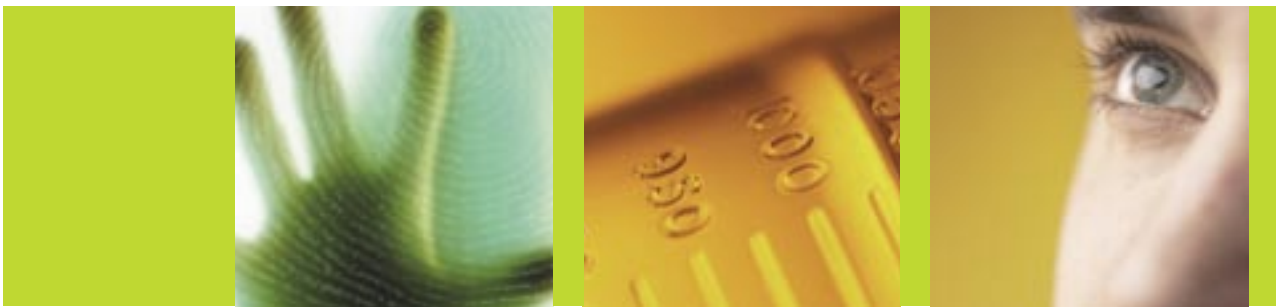


Competency Standards

for nurses in general practice



Scope of nursing practice

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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Scope of Nursing Practice

What is the scope of nursing practice?

The International Council of Nurses' definition of nursing is:

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 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

ICN adds in the position statement on the scope of nursing practice that, *the scope of nursing practice is not limited to specific tasks, functions or responsibilities but includes direct care giving and evaluation of its impact, advocating for patients and for health²...*

The Queensland Nursing Council uses the following definition of the scope of nursing practice:

The scope of nursing and midwifery practice is that which nurses and midwives are educated, competent and authorised to perform. The actual scope of an individual nurse's or midwife's practice is influenced by the:

- *context in which they practice;*
- *client's health needs;*
- *level of competence, education and qualifications of the individual nurse or midwife; and*
- *service provider's policies.³*

The Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Healthcare recently defined the scope of clinical practice for doctors as:

Describing the extent of an individual doctor's clinical practice within a particular organisation based on the individual's credentials, competence, performance and professional suitability, and the need for the organisation to suit this process.⁴

How is the scope of nursing practice identified?

The information on this page has been prepared using the Queensland Nursing Council's scope of practice framework for nurses and midwives which was the first such framework produced in Australia for nurses, however other nurse regulatory authorities are preparing guidelines to assist nurses and their employers to assess and enhance the scope of nursing practice.

The scope of nursing practice will vary from nurse to nurse and from general practice to general practice. It is recommended that the employer and the nurse work together to identify the scope of practice needed in the general practice and identify where or whether expansion is required. The registered nurse involved in supervising an enrolled nurse⁵ must be involved in identifying the scope of nursing practice for the enrolled nurse.

The nurse needing to develop additional knowledge and skills required in the general practice setting should be supported by the employer.

¹ See www.icn.ch

² See www.icn.ch

³ Queensland Nursing Council 2005 The scope of practice framework for nurses and midwives QNC Brisbane.

⁴ See www.safetyandquality.org for more information on the credentialling and defining the scope of clinical practice project.

⁵ Registered nurse (division 2) in Victoria.

The Queensland Nursing Council uses the following principles for expanding the scope of practice of registered nurses and midwives:⁶

Principles for expanding the scope of practice of registered nurses and midwives

1. The primary motivation to expand the scope of practice for registered nurses and midwives is to meet clients' health needs and to improve health outcomes.
2. Any expansion of the scope of practice enhances existing aspects of professional practice.
3. The expansion in the registered nurse's or midwife's scope of practice is:
 - lawful;
 - appropriate for the context;
 - consistent with standards acceptable to the nursing profession and nursing/midwifery organisations; and
 - consistent with the service provider's policies.
4. Expansion of the scope of practice is based on appropriate consultation and planning.
5. The registered nurse/midwife expanding their practice:
 - is already practising at an advanced level;
 - has the appropriate education;
 - is assessed as competent;
 - understands their degree of accountability.
6. A competent health professional has assessed the competence of the registered nurse or midwife who will incorporate the activity into their practice.

If all six principles are met then it is safe to proceed with the expansion, BUT, if the context changes, the principles must be reapplied.

How is the scope of nursing practice identified for enrolled nurses?

Enrolled nurses work under the professional supervision of a registered nurse. Registered nurses need to be involved in developing the scope of nursing practice for enrolled nurses. The principles used in the Queensland Nursing Council's scope of nursing practice document for advancing the scope of practice for enrolled nurses are:

1. The primary motivation for the delegation of the nursing activity is to meet clients' health needs and to improve health outcomes.
2. The change in the scope of practice...is:
 - lawful;
 - appropriate for the context;
 - consistent with standards acceptable to the profession and nursing/midwifery organisations; and
 - consistent with the service provider's policies.
3. There has been appropriate consultation and planning.
4. The enrolled nurse accepting the delegated activity:
 - agrees to accept the activity;
 - has the appropriate education;
 - is assessed as competent; and
 - understands their degree of accountability.

⁶ Queensland Nursing Council 2005 The scope of practice framework for nurses and midwives QNC Brisbane.

5. A registered nurse has assessed the competence of the person who will perform the activity.
6. Processes exist for ensuring:
 - continuing education
 - assessment of competence, and
 - appropriate clinically-focused supervision.

If all six principles are met, then it is safe to proceed with the delegation, BUT if the context changes, the principles must be reapplied.⁷

What is the role of the enrolled nurse in general practice?

Role statement for enrolled nurses in general practice⁸

Nurses in general practice demonstrate competence in the provision of primary health care centred on individuals and groups, in accordance with their educational preparation, professional nursing standards, relevant legislation and practice context in an environment characterised by unpredictability and individual diversity across the lifespan.

While the role of the nurse varies according to the practice client population, practice structure, employment arrangement and category of nurse, most nurses provide a combination of direct clinical care and manage clinical care systems in an environment which is often isolated from other nurses. This requires that the nurse promotes health care centred on individuals and groups by working collaboratively with others both in and outside the general practice.

The enrolled nurse is legally required to be supervised by a registered nurse and is accountable and responsible for all aspects of delegated care.⁹

The relationship between nurses in general practice and individuals/groups usually extends beyond single episodes of care to meeting changing health care needs and priorities across the lifespan.

Both registered and enrolled nurses play a pivotal role in health promotion, health maintenance and prevention of illness through provision of evidence based information and education to individuals, groups and communities. This requires knowledge of resources available within the community and health care sectors to facilitate care for individuals and groups and the skills to communicate and educate.

All nurses in general practice need computer literacy skills. Enrolled nurses need to be able to use and maintain recall, infection control and quality improvement systems.

All nurses have a responsibility to know and practice within their scope of practice relevant to their education and qualifications. The enrolled nurse in general practice can assume responsibilities according to their education, experience and the availability of registered nurse supervision.

All nurses in general practice have a responsibility to seek out and engage in ongoing education and professional development to maintain the competencies that are specific to nursing in general practice settings.

⁷ Queensland Nursing Council 2005 The scope of practice framework for nurses and midwives QNC Brisbane.

⁸ Prepared as part of the project to develop competency standards for nurses in general practice by the University of South Australia project team.

⁹ Note that in South Australia, enrolled nurses can apply to the nurse regulatory authority for authorisation to work without the supervision of a registered nurse.

What is the role of the registered nurse in general practice?

Role statement for the registered nurse in general practice¹⁰

The registered nurse in general practice demonstrates competence in the provision of primary health care centred on individuals and groups, in accordance with their educational preparation, professional nursing standards, relevant legislation and general practice context in an environment characterised by unpredictability and individual diversity across the lifespan.

While the role of the registered nurse in general practice varies according to the population profile of the general practice, the general practice structure, and employment arrangements, the registered nurse provides a combination of direct clinical care and management of clinical care systems in an environment which is often isolated from other nurses. This requires that s/he works collaboratively with others, internal and external to the general practice, to promote health care centred on individuals and groups.

In some general practices, the registered nurse autonomously conducts clinics, health assessments and chronic disease management programs as well as collaborating with general practitioners and other members of the multidisciplinary health care team as determined by the needs of individuals and groups, and the registered nurse's scope of practice and employment arrangement. The registered nurse may undertake their nursing role both within and external to the general practice, conducting assessments and health visits in the home and/or another community setting.

The relationships between nurses in general practice and the individuals/groups requiring nursing care usually extends beyond single episodes of care to meeting changing health care needs and priorities across the lifespan.

The registered nurse plays a pivotal role in health promotion, health maintenance and prevention of illness through provision of evidence based information and education to individuals, groups and communities. This requires a broad knowledge of resources available within the community and health care sectors to facilitate care to individuals/groups and the skills to communicate and educate.

The registered nurse in general practice also requires highly developed information literacy, management and coordination skills to enable the development and management of systems that ensure safety and quality. This includes recall, infection control and quality improvement systems.

All nurses have a responsibility to know and practice within their scope of practice relevant to their education, qualifications and context.

Registered nurses in general practice have a responsibility to seek out and engage in ongoing education and professional development to maintain the competencies that are specific to nursing in general practice settings.

¹⁰ Prepared as part of the project to develop competency standards for nurses in general practice by the University of South Australia project team.

Questions that need to be asked when identifying the scope of nursing practice

- What is the profile of the population using the general practice and what could the nurse be doing to improve health outcomes for the population?
- What education has the nurse completed?
- What is the previous experience of the nurse?
- What additional education does the nurse need to provide this nursing care?
- Is the scope of practice used by nurses in other settings?
- What is the legal position ie does Australian and/or State/Territory Government legislation and regulations permit nurses to deliver the care being considered as part of the nursing scope of practice?
- What are the risks and benefits?
- Are there policies and procedures in place to support the nurse providing this care in general practice?
- How will competency assessment take place if the nurse is expanding their scope of nursing practice eg formal accreditation, supervision by another experienced health care provider?
- Is there any reluctance on behalf of the nurse in taking on this new responsibility? And what are the reasons for this reluctance?
- How will this new responsibility impact on the workload of the nurse?

Sample only

1. Improved management of people with chronic diseases by involving the registered nurse in the assessment and management of people with diabetes

Assess the needs of the patients accessing the general practice	Assess the situation	Assess the risks and benefits	Assess the supports	Plan	Implement	Evaluate
<p>Improve the care provided to people with diabetes as there are increasing numbers of people presenting with diabetes</p>	<p>General practitioner has kept up-to-date with the medical management of diabetes</p> <p>The registered nurse is keen to take on this responsibility but has not been involved with patients with diabetes for several years and acknowledges that she needs to update her knowledge and skills</p> <p>The Division has access to a diabetes nurse educator who is running a series of education sessions for nurses</p> <p>There are resources available from Diabetes Australia, the Australian Diabetes Society and from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing</p> <p>Management of people with diabetes is a usual nursing role and there are no new legal issues associated with this expansion of the registered nurse's scope of practice</p>	<p>Improved health outcomes for people with diabetes</p> <p>Better assessment of people identified as at high risk of developing diabetes</p> <p>Reduced workload for the general practitioners</p> <p>Increased income for the general practice</p> <p>Less time for registered nurse to undertake other duties in the general practice</p> <p>Lost time during the education period</p>	<p>Registered nurse attends the Division's education program and any other local courses</p> <p>Arrangements are made for the nurse to work with the diabetes educator once a week for 4 weeks</p> <p>The general practitioner and the nurse will prepare guidelines for the management of people with diabetes in the general practice including preventive health strategies and health promotion activities</p> <p>The registered nurse will contact the diabetes nurse educator at least once a month to review the nursing care being provided to patients in the general practice with diabetes</p>	<p>Registered nurse will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess patients and draft management plans in consultation with the general practitioner • provide education sessions for the patient including their self-management activities • keep up-to-date about the local resources available for people with diabetes including services and support groups • manage the recall register for patients with diabetes • organise health promotion materials in the waiting areas and in the general practice newsletter • provide an assessment and education service for patients identified as at a high risk of developing diabetes • monitor the information that is released about diabetes and bring it to the attention of the general practice team 	<p>Registered nurse is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessing patients and drafting management plans in consultation with the general practitioner • providing education sessions for the patient including their self-management activities • keeping up-to-date about the local resources available for people with diabetes including services and support groups • managing the recall register for patients with diabetes • organising health promotion materials in the waiting areas and in the general practice newsletter • providing an assessment and education service for patients identified as at a high risk of developing diabetes • monitoring the information that is released about diabetes and bringing it to the attention of the general practice team 	<p>AT 6 MONTHS</p> <p>People with diabetes are returning for follow-up as planned</p> <p>People with diabetes report greater confidence in their self-management strategies [number] of patients at high risk of diabetes have been assessed with [number] identified as having diabetes</p> <p>Registered nurse continues to review patient care with the diabetes educator every month</p> <p>Registered nurse is planning to complete the diabetes educators course this year</p> <p>Workload for the registered nurse is satisfactory</p> <p>Income has increased</p>