

**FRAMEWORK  
FOR  
PROFESSIONAL  
STANDARDS**

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## Introduction

This document describes the framework that the Nursing Council will use to set standards and guidelines for the profession. As the statutory authority under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003), the Nursing Council of New Zealand governs the practice of nurses. The Council sets and monitors standards in the interests of the public and the profession. The Council's primary concern is public safety.

### Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003)

The principal purpose of the Health Practitioner Competence Assurance Act (2003) is "to protect the health and safety of members of the public by providing mechanisms to ensure that health practitioners are competent and fit to practise their professions" (section 3). Section 118 of the Act sets out the functions of authorities. These include:

- (i) Prescribing the qualifications required for scopes of practice and accrediting educational institutions and programmes
- (ii) Authorising the registration of health practitioners
- (iii) Reviewing and maintaining the competence of health practitioners
- (iv) Setting standards of clinical competence, cultural competence and ethical conduct to be observed by health practitioners of the profession
- (v) Setting programmes to ensure the ongoing competence of health practitioners
- (vi) To promote public awareness of the responsibilities of the authority.

**The Council's role in setting standards will reflect its key functions as a registration authority.**

The Council has already developed a number of standards that will be incorporated into this framework.

Nursing professionals must also practise in accordance with relevant legislation including the Health and Disability Commissioners' (HDC) Code of Consumer Rights and the Health Sector Safety Standards.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) guidelines define a standard as "the desirable and achievable level of performance against which actual practice is compared." (ICN, 1989, p24). Performance criteria are specific measurable statements reflecting the intent of the standard

The Council will set standards for the profession in the following three areas:

- Scope of practice
- Continuing competence
- Conduct as a professional.

The Council will set standards that inform the public and nurses of minimum requirements and it will set standards that enable it to carry out its functions e.g. approve education programmes. It will also develop guidelines on related areas or particular standards or competencies where nurses need more guidance or explanation.

FRAMEWORK FOR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Area of regulation	Standards	Guidelines	Examples of Standards/guidelines/position statements to be developed
<p><b>Scope of practice</b></p>	<p>Education programmes                      Undergraduate                      Postgraduate                      Nurse Assistant                      Competence Assessment                      Nurse entry to practice                      Competencies for scope                      Registered nurse                      Nurse Assistant and enrolled nurse                      Nurse Practitioner                      Authorisations (ECP, x-ray)</p>	<p>Guidelines for cultural safety                      Direction and supervision                      Telenursing</p>	<p><i>Documentation</i>  <i>Medications</i>  <i>Working with unregulated caregivers</i>  <i>Guidelines for prescribers</i>  <i>Guidelines for extending practice</i>  <i>Complementary therapies</i></p>
<p><b>Continuing competence/fitness to practise</b></p>	<p>Requirements for continuing competence                      Approval of PDRPS</p>		<p><i>Guidance for Nurses and Midwives with Serious Contagious / Infectious Diseases</i></p>
<p><b>Professional Conduct</b></p>	<p>Code of conduct</p>		<p><i>Code of ethics</i>  <i>Professional Boundaries (with ANMC)</i>  <i>Nurse client relationship</i></p>

The development of standards and guidelines will be for the following reasons:

- To meet the Council's primary objective of protecting the health and safety of the public,
- To define a reasonable standard of care,
- To assist nurses to work safely with unregulated health care workers,
- To assist nurses to maintain competence,
- To assist nurses to safely extend practice,
- To advise nurses on appropriate conduct and ethics.

Prioritisation of the development of standards and guidelines will be based on an assessment of the following:

- Do changes to legislation or regulations require changes to standards or new standards?
- Are the issues of concern to consumers (identified through complaints and notifications)?
- Are the issues of concern to nurses (identified through calls for advice and professional organisations)?
- What are the level of potential risk to consumers and the frequency of that risk?
- Are there already appropriate standards/guidelines within the health sector?

The Council sets **standards** which are the expected minimum standard of practice or performance such as the *Code of conduct* or the *Competencies for the Registered Nurse scope of practice*. The Council also develops **guidelines** designed to give advice or to guide the practitioner. The Council also provides **information sheets** for nurses, the public and employers on its functions and processes e.g. the competence process. The Council may develop **position statements** on issues within the health sector that effect nursing practice.

The Council will develop standards and guidelines in consultation with the profession. The Council may ask experts to assist and/or advise on the development of standards and guidelines. The Council may endorse and adopt standards or guidelines developed by professional organisations or other health sector organisations if they relate to scope of practice, continuing competence or conduct as a professional. The Council may develop standards with other New Zealand authorities or Australian nursing authorities if appropriate.

Nursing Council is supportive of groups within the profession developing standards that will protect the public and improve standards of care. Practice standards and accreditation processes developed by specialty groups may be approved by Council as recertification programmes using the *Framework for the approval of professional development and recognition programmes to meet the continuing competence requirements for nurses (March 2005)*.

### **Criteria for Nursing Council Standards and Guidelines**

1. The purpose of the standard or guideline is consistent with this framework.
2. The standard or guideline provides adequate guidance to the practitioner.
3. The standard or guideline identifies important legislation and other relevant health sector standards or guidelines.
4. The standard or guideline has an internal consistency and is not open to misinterpretation.
5. The standards are reviewed three to five yearly.

## References

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