



RCN Professional Development Framework - Levels of Nursing

Advanced Level Nursing

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Introduction

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has worked with our members, including RCN Forums and Fellows, to define the levels of nursing beyond the point of registration: enhanced, advanced and consultant level nursing.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) sets the standards of proficiency for the registered nurse (NMC, 2018). These standards represent the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that all nurses must have.

The NMC also sets the standards framework for nursing (and midwifery) education, to ensure that the standards of proficiency are met in practice (NMC, 2024).

Beyond the point of registration, the levels at which nurses work are evolving within all settings, including primary, secondary, and tertiary care, the independent sector and social care.

The RCN has developed definitions and standards for the enhanced, advanced and consultant levels of nursing to provide clarity for those aspiring to practice at these levels, as well as for employers and higher education institutions (HEIs).

Whilst consultant and advanced clinical practitioners have been recognised within nursing, previously they have not been defined c.3 (o)-12.7 (v)--11128.7 (i)-3.7 aecoter3-12

* **Experienced** - This term is used here to emphasise the fact that a registered nurse cannot progress to an advanced level as described in this definition and core standards, based purely on knowledge and skills acquired through education. Similarly meaningful learning from experience does not take place automatically according to the time served as a registered nurse (Rolfe et al., 2001). Rather, development of the expected level of expertise will require experiential learning describing an engaged learning process whereby people "learn by doing" combined with **critical reflection** incorporating testing,

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Further information on Credentialing please access the following link:
rcn.org.uk/Credentialing

There are also country specific arrangements:

ENGLAND: NHS England, Centre for Advancing Practice currently provide an ePortfolio (supported) Route. This was specifically designed to enable recognition with the Centre of existing, experienced advanced practitioners, who

Core standards for advanced level nursing

The knowledge base and skills for this level of nursing is influenced by the context in which individuals practice but all advanced level registered nurses will demonstrate the capability to:

- x take full responsibility for and optimise their freedom to act, with commitment to, and evidence of, operating at the highest standards across all four pillars of advanced level nursing.
- x apply a systematic, authoritative, and tacit**** understanding of current knowledge, advanced skills, and related issues in their field and at the interface of other fields. This includes current and emerging technology. They will proactively develop new skills and approaches in response to emerging knowledge and techniques.
- x create an evidence-based judgement about a particular issue by integrating knowledge from new or existing sources, including those from other disciplines, and in situations with incomplete, contradictory, or limited information. This utilises their ability to interpret, analyse, evaluate, synthesise, and infer.
- x demonstrate a holistic grasp of complex situations, perceiving the overall picture and alternative approaches, with a vision of what may be possible.
- x communicate complex issues clearly and effectively to a wide range of stakeholders, selecting and applying a range of methods and approaches.
- x demonstrate vigilance by systematically monitoring, assessing, proactively challenging situations, actions and behaviours and acting to maintain safety and minimise risk.
- x work in a collaborative, compassionate way, promoting equality, respecting diversity

All advanced level nurses will demonstrate the full range of capabilities listed under the following four pillars.

Clinical pillar

- x Act as an expert nursing resource in their area of professional practice, including utilisation of clinical expertise.
- x Role model high levels of nursing professionalism to people in the organisation and wider networks.
- x Systematically apply an in-depth understanding of health and care policy, systems and structures, implications of changing population needs and the political, social, economic, legal, technical, and prred 1y1(in)14H-f polin onoks.e w v t

Education pillar

- x Demonstrate critical self-

- x Use a range of strategies and techniques for knowledge mobilisation and dissemination of research findings.
- x Contribute to and undertake activities, including research, that monitor and improve the quality of services provided by an organisation, taking immediate action when standards are not met.
- x Propose and enact evidence-based changes to practices or procedures which impact beyond own work area.
- x Source advice on research governance processes to ensure compliance.

Leadership pillar

- x Demonstrate individual leadership via self-awareness, dynamism, self-motivation and adaptivity in own leadership style to optimise results.
- x Display self-leadership by prioritising own workload and actions at times of competing demands.
- x Make challenging decisions, taking responsibility for outcomes in unpredictably complex contexts.
- x Demonstrate tactical leadership by working collaboratively with a broad range of people within and across an organisation and of external stakeholders and agencies.
- x Apply advanced interpersonal, team and networking skills to enhance team performance.
- x Use a range of negotiating and influencing skills to develop and improve on current ways of working and optimise outcomes and support a culture of safety.
- x Demonstrate operational leadership including leading individuals, teams and/or different groups, they may or may not manage.
- x Translate strategic decisions into operational practice.
- x Systematically synthesise advanced and specialist information and ideas and formulate and develop innovative proposals to address strategic issues or opportunities in unpredictably complex contexts.
- x Demonstrate leadership and innovation in work contexts that are challenging, unfamiliar, complex, and unpredictable and that require solving problems involving many interacting factors.
- x Participate in local and regional networks and respond to local, regional and national developments.
- x Develop robust governance systems by contributing to the development and implementation of evidence-based policies, processes, and standards.
- x Ensure that national, and where applicable international standards, are applied as a minimum.
- x Formulate plans and manage projects that translate strategy into action and evaluate change, outcomes, and impact.
- x Work across professional, service, organisational, agency and system boundaries.
- x Use financial acumen in developing appropriate strategies that enhance quality, productivity, and value.
- x Proactively facilitate development of leadership skills in others within and across the organisation.

- x Demonstrate strategic leadership by supporting the creation and development of environments, systems, and cultures in current approaches are continuously reviewed and improved.
- x Deploy strategic competence by having the skill to decide when or when not to act.
- x Horizon scan for opportunities across disciplines and organisations, seize and facilitate the creation of momentum to optimise effective and sustainable change.
- x Lead innovation and service development utilising evidence-based approaches for quality improvement.
- x Develop and sustain productive relationships and partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders, locally and regionally, to influence the strategic direction of organisational provision and outcomes for the benefit of people and/or populations.

Additional capabilities to those in the four pillars

To optimise public protection, registered nurses who primarily provide direct-patient care at an advanced level **must** also be able to demonstrate they have the capability to:

- x manage a whole episode of care and/or caseload, relating to new or existing health problems. The episode may be over the immediate, short, or longer term, depending on the area of practice/setting and the nurses' knowledge, skills, and scope of practice.
- x apply underpinning nursing and in-depth area-specific knowledge, skills, and behaviours to provide safe, effective assessment and care, including adsaf-1.7 ((a)-1)

APPENDIX I: Definitions related to advanced level nursing used to inform this work.

Pertinent documents were reviewed with key aspects of current publications summarised here.

It was noted that the RCN's previous definition and standards for advanced level nursing practice were created in 2018 and were presented within the following documents:

- x RCN Standards for Advanced Level Nursing Practice
- x Section 1: The

Clinical practice and scope of role

- x Work autonomously, using a person-centred approach within the expanded scope of practice.
- x Undertake comprehensive health assessment with differential diagnosis and will diagnose.
- x Prescribe care and treatment, or appropriately refer and/or discharge patients/clients.
- x Provide complex care, using expert decision-making skills.
- x Act as an educator, leader, innovator and contributor to research.

The advanced nurse practitioner will undertake comprehensive health assessments and will manage a range of illnesses and conditions that frequently present in the care settings within which the individual works. They will:

- x practise autonomously within an expanded scope of practice.
- x demonstrate a person-centred approach to care delivery.
- x develop and sustain partnerships and networks to influence and improve health care outcomes and health care delivery.
- x educate, supervise or mentor nursing colleagues and others in the health care team.
- x contribute to and undertake activities, including research, that monitor and improve the quality of health care and the effectiveness of practice.

It must be noted that only those who meet the requirements of the role and who are employed as advanced nurse practitioners, will be able to use the title.

A review by the Department of Health Northern Ireland (2023) [doh-nipec-anp.pdf](https://www.doh-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/doh-nipec-anp.pdf) ([health-ni.gov.uk](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk)) has recommended that the contents of the Advanced Nursing Practice Framework should be refreshed, broadening the scope to include the wider integrated health and care system and aligned to relevant education and regulation standards and requirements. h

CNOD Scottish Government (2017) *T(e)-24 (t)1(r)32 g382b2107g4a34240.594 t-1-11.72oon1*

practice, additional education, and a master's degree or beyond. However, the core of the APN remains based within the context of nursing and nursing principles. (Adapted from ICN, 2008.)

The ICN (2020) publication refers to integrated role domains, alongside clinical practice role of:

- x professional development
- x organisational leadership
- x research
- x education.

This definition has also been adopted by the European Federation of Nursing Association's advanced practice nursing working group, the RCN chairs this group.

Multi-professional definitions

Skills for Health (2010) *Career Framework (Version 2)*

https://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Career_framework_key_elements-1.pdf

People at Level 7 of the career framework have a critical awareness of knowledge issues in the field and at the interface of other fields. They are innovative and have responsibility for development and changing practice and/or services in a complex and unpredictable environment.

Health Education England (2017) *Multi-professional Framework for Advanced Clinical Practice in England*

<https://advanced-practice.hee.nhs.uk/multi-professional-framework-for-advanced-clinical-practice-in-england/>

Advanced clinical practice is delivered by experienced, registered health and care practitioners. It is a level of practice characterised by a high degree of autonomy and complex decision making. This is underpinned by a master's level award or equivalent that encompasses the four pillars of clinical practice, leadership and management, education, and r 0 Td(a)9.6 (/)-1-14.6 (s)0.6 (d)-17 (i)-1244 (u)-4.7 (ca

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International Council of Nurses (2020) **Guidelines on Advanced Practice Nursing**. Available at: https://www.icn.ch/system/files/documents/2020-04/ICN_APN%20Report_EN_WEB.pdf-

Ofqual (2023)

Skills for Health (2020) NHS Career Framework (Version 2) Available at:
skillsforhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Career_framework_key_elements-1.pdf

The main definition of nursing can be found at: rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/Definition-and-Principles-of-Nursing

Enhanced Level of Nursing definition: rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/RCN-Levels-of-Practice/Consultant

Consultant Level of Nursing definition: rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/RCN-Levels-of-Practice/Enhanced

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