



Royal College  
of Nursing

Oxford Branch Development Day  
and AGM October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024  
Professional Framework

 **SAFE STAFFING  
SAVES LIVES**

Nursing  
Workforce  
Standards

Ratios

Legislation

Escalation  
Guidance

Professional  
Framework

Pay

 **FAIR PAY  
FOR NURSING**



Royal College  
of Nursing

## Nursing Workforce Standards

Supporting a safe and effective  
nursing workforce

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/nursing-workforce-standards>

# UK Professional Framework: This is Nursing

- [Definition and Principles of Nursing | Royal College of Nursing \(rcn.org.uk\)](https://www.rcn.org.uk)
- [Levels of nursing | Royal College of Nursing \(rcn.org.uk\)](https://www.rcn.org.uk)
- [Four pillars of nursing | Levels of nursing | Royal College of Nursing \(rcn.org.uk\)](https://www.rcn.org.uk)



## **Definition of Nursing (expanded version)**

Nursing is a safety critical profession founded on four pillars: clinical practice, education, research, and leadership.

Registered nurses use evidence-based knowledge, professional and clinical judgement to assess, plan, implement and evaluate high-quality person-centred nursing care.

The work of registered nurses consists of many specialised and complex interventions. Their vigilance is critical to the safety of people, the prevention of avoidable harm and the management of risks regardless of the location or situation.

Compassionate leadership is central to the provision and co-ordination of nursing care and informed by its values, integrity and professional knowledge. Responsibility includes leading the integration of emotional, physical, organisational, and cognitive nursing work to meet the needs of people, organisations, systems, and populations.

Registered nurses are decision makers. They use clinical judgement and problem-solving skills to manage and co-ordinate the complexity of health and social care systems to ensure people and their families are enabled to improve, maintain, or recover health by adapting, coping, and returning to live lives of the best quality or to experience a dignified death. They have high levels of autonomy within nursing and multi professional teams, and they delegate to others in line with the NMC Code.

### **Footnote**

The leadership pillar for some nurses will include management responsibilities.



## Core capabilities

### Clinical

The clinical pillar includes the knowledge, skills, and behaviours and nursing proficiencies needed to ensure high quality care is provided that is safe, effective and person-centred.

### Research

The research pillar includes the knowledge, skills, and behaviours and nursing proficiencies needed to lead and deliver research, as well as source and use high-quality evidence to inform practice, education activities and improve services.

### Education

The education pillar includes the knowledge, skills, and behaviours and nursing proficiencies needed to enable reflective practice, on-going self-development and effective learning in the workplace.

### Leadership

The leadership pillar includes the knowledge, skills, and behaviours and nursing proficiencies needed to work effectively in a team, lead in the manner appropriate to their level within the career framework and fulfil management responsibilities (if applicable).





## The levels of nursing

Setting definitions and standards for nursing practice beyond registration

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Here at the RCN, we are developing a professional framework for nursing which will encompass the whole nursing workforce, from the nursing support worker through to the consultant nurse. We issued the revised [definition and principles of nursing](#) which underpin the Framework. We have now defined the levels of nursing practice beyond the point of registration as a nurse.

### Levels of practice of the registered nurse

Explore the definitions and standards which apply to all fields of nursing, and all settings in which registered nurses practice.



Enhanced level



Advanced level



Consultant level

# Enhanced Level

- Enhanced level nursing describes a level that can only be delivered by registered nurses who have gained additional *post-registration education and experiential learning* in a relevant subject area.
- This level can be applied to the *full range* of registered nurse careers. The enhanced level is differentiated from other levels by a registered nurse's expertise in applying specific knowledge and skills to a designated area. For example, this could be a client group, skill set or in an organisational context.
- Registered nurses working at an enhanced level are expected to be able to *manage discrete activities in complex, challenging and changing situations and environments*. They should also be confident to seek further guidance when they reach the boundaries of their competence.
- This level is underpinned by a *broad foundation of skills and capabilities across all four pillars of nursing*: clinical practice, education, research and leadership. These, together with critical reflection, enable a nurse working at the enhanced level to function to a *high level of autonomy within their designated area and role*.

# Advanced Level

- Advanced level nursing describes a level which can only be delivered by registered nurses with *substantial experience and expertise*.
- This level can be applied to the *full range* of registered nurse careers. The advanced level is differentiated from other levels by a registered nurses' expertise in *applying highly developed theoretical and practical knowledge to complex, unfamiliar and unpredictable situations*. For example, this could be through the use of critical thinking, high-level decision making and exercising professional judgement.
- This level is underpinned by a *comprehensive range of knowledge, skills and capabilities within each of the four pillars of nursing*: clinical practice, education, research and leadership. These will have been developed through studying *a master's degree in a relevant subject area with experiential learning or by demonstrating equivalence*. Integration of the capabilities across the four pillars, together with critical reflection, enables a nurse working at the advanced level to function to their *full potential and feel empowered to make decisions* in the workplace.

[Advanced | Levels of nursing | Royal College of Nursing  
\(rcn.org.uk\)](https://www.rcn.org.uk)



# Consultant Level

- Consultant level nursing practice describes a level which can only be delivered by registered nurses who have progressed *from an advanced level within their field to reach a significantly higher level.*
- All consultant level registered nurses will demonstrate *Level 8 (Scottish equivalent Level 12) doctoral level capabilities to act within highly abstract and complex contexts.*
- The concept of consultant level nursing can be applied to the *full range* of registered nurses' careers and not particular roles or specific organisational contexts. It is differentiated from other levels by:
  - ❑ *expertise*, backed by the *credibility* gained through the consultant's own professional practice
  - ❑ *strategic and enabling leadership*, embracing the key skillset for systems leadership and systems transformation
  - ❑ experience of *learning, developing and enhancing and improving processes and systems*
  - ❑ using and embedding *research and innovation* into the role.
- Consultant level nursing is underpinned by a comprehensive range of capabilities and integrated expertise across the four pillars of nursing: clinical practice, education, research and leadership. *All four are underpinned by consultancy* as the foundations of putting expertise in place across systems of health and social care to sustain quality.
- These dimensions, together with critical reflection, enable the nurse working at the consultant level to function to their full potential and achieve *the highest degree of autonomy* possible within their context of employment.

# How will you use the Professional Framework?

In clinical practice?

In activist work?

In practice development and education?

In management and leadership?

In research?



# Thank you & any questions

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/Levels-of-nursing>

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