

The Nursing Council of Hong Kong

Core-Competencies for Registered Nurses (General)



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I. Preamble

The role of the nurse is evolving as the mode of delivery of health care services has undergone major changes both locally and internationally in the past decades. In line with international trends, we are developing a health care system that provides lifelong holistic care, promotes health, enhances the quality of life and enables human development. The availability of qualified and competent health care professionals is the key to the delivery of quality health care services. As nurses play a pivotal role in the promotion, maintenance and restoration of health, we need to develop competent nurses who are able to take up extended and expended roles in the delivery of primary, secondary and tertiary care.

Thus, apart from the roles of a caregiver, the nurse needs to develop competencies to take up the roles of a health promoter, educator, counselor, care coordinator, case manager, researcher as well as that of a client advocate. Hence, education programmes for preparing nurses must ensure that the students acquired the essential competencies that enable them to fulfill these roles competently and ethically.

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

1. To state the philosophy of nursing based on which the nursing practice is developed in Hong Kong;
2. To provide an overview of the professional roles of nurses in Hong Kong and the competencies required in fulfilling these roles;
3. To delineate a scope of core-competency areas to guide curriculum development of education programmes that prepare Registered Nurses (General) [RNs(G)] who are capable of delivering safe, effective and ethical care;
4. To inform the public and employers of what they may expect from RNs(G) on entry to practice; and
5. To inform experienced nurses moving to new settings or roles to refresh these established nursing competencies.

The nursing competencies contained in this document have gone through vast consultation with the nursing professionals in major health care organizations (including the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority), nursing education institutes and professional bodies for nursing education. They have then been fine-tuned and tabulated for the ease of reference.

An RN(G) is expected to possess the competencies commensurate with experience, and is accountable for practising nursing according to the code of professional conduct, the scope of professional practice as well as the legal and ethical requirements defined by the NCHK under the current regulation of the Nurses Registration Ordinance Chapter 164.

As the health care delivery system is undergoing continuous changes, the competency areas required of an RN(G) are subject to constant review. Nevertheless, the NCHK is vigilant in observing the contemporary needs for quality nursing service and proactive in revising the document when it is due.

II. PHILOSOPHY OF NURSING

This stated philosophy of nursing summarizes our beliefs in the nature and practice of professional nursing, as well as our views on the person, the environment and health. It provides a basis for the revision of the nursing syllabus that guides the development of education programmes for RN (G).

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.

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 healthy environment is crucial to the maintenance and promotion of health.

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.

III. SCOPE OF CORE-COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF A REGISTERED NURSE (GENERAL)

Glossary

1. Registered Nurse (General) [RN(G)]
A nurse who has graduated from a basic general nursing programme and has registered with the Nursing Council of Hong Kong.
2. Competence
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(G) is expected to possess at entry to practice as an outcome of their nursing education in order to provide the public with safe, effective and ethical care.
4. The Client
The focus of the nurse's care with whom the nurse is engaged in a professional helping relationship through which the client is empowered to achieve mutually defined health goals in the process of illness prevention, health promotion and health restoration.

The Scope of Core-Competencies Required of A RN(G)

The scope of core-competencies required of a RN (G) comprises 5 competence areas:

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| Competence area 1: | Professional, Legal and Ethical Nursing Practice |
| Competence area 2: | Health Promotion and Health Education |
| Competence area 3: | Management and Leadership |
| Competence area 4: | Research |
| Competence area 5: | Personal Effectiveness and Professional Development |

Please refer to the following table for details.

SCOPE OF CORE-COMPETENCIES OF REGISTERED NURSE

Roles		Competence area 1 : Professional, Legal and Ethical Nursing Practice			
		Ability	Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
1.	Carer	<p>Proficiency in applying nursing theories, evidence- based nursing knowledge, problem solving skills and therapeutic techniques to perform professional nursing duties safely, legally, ethically and effectively.</p> <p>The nurse must be able to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● think analytically, critically and reflectively. ● integrate professional knowledge into practice including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – assessing the health needs of the individual, groups and community using a bio-psycho-social-spiritual framework; – managing physical, mental, psychosocial and/or spiritual ill health via working with the client to develop a care plan and contribute to its implementation and evaluation; – enabling the client to achieve self-determined health goals and maximum independence, or a peaceful death; – performing nursing techniques proficiently; – maintaining accurate documentation; – using appropriate channels of referral; and – working effectively with other health care team members. ● maintain confidentiality and respect the client's right to privacy. ● acknowledge the client's rights to dignity, autonomy and access to information. ● recognize limits of own abilities and qualifications in accepting delegations ● respond appropriately to instances of unsafe practice to safeguard the client's health. ● maintain an environment conducive to health including infection control. 	<p>A. General, Behavioural and Life Sciences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● biological, chemical, ecological, social and behavioural sciences relevant to nursing <p>B. Professional Nursing Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the nursing profession ● concepts and theories of nursing and caring ● evidence-based nursing knowledge ● principles and practice of nursing ● modern Chinese medicine nursing and alternative medicine <p>C. Legal and Ethical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● legal aspects pertinent to nursing practice ● professional conduct principles and nursing ethics ● principles of safe practice ● contemporary ethical issues <p>D. Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● theories of communication and counselling, ● interpersonal relationship and team work <p>E. Rights of the Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● human rights ● clients' rights ● rights for privacy <p>F. Information Technology in Nursing and Health Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● basic understanding of information technology (IT) ● application of IT in nursing and health care 	<p>A. Cognitive Skills :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● critical thinking ● decision making ● problem solving ● planning ● organizing ● reflective thinking ● assertiveness ● self-directed learning <p>B. Psycho-motor Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● health assessment ● clinical nursing and therapeutic techniques <p>C. Psychosocial Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● communication ● interpersonal skills ● team work ● counselling <p>D. Skills in Information Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● electronic communication ● data processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● respect for life, dignity and rights of the individual ● respect individual differences in beliefs, values and cultural practices ● accept responsibility for own actions and be accountable for the care provided ● caring ● supporting ● enabling/empowering ● continuous/life-long learning
2.	<p>Service Provider at 3 levels of health care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● primary ● secondary ● tertiary 				

SCOPE OF CORE-COMPETENCIES OF REGISTERED NURSE (Continued)

Roles	Competence area 2: Health Promotion and Health Education			
	Ability	Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
3. Educator	<p>Ability to work in partnership with other health care providers, clients, families and the community in preventing illness, promoting and protecting the health of the individual and society.</p> <p>The nurse must be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● recognize the factors affecting health and the appropriate actions to take for the promotion of health. ● identify health related learning needs of clients. ● use educational principles and counseling techniques appropriately and effectively. ● communicate health information and coordinate health education/promotion activities effectively. ● seek, scrutinize and utilize information from a variety of reliable sources for planning and improving health promotion and health education activities. ● intervene appropriately to safe guard the interests and well-being of the client. 	<p>A. Education Theories and Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● teaching and learning 	<p>A. Education Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● modeling ● facilitating ● teaching ● the use of teaching aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● proactive in identifying the clients' health learning needs and positive in meeting these needs ● concerned about contemporary issues affecting the individual and the community ● active in participating in activities for health education and health promotion at local, national and ecological levels ● committed to protecting the health of the individual and society
4. Counselor		<p>B. Concepts of Health; Health Education and Health Promotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● concepts of health and health care delivery system 	<p>B. Problem Solving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● community health assessment ● educational needs assessment 	
5. Health Promotor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● personal, environmental and community/public health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● problem identification, planning, implementing and evaluating health education activities for individuals, groups and community 	
6. Care Co-ordinator		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● theories and practice of health education and health promotion for the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – individual – group – community ● Contemporary issues in health education and health promotion 	<p>C. Communication skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● interviewing and counseling 	
7. Client Advocate		<p>C. Communication Theories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● theories of interviewing and counseling 	<p>D. Skills of an Advocate</p>	
		<p>D. Rights of the Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● human rights ● clients' rights ● rights for privacy 		

SCOPE OF CORE-COMPETENCIES OF REGISTERED NURSE (Continued)

Roles	Competence area 3: Management and Leadership			
	Ability	Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
<p>8. Manager</p> <p>9. Supervisor</p> <p>10. Change Agent</p> <p>11. Leader</p> <p>12. Public Health Advocate</p>	<p>A. Possession of effective managerial and leadership skills in the provision of quality nursing care</p> <p>B. Ability to initiate and implement change conducive to the improvement of health care provision</p> <p>C. Ability to contribute to health care policy formulation when working in partnership with other health care team members and community sectors</p> <p>D. Ability to assess and manage risk including occupational safety and health of clients and colleagues</p> <p>E. Ability to assess and manage crises</p>	<p>A. Management Theories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● management of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the health care setting – human resources – financial resources – crises – time – change – risk <p>B. Leadership Theories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● nursing leadership ● leadership in health care <p>C. Health Care Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● health care system and trends ● contemporary health issues ● environmental, socio-cultural, socio-economic issues in health ● the making of health care policies <p>D. Politics in Nursing</p>	<p>A. Managerial Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● dealing with colleagues, clients, health care professionals and members of the public ● delegation ● supervision ● planning, organizing, monitoring, controlling and evaluating <p>B. Leadership Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● leading/influencing ● motivating ● problem solving ● team building <p>C. Political Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● advocating ● lobbying ● negotiating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● positive ● proactive ● assertive ● accommodating ● fair ● open ● objective ● cooperative ● supportive

SCOPE OF CORE-COMPETENCIES OF REGISTERED NURSE (Continued)

Roles	Competence area 4: Research			
	Ability	Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
13. Researcher	<p>A. Ability to apply the knowledge and skills in nursing research in different health care settings and in the community</p> <p>B. Ability to collect, analyse, interpret and use research data to improve nursing and health care practices</p>	<p>A. Basic Knowledge in Conducting Research in Health Care Settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the research process ● use of computer software in data analysis <p>B. Appraising and Utilizing Research Findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge of a research critique ● strategies in utilization of research findings in evidence-based practice 	<p>Research Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● identify relevant research areas ● data collection, analysis and interpretation ● reporting, presenting and publishing results ● implementing evidence-based practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● objective ● realistic ● keen ● proactive ● positive ● persistent
Competence area 5: Personal Effectiveness and Professional Development				
14. Nurse professional	<p>A. Ability to maintain own physical, mental and emotional well-being</p> <p>B. Ability to develop and maintain nursing as a profession and maintain one's status as a professional registered nurse</p>	<p>A. Personal Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge of self, environment, stress coping and adaptation to change. <p>B. Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● knowledge of professional organizations and advanced learning opportunities <p>C. Establishing and Maintaining Nursing as a Profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● strategies in achieving professionalism 	<p>A. Personal Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● healthy life styles and health promotion practices ● change adaptation and management skills ● stress management skills <p>B. Public Speaking and Presentation Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● enthusiastic and positive towards life, human being, society and health ● life-long commitment to continuous learning ● supportive to professional organizations in functions conducive to professional development

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