

FAQs enrolled nurse standards of competence

The Nursing Council has new enrolled nurse standards of competence (previously called competencies) to underpin and guide the way in which nurses practise. These standards of competence have been developed by the Council, along with the nursing profession, to ensure public safety is maintained in increasingly complex healthcare settings.

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Why were changes made?

The Nursing Council, under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act), is required to determine standards of competence. The Council regularly reviews the standards to ensure nurses on the register are equipped to meet the challenges of today's complex healthcare environment. The standards were last reviewed in 2012.

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Who made the changes?

The Council is responsible for the changes. Development of the standards of competence was supported by design and reference groups comprised of nurses, educators and employers. The results of widespread consultation with the sector also made a significant contribution to the development.

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When will the changes come into effect?

1 April 2025 for all **new** annual practising certificates and recertification audit requirements.

1 January 2026 for all other purposes. This includes changes to Professional Development and Recognition Programmes (PDRP).

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What are the changes to structure?

Within the standards of competence are five **pou** (previously called domains). The pou are pillars of nursing competence and powerful symbols of strength, support and stability.

Descriptors (previously called indicators) provide depth to each pou and guide quality practice in all settings.

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What is the impact on my practice?

The changes emphasise a greater focus on Māori health, culturally safe care, knowledge-informed practice, professional accountability and partnership.

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Te Tiriti o Waitangi in practice

The Council recognises the importance of nursing practice that honours Māori and culturally safe care that promotes equitable health outcomes. The standards of competence incorporate the articles and principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

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What are the changes to the standards of competence?

The five pou below describe the standards expected to practise safely.

- A focus on **Māori health** where enrolled nurses must support, respect and protect Māori rights while advocating for equitable and positive health outcomes.
- **Cultural safety** requires enrolled nurses to understand their own cultural identity and its impact on professional practice, including the power imbalance between the nurse and the person receiving care, to provide culturally safe care that is inclusive, responsive and equitable.
- **Whanaungatanga, partnership and communication** requires enrolled nurses to work in partnership, using a range of communication techniques, to work effectively and collaboratively in all healthcare settings.
- A commitment to **pūkengatanga and knowledge-informed practice** requires enrolled nurses to use clinical knowledge and expertise to undertake a nursing assessment and inform clinical decision-making to provide safe nursing care.
- **Mana hautū, professional accountability and responsibility** requires enrolled nurses to provide care within professional, ethical and legal boundaries, and ensure dignity and respect are upheld.



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What is kawa whakaruruhau?

Kawa whakaruruhau (cultural safety in Māori context) in nursing is the practice of delivering care that respects and upholds the cultural identity, values and rights of Māori, ensuring their mana and cultural beliefs are protected. It emphasises equitable, patient-centred care that empowers Māori and their whānau to make health decisions that align with their cultural practice, addressing power imbalances in health care.

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What is whakapapa-centred care?

Whakapapa-centred care is collaborative health care focused on meeting the needs, values and desired outcomes of individuals, whānau and future generations. It acknowledges the longer-term generational impacts of nursing care.

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How has direction and delegation of enrolled nurses by registered nurses changed?

- Enrolled nurses must work with access to, and seek when appropriate, guidance from a registered nurse or other registered health practitioner.
- Registered nurses provide support and guidance to enrolled nurses.
- Registered nurses are still responsible and accountable for directing and delegating to members of the healthcare team.
- Enrolled nurses are responsible and accountable for their practice, based on their education, assessed competence, and experience.
- Good communication between enrolled nurses and registered nurses, teamwork and working effectively together are key for safe care.



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What does support and guidance mean in practice?

- Enrolled nurses will work with patients and their whānau to initiate and monitor care, providing ongoing assessment and care planning, all while documenting the outcomes, and seeking guidance as necessary.
- Enrolled nurses can work in a variety of clinical settings and will lead care with support and guidance from a registered nurse.
- If a patient's condition changes, enrolled nurses will need to recognise the change and are required to escalate findings as appropriate.
- Enrolled nurses can offer a wider range of nursing care as defined by their education, assessed competence, and experience.
- An enrolled nurse's practice, which is informed by their level of education, assessed competence and practice experience, may include a leadership or coordination role within the healthcare team.

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Do I need to undertake any additional education to meet the new standards of competence?

It may take some time to familiarise yourself with the new standards. Some aspects of the standards may require you to undertake additional education such as Māori health, cultural safety and clinical reasoning.

You may need to familiarise yourself with the kupu Māori used in the document. The Council has provided a glossary of terms to support your knowledge and will provide further guidance. We also encourage you to discuss your educational needs with your employer who will be able to offer support.

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Will I be assessed differently to meet the new standards of competence?

Yes, the new standards of competence will mean that you will be assessed against these standards. Your ability to demonstrate you meet these standards will be essential as part of PDRP and the Council's recertification audit.

