

Nurses Scope of Practice

A nurse's scope of practice is determined by their registration (Registered nurse or enrolled nurse), endorsement (eg Nurse practitioner), educational background, previous nursing experience and clinical specialisation

There are 2 elements to consider when thinking about scope of practice – there is scope of professional practice and scope of the individual's practice which fits within this.

1. **Professional Practice:** The scope of the [professional practice](#) is set by legislation — and includes core registration standards and Professional Codes and Guidelines (Policies, Professional standards, Guidelines and Frameworks) it may therefore be broader than that of any individual within the profession.
2. **Individual Practice:** To practice within the full scope of practice of the profession may require individuals to update or increase their own knowledge, skills or competence. The scope of practice of an individual Nurse may therefore be described as that which the individual is:
 - Educated
 - Authorised and
 - Competent and confident to perform.

So the scope of practice of an individual nurse or midwife can be more specifically defined than the scope of practice of their profession. To practice within the full scope of practice of the profession may require individuals to update or increase their knowledge, skills or competence

The scope of an individual's practice is **influenced** by the:

- context in which they practise
- consumers' health needs
- level of competence, education, qualifications and
- experience of the individual
- service provider's policy, quality and risk management
- Framework and organisational culture.

This means that what we do in our day to day work must 'fit' within our own individual level of education, our competence, within the context of where we are practicing, and within the legal and professional framework.

In other words, your own scope of practice may vary considerably from that of another nurse colleague working in your practice, or in the practice down the road.

This is where it is vitally important to understand how you might ascertain what steps are needed to be taken to establish your capabilities and competence, and assess whether there is opportunity for you to expand your practice and undertake a new role or perform a new task.

We recommend that you also consider the following when considering expanding or optimizing your scope of practice.

- Determine if this role is appropriate for you to perform this role / task and if it is within the parameters of safety and quality in health care.
- Establish what relevant training or education you will require – ensuring it is evidence based and fits with contemporary care.
- Determine how you will ensure you are continuing to perform this role / task safely
- Determine how you might become confident and competent in the area
- Speak with your professional Indemnity Insurer and ascertain whether your cover will include cover for the new provision of service
- How will you ensure continuity and recency of practice in this area?
- Ensure there is a policy and procedure in place in your practice which supports the procedure including skill review annually

Resources and tools to assist with scope of practice and defining competence

Tools to assist Nurses determining their scope of practice

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery board have developed a set of tools and principles to assist all nurses in the process of making decisions about whether specific tasks are within their individual scope of practice. They developed an overarching document in which the two decision making framework tools sit. There is a longer version flow chart and a summary version flow chart for nurses to use, when deciding if a task is in or out of scope for them.

- All documents can be [found here](#)

National framework for the decision-making tools

- Title: *National framework for the development of decision-making tools for nursing and midwifery practice - September 2007 - rebranded**

Long and Summary decision making charts:

- Title of long flow chart: *DMF A3 nursing flowchart - 2013 - rebranded**
- Title of summary guide: *DMF A4 nursing summary guide - 2010 - rebranded**

Other resources and tools to consider:

- APNA's online learning course (free to members) titled: [Scope of Practice](#)
- [Practice Standards for Nurses working in General Practice](#)
- [National Toolkit for Nurses in General Practice](#)

Defining Competence – as per the Nursing and Midwifery Board Australia

The document called: National framework for the development of decision-making tools for nursing and midwifery practice - September 2007 - rebranded* can be [found here](#) defines competence and assessing competence as:

Competence/competent

Competence is the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and abilities that underpin effective performance in a profession. It encompasses confidence and capability.

Competence assessment

Assessment of an individual's competence may occur through structured educational programs or a peer review process.

Evidence of a person's competence may include:

- Written transcripts of the skills/knowledge they have obtained in a formal course
- In-service education session records
- Direct observation of their skill
- Questioning of their knowledge base
- Assessment from the consumer's perspective using agreed criteria
- Self-assessment through reflection on performance in comparison with professional standards.

Overall, this means that ***your competence can be assessed by other means***. Rather than just having a certificate of attainment from a course, you may be observed by a peer with knowledge and experience in this area. Especially as certain skills may not have a specific course you can undertake. You may then undertake further research and education of your own volition.

A great example of this, is wound care. The most common way nurses ***first*** learn, is through peer to peer teaching. This is then built upon (and sometimes questioned!) through relevant evidence based education and experience as required.