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RACGP CPD Provider

NDC Lactation Fellowship Curriculum Handbook

'Growing joy in early life!'

Advanced knowledge, clinical skills, and qualification in
Breastfeeding and Lactation Medicine

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Fellowship aim

The NDC Lactation Fellowship is the most advanced qualification in Neuroprotective Developmental Care (NDC or the Possums programs) available for medical practitioners and other registered health professionals.

On completion, clinicians are empowered to

- Offer comprehensive, evidence-based clinical interventions in collaboration with families who present with breastfeeding and lactation related challenges, across the spectrum of the most common, the most complex, and the most rare
- Integrate research analysis, leadership skills, advocacy, and education of colleagues into professional practice.

About The NDC Institute

The NDC Institute is an Australian social enterprise which upskills registered health professionals in early life care, based on the evolutionary principle that optimising breastfeeding and lactation support practices is foundational across infant care domains if health systems are to support optimal family and developmental outcomes.

Breastfeeding and lactation medicine remains a research frontier. The NDC Institute offers future-focused breastfeeding and lactation medicine education, using the principles of best practice implementation science to translate current research into clinical practice.

NDC lactation education

- Applies the frameworks of evolutionary biology, complexity science, and transdisciplinary generalism to lactation and related infant care sciences
- Foundationally integrates the emerging interdisciplinary field of mechanobiology into breastfeeding and lactation medicine
- Comprehensively translates research into comprehensive clinical skills across the wide range of breastfeeding and lactation presentations
- Is uniquely transparent about underlying NDC (peer reviewed and published) theoretical models when robust evidence is lacking.

Alignment with NABBM and IBLCE recommended curriculums

The Fellowship (including the Masterclasses and Accreditation) comprehensively covers the curriculum content recommended for certification by both the North American Board of Breastfeeding and Lactation Medicine and the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners. (Comprehensive NDC Lactation Fellowship curriculum topic lists and correlations are available elsewhere.)

In addition, the NDC Fellowship covers content that is not stipulated in these recommended curriculums, but which remains essential if breastfeeding rates are to improve within local health systems and internationally. Please see the text box Appendix 1 ‘NDC lactation education has differences’ at the end of this document.

NDC Institute educators

1. Lead educator is founder **Dr Pamela Douglas** MBBS FRACGP PhD IBCLC FABM.
    - GP-researcher (30 + research articles which develop the evidence base, including 10 evaluations of NDC, published in international journals)
    - Breastfeeding medicine physician (IBCLC qualification initially awarded in 1994; Fellow of Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine) with over 30 years clinical experience
    - Associate Professor Adjunct, School of Medicine, Griffith University; Senior Lecturer, School of Medicine, The University of Queensland.

2. **Guest presenters.** More than 20 invited guest speakers contribute to the NDC curriculum. Guest presenters are clinicians, educators, and researchers who are prominent in their field within Australia or internationally. Their presentations are offered live online to members of The NDC Institute and the public, with recordings (+ transcripts) embedded in the Lactation Fellowship curriculum.

NDC Accredited Practitioners c.f. NDC Lactation Fellows (latter also referred to as NDC Lactation Consultants)

NDC Accreditation is a credential which demonstrates a high level of clinical skill in the inter-related and interacting fields of breastfeeding and lactation, unsettled infant behaviour, and perinatal and infant mental health. NDC Accreditation is equivalent to Level 2 of the NDC Lactation Fellowship. Maintenance ensures this credential remains current.

Many NDC participants who qualify as NDC Accredited will not choose to complete Level 3 of NDC upskilling which is required to become a Lactation Fellow (also referred to as an NDC Lactation Consultant). This may be because the Fellowship offers skills outside their scope of practice, or because the Fellowship doesn't align with current direction of personal and professional interests.

Only NDC Accredited Practitioners, continuing on with their NDC licence in Maintenance, can proceed into the NDC Lactation Fellowship.

A three level Fellowship pathway: course summary

There are three levels of course-work necessary for qualifying as an NDC Lactation Fellow (also known as an NDC Lactation Consultant), which can occur over a minimum of 2.5 years but may take 7 years or more. These are detailed further in Table 1 below. Please click on the relevant links to learn more about each course.

1. Level 1. Foundational topics are covered in the Masterclasses, alongside clinical demonstrations, short group discussions, and reflective exercises.
2. Level 2. NDC Accreditation develops these topics in greater depth and consolidates skills, as participants access a range of parent handouts, clinical tools, clinical templates, research and educational articles, videos, and podcasts, and engage in regular live online case discussions receiving peer and facilitator discussion and feedback.
3. Level 3. The NDC Lactation Fellowship provides comprehensive in-depth development of both pre-clinical knowledge and clinical skills across the broad spectrum of lactation-related topics through asynchronous e-learning, with ongoing live online facilitated peer case discussions accompanied by self-driven clinical case reflective practices.

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Table 1. NDC Lactation Fellowship curriculum overview

Level	NDC Lactation Fellowship course title	Prerequisites	No. of modules	Continuing professional development hours	Assessment	CPD accreditation
1A	Masterclasses in Breastfeeding Medicine: Assessment and Management	Prep content stipulated in each of 6 modules	6	12	Evidence of completion of pre and post-module reflection practices required.	RACGP, ACRRM, ACM; CERPs self-logged (1 L or R CERP/1 hr)
1B	Masterclasses in infant sleep and cry-fuss problems, and perinatal and infant mental health: Assessment and Management	Prep content stipulated in each of 6 modules	6	12	Evidence of completion of pre and post-module reflection practices required.	RACGP, ACRRM, ACM; CERPs self-logged (1 L or R CERP/1 hr)
2A	NDC Accreditation	1A, 1B	n/a	50	Mandatory participation recorded in Activity Log: 12 live network hours; 4 clinical demonstrations, covering the topics of breastfeeding, infant sleep, cry-fuss problems). required to Presentation of 4 cases in Live Network Hours (one each on breastfeeding difficulty, infant sleep problems, cry-fuss problems, and postnatal mental health challenges). 100 MCQ exam, 95% correct to pass, a second attempt allowed.	RACGP, ACRRM, ACM; CERPs self-logged (1 L or R CERP/1 hr)
2B	Maintenance of NDC Accreditation	1A, 1B, 2A	n/a	Time investment recommended not compulsory	n/a	

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Level	NDC Lactation Fellowship course title	Prerequisites	No. of modules	Continuing professional development hours	Assessment	CPD accreditation
3	NDC Lactation Fellowship	1A, 1B, 2A, 2B	29	95	Mandatory participation 5 Live Network Hours, recorded in Activity Log (5 hrs); present 3 case discussions in Live Network Hours (1 hr prep) (complex breastfeeding presentations); submit 3 self-audits of complex breastfeeding & lactation case (1.5 hrs prep); 126 MCQs (2-9 for each module), 100% pass rate, a second attempt allowed.	Self-log with Australian professional colleges or IBLCE
				NDC Lactation Fellowship = minimum 169 hrs in total		

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Teaching methods

The NDC Lactation Fellowship applies blended teaching methods:

- Pre and post-module reflection practices, for submission to the education manager
- 100 pre-course multiple choice questions (formative assessment) so participants map gaps in existing knowledge base
- Traditional lectures presenting structure foundational knowledge, delivered live online with discussion opportunities, and available subsequently as recordings with transcripts and powerpoint pdfs
    - Guest Speakers (20 + experts)
    - Dr Pamela Douglas
- Live online clinical demonstrations with volunteer families conducted by Dr Pamela Douglas, also available as recordings
- Access to Resource Hub for asynchronous e-learning, including
    - Parent handouts
    - Clinical tools and templates
    - Education articles
    - Video presentations
- Live online case-based discussions (both mixed Stream 1 + 2 and separate Stream 1 and 2 opportunities)
- Mandatory live online case presentations by participant, with peer + facilitator feedback and discussion
- Lactation Fellowship asynchronous e-learning includes access to
    - Multiple education articles relevant to each Level 3 module
    - Exercises in critical analysis of selected research studies
    - Brief summaries of extensive selected studies
    - Access to curated collection of research papers
- Self-directed case audits (x 6), for submission to education manager
- Note formal assessment mechanisms listed in Table 1, above.

Peer support

- Facilitated peer group case discussions, feedback, and support (live online zoom meetings) - at least 17 hours of participation is mandatory (Levels 2 + 3)
- Online peer group case discussions and support (NDC Accredited Practitioners) available in the NDC Network closed facebook group (optional).
- Access to self-organising discipline-specific peer group case discussions with other NDC Accredited Practitioners (optional).

The two professional streams within Level 3

The NDC Lactation Fellowship was developed for NDC Accredited doctors who wish to obtain or consolidate advanced skills and qualification in breastfeeding and lactation medicine, in addition to the foundational breastfeeding medicine clinical skills taught in the Masterclasses and Accreditation (Stream 2).

The NDC Lactation Fellowship is also available to other NDC Accredited health professionals including IBCLCs who select from the content according to their own scope of practice and interests (Stream 1).

- Stream 1 allows registered health professionals to meet in live online network hours with other colleagues for case discussions relevant to their own scopes of practice.
- Stream 2 allows medical practitioners to meet in live online network hours with their own colleagues for case discussions relevant to their specific scope of practice.

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Renew cycle

The online educational content found within Possums Breastfeeding and Lactation Advanced, comprising the comprehensive library of education articles and videos for doctors and health professionals from which the NDC Lactation Fellowship in part draws, is constantly modified and improved according to the latest research. This is possible because of its online and modifiable nature, month by month.

The courses and accompanying presentations, including guest speaker presentations, are on a 4 year cycle of renewal. For example, the Masterclass presentations have just finished an upgrade in response to latest evidence (2026), with previous upgrade occurring in 2023.

Cost

A member of The NDC Institute who is eligible to participate in the Lactation Fellowship will invest

1. AUD $350 x 2 = $700 for the Masterclasses
2. Either AUD $850 separately for NDC Accreditation, or a total of $1200 for the bundle that included the two Masterclasses and NDC Accreditation. This comes to a total of between AUD $1200-$1550.
3. AUD $325 annually, ongoing, for membership of Maintenance of NDC Accreditation. If a participant takes an average of 2-3 years to complete the Lactation Fellowship, that means paying AUD $1075. Maintenance is a pre-requisite of ongoing license to promote services using the qualification of NDC Lactation Fellow or NDC Lactation Consultant, as a matter of quality assurance.
4. AUD $200 for joining NDC Lactation Fellowship (Level 3 of NDC courses), giving participants 5 years access to Level 3 course content.

This is (on average) AUD $2400 already invested in becoming NDC Accredited and continuing Maintenance of NDC Accreditation with The NDC Institute. It costs AUD $200 to join the Lactation Fellowship. Therefore, the total cost of completing the NDC Lactation Fellowship is estimated to be a total of about AUD $2,600 covering a period of 2.5 – 7 years, depending on time the practitioner takes to complete.

Content lists and learning outcomes

A summary of content lists is found in Table 2 below.

Detailed learning outcomes and content lists for each module in the Masterclasses (Level 1), for the NDC Accreditation Pathway (Level 2), and each module in the Lactation Fellowship (Level 3) are available within The NDC Institute's education hub as Master Tables for members. They may also be available upon request at education@ndcinstitute.com.au

Table 2. Content summaries

Level	Content title (asynchronous e-learning articles, videos, research summaries)	Live online presentation
MASTERCLASSES IN BREASTFEEDING MEDICINE: ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT		
1	Frequent flexible breastfeeds Fit and hold – why it matters, strengths and limitations of commonly used approaches Biomechanics of infant suck in breastfeeding Infant oromotor assessment including ankyloglossia assessment	Dr Pamela Douglas, MBBS FRACGP, Fellow of Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, PhD, IBCLC
2	Assessment of lactating breasts + nipple The gestalt method of fit and hold and why Paced bottle feeding Ankyloglossia management : The role of infant bodywork Steps of scissors frenotomy	
3	Human lactation research update: research findings and wide range of clinical applications	Dr Sharon Perrella, RN IBCLC, Research Fellow, Geddes Hartmann Human Milk Research Group, UWA
4	Clinical observation	Dr Pamela Douglas + volunteer family
5	Nipple pain/damage: assessment + management Breast inflammation: assessment + management	
6	Low supply: aetiology, assessment, management, including breastfeeding and lactation aids (domperidone, delivery of milk by cup/spoon/finger/syringe, pumps, supplementer, nipple shields) High supply: aetiology, assessment, management	
MASTERCLASSES IN INFANT SLEEP AND CRY-FUSS PROBLEMS, AND PERINATAL AND INFANT MENTAL HEALTH: ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT		
1	Steps of The Possums Sleep Program (evidence-based alternative to extinction or graduated extinction methods)	Dr Pamela Douglas, MBBS FRACGP, Fellow of Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, PhD, IBCLC
2	Clinical demonstration with volunteer family	Dr Pamela Douglas + volunteer family

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Level	Content title (asynchronous e-learning articles, videos, research summaries)	Live online presentation
3	Is excessive crying normal in the first few months of life? Why an evidence-based approach to infant crying matters The neurobiological model of cry-fuss problems The Possums 5-domain approach to cry-fuss problems	Dr Pamela Dougals
4	Clinical observation with volunteer family	Dr Pamela Douglas + volunteer family
5	Behavioural approaches to infant care vs attachment-based parenting What is Acceptance & Commitment Therapy? ACT adapted for the perinatal period Self-compassion strategies	Dr Pamela Douglas
6	Revision + discussions	Dr Pamela Douglas
NDC ACCREDITATION		
Consolidation of knowledge and clinical skills		
MAINTENANCE OF NDC ACCREDITATION		
Consolidation of knowledge and clinical skills + maintenance of license		
NDC LACTATION FELLOWSHIP		
1A	Evolutionary context: Homo sapiens + lactation	
2A	Sociocultural & historical contexts + quotidian patterns of breastfeeding	Dr Julie Smith – “Improving visibility of the economic and environmental value of breastfeeding” Ms Maureen Minchin – “Video 1. History of the professionalisation of breastfeeding support internationally”
3A	Functional anatomy of infant suck and swallow in breastfeeding + airway protection	Dr Nikki Mills – “The functional anatomy of swallowing and airway protection in the breastfeeding infant”
4A	The milk ejection reflex	Assoc/Prof Felicity Davis – "The biology of milk ejection"

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Level	Content title (asynchronous e-learning articles, videos, research summaries)	Live online presentation
5A	The human mammary gland: functional anatomy, physiology, mechanobiology	
6A	Regulation of mammary gland secretion: models and mechanisms	Professor Donna Geddes – “Impact of maternal breast development, diet and diabetes on milk production and composition”
7A	Milk composition, mammary microbiomes, and the maternal-infant immune system	Dr Sharon Perrella – "Human milk: impacts on infant health, growth and development"
8A	Protecting infant development	Professor Jeanine Young – “Reframing from risk to protection to engage families with safe sleep messaging: words matter” Dr Sharon Perrella – “Human milk: impacts on infant health, growth and development” Professor Helen Ball – “How babies sleep: the view from anthropology”
9A	Whole patient/whole family care: complexity, transdisciplinary generalism, patient-centred communication	Assoc/Prof Johanna Lynch – "The nature of holistic generalism in medical practice"
10B	Antenatal preparation for breastfeeding	Dr Stuart Prosser – "Clinical breastfeeding/lactation screening tools for use antenatally or in the first few days post-birth"
11B	Initiation of breastfeeding: the first three weeks post-birth	Dr Danielle Freeman – “Breastfeeding in the first days of life and when do we need to intervene with formula?” Professor Michelle Brenner – “How Donor Milk Saves Lives: Human Milk as a Medical Intervention (the NICU and beyond)”
12B	Fit & hold: advanced clinical interventions	
13B	Nipple-areolar complex pain, inflammation, and wounds	
14B	Restricted oral connective tissues in infants	Dr Nikki Mills – “The tongue-tie talk”
15B	The fussy breastfed infant + conditioned sympathetic nervous system hyperarousal	
16B	Synchronising breast milk production with infant (or multiple infants') caloric need	Dr Zoya Gridneva – "Predominantly and exclusively pumping mothers – Why, how and how effective"
17B	Breast inflammation (stroma): engorgement, blocked ducts, mastitis	

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Level	Content title (asynchronous e-learning articles, videos, research summaries)	Live online presentation
18C	Breast inflammation (stroma): abscess, galactocoele, phlegmon, fistula	Dr Adam Ofri – "Lactation-related breast complications (abscesses, galactoceles, and fistulas)"
19C	Breast imaging in pregnancy + lactation, benign breast disease, idiopathic granulomatous mastitis	Dr Adam Ofri – "Breast Imaging in the pregnant and lactating patient"; "Idiopathic granulomatous mastitis + benign breast diseases"
20C	The preterm infant	Dr Sharon Perrella – "Preterm breastfeeding" Professor Michelle Brenner – "How Donor Milk Saves Lives: Human Milk as a Medical Intervention (the NICU and beyond)"
21C	Infant medical conditions	Dr Leigh Campbell – "Breastfeeding management of an infant with airway compromise (case report)"
22C	Perinatal mental health and emotional wellbeing	Dr Johanna Lynch – "The senses and emotional and mental wellbeing" Dr Rob Purssey – "Exploring the role of Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors in perinatal mental health" Dr Anita Elias – "Perinatal sexuality"
23C	Maternal medical conditions	Dr Kate Rassie – "Diabetes, PCOS, breastfeeding"; "Obesity and breastfeeding"; "Lactational amenorrhea, lactational osteoporosis and bone health, atrophic vaginitis" Professor Donna Geddes – "Impact of maternal breast development, diet and diabetes on milk production and composition" Professor Pamela Berens – "Lactation and selected maternal medical conditions" Dr Leigh Campbell – "Persons with HIV and infant feeding approach in the perinatal period"; "Case report. Management of a lactation-related hyperkeratosis of the nipple"
24C	Maternal medications + supplements	Articles written by Associate Professor Treasure McGuire
25C	Maternal nutrition (including supplements + alcohol) during lactation	Articles written by Associate Professor Treasure McGuire – core content author for this module Professor Donna Geddes – "Impact of maternal breast

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Level	Content title (asynchronous e-learning articles, videos, research summaries)	Live online presentation
		development, diet and diabetes on milk production and composition"
26C	Non-puerperal induction of lactation, relactation, donor milk	Professor Michelle Brenner – "How Donor Milk Saves Lives: Human Milk as a Medical Intervention (the NICU and beyond)" (28 Jul 2026)
27D	Overmedicalisation, paramedicalisation, and overtreatment of the breastfeeding woman and her infant	
28D	Implementation science + interpreting research	Professor Donna Geddes (in conversation with Dr Pamela Douglas) – "What I wish clinicians knew about reading research"
29D	Ethics, business, and the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes	Ms Maureen Minchin – Videos 2-4. History of IBLCE, ALCA, WHO Code for Marketing of International Breast-Milk Substitutes

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Conflict of interest declaration

- Dr Pamela Douglas and all NDC courses are compliant with the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes and associated WHA resolutions.
- Guest Speakers are responsible for their own conflict of interest declarations, in alignment with internationally agreed university and medical journal ethical standards
- Dr Pamela Douglas's university affiliations are adjunct, that is, unpaid. Her research is self-funded and strictly independent.

For further information about the NDC Lactation Fellowship, please search possums.org, or email education@ndcinstitute.com.au

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