

**The Nursing Council of Hong Kong**

*Core-Competencies for  
Registered Nurses (Psychiatric)*



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# CONTENT

I.	Preamble	1
II.	Philosophy of Psychiatric Nursing	2
III.	Scope of Core-competencies Required of a Registered Nurse (Psychiatric)	4
	Competency 1: Professional, Legal and Ethical Nursing Practice	5
	Competency 2: Health Promotion and Education	6
	Competency 3: Management and Leadership	7
	Competency 4: Nursing Research	8
	Competency 5: Personal and Professional Development	8
	References	9

## **I. Preamble**

Psychiatric nurses serve the community by meeting the needs of individuals suffering from mental disorders as well as promoting mental health of the community. Apart from being a formal carer of clients with mental disorders, the psychiatric nurse needs to take up other professional roles, such as health promoter, educator, counsellor, care coordinator and manager, researcher, and client's advocate.

To ensure a regulated practice and to enhance the advancement of psychiatric nursing practice, it is essential that the roles of psychiatric nurses and their professional competencies are clearly defined.

This document has been developed by the Nursing Council of Hong Kong (NCHK) to serve the following purposes:

1. To state the philosophy of psychiatric nursing based on which such practice is developed in Hong Kong;
2. To outline the professional roles of psychiatric nurses and the core-competencies required to fulfilling these roles;
3. To describe the scope and characteristics of the core-competencies to guide the curriculum development of education programmes that prepare RN(Psy) who can practise psychiatric nursing safely, ethically and effectively;
4. To inform the public, the employers and stakeholders locally and internationally of what they may expect from the RN(Psy) on entry to practice.

These core-competencies should be possessed by the RNs(Psy) on entry to practice. In addition, the RNs(Psy) should practise according to the Code of Professional Conduct, the Scope of Professional Practice and other legal and ethical requirements defined by the NCHK as stipulated in the Nurses Registration Ordinance, Chapter 164. This document will be subjected to constant review in order to ensure its appropriateness and usefulness to reflect the contemporary role and requirements of practising as a RN(Psy) in Hong Kong.

This document will undergo open consultation with nursing and health care professionals in major local health care organisations, nursing education institutes and nursing professional bodies.

## II. PHILOSOPHY OF PSYCHIATRIC NURSING

The philosophy of psychiatric nursing in this section summarises our beliefs in the nature and practice of professional psychiatric/mental health nursing as well as our views on the person, environment, health, and mental health. Such beliefs also provide basic information for the development of education programme and syllabus for psychiatric nursing registration in the NCHK.

**Nursing** is a caring, enabling, knowledge-based and competence-assessed profession, which is dynamic in meeting the changing health needs of the society. It is committed to promoting and maintaining health; as well as to caring for the sick and the disabled as individuals, or in families, groups, institutions, home settings and in the community.

The practice of nursing is client-focused and evidence-based. It is carried out at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of health care. It functions through problem solving and collaboration with the client as well as other health care professionals to define and achieve mutually agreed health goals.

The provision of holistic, client-centred care requires research-based professional knowledge and skills through the implementation of the nursing process; the adoption of a caring and responsible attitude; effective communication and interpersonal skill as well as ethical principles. The quality of care is maintained through the enhancement of professional competencies via continuous nursing education.

**Psychiatric nursing** is a profession, possessing its unique history, ideology, knowledge, and skills. It provides services to individuals whose primary health needs are related to mental, emotional and developmental problems, especially serious disorders and persistent disabilities. It is committed to the maintenance, promotion and restoration of optimal mental health for individuals, families, community groups, and society, through the use of therapeutic relationships and interventions.

**The person** is a unique, holistic being with the potential to learn and develop through interacting with the changing environment. Each person has intrinsic worth and has the right to participate in the decision-making, which affects his/her own life and dignity, and must always be treated with respect.

**The environment** consists of external and internal components, which change constantly and generate both positive and negative stressors. The internal environment of a person, comprising biological, psychological, spiritual and intellectual components, interacts with the external environment that encompasses social, cultural and situational influences. This continual interaction affects the person's functioning as an individual, as well as in families, groups and community. The creation, preservation and conservation of a sustainable environment are crucial to the maintenance and promotion of human survival.

**Health** is a state of well-being, perceived differently by the individual at specific points in time along the health-illness continuum. It is affected by biological, psychological, socio-economical, developmental, political, cultural and religious factors. The level of well-being depends on the maintenance of equilibrium within the person, and between the person's interaction with the changing environment.

**Mental health** as suggested by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2001, is a state of well being in which the individual realises his/her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Mental health is as important as physical health to the overall well-being of individuals, societies and countries. The positive dimension of mental health is also stressed in WHO's definition of health as contained in its constitution in 1948: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

### **III. SCOPE OF CORE-COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF A REGISTERED NURSE (Psychiatric)**

#### **Glossary**

1. Registered Nurse (Psychiatric) [RN(Psy)]

A nurse who has completed a psychiatric/mental health nursing programme and has registered under the Professional Register Part II of the Nursing Council of Hong Kong.

2. Competence/Competency

The ability, knowledge, skills and attitudes required of a nurse in performing a range of expected roles in professional nursing practice.

3. Core-competencies

The essential competencies that a RN(Psy) is expected to possess at entry to practice as an outcome of their psychiatric nursing education in order to provide the local people with safe, effective and ethical care.

4. The Client

The focus of care provision by a RN(Psy) with whom the nurse is engaged in a professional helping relationship through which a mutually defined health goals in the process of mental illness prevention, and mental health promotion and restoration can be optimised or achieved.

#### **The Scope of Core-competencies Required of a RN(Psy)**

The scope of core-competencies required of a RN (Psy) also comprises 5 key aspects:

Competency 1: Professional, Legal and Ethical Nursing Practice

Competency 2: Health Promotion and Education

Competency 3: Management and Leadership

Competency 4: Nursing Research

Competency 5: Personal and Professional Development

Description of these core-competencies is tabulated as below.

## SCOPE OF CORE-COMPETENCIES OF REGISTERED NURSE (PSYCHIATRIC)

<b>Competency 1: Professional, Legal and Ethical Nursing Practice</b>			
<b>Ability</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Attitude</b>
<p><b>Proficiency in evidence- based nursing practice, applying problem solving skills and psychotherapeutic interventions to perform effective psychiatric nursing care safely, legally and ethically.</b></p> <p><b>The nurse should be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● think and reflect analytically and critically.</li> <li>● integrate nursing knowledge and theories into practice particularly for:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– assessment of psychosocial health needs in line with physiological ones using a systematic and holistic approach;</li> <li>– design, implementation and evaluation of care planning with the partnership of client and significant others;</li> <li>– restoration and promotion of mental health and enhancement of quality of life as client’s desire;</li> <li>– performing psychotherapeutic interventions proficiently and effectively and documenting the care accurately; and</li> <li>– collaboration with other mental health team members in the care provision.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● recognise limits of own abilities and qualification in accepting delegations.</li> <li>● safeguard client from unsafe practice.</li> <li>● ensure client’s rights of dignity, autonomy, privacy, confidentiality and access to information and responsibility to treatment, in consistent with the Mental Health Ordinance, Chapter 136.</li> <li>● maintain a therapeutic environment conducive to mental health rehabilitation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A. Medical, Behavioural and Social Sciences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● biological, pharmacological, social and behavioural sciences relevant to psychiatric nursing</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>B. Therapeutic Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● theories of communication, motivation and counselling;</li> <li>● interpersonal relationships and team building;</li> <li>● concepts of therapeutic communication and interventions.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>C. Professional Nursing Practice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● concepts and theories of professional nursing and caring</li> <li>● evidence-based nursing</li> <li>● principles and practice of psychiatric nursing</li> <li>● principles and practice of psychotherapeutic interventions</li> <li>● alternative and complementary medicine/treatment relevant to psychiatric nursing</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>D. Legal and Ethical Aspects</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● legal aspects pertinent to psychiatric nursing , particularly the Mental Health Ordinance, Chapter 136</li> <li>● principles of professional conduct and nursing ethics</li> <li>● patient’s right and responsibility</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>E. Information Technology applied to Nursing and Health Care</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● contemporary concepts of information technology (IT)</li> <li>● application of IT in psychiatric nursing and mental health care</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A. Cognitive Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● critical thinking</li> <li>● clinical decision making</li> <li>● problem solving</li> <li>● reflective learning</li> <li>● assertiveness</li> <li>● discovery learning</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>B. Psycho-motor Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● health assessment</li> <li>● psychiatric nursing and basic general nursing techniques</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>C. Psychosocial Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● communication and interpersonal skills</li> <li>● counselling</li> <li>● rapport and collaboration skill</li> <li>● psychotherapeutic interventions</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>D. Skills in Information Technology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● use of nursing informatics</li> <li>● electronic communication</li> <li>● data entry and retrieval in computer</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● respect for life, dignity, rights, beliefs, and culture of an individual</li> <li>● taking initiative for professional actions and be accountable for the care provided</li> <li>● supportive and collaborative with other health team members to provide systematic and holistic care for individuals, family and groups as needed</li> <li>● non-judgemental and accepting clients with mental problems under care</li> <li>● enabling/empowering</li> <li>● continuous learning</li> </ul>

## SCOPE OF CORE-COMPETENCIES OF REGISTERED NURSE (PSYCHIATRIC) (Continued)

<b>Competency 2: Health Promotion and Education</b>			
<b>Ability</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Attitude</b>
<p><b>Being able to work in partnership with health care team, clients, families and the community in preventing illness, promoting and protecting the health, in particular mental health, of an individual, family and the community.</b></p> <p><b>The nurse should be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● recognise the factors affecting mental health and the appropriate actions to take for mental health promotion.</li> <li>● identify the health-related needs of clients in different health care settings.</li> <li>● use learning principles and counselling techniques appropriately and effectively.</li> <li>● communicate health information and co-ordinate mental health education/promotion activities effectively.</li> <li>● collect and utilise updated evidence and reliable information for planning and improving mental health promotion and education activities.</li> <li>● intervene appropriately to safeguard the interests and well-being of clients.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A. Education Theories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● teaching and learning methods, motivational theories</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Concepts of Health and Mental Health; Health Education and Mental Health Promotion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● concepts of health, mental health and public health</li> <li>● health care delivery system</li> <li>● theories and practice of mental health education and promotion for                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– individual</li> <li>– family, group</li> <li>– the community</li> </ul> </li> <li>● contemporary issues in mental health education and promotion</li> </ul> <p><b>C. Communication Theories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● interviewing</li> <li>● nurse-patient relationships</li> <li>● therapeutic communication and counselling</li> <li>● cultural beliefs and societal values</li> </ul> <p><b>D. Rights of an Individual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● human rights</li> <li>● ethical principles applied to mental health promotion and education</li> </ul>	<p><b>A. Skills of Health Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● modelling and role playing</li> <li>● teaching, facilitating and motivating</li> <li>● reflecting</li> <li>● reinforcing and shaping</li> <li>● psychoeducation</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Problem Solving</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● community health assessment</li> <li>● psychosocial and mental health assessment</li> <li>● educational needs assessment</li> <li>● problem identification, planning, implementing and evaluating health education activities for individuals, groups and the community</li> </ul> <p><b>C. Communication skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● interviewing and counselling</li> <li>● building therapeutic relationship</li> <li>● networking</li> <li>● communicating with individuals and groups;</li> <li>● persuasion and promotion</li> </ul> <p><b>D. Public Speaking and Presentation Skills</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● proactive in identifying and meeting clients' mental health needs</li> <li>● committed in continuous updating of issues about mental health promotion and education</li> <li>● committed in participating in activities for mental health education and promotion at local, national and/or international levels</li> <li>● showing respect and understanding of clients' rights and mental health needs</li> <li>● aiming at holistic care for clients in need</li> </ul>

## SCOPE OF CORE-COMPETENCIES OF REGISTERED NURSE (PSYCHIATRIC) (Continued)

<b>Competency 3: Management and Leadership</b>			
<b>Ability</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Attitude</b>
<p><b>Effective managerial, supervision and leadership skills in mental health nursing practice</b></p> <p><b>The nurse should be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● initiate, implement and evaluate change conducive to improvement of mental health care services.</li> <li>● participate in health care policy planning and evaluation, in partnership with the health care team and the community sectors.</li> <li>● Assess, prevent and manage risks in mental health of clients and families and occupational health and safety of colleagues.</li> <li>● supervise the junior colleagues and trainees for provision of quality nursing care.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A. Management &amp; Leadership Theories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● management of time, risk, crises, services, and resources</li> <li>● leadership in nursing and health care</li> <li>● supervision</li> <li>● change theories</li> <li>● team building</li> <li>● motivation</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Health Care System and Policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● health care and mental health care systems and policies</li> <li>● contemporary mental health care issues</li> <li>● factors influencing mental health and health care</li> </ul> <p><b>C. Politics and Health Care Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● multidisciplinary approach</li> <li>● mediation strategies</li> </ul>	<p><b>A. Managerial Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● establishing working relationships with clients, health care professionals and the public</li> <li>● management of people and resources</li> <li>● conflict resolution</li> <li>● delegation and supervision</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Leadership Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● leading</li> <li>● making changes</li> <li>● motivating</li> <li>● problem solving</li> <li>● team building</li> </ul> <p><b>C. Political Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● advocating</li> <li>● lobbying</li> <li>● negotiating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● proactive in planning and improvements of mental health care and services</li> <li>● assertive in initiating changes, supervising and provision of quality nursing care</li> <li>● open and accommodating</li> <li>● fair and objective in management of staff, clients, policies, and conflicts</li> <li>● cooperative, supportive and cultivate team spirit in the health care team</li> </ul>

## SCOPE OF CORE-COMPETENCIES OF REGISTERED NURSE (PSYCHIATRIC) (Continued)

<b>Competency 4: Nursing Research</b>			
<b>Ability</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Attitude</b>
<p><b>Being able to conduct research and apply research knowledge in order to improve mental health nursing practice.</b></p> <p><b>The nurse should be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● critically appraise research articles in nursing and health care.</li> <li>● participate in or conduct a nursing research.</li> <li>● disseminate study findings to mental health professionals and public.</li> <li>● apply evidence based practice to mental health nursing.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A. Basic Knowledge in Nursing Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● the research process</li> <li>● qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis</li> <li>● research needs in mental health care</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Appraising, Disseminating and Utilising Research Findings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● knowledge and skills of research critique</li> <li>● strategies in utilisation and dissemination of research findings for mental health care practice</li> <li>● evidence-based nursing practice</li> </ul>	<p><b>Research Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● literature search and critical review, and identify research topics</li> <li>● data collection, analysis and interpretation</li> <li>● reporting, presenting and documenting the results</li> <li>● applying the findings/evidence to practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● sensitive and objective in research process, reporting and applying research findings</li> <li>● enthusiastic and active in enhancing evidence-based nursing practice</li> <li>● proactive in identifying research needs</li> <li>● enthusiastic in exploring research evidence related to mental health nursing practice</li> </ul>

<b>Competency 5: Personal and Professional Development</b>			
<b>Ability</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Attitude</b>
<p><b>Being able to be a role model in health promotion and professional development.</b></p> <p><b>The nurse should be able to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● maintain and promote health of self, particularly mental health and emotional well-being.</li> <li>● continue mental health nursing education to practice.</li> <li>● work with colleagues to maintain professional standard and develop the nursing profession.</li> <li>● maintain and promote professional image of mental health nursing.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A. Individual Mental Health and Well-being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● positive self concept</li> <li>● harmonious relationship with people and environment</li> <li>● coping with stress and adaptation to change</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Professional Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● professional organisations and opportunities for professional development</li> <li>● basic and advanced mental health nursing education</li> <li>● recognition of and global view on mental health nursing development</li> </ul> <p><b>C. Maintaining Nursing as a Profession</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● strategies in maintaining and development of the nursing profession</li> </ul>	<p><b>A. Personal Health Promotion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● healthy lifestyles and health promotion practices</li> <li>● adaptation and management of changes</li> <li>● coping of stress</li> <li>● positive self concept and development</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Public Speaking and Presentation Skills</b></p> <p><b>C. Participate in professional activities and mentorship programmes</b></p> <p><b>D. Continuing development in Contemporary Mental Health Nursing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● enthusiastic and positive towards life, human being, society and health</li> <li>● committed in continuous life-long learning</li> <li>● committed in continuing education and updating of issues about mental health</li> <li>● supportive and committed to professional organisations and professional nursing development</li> <li>● enthusiastic in acting as mentor of learners and preceptor of junior colleagues</li> </ul>

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