

Gazettal of Nurses Registration (Amendment) Bill 2023

The Government published in the Gazette today (December 8) the Nurses Registration (Amendment) Bill 2023 (the Bill) to amend the Nurses Registration Ordinance (Cap. 164) (the Ordinance) and its subsidiary legislation.

The Bill aims at creating new pathways for admitting eligible non-locally trained nurses to alleviate the shortage of nurses in the public healthcare system and the social welfare sector. In addition, the Bill will make continuing nursing education a mandatory requirement for nursing practice of all registered nurses and enrolled nurses to enhance the professional competency of nurses. The Bill will also make technical amendments to bring the regulatory regime of nurses up to date.

The proposed new pathways for admitting non-locally trained nurses to practise in Hong Kong include:

(a) Limited registration/enrolment: admitting non-locally trained nurses who are capable of serving in specified settings in the public healthcare sector (i.e. the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA)) and the social welfare sector (including residential care homes (RCHs) for the elderly and RCHs for persons with disabilities as well as other social welfare service units/organisations specified by the Director of Social Welfare) to meet the service demand. Nurses under limited registration/enrolment cannot migrate to full registration/enrolment;

(b) Special registration/enrolment: admitting non-locally trained nurses who are capable of serving in various clinical settings in the clinics and hospitals under the DH and the HA, and have the potential to formally join the local nursing profession. For nurses under special registration/enrolment employed on a full-time basis for a certain period and assessed by their employing institutions to have performed satisfactorily and competently, they will be eligible to migrate to full registration/enrolment without having to take the Licensing Examination; and

(c) Temporary registration/enrolment: enabling nurses from other jurisdictions to perform short-term academic exchanges and clinical demonstrations in Hong Kong for no more than 14 days. Nurses under temporary registration/enrolment cannot migrate to full registration/enrolment.

A spokesman for the Health Bureau said, "As it takes time to train local nurses, we need to tap non-local manpower sources as far as possible to address the pressing manpower problem.

"The admission of non-locally trained healthcare professionals is premised on the condition of not compromising the professional standards. Non-locally trained nurses who are going to practise in Hong Kong

under limited registration/enrolment or special registration/enrolment must possess a qualification that is broadly comparable to any recognised local nursing training programme and must be qualified as a practising nurse in their place of origin with relevant nursing or clinical work experience. The Nursing Council of Hong Kong will process applications in strict accordance with the relevant criteria to ensure that the applicants meet certain professional standards."

The Government conducted a consultation from March to June this year by reaching out to over 80 organisations and groups of the medical and healthcare as well as social welfare sectors. The Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Health Services was also consulted on March 10. The proposal was supported by the sectors and LegCo members.

The Bill will be introduced into the LegCo for scrutiny on December 13.