



Revision to the *Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Practice* Executive Summary

Historically the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) has provided the educational framework for the preparation of nurses at four-year colleges and universities through a series of documents known as *The Essentials*. These include [The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice](#) (2008); [The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing](#), (2011) and [The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice](#) (2006). Each document provides specific guidance for the development and revision of nursing curricula at each degree level. Given changes in higher education, learner expectations, and the rapidly evolving healthcare system outlined in [AACN's Vision for Academic Nursing](#) (2019), new thinking and new approaches to nursing education are needed to prepare the nursing workforce of the future.

The proposed revision, *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education* provides a framework for preparing individuals as members of the discipline of nursing, reflecting expectations across the trajectory of nursing education and applied experience. The new *Essentials* framework includes domains, competencies, sub-competencies, and concepts. The domains, competencies, and concepts exemplify the uniqueness of nursing as a profession and are designed to be applicable across all areas of health care, throughout the lifespan and with diverse patient populations. They also use a common language that is understandable across healthcare professions and by employers, learners, faculty, and the public.

Competencies and sub-competencies are organized within ten domains that represent the essence of professional nursing practice. The 10 domains include:

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|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Domain 1: <i>Knowledge for Nursing Practice</i> | Domain 6: <i>Interprofessional Partnerships</i> |
| Domain 2: <i>Person-Centered Care</i> | Domain 7: <i>Systems-Based Practice</i> |
| Domain 3: <i>Population Health</i> | Domain 8: <i>Information and Healthcare Technologies</i> |
| Domain 4: <i>Scholarship for Nursing Practice</i> | Domain 9: <i>Professionalism</i> |
| Domain 5: <i>Quality and Safety</i> | Domain 10: <i>Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development</i> |

Concepts essential to professional nursing practice are applied across domains and competencies, reflecting broad application; this integration is essential to ensure their application throughout the educational experience and ultimately in nursing practice. The featured concepts include:

- *Clinical Judgement*
- *Communication*
- *Compassionate Care*
- *Determinants of Health*
- *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*
- *Ethics*
- *Evidence-based Practice*
- *Health Policy*

While the domains, competencies, and concepts are identical for both entry and advanced levels of education, sub-competencies are used to differentiate expectations for entry (Level 1) and advanced (Level 2) professional nursing education (See Figure 1). The first level sub-competencies set the foundation for nurses entering professional practice (Bachelor of Nursing degrees and Master's entry nursing degrees).

These entry-level competencies are used within curricula for prelicensure preparation and degree completion pathways for professional nursing practice for nurses with initial preparation in associate degree programs. The second level sub-competencies build and expand the competence of the nurse seeking advanced education in nursing. Advanced nursing education generally affords the student the opportunity to focus on an emphasis area or practice role. Regardless of the specialty emphasis, the advanced level sub-competencies represent the foundation for specialty practice. Any program of study that a student pursues in an area of advanced nursing education will include the advanced sub-competencies. These advanced-level sub-competencies complement and provide a foundation for any additional competencies defined for achieving a specialty area of practice.

ESSENTIALS MODEL

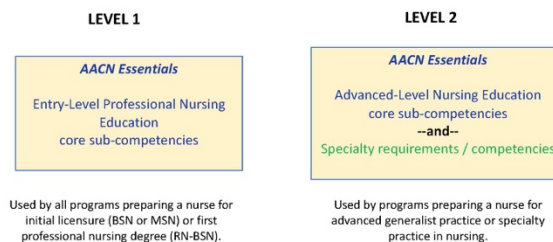


Figure 1: Model for Nursing Education

The incorporation of sub-competencies on two levels is an intentional departure from the previous versions of Essentials that were aligned to an academic degree. The two levels of sub-competencies essentially reflect the educational stages of nurses now and in the future – as they enter practice, and as they return to school to advance their education – regardless of the degree they are completing.

One of the perceived benefits of this new model education is the clarification regarding what graduates can do with what they know. In the future it is believed that graduates will communicate their preparation to employers through an electronic portfolio that includes their license, their academic degree, competencies achieved, and other stackable credentials.

The Essentials Task force has benefited from the engagement of nursing practice leaders as task force members, thus this work truly represents a shared academic-practice perspective. The new Essentials have been designed to prepare our future nursing workforce with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed in a continually evolving and complex healthcare environment.