



26<sup>th</sup> February 2024

## **Te Pūkenga consultation phase begins for Bachelor of Midwifery programme**

Te Kāreti O Nga Kaiwhakawhanau Ki Aotearoa | New Zealand College of Midwives

PO Box 21 206

Christchurch 8143

Tel (03) 377 2732

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Te Kāreti O Nga Kaiwhakawhanau Ki Aotearoa | New Zealand College of Midwives (The College) is the professional organisation for midwifery. Our members are employed and self-employed and collectively represent over 90% of the practising midwives in this country. There are approximately 3,000 midwives who hold an Annual Practising Certificate (APC). These midwives provide maternity care to, on average, 60,000 women and babies each year. Aotearoa New Zealand has a unique and efficient maternity service model which centres care around the needs of the woman and her baby.

Midwives provide an accessible and primary health care service for women in the community within a continuity of carer model as Lead Maternity Carers. Midwives can also choose to work within secondary and tertiary maternity facilities, providing essential care to women with complex maternity needs.

The College offers information, education and advice to women and their whānau, midwives, Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, Te Aka Whai Ora, health and social service agencies, and the Ministry of Health regarding midwifery and maternity issues. Midwives interface with a multitude of other health professionals and agencies to support women to achieve the optimum outcome for their pregnancies, health, and wellbeing.

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New Zealand  
**College of Midwives**  
TE KĀRETI O NGA KAIWHAKAWHANAU KI AOTEAROA

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### **Te Pūkenga consultation phase begins for Bachelor of Midwifery programme**

Tēnā koutou

Te Kāreti O Nga Kaiwhakawhanau Ki Aotearoa | New Zealand College of Midwives (the College) have welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed Te Pūkenga redevelopment of the unified curriculum and study pathways for future student midwives engaged in study at Ara Institute of Canterbury | Te Pūkenga (Ara), Otago Polytechnic | Te Pūkenga (Otago) and Waikato Institute of Technology | Te Pūkenga (Wintec). We apologise for our later response to the consultation process and appreciate the extension time for our feedback. Overall, the College is fully supportive of the merging of the three Schools of Midwifery on this project as we support the notion that by having one shared curriculum will strengthen the education all students receive and their experience. We are slightly anxious though that over the time period of the development of the new curriculum and programme there has been a change in government whose directive is to disband the notion of the merging of Te Pūkenga as a whole and we therefore are unsure of what this means for the future collaboration approach.

The College has a vested interest in education pathways for student midwives that meets both local and international regulatory and educational standards. The undergraduate curriculum design and pathway for students is integral to the competency of graduate midwives at the end of their Bachelor of Midwifery. The College facilitates the Midwifery First Year of Practice (MFYP) programme which is a funded mandatory support programme for all graduates in Aotearoa. This includes full mentoring by senior midwives, further education opportunities and practice experiences which supports growth and development for the individual midwife and strengthen the profession as a whole. Through this programme we welcome all graduates nationally to the workforce and support them throughout the year. We have therefore also based some of our feedback on the lived experiences of supporting

graduate midwives enter the workforce as they navigate the rapid changes in maternity and health reforms that impact the midwifery workforce.

### **Proposed changes to a four-year degree pathway**

We note that the proposed curriculum will enable students to study over a four year period. As a College we understand the rationale and reasoning however we are concerned that there will be no options for students who may wish for a faster study pathway. We recognise that many students do extend their degree longer than anticipated however we are now seeing a younger generation of students who are also keen to study and complete their degree in a shorter timeframe and be able to enter the workforce earlier. We would strongly urge that Te Pūkenga consider offering a three-year study pathway for student midwives which walks alongside a four year pathway.

### **Structure and content**

The College has reviewed the overall proposed programme and content themes, and we would like to highlight some of our thoughts in relation to the proposed programme. We acknowledge that the course descriptors may have confused our understanding of the course content however this in itself is concerning.

### **Theory versus practice**

The College recognises that the three current Polytechnic Schools of Midwifery have always had a strong focus on providing vocational education that has had special emphasis on the skills, knowledge and attributes required to practice as a midwife in Aotearoa. Midwifery is an applied science which is grounded in practice, supported by evidence and applied to learning. We hope that this concept remains within the proposed curriculum as we are aware that nationally more graduates are entering the workforce with varying levels of clinical competence.

The College would like to be reassured that the 2400 hours of clinical practice over the programme is where possible undertaken in practice with midwives, women, babies and whānau. We note that simulation may be included in the midwifery skills courses and whilst we recognise the importance of simulation in order to support students learning, we also recognise the importance of working alongside midwives in practice and hope this remains a strong focus in the new design.

### **The strengthening of the cultural papers (Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Hauora Māori, Te Ao Māori)**

The College congratulates the integration of mātauranga Māori approaches to learning, teaching and practice. The underpinning of Te Tiriti o Waitangi is clear within the new programme structure. However, we are unsure how Te Tiriti o Waitangi is woven and considered throughout the programme.

Reference is made to the three key frameworks that support cultural competence; midwifery partnership, cultural safety and Tūranga Kaupapa however we are not able to overtly see how this occurs in all papers. We suggest that students learn how to apply cultural safety in their midwifery practice particularly in their last year of study as they are full immersed in midwifery practice. Certainly, the undergraduate programme provides sound education on culturally safety however it is its application in practice that ensures a competent midwife at the completion of their degree.

With the increased focus on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Tūranga Kaupapa we are unsure how this will be supported within the programme as there will need to be a stronger Māori and Pacific supportive pathways for lecturers who are able to teach and support all students to achieve this goal. The College is unsure if there is a structure in the integrated model to support the development of a specific career pathway for Māori midwives. We strongly urge any new study pathway to maintain the unique support provided through the Te Ara o Hine and Tapu Ora initiative.

### **Integration into practice courses**

Reviewing the overall document, the College perception is that continuity of care is not a key focus across the first 3 years of the programme. It may well be that there are elements of the continuity model woven through the first 3 years however the College would like to see this more explicitly described in the course curriculum.

Integration of professional and legislative frameworks are integral to supporting the aims of the programme however there appears to be only limited reference to how these frameworks have been incorporated into the overall programme. In section 1.2 there is reference made to cultural competence and ethical conduct in midwifery practice however we would strongly urge that informed consent and the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights have a stronger presence throughout the programme.

### **Graduate profile outcomes (GPO's)**

The GPO's appear to be more heavily weighted towards principles of cultural safety and sustainability and less focused on science, research and clinical competency. It would appear that this shift is also reflected in the way credits are allocated across the proposed programme framework. The College expects graduate midwives to be competent across all aspects of midwifery practice and able to balance the importance of both culturally and clinically safe care.

The College feels that the final aspect of GPO 4 (*leadership to address challenges within their communities*) is an unrealistic expectation of a graduate midwife. We would recommend that this be

replaced with *promoting public health strategies including breastfeeding*. We would like to see midwifery partnership more prominently acknowledged within the GPO's.

Thank you for the opportunity to make provide this feedback and our apologies for the later submission.

Ngā mihi

Alison Eddy

CE

New Zealand College of Midwives | Te Kāreti O Nga Kaiwhakawhanau Ki Aotearoa