National competency standards for the registered nurse: a critical evaluation of their use in practice

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National competency standards for the registered nurse

“The national competency standards for the registered nurse are the core competency standards by which your performance is assessed to obtain and retain your registration as a registered nurse in Australia.”

“These core competency standards provide you with the framework for assessing your competence, and are used by the national board to assess competence as part of the annual renewal of registration”

(NMBA 2006)
Domains

4 domains and 10 competency statements

• Professional practice
• Critical thinking and analysis
• Provision and coordination of care
• Collaborative and therapeutic relationships
National competency standards for the registered nurse

What do they mean to you?
How do you use them?
Do you benchmark your practice against the standards?
What are the barriers to their use?
Intention

• Public document that communicates to consumers the standards they can expect from nurses (NMBA 2006)

• Assessing
  • eligibility for registration as a practitioner
  • the competence of overseas-trained professionals.
  • the competence of people re-entering the profession after a lengthy absence
  • employee performance

• Education
  • accrediting educational programs
  • developing curricular in university and competency-based assessment procedures
  • developing continuing education programs
    (NOOSR, 1995)
Annual declaration of competence

• Every year registered nurses in Australia make a declaration that they will meet all the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the NMBA.

• How do you know that you meet these codes standards and guidelines?
The language of competence

The NMBA are cognisant of the discourse about competence, competency, competency standards and assessment of competence. The NMBA believe that there is confusion around these terms especially in relation to ‘competency based assessment’ in the vocational sector and the positivist view, that assessment of competence is the assessment procedures and tasks. Therefore there is a planned shift from ‘competency standards’ to ‘standards of practice’.

(NMBA, 2014)
Assessing competence

“Framework for assessing standards for practice for registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives”

Framework for assessment

The NMBA recognises that the nature of professional nursing is multifaceted and requires comprehensive knowledge and the attempt to assess competence in a single and narrowly prescribed procedural model fails to recognise this.

Therefore, the essential elements in using the standards to assess competence include the importance of context and assessment in the practice setting; the collection of evidence/data from a variety of sources including self-assessment, observation, interviews with peers and persons receiving care and any relevant documentation and the professional judgement of the assessor.

(NMBA, 2015)
Self assessment

Becoming a self-regulated life-long learner requires the nurse to make judgements about their own performance.
Building capacity for self assessment

• Self assessment is necessary for life-long learning because all learners must “develop the ability to be realistic judges of their own performance and to effectively monitor their own learning” (Boud, 1997, p.13).

• Registered nurses must continue to learn throughout their careers and those who depend on others for feedback will ultimately be handicapped in their learning (Boud, 1997).

• Reflection and self assessment are built into the UNDA Bachelor of Nursing Professional Workplace Experience with all students from 1st to 3rd year engaging in self assessment and benchmarking using the standards.
Building capacity for self assessment

The activities and the scaffolding in the professional workplace experience books are designed to assist the student in developing habits and the ability to self assess and make judgments about their performance using the standards. Underpinning self assessment is the process of reflection; reflecting on action, learning from practice, processing experiences and exploring understanding.

(Levett-Jones & Borgeois, 2011)
Integration of self assessment into performance appraisal

Combining the judgement of self and others


