processes concerning death and dying	This unit provides an overview of the legal and professional responsibilities when a person dies in Australia. It covers the Coroners Act, completion of Parts A and B of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death, and key aspects of end-of-life and palliative care, including advance care planning, advance care directives, and voluntary assisted dying.	30 minutes	☐
12	Child protection and domestic family violence	This unit covers child protection, child abuse and neglect, and responses to domestic and family violence. It emphasises the responsibility of health professionals to identify, respond to, and report concerns, while building skills to support vulnerable patients using trauma-informed, and legally compliant approaches.	20 minutes	☐
13	Aged care	This unit provides an overview of aged care in Australia, including services and workforce. It outlines how services are funded, accessed, and regulated, and key professionals and types of care supporting older people.	20 minutes	☐
14	Mental health services	This unit provides an overview of mental health services in Australia and how they support people with diverse mental health needs. It explores the main types of services and the range of professionals involved, highlighting their roles in delivering care.	20 minutes	☐
15	Working in the Australian health system	This unit provides an overview of working in the Australian health system, including employment conditions, remuneration, and leave entitlements. It also explores diversity and inclusion, respectful workplace behaviour, and support services to maintain health and wellbeing of health professionals.	40 minutes	☐
16	Clinical communication and open disclosure	This unit provides an overview of communication in clinical practice and open disclosure. It emphasises clear, safe communication with patients, families, and multidisciplinary teams.	20 minutes	☐

Unit	Topic	Description	Duration	Completed
17	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	This unit recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia and builds cultural understanding. It introduces key terminology, explores the diversity of Country, cultures and languages, and provides an overview of contemporary lived experiences.	30 minutes	☐
18	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – History and systems	This unit provides an overview of colonisation in Australia and its ongoing impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. It examines how policies and practices have shaped health outcomes, explores intergenerational trauma and resilience, and considers how these legacies continue to influence experiences of healthcare today.	25 minutes	☐
19	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – What is cultural safety in the Australian health context	This unit introduces the concept of cultural safety, emphasising its foundational importance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the Australian health system. It outlines responsibilities across the health system and explores social and emotional wellbeing.	30 minutes	☐
20	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – Communication, respect and racism	This unit examines how communication shapes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' healthcare experiences, highlighting culturally respectful practice, barriers to care, and the importance of respect, trust, and family-centred decision-making.	20 minutes	☐
21	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – Access and working with diverse peoples	This unit explores the Australian health system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, focusing on barriers to timely, culturally safe care, the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health organisations, intersectionality, and the contribution of health professionals in rural and remote communities.	25 minutes	☐
22	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – Cultural learning and reflection in practice	This unit supports reflection on clinical role and translating theory into practice to strengthen culturally safe care. It emphasises continuing cultural learning as an ongoing journey shaped by experience, building understanding, relationships and care outcomes.	15 minutes	☐