Assessment of nursing and midwifery clinical competency and practice

Achieving clinical competency requires an adequate knowledge base for safe practice as well as mastery of a variety of skills. Clinical staff and the clinical facilitator, who supervise and observe the student’s practice, will meet with the student regularly to discuss their progress.

Clinical reports

Clinical Experience Records (CER) and Midwifery Practice Records (MPR) are designed to document student achievement of ANMC competencies by the provision of numerical and/or written evidence.

A student’s performance must be evaluated against the expected level for a particular semester and not against the performance expected for a registered nurse. Assessors and students need to have a clear understanding of the meaning of numerical scores and assessors should use the discussion section to provide further evidence of student achievement and developmental needs.

For undergraduate students

ANMC National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse and the ANMC National Competency Standards for the Midwife (2006) along with specific topic objectives will be used as criteria for assessment of clinical competence.

A CER or MPR is a requirement of each clinical topic for undergraduate students. Instruction for completion and submission of these is provided in the Topic information/Topic details booklet. Students should discuss the CER/MPR with the clinical facilitator or other designated person.

- A photocopy of all reports must be submitted to the topic coordinator at the end of the clinical placement. Students should attach the yellow ‘Clinical experience record’ cover sheet and submit via the assignment chute at the Assignment Office. This copy will be filed in the School Office on their behalf.
For postgraduate students

Students will be assessed against the competencies of relevant national nursing organisations and specific topic objectives. Assessment of clinical practice varies according to the specialty stream students are enrolled in. Students should refer to the relevant Topic Information/Topic details booklet.

Clinical learning contracts

Clinical learning contracts have been designed to provide students who are at risk of failing the clinical component of a nursing or midwifery practice topic with the opportunity to focus on identified areas of unsatisfactory practice within the clinical placement timelines, in order to successfully complete the contract and the clinical component of the topic.

Implementing and fulfilling a clinical learning contract

Once a student has been identified as requiring a clinical learning contract, they will be notified by the clinical facilitator and provided with the opportunity to discuss the areas of concern with the clinical facilitator and, where appropriate, the clinical liaison person.

A written contract will clearly state the expectations on the student to demonstrate an improved knowledge base and level of competency in the areas identified within a designated timeframe.

In addition, the clinical facilitator will identify within the contract learning strategies to assist the student in redeeming the contract and the assessment criteria to be used to evaluate the student’s practice.

Upon receipt of the contract, the student will be given three working days to read and seek advice on its content (e.g. from the topic coordinator, Course Coordinator (Undergraduate Programs), or Associate Dean (Academic). At this point the student may either return the signed contract to the clinical facilitator or advise them of any concerns they may have and make arrangements for further negotiation regarding the content of the contract. The clinical facilitator will ensure the student receives a signed copy of the contract. Should the student
ultimately refuse to accept the contract, a fail grade will be recorded for the topic to which the clinical placement is attached.

Upon completion of the assessment period, the clinical learning contract will indicate that the student:

- has fulfilled the requirements as stated and can remain in the clinical placement as scheduled; or
- has not achieved the requirements for successful fulfilment of the requirements of the clinical component of the topic and will be withdrawn from the clinical placement.

The student should refer to the ‘Statement of assessment methods’ in individual Topic information/Topic details booklets for specific details on availability of supplementary assessment where it exists.

Students who wish to appeal against a decision concerning their assessment should refer to the Student related policies and procedures manual for guidance.

**Note:** a student will only be permitted one clinical learning contract per clinical placement. If the student’s performance is not maintained following successful redemption of the first clinical learning contract, the student will receive a fail grade for the topic involved unless evidence of extenuating circumstances can be provided.

**Suspension of clinical practice**

A student demonstrating unsafe clinical practice will be immediately withdrawn from the clinical venue.

The facilitator will notify the topic coordinator and the Course Coordinator (Undergraduate Programs) in writing of the circumstances requiring the student to be withdrawn from the clinical venue.

Unsafe clinical practice is defined as:

- inadequate knowledge base to sustain safe practice
- inadequate performance of any skill, including communication, or
- any unprofessional behaviour which places patients at risk of physical harm, unreasonable emotional distress, or neglect.
Process of re-instatement

The process of re-instatement has been designed to enable the student to resume their clinical placement without putting the public at risk. The student may not be considered for the process of re-instatement if the level of safety is at a fail level. The student will be placed on a clinical learning contract to enable them to return to the clinical venue.

Relevant forms

A number of forms are used for warnings and clinical learning contracts:

- Form A is the formal warning record. It summaries the issues the student must improve in their clinical nursing practice and strategies to do so.
- Form B is the clinical learning contract. This contract details what the student must do to demonstrate satisfactory clinical practice.
- Form C is the redemption form that confirms the student has achieved the objectives in the clinical learning contract.
- Form D is the failed contract form that informs the student that they have not achieved the objectives in the clinical learning contract and have received a fail grade in the topic.

Permission to use patient’s medical records to assist in learning

Clinical assignments are designed to assist students to build links between theory and clinical practice. These assignments use information from the clinical practice environment in a variety of ways. In some instances it will be necessary to obtain patient consent for the activity—if so the institutional guidelines for patient confidentiality and consent must be adhered to at all times. For those who have completed the online orientation for Department of Health hospitals you should have completed the ‘Consent to undertake a case study’ form.

Prior to attempting to obtain information from patients or staff for assignment purposes students will need to consult with the clinical facilitator.