



Entry-Level Competencies (ELCs) for the Practice of Registered Nurses (2018)

Background

In 2017 the Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators (CCRNR) initiated the revisions of the Entry-Level Competencies of Registered Nurses in Canada (the “ELCs”). This initiative was led by a working group comprised of 11 jurisdictions representing registered nurse (RN) regulators in Canada. The ELCs are revised every five years to ensure inter-jurisdictional consistency and practice relevance. Consistency between jurisdictions supports the workforce mobility requirements of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Revisions are based on the results of an environmental scan, literature reviews and stakeholder consultation. The regulatory body in each jurisdiction validates and approves the ELCs and confirms they are consistent with Provincial/Territorial legislation.

Each ELC in this context is defined as *“an observable ability of a registered nurse at entry-level that integrates the knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgment required to practice nursing safely and ethically.”*

ELCs are used by regulatory bodies for a number of purposes including but not limited to:

- Academic program approval/recognition
- Assessment of internationally educated applicants
- Assessment of applicants for the purpose of re-entry into the profession
- Input into the content and scope of entry-to-practice exams
- Practice advice/guidance to clinicians
- Reference for professional conduct matters
- Public and employer awareness of the practice expectations of registered nurses

The Context of Entry-Level Registered Nursing Practice

The design and application of the listed competencies is at entry-to-practice. Entry-level RNs are at the point of initial registration or licensure, following graduation from an approved nursing education program. Their beginning practice draws on a theoretical and experiential knowledge base that has been shaped by specific experiences during their education program. They are health care team members who are expected to accept responsibility and demonstrate accountability for their practice. They will recognize their limitations, ask questions, exercise professional judgment, and determine when they require consultation. Entry-level RNs realize the importance of identifying what they know and do not know, what their learning gaps may be, and how and where to access available resources. They display initiative, a beginning confidence, and self-awareness in taking responsibility for their decisions in the care they provide.

RN practice is dynamic and evolving; the ELCs establish the foundation for nursing practice. Entry-to-practice represents the time when learners become clinicians. Further development of RN practice is facilitated through education, collaboration, and mentorship. All groups involved in the provision of health



care have a shared responsibility to create and maintain practice environments that support RNs in providing safe, ethical, and quality health care. The practice environment influences the transition and consolidation of RN practice and the development of further competence.

Overarching Principles

These competencies are expected not only of entry-level RNs; all RNs are ultimately accountable to meet these competencies throughout their careers relative to their specific context and/or patient population. The following overarching principles apply to the education and practice of entry-level registered nurses:

1. The entry-level RN is a beginning practitioner. It is unrealistic to expect an entry-level RN to function at the level of practice of an experienced RN.
2. The entry-level RN works within the registered nursing scope of practice, and appropriately seeks guidance when they encounter situations outside of their ability.
3. The entry-level RN must have the requisite skills and abilities to attain the entry-level competencies.
4. The entry-level RN is prepared as a generalist to practice safely, competently, compassionately, and ethically:
 - in situations of health and illness,
 - with all people across the lifespan,
 - with all recipients of care: individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations,
 - across diverse practice settings, and
 - using evidence-informed practice.
5. The entry-level RN has a strong foundation in nursing theory, concepts and knowledge; health and sciences; humanities; research; and ethics from education at the baccalaureate level.
6. The entry-level RN practices autonomously within legislation, practice standards, ethics, and scope of practice in their jurisdiction.
7. The entry-level RN applies the critical thinking process throughout all aspects of practice.

The client is the central focus of RN practice and leads the process of decision-making related to care. In the context of this document, “client” refers to a person who benefits from registered nursing care and, where the context requires, includes a substitute decision maker for the recipient of nursing services. A client may be an individual, a family, group, community or population. Client-centred care reflects that people are at the centre of decisions about their health and are seen as experts, working alongside RNs to achieve optimal health outcomes.

Structure

The document is organized thematically per a roles-based format. There are a total of 101 competencies grouped thematically under 9 headings:

1. Clinician
2. Professional
3. Communicator
4. Collaborator
5. Coordinator
6. Leader
7. Advocate
8. Educator
9. Scholar



Integration of all nine roles enables the entry-level RN to provide safe, competent, ethical, compassionate, and evidence-informed nursing care in any practice setting. Some concepts are relevant to multiple roles. For the sake of clarity and to avoid unnecessary repetition, certain key concepts (e.g. client-centred) are mentioned once and assumed to apply to all competencies.

Terms in [blue text](#) are defined in the Glossary.



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1. Clinician

Registered nurses are clinicians who provide safe, competent, ethical, compassionate, and evidence-informed care across the lifespan in response to client needs. Registered nurses integrate knowledge, skills, judgment and professional values from nursing and other diverse sources into their practice.

Number	Competency
1.1	Provides safe, ethical, competent, compassionate, client-centred and evidence-informed nursing care across the lifespan in response to client needs.
1.2	Conducts a holistic nursing assessment to collect comprehensive information on client health status.
1.3	Uses principles of trauma-informed care which places priority on trauma survivors' safety, choice, and control.
1.4	Analyses and interprets data obtained in client assessment to inform ongoing decision-making about client health status.
1.5	Develops plans of care using critical inquiry to support professional judgment and reasoned decision-making.
1.6	Evaluates effectiveness of plan of care and modifies accordingly.
1.7	Anticipates actual and potential health risks and possible unintended outcomes.
1.8	Recognizes and responds immediately when client safety is affected.
1.9	Recognizes and responds immediately when client's condition is deteriorating
1.10	Prepares clients for and performs procedures, treatments, and follow up care.
1.11	Applies knowledge of pharmacology and principles of safe medication practice.
1.12	Implements evidence-informed practices of pain prevention, manages client's pain, and provides comfort through pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions.
1.13	Implements therapeutic nursing interventions that contribute to the care and needs of the client.
1.14	Provides nursing care to meet palliative and end-of-life care needs.
1.15	Incorporates knowledge about ethical, legal, and regulatory implications of medical assistance in dying (MAiD) when providing nursing care.
1.16	Incorporates principles of harm reduction with respect to substance use and misuse into plans of care.
1.17	Incorporates knowledge of epidemiological principles into plans of care.
1.18	Provides recovery-oriented nursing care in partnership with clients who experience a mental health condition and/or addiction.
1.19	Incorporates mental health promotion when providing nursing care.
1.20	Incorporates suicide prevention approaches when providing nursing care.
1.21	Incorporates knowledge from the health sciences, including anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, psychopathology, pharmacology, microbiology, epidemiology, genetics, immunology, and nutrition.
1.22	Incorporates knowledge from nursing science, social sciences, humanities, and health-related research into plans of care.



Number	Competency
1.23	Uses knowledge of the impact of evidence-informed registered nursing practice on client health outcomes.
1.24	Uses effective strategies to prevent, de-escalate, and manage disruptive, aggressive, or violent behaviour.
1.25	Uses strategies to promote wellness, to prevent illness, and to minimize disease and injury in clients, self, and others.
1.26	Adapts practice in response to the spiritual beliefs and cultural practices of clients.
1.27	Implements evidence-informed practices for infection prevention and control.

2. Professional

Registered nurses are professionals who are committed to the health and well-being of clients. Registered nurses uphold the profession's practice standards and ethics and are accountable to the public and the profession.

Number	Competency
2.1	Demonstrates accountability, accepts responsibility, and seeks assistance as necessary for decisions and actions within the legislated scope of practice.
2.2	Demonstrates a professional presence, and confidence, honesty, integrity, and respect in all interactions.
2.3	Exercises professional judgment when using agency policies and procedures, or when practising in their absence.
2.4	Maintains client privacy, confidentiality, and security by complying with legislation, practice standards, ethics, and organizational policies.
2.5	Identifies the influence of personal values, beliefs, and positional power on clients and the health care team and acts to reduce bias and influences.
2.6	Establishes and maintains professional boundaries with clients and the health care team.
2.7	Identifies and addresses ethical (moral) issues using ethical reasoning, seeking support when necessary.
2.8	Demonstrates professional judgment to ensure social media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) are used in a way that maintains public trust in the profession.
2.9	Adheres to the self-regulatory requirements of jurisdictional legislation to protect the public by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) assessing own practice and individual competence to identify learning needs. b) developing a learning plan using a variety of sources c) seeking and using new knowledge that may enhance, support, or influence competence in practice d) Implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of the learning plan and developing future learning plans to maintain and enhance competence as a registered nurse.
2.10	Demonstrates fitness to practice ¹ .

¹ Individual jurisdictions to modify/delete to align with use of "fitness to practice" in their jurisdiction.



Number	Competency
2.11	Adheres to the duty to report ² .
2.12	Distinguishes between the mandates of regulatory bodies, professional associations, and unions.
2.13	Recognizes, acts on, and reports, harmful incidences, near misses, and no harm incidences.
2.14	Recognizes, acts on, and reports actual and potential workplace and occupational safety risks.

3. Communicator

Registered nurses are communicators who use a variety of strategies and relevant technologies to create and maintain professional relationships, share information, and foster therapeutic environments.

Number	Competency
3.1	Introduces self to clients and health care team members by first and last name, and professional designation (protected title).
3.2	Engages in active listening to understand and respond to the client's experience, preferences, and health goals.
3.3	Uses evidence-informed communication skills to build trusting, compassionate, and therapeutic relationships with clients.
3.4	Uses conflict resolution strategies to promote healthy relationships and optimal client outcomes.
3.5	Incorporates the process of relational practice to adapt communication skills.
3.6	Uses information and communication technologies (ICTs) to support communication.
3.7	Communicates effectively in complex and rapidly changing situations.
3.8	Documents and reports clearly, concisely, accurately, and in a timely manner.

4. Collaborator

Registered nurses are collaborators who play an integral role in the health care team partnership.

Number	Competency
4.1	Demonstrates collaborative professional relationships.
4.2	Initiates collaboration to support care planning and safe, continuous transitions from one health care facility to another, or to residential, community or home and self-care.
4.3	Determines their own professional and interprofessional role within the team by considering the roles, responsibilities, and the scope of practice of others.

² Individual jurisdictions to modify/delete to align with use of "duty to report" in their jurisdiction.



Number	Competency
4.4	Applies knowledge about the scopes of practice of each regulated nursing designation to strengthen intraprofessional collaboration that enhances contributions to client health and well-being.
4.5	Contributes to health care team functioning by applying group communication theory, principles, and group process skills.

5. Coordinator

Registered nurses coordinate point-of-care health service delivery with clients, the health care team, and other sectors to ensure continuous, safe care.

Number	Competency
5.1	Consults with clients and health care team members to make ongoing adjustments required by changes in the availability of services or client health status.
5.2	Monitors client care to help ensure needed services happen at the right time and in the correct sequence.
5.3	Organizes own workload, assigns nursing care, sets priorities, and demonstrates effective time management skills
5.4	Demonstrates knowledge of the delegation process.
5.5	Participates in decision-making to manage client transfers within health care facilities.
5.6	Supports clients to navigate health care systems and other service sectors to optimize health and well-being.
5.7	Prepares clients for transitions in care.
5.8	Prepares clients for discharge.
5.9	Participates in emergency preparedness and disaster management.

6. Leader

Registered nurses are leaders who influence and inspire others to achieve optimal health outcomes for all.

Number	Competency
6.1	Acquires knowledge of the <i>Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada</i> .
6.2	Integrates continuous quality improvement principles and activities into nursing practice.
6.3	Participates in innovative client-centred care models.
6.4	Participates in creating and maintaining a healthy, respectful, and psychologically safe workplace.
6.5	Recognizes the impact of organizational culture and acts to enhance the quality of a professional and safe practice environment.
6.6	Demonstrates self-awareness through reflective practice and solicitation of feedback.
6.7	Takes action to support culturally safe practice environments.



Number	Competency
6.8	Uses and allocates resources wisely.
6.9	Provides constructive feedback to promote professional growth of other members of the health care team.
6.10	Demonstrates knowledge of the health care system and its impact on client care and professional practice.
6.11	Adapts practice to meet client care needs within a continually changing health care system.

7. Advocate

Registered nurses are advocates who support clients to voice their needs to achieve optimal health outcomes. Registered nurses also support clients who cannot advocate for themselves.

Number	Competency
7.1	Recognizes and takes action in situations where client safety is actually or potentially compromised.
7.2	Resolves questions about unclear orders, decisions, actions, or treatment.
7.3	Advocates for the use of Indigenous health knowledge and healing practices in collaboration with Indigenous healers and Elders consistent with the <i>Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada</i> . ³
7.4	Advocates for health equity for all, particularly for vulnerable and/or diverse clients and populations.
7.5	Supports environmentally responsible practice.
7.6	Advocates for safe, competent, compassionate and ethical care for clients.
7.7	Supports and empowers clients in making informed decisions about their health care, and respects their decisions.
7.8	Supports healthy public policy and principles of social justice.
7.9	Assesses that clients have an understanding and ability to be an active participant in their own care, and facilitates appropriate strategies for clients who are unable to be fully involved.
7.10	Advocates for client's rights and ensures informed consent, guided by legislation, practice standards, and ethics.
7.11	Uses knowledge of population health, determinants of health, primary health care, and health promotion to achieve health equity.
7.12	Assesses client's understanding of informed consent, and implements actions when client is unable to provide informed consent.
7.13	Demonstrates knowledge of a substitute decision maker's role in providing informed consent and decision-making for client care.
7.14	Uses knowledge of health disparities and inequities to optimize health outcomes for all clients.

³ Calls to Action #22: "We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients." (p. 3)



8. Educator

Registered nurses are educators who identify learning needs with clients and apply a broad range of educational strategies towards achieving optimal health outcomes.

Number	Competency
8.1	Develops an education plan with the client and team to address learning needs.
8.2	Applies strategies to optimize client health literacy.
8.3	Selects, develops, and uses relevant teaching and learning theories and strategies to address diverse clients and contexts, including lifespan, family, and cultural considerations.
8.4	Evaluates effectiveness of health teaching and revises education plan if necessary.
8.5	Assists clients to access, review, and evaluate information they retrieve using information and communication technologies (ICTs).

9. Scholar

Registered nurses are scholars who demonstrate a lifelong commitment to excellence in practice through critical inquiry, continuous learning, application of evidence to practice, and support of research activities.

Number	Competency
9.1	Uses best evidence to make informed decisions.
9.2	Translates knowledge from relevant sources into professional practice.
9.3	Engages in self-reflection to interact from a place of cultural humility and create culturally safe environments where clients perceive respect for their unique health care practices, preferences, and decisions.
9.4	Engages in activities to strengthen competence in nursing informatics.
9.5	Identifies and analyzes emerging evidence and technologies that may change, enhance, or support health care.
9.6	Uses knowledge about current and emerging community and global health care issues and trends to optimize client health outcomes.
9.7	Supports research activities and develops own research skills.
9.8	Engages in practices that contribute to lifelong learning.