AACN The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education

Entry-Level Professional Nursing Education (BSN)

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2021, April). *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education*. Author.

The Essentials are divided into 10 domains, which are broad, distinguishable areas of competence to provide a framework for nursing education. Within the 10 domains are competencies, which are short statements of a component of the domain. The sub-competencies are observable & measurable learner outcomes expected for the entry-level professional BSN graduates.

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
Domain 1: Knowledge for Nursing Practice	1.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the discipline of nursing/s distinct perspective & where shared perspectives exist with other disciplines	1.1a Identify concepts, derived from theories from nursing & other disciplines, which distinguish the practice of nursing
		1.1b Apply knowledge of nursing science that develops a foundation for nursing practice
		1.1c Understand the historical foundation of nursing as the relationship developed between the individual & nurse
		1.1d Articulate nursing's distinct perspective to practice
	1.2 Apply theory & research-based knowledge from nursing, the arts, humanities, & other sciences	1.2a Apply or employ knowledge from nursing science as well as the natural, physical, & social sciences to build an understanding of the human experience & nursing practice
		1.2bDemonstrate intellectual curiosity
		1.2c Demonstrate social responsibility as a global citizen who fosters the attainment of health equity for all
		1.2d Examine influence of personal values in decision making for nursing practice
		1.2e Demonstrate ethical decision making
	1.3 Demonstrate clinical judgement founded on a broad knowledge base	1.3a Demonstrate clinical reasoning
		1.3b Integrate nursing knowledge (theories, multiple ways of knowing, evidence) & knowledge from other disciplines & inquiry to inform clinical judgement
		1.3c Incorporate knowledge from nursing & other disciplines to support
Domain 2: Person Centered Care	2.1 Engage with the individual in establishing a caring relationship	2.1a Demonstrate qualities of empathy
		2.1b Demonstrate compassionate care

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
		2.1c Establish mutual respect with the individual & family
	2.2 Communicate effectively with individuals	2.2a Demonstrate relationship-centered care
		2.2b Consider individual beliefs, values, & personalized information in communications
		2.2c Use a variety of communication modes appropriate for the context
		2.2d Demonstrate the ability to conduct sensitive or difficult conversations
		2.2e Use evidence-based patient teaching materials, considering health literacy, vision, hearing, & cultural sensitivity
		2.2f Demonstrate emotional intelligence in communications
	2.3 Integrate assessment skills in practice	2.3a Create an environment during assessment that promotes a dynamic interactive experience
		2.3b Obtain a complete & accurate history in a systematic manner
		2.3c Perform a clinically relevant, holistic health assessment
		2.3d Perform point of care screening/ diagnostic testing (e.g. blood glucose, PO2, EKG)
		2.3e Distinguish between normal & abnormal health findings
		2.3f Apply nursing knowledge to gain a holistic perspective of the person, family, community, & population
		2.3g Communicate findings of a comprehensive assessment
	2.4 Diagnose actual or potential health problems & needs	2.4a Synthesize assessment data in the context of the individual's current preferences, situation, & experience
		2.4b Create a list of problems/ health concerns
		2.4c Prioritize problems/ health concerns
		2.4d Understand & apply the result of social screening, psychological testing, laboratory data, imaging studies, & other diagnostic tests in actions & plans of care
		2.4e Contribute as a team member to the formation & improvement of diagnoses
	2.5 Develop a plan of care	2.5a Engage the individual & the team in plan development
		2.5b Organize care based on mutual health goals

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
		2.5c Prioritize care based on best evidence
		2.5d Incorporate evidence-based intervention to improve outcomes & safety
		2.5e Anticipate outcomes of care (expected, unexpected, & potentially adverse)
		2.5f Demonstrate rationale for plan
		2.5g Address individual's experiences & perspectives in designing plans of care
	2.6 Demonstrate accountability for care delivery	2.6a Implement individualized plan of care using established protocols
		2.6b communicate care delivery through multiple modalities
		2.6c Delegate appropriately to team members
		2.6d Monitor the implementation of the plan of care
	2.7 Evaluate outcomes of care	2.7a Reassess the individual to evaluate health outcomes/ goals
		2.7b Modify plan of care as needed
		2.7c Recognize the need for modifications to standard practice
	2.8 Promote self-care management	2.8a Assist the individual to engage in self-care management
		2.8b Employ individualized educational strategies based on learning theories, methodologies, & health literacy
		2.8c Educate individuals & families regarding self-care for health promotion, illness prevention, & illness management
		2.8d Respect individuals & families' self-determination in their healthcare decisions
		2.8e Identify personal, system, & community resources available to support self-care management
	2.9 Provide care coordination	2.9a Facilitate continuity of care based on assessment of assets & needs
		2.9b Communicate with relevant stakeholders across health systems
		2.9c Promote collaboration by clarifying responsibilities among individual, family, & team members
		2.9d Recognize when additional expertise & knowledge is needed to manage the patient

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
		2.9e Provide coordination of care of individuals & families in collaboration with care team
Domain 3: Population Health	3.1 Manage population health	3.1a Define a target population including its functional & problem-solving capabilities (anywhere in the continuum of care)
		3.1b Assess population health data
		3.1c Assess the priorities of the community &/or the affected clinical population
		3.1d Compare & contrast local, regional, national, & global benchmarks to identify health patterns across populations
		3.1e Apply an understanding of the public health system & its interfaces with clinical health care in addressing population health needs
		3.1f Develop an action plan to meet an identified need(s), including evaluation methods
		3.1g Participate in the implementation of sociocultural & linguistically responsive interventions
		3.1h Describe general principles & practices for the clinical management of populations across the age continuum
		3.1i Identify ethical principles to protect the health & safety of diverse populations
	3.2 Engage in effective partnerships	3.2a Engage with other health professionals to address population health issues
		3.2b Demonstrate effective collaboration & mutual accountability with relevant stakeholders
		3.2c Use culturally & linguistically responsive communication strategies
	3.3 Consider the socioeconomic impact of the delivery of health care	3.3a Describe access & equity implications of proposed intervention(s)
		3.3b Prioritize patient-focused &/or community action plans that are safe, effective, & efficient in the context of available resources
	3.4 Advance equitable population health policy	3.4a Describe policy development processes
		3.4b Describe the impact of policies on population outcomes, including social justice & health equity

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
		3.4c Identify best evidence to support policy development
		3.4d Propose modifications to or development of policy based on population findings
		3.4e Develop an awareness of the interconnectedness of population health across borders
	3.5 Demonstrate advocacy strategies	3.5a Articulate a need for change
		3.5b Describe the intent of the proposed change
		3.5c Define stakeholders, including members of the community &/or clinical populations, & their level of influence
		3.5d Implement messaging strategies appropriate to audience & stakeholders
		3.5e Evaluate the effectiveness of advocacy actions
	3.6 Advance preparedness to protect population health during disasters & public health emergencies	3.6a Identify changes in conditions that might indicate a disaster or public health emergency
		3.6b Understand the impact of climate change on environmental & population health
		3.6c Describe the health & safety hazards of disasters & public health emergencies
		3.6d Describe the overarching principles & methods regarding personal safety measures, including personal protective equipment (PPE)
		3.6e Implement infection control measures & proper use of personal protective equipment
Domain 4: Scholarship for the Nursing Discipline	4.1 Advance the scholarship of nursing	4.1a Demonstrate an understanding of different approaches to scholarly practice
		4.1b Demonstrate application of different levels of evidence
		4.1c Apply theoretical framework(s)/models in practice
		4.1d Demonstrate an understanding of basic elements of the research process
		4.1e Participate in scholarly inquiry as a team member
		4.1f Evaluate research
		4.1g Communicate scholarly findings

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
	4.2 Integrate best evidence into nursing practice	4.2a Evaluate clinical practice to generate questions to improve nursing care
		4.2b Evaluate appropriateness & strength of the evidence
		4.2c Use best evidence in practice
		4.2d Participate in the implementation of a practice change to improve nursing care
		4.2e Participate in the evaluation of outcomes & their implications for practice
	4.3 Promote the ethical conduct of scholarly activities	4.3a Explain the rationale for ethical research guidelines, including Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines
		4.3b Demonstrate ethical behaviors in scholarly projects including quality improvement & EBP initiatives
		4.3c Advocate for the protection of participants in the conduct of scholarly initiatives
		4.3d Recognize the impact of equity issues in research
Domain 5: Quality & Safety	5.1 Apply quality improvement principles in care delivery	5.1a Recognize nursing's essential role in improving healthcare quality & safety
		5.1b Identify sources & applications of national safety & quality standards to guide nursing practice
		5.1c Implement standardized, evidence-based processes for care delivery
		5.1d Interpret benchmark & unit outcome data to inform individual & microsystem practice
		5.1e Compare quality improvement methods in the delivery of patient care
		5.1f Identify strategies to improve outcomes of patient care in practice
		5.1g Participate in the implementation of a practice change
		5.1h Develop a plan for monitoring quality improvement change
	5.2 Contribute to a culture of patient safety	5.2a Describe the factors that create a culture of safety
		5.2b Articulate the nurse's role within an interprofessional team in promoting safety & preventing errors & near misses
		5.2c Examine basic safety design principles to reduce risk of harm

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
		5.2d Assume accountability for reporting unsafe conditions, near misses, & errors to reduce harm
		5.2e Describe processes used in understanding causes of error
		5.2f Use national patient safety resources, initiatives, & regulations at the point of care
	5.3 Contribute to a culture of provider & work environment safety	5.3a Identify actual & potential level of risks to providers within the workplace
		5.3b Recognize how to prevent workplace violence & injury
		5.3c Promote policies for prevention of violence & risk mitigation
		5.3d Recognize one's role in sustaining a just culture reflecting civility & respect
Domain 6: Interprofessional Partnerships	6.1 Communicate in a manner that facilitates a partnership approach to quality care delivery	6.1a Communicate the nurse's roles & responsibilities clearly
		6.1b Use various communication tools & techniques effectively
		6.1c Elicit the perspectives of team members to inform person-centered care decision making
		6.1d Articulate impact of diversity, equity, & inclusion on team-based communications
		6.1e Communicate individual information in a professional, accurate, & timely manner
		6.1f Communicate as informed by legal, regulatory, & policy guidelines
	6.2 Perform effectively in different team roles, using principles & values of team dynamics	6.2a Apply principles of team dynamics, including team roles, to facilitate effective team functioning
		6.2b Delegate work to team members based on their roles & competency
		6.2c Engage in the work of the team as appropriate to one's scope of practice & competency
		6.2d Recognize how one's uniqueness (as a person & a nurse) contributes to effective interprofessional working relationships
		6.2e Apply principles of team leadership & management. performance to improve quality & assure safety

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
		6.2f Evaluate performance of individual & team to improve quality & promote safety
	6.3 Use knowledge of nursing & other professions to address healthcare needs	6.3a Integrate the roles & responsibilities of healthcare professionals through interprofessional collaborative practice
		6.3b Leverage roles & abilities of team members to optimize care
		6.3c Communicate with team members to clarify responsibilities in executing plan of care
	6.4 Work with other professions to maintain a climate of mutual learning, respect, & shared values	6.4a Demonstrate an awareness of one's biases & how they may affect mutual respect & communication with team members
		6.4b Demonstrate respect for the perspectives & experiences of other professions
		6.4c Engage in constructive communication to facilitate conflict management
		6.4d Collaborate with interprofessional team members to establish mutual healthcare goals for individuals, communities, or populations
Domain 7: Systems-Based Practice	7.1 Apply knowledge of systems to work effectively across the continuum of care	7.1a Describe organizational structure, mission, vision, philosophy, & values
		7.1b Explain the relationships of macrosystems, mesosystems, & microsystems
		7.1c Differentiate between various healthcare delivery environments across the continuum of care
		7.1d Recognize internal & external system processes that impact care coordination & transition of care
	7.2 Incorporate consideration of cost-effectiveness of care	7.2a Describe the financial & payment models of health care
		7.2b Recognize the impact of health disparities & social determinants of health on care outcomes
		7.2c Describe the impact of healthcare cost & payment models on the delivery, access, & quality of care
		7.2d Explain the relationship of policy, regulatory requirements, & economics on care outcomes
		7.2e Incorporate considerations of efficiency, value, & cost in providing care

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
		7.2f Identify the impact of differing system structures, leadership, & workforce needs on care outcomes
	7.3 Optimize system effectiveness through application of innovation & evidence-based practice	7.3a Demonstrate a systematic approach for decision-making
		7.3b Use reported performance metrics to compare/monitor outcomes
		7.3c Participate in evaluating system effectiveness
		7.3d Recognize internal & external system processes & structures that perpetuate racism & other forms of discrimination within health care
Domain 8: Informatics & Healthcare Technologies	8.1 Describe the various information & communication technology tools used in the care of patients, communities, & populations	8.1a Identify the variety of information & communication technologies used in care settings
		8.1b Identify the basic concepts of electronic health, mobile health, & telehealth systems for enabling patient care
		8.1c Effectively use electronic communication tools
		8.1d Describe the appropriate use of multimedia applications in health care
		8.1e Demonstrate best practice use of social networking applications
		8.1f Explain the importance of nursing engagement in the planning & selection of healthcare technologies
	8.2 Use information & communication technology to gather data, create information, & generate knowledge	8.2a Enter accurate data when chronicling care
		8.2b Explain how data entered on one patient impacts public & population health data
		8.2c Use appropriate data when planning care
		8.2d Demonstrate the appropriate use of health information literacy assessments & improvement strategies
		8.2e Describe the importance of standardized nursing data to reflect the unique contribution of nursing practice
	8.3 Use information & communication technologies & informatics processes to delivery safe nursing care to diverse populations in a variety of settings	8.3a Demonstrate appropriate use of information & communication technologies
		8.3b Evaluate how decision support tools impact clinical judgment & safe patient care
		8.3c Use information & communication technology in a manner that supports the nurse-patient relationship

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
		8.3d Examine how emerging technologies influence healthcare delivery & clinical decision making
		8.3e Identify impact of information & communication technology on quality & safety of care
		8.3f Identify the importance of reporting system processes & functional issues (error messages, mis-directions, device malfunctions, etc.) according to organizational policies & procedures
	8.4 Use information & communication technology to support documentation of care & communication among providers, patients, & all system levels	8.4a Explain the role of communication technology in enhancing clinical information flows
		8.4b Describe how information & communication technology tools support patient & team communications
		8.4c Identify the basic concepts of electronic health, mobile health, & telehealth systems in enabling patient care
		8.4d Explain the impact of health information exchange, interoperability, & integration on health care
	8.5 Use information & communication technologies in accordance with ethical, legal, professional, & regulatory standards, & workplace policies in the delivery of care	8.5a Identify common risks associated with using information & communication technology
		8.5b Demonstrate ethical use of social networking applications
		8.5c Comply with legal & regulatory requirements while using communication & information technologies
		8.5d Educate patients on their rights to access, review, & correct personal data & medical records
		8.5e Discuss how clinical judgment & critical thinking must prevail in the presence of information & communication technologies
		8.5f Deliver care using remote technology
Domain 9: Professionalism	9.1 Demonstrate an ethical comportment in one's practice reflective of nursing's mission to society	9.1a Apply principles of professional nursing ethics & human rights in patient care & professional situations
		9.1b Reflect on one's actions & their consequences
		9.1c Demonstrate ethical behaviors in practice
		9.1d Change behavior based on self & situational awareness
		9.1e Report unethical behaviors when observed
		9.1f Safeguard privacy, confidentiality, & autonomy in all interactions
		9.1g Advocate for the individual's right to self-determination

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
	9.2 Employ participatory approach to nursing care	9.2a Employ the use of intentional presence to facilitate shared meaning of the experience between nurse & recipient of care
		9.2b Facilitate health & healing through compassionate caring
		9.2c Demonstrate empathy to the individual's life experience
		9.2d Advocate for practices that advance diversity, equity, & inclusion
		9.2e Demonstrate cultural sensitivity & humility in practice
		9.2f Apply principles of therapeutic relationships & professional boundaries
		9.2g Communicate in a professional manner
	9.3 Demonstrate accountability to the individual, society, & the profession	9.3a Engage in advocacy that promotes the best interest of the individual, community, & profession
		9.3b Demonstrate the moral courage to report concerns related to actual or potential hazards &/or errors
		9.3c Demonstrate professional & personal honesty & integrity
		9.3d Take responsibility for one's roles, decisions, obligations, actions, & care outcomes
		9.3e Engage in professional activities &/or organizations
		9.3f Demonstrate adherence to a culture of civility
		9.3g Advocate for social justice & health equity, including addressing the health of vulnerable populations
		9.3h Engage in peer evaluation
	9.4 Comply with relevant laws, policies, & regulations	9.4a Advocate for policies that promote health & prevent harm
		9.4b Adhere to the registered nurse scope & standards of practice
		9.4c Adhere to regulatory requirements & workplace policies consistent with one's educational preparation.
	9.5 Demonstrate the professional identity of nursing	9.5a Describe nursing's professional identity & contributions to the healthcare team
		9.5b Demonstrate the core values of professional nursing identity
		9.5c Demonstrate sensitivity to the values of others
		9.5d Demonstrate ethical comportment & moral courage in decision making & actions
		9.5e Demonstrate emotional intelligence

Domain	Competency	Sub-Competency
	9.6 Integrate diversity, equity, & inclusion as core to one's professional identity	9.6a Demonstrate respect for diverse individual differences & diverse communities & populations
		9.6b Demonstrate awareness of personal & professional values & conscious & unconscious biases
		9.6c Integrate core principles of social justice & human rights into practice
Domain 10: Personal, Professional, & Leadership Development	10.1 Demonstrate a commitment to personal health & well-being	10.1a Demonstrate healthy, self-care behaviors that promote wellness & resiliency
		10.1b Manage conflict between personal & professional responsibilities
	10.2 Demonstrate a spirit of inquiry that fosters flexibility & professional maturity	10.2a Engage in guided & spontaneous reflection of one's practice
		10.2b Integrate comprehensive feedback to improve performance
		10.2c Commit to personal & professional development
		10.2d Expand personal knowledge to inform clinical judgment
		10.2e Identify role models & mentors to support professional growth
	10.3 Develop capacity for leadership	10.3a Compare & contrast leadership principles & theories
		10.3b Formulate a personal leadership style
		10.3c Demonstrate leadership behaviors in professional situations
		10.3d Demonstrate self-efficacy consistent with one's professional development
		10.3e Use appropriate resources when dealing with ambiguity
		10.3f Modify one's own leadership behaviors based on guided self-reflection
		10.3g Demonstrate self-awareness of one's own implicit biases & their relationship to one's culture & environment
		10.3h Communicate a consistent image of the nurse as a leader
		10.3i Recognize the importance of nursing's contributions as leaders in practice & policy issues