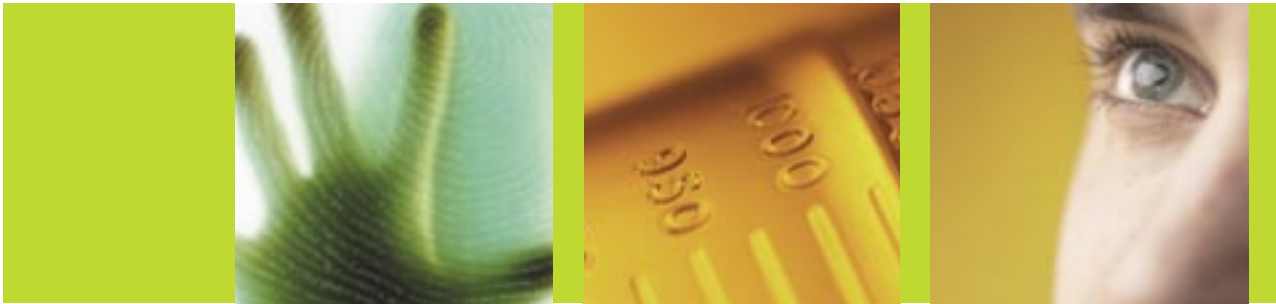


Competency Standards

for nurses in general practice



Tool-kit introduction

Competency standards for registered and enrolled nurses in general practice An Australian Nursing Federation project funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The competency standards for nurses in general practice were developed by a University of South Australia project team led by Terri Gibson and Marie Heartfield. First published August 2005.

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Tool-Kit introduction

Why has this website been developed?

This web-site has been developed to help you to start using the competency standards for nurses in general practice. Examples of the following have been included:

Nurses in general practice

- Self assessment tool;
- Sample professional development plan;
- Guidance on developing a professional portfolio;
- Resources to assist you to use the competency standards as your professional framework; and
- Assistance to review your scope of nursing practice.

General practitioners and practice managers

- Sample job descriptions and performance assessment tools;
- Assistance to review the scope of nursing practice for nurses employed in your general practice;
- Glossary of terms used in nursing.

Education providers

- To be developed

What is nursing?

The International Council of Nurses defines nursing as:

Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. Nursing includes the promotion of the health, prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Advocacy, promotion of a safe environments, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patients and health systems management, and education are also key nursing roles.¹

Nurses work as part of the health care team and they are involved in health care at the primary, secondary and tertiary level. Nurses collaborate, refer and coordinate their activities with doctors, other nurses and midwives, and other health care providers. Nurses and midwives work closely with the individual or group accessing the health care services.

Nursing is not a series of tasks and the tool-kit provides assistance to review the scope of nursing practice and identify the health care to be provided by nurses in general practice.

Enrolled nurses are required to have professional supervision by registered nurses and general practitioners who employ only enrolled nurses will have to put in place a system where enrolled nurses can easily access professional support from a registered nurse.

¹ See www.icn.ch.

² Registered nurse (Division 2) in Victoria

What is primary health care?

Primary health care is defined in the World Health Organisation's Declaration of Alma-Ata (1978) as:

*Primary health care is essential health care based on practical, scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development in the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination. It forms an integral part both of the country's health system, of which it is the central function and main focus, and of the overall social and economic development of the community. It is the first level of contact of individuals, the family and community with the national health system bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work, and constitutes the first element of a continuing health care process.*³

What are competency standards?

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council use the following definition⁴ of competence, *the combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and abilities that underpin effective performance in a professional/occupational area*⁵.

The Australian National Training Authority which was, until June 2005, the national body responsible for vocational education and training uses the following definitions:

Competency (also competence) *the ability to perform tasks and duties to the standard expected in employment;*

Competency standard *an industry-determined specification of performance which sets out the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to operate effectively in employment...*

Unit of competency *a component of a competency standard. A unit of competency is a statement of a key function or role in a particular job or occupation.*⁶

How can competency standards be used?

Competency standards can be used in many ways:

- Nurses use competency standards as their professional framework against which to measure performance and prepare a professional development plan so that competence is maintained and enhanced;
- Nurse regulatory authorities in each state and territory use competency standards to determine the eligibility of people applying for a licence to practice as a nurse and to assess nurses required to demonstrate continuing competence;
- Education providers in both the higher education and vocational education settings use competency standards as the framework for course development purposes; and
- Employers use competency standards for position description and performance assessment purposes.

How were these competency standards developed?

Competency standards for nurses in general practice were developed during 2004 by Marie Heartfield and Terri Gibson from the University of South Australia in conjunction with Royal College of Nursing Australia. The project to develop the standards was managed by the Australian Nursing Federation

³ The Declaration of Alma-Ata can be found on the following web-site, http://www.euro.who.int/AboutWHO/Policy/20010827_1

⁴ Adapted from the 2003 glossary in the International Council of Nurses' framework of competencies for the generalist nurse.

⁵ ANMC 2004 Common competencies for registered nurses in Western Pacific and South East Asian Region ANMC Canberra.

⁶ See glossary on www.anta.gov.au. The Australian Government announced in 2004 that ANTA would be abolished and responsibilities transferred back to the Department of Education, Science and Training.

with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. More information on the project can be found in the publication on this website, Competency standards for nurses in general practice.

The competency standards for nurses in general practice were designed to accompany the national competency standards⁷ and to describe the work that is being undertaken by nurses working in general practice settings.

Please note that some nurses working in general practice will be working at an advanced level and/or in a specialist nursing role (eg gerontic or paediatric nurse specialist) and these nurses may use the competency standards for the advanced registered nurse or the competency standards prepared by their professional nursing organisations.

⁷ developed by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council.