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This guide outlines the steps to develop a learning plan to meet of the Continuing Competence Program (CCP) requirements set by the Nova Scotia College of Nursing (NSCN) for licensure.

To obtain an active-practising license, each registered nurse (RN) and nurse practitioner (NP) must complete the following components of CCP:

- a. Maintain nursing practice hours or complete nursing education according to the Nursing Regulations (2019) Section 10(g);
- b. Participate in a reflective practice process which includes self-reflection, self-assessment and the development of a learning plan;
- c. Confirm on the initial and annual application for licensure that a learning plan has been completed;
- d. Complete the NSCN learning plan verification process if randomly selected; and
- e. Pass the mandatory education quiz, when required (not required in 2018 for those renewing their licence for the 2019 licensure year).

How to Develop a Learning Plan

Wherever you are on your career path, a learning plan can provide a road map for your professional development. Continuously learning helps to ensure nurses stay current and are able to provide optimal care.

A learning plan can be a helpful tool in developing your continuing competence. However, it can be difficult to develop a learning plan without guidance and support. In knowing this, NSCN has outlined three steps to guide your learning plan development and provided tools to support you in this process.

The steps to develop your learning plan include:

Step 1: Complete a self-reflection.

Step 2: Complete a self-assessment using the RN and/or NP Standards of Practice.

Step 3: Develop a learning plan based on your self-reflection and self-assessment.

STEP ONE: Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is a mandatory component of CCP because it is an important component of learning. Through self-reflection, you examine how your personal values and beliefs affect your approach to situations. It involves exploring, clarifying and understanding past experiences to become more self-aware.

During your self-reflection, think about events in your nursing practice over the past year that may have represented learning opportunities for you. Using any method you choose (e.g., analyzing the situation, journaling, or discussing with a colleague), reflect on this event. Your self-reflection can be enhanced by incorporating information from peer feedback, performance appraisals, and/or multisource feedback¹. To learn more about self-reflection, visit our website at www.nscn.ca.

“Self-reflection is a very individual process and there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to do it, as long as you learn from it.”

¹ Peer feedback is an informal and unstructured evaluation of your nursing practice that you solicit from your peers. Performance appraisal is a formal and structured evaluation of your nursing practice by your supervisor/manager. Multisource feedback is a formal and structured evaluation of your nursing practice by your peers, recipients of care and other interdisciplinary team members. You can incorporate the feedback you receive from any of these methods into your self-assessment to assist you in identifying your learning needs and developing your learning plan.

Self-Reflection Tool - The FRAME™ Method

One way to complete a self-reflection is to use the FRAME™ Method. This method was developed specifically for nurses for this purpose. By using the step-by-step FRAME™ Method, you can reflect on an event or challenge you experienced in the past year.

The FRAME™ Method is broken down into five steps:

1. **Focus:**

Think about an event or a period of time in the past year that was challenging or one where you excelled in your professional life.

2. **Reflect:**

Think about the event or period of time using the questions below to guide your reflection:

- What specifically presented a challenge?
- What specifically did I excel at?
- What initiatives did I take that made me proud of my practice?
- What learning opportunities existed?
- What do I feel are qualities of a competent nurse working in today's health care system? How do I enhance these qualities within myself?

3. **Assess:**

Ask yourself the questions below to assist you in your assessment of the situation:

- What went well? What didn't?
- What were my strengths in this situation and how could I build on these?
- How did the people and/or situations that presented a challenge affect my ability to do my job?
- In the situation, was I able to work to my optimal scope of practice² and if not, why?

4. **Make meaning:**

Think about what happened as a result of your actions:

- What would I do differently or the same next time?
- What feedback/response did I get, if any?
- How might I grow and learn from this experience?

5. **Explore your options:**

In case you are faced with this situation again in the future, ask yourself:

- What would help me manage similar situations?
- What do I need to learn to enhance my abilities to better manage this situation next time?
- How can I help a colleague learn from my experience?

² Optimal scope of practice means that individual registered nurses are performing at the highest level of their competencies (knowledge, skills and judgment) and, thereby, making their greatest contribution to client outcomes. (NSCN Ends document, 2011).

STEP TWO: Self-Assessment

Once you have reflected on your practice over the past year and have identified some significant experiences, you are ready to complete your self-assessment. A self-assessment is a mandatory component of developing your learning plan because it will help you to determine how well you are meeting the RN and/or NP Standards of Practice. To guide this process, we have developed two self-assessment tools – one for RNs and one for NPs. These tools are based on the Standards of Practice for RNs and NPs because, as self-regulated professionals, nurses are accountable to know and apply their standards of practice at all times.

USING THE TOOL

Review each indicator in the self-assessment tool and rate your own practice against each one.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS:

For your convenience, the tools have been provided in two file formats - PDF and Microsoft Word.

[Tool One: Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses Self-Assessment Tool: All RNs](#)

[Tool Two: Nurse Practitioner Standards of Practice Self-Assessment Tool: All NPs](#)

STEP THREE: Develop Your Learning Plan

With the knowledge gained from your self-reflection and self-assessment, you are now ready to develop a learning plan. Follow the steps below to develop your plan.

1. Select a Learning Plan Template

The first step is to select a learning plan template. You can choose to use the learning plan template developed by NSCN or one of your own design. The learning plan template developed by NSCN is available in PDF format.

- [Develop learning plan template](#)

2. Identify Two Standards of Practice Indicators

Next, identify two indicators from the [Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses](#) and/or the [Nurse Practitioner Standards of Practice](#) to focus on and include them in your plan. These could be indicators in which you rated yourself as a “1” or “2” during your self-assessment or indicators you would like to develop to meet your professional goals. Both indicators may be from the same standard.

3. Develop Two Objectives

The next step is to develop a SMART objective for each indicator that will enhance your practice. A SMART objective is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely.

Specific: To set a specific objective you would consider:

- Who is involved?
- What do I want to accomplish?
- What is my time frame?
- What are the requirements and constraints?
- What is the purpose or benefits of accomplishing the objective?

Measurable: Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each objective you set. To determine if your objective is measurable, ask questions such as:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?

Attainable: The objective should be both possible and realistic while still being challenging. Having an objective that pushes you and allows for personal growth can lead to improvement in your practice.

Relevant: The objective is not only within reach of skill levels but also has meaning and relates directly to your practice and your ability to meet your standards. When an objective is relevant, it increases your commitment and motivation to meet the objective.

Timely: Having a time frame established allows you to monitor your progress, stay on track, make adjustments to meet the overall objective, and gain momentum with each accomplishment along the objective path.

4. Identify Two Learning Activities per Objective

For each objective you have developed for your learning plan, you need to identify at least two learning activities that will help you achieve the objective. The learning activities must occur between the dates indicated in the notification letter.

Your learning activities can include any education you are required to take as part of your role (e.g. ACLS, certification, etc.) as long as they help you to achieve your objective. Remember to document when you anticipate completing the learning activities.

5. Develop an Evaluation Plan

The evaluation is important because it outlines how you plan to apply learning to your nursing practice and the impact you anticipate it will have. As you implement your learning plan through the licensure year, you can then evaluate your progress.

How will I evaluate?

Think about some ways in which your enhanced learning could impact your nursing practice and the care you provide to your clients. Ask yourself:

1. How will I know if I have obtained my objectives?
2. How will my nursing practice be enhanced?
3. How will the nursing care I provide to my clients change?
4. What impact could a change in my nursing practice have on client outcomes?

Summarize your answers and enter them in the evaluation section of your learning plan.

6. Submit Your Learning Plan to NSCN if Selected for Verification

If you are selected for verification, the last step is to submit your learning plan to NSCN by dates indicated in your notification letter. It is strongly recommended that you complete the Pre-submission Checklist to ensure your learning plan is complete before submitting.

There are two ways to submit your learning plan:

1. **Email:** If you develop your learning plan using Word, attach your learning plan in an email and send it to ccp@nscn.ca.

2. **Regular Mail:** Send copies (keeping originals in your personal files at home) to the address in notification letter.

For more information on the verification process, see below.

Additional Resources

Do you still have questions?

NSCN staff support: We are available to answer any questions you may have. Please contact ccp@nscn.ca.

Other Information

VERIFICATION OF YOUR LEARNING PLAN

The verification of learning plans is the process of confirming that you have met the requirements established by NSCN as part of the CCP. Verification of learning plans is considered best practice among nursing regulators in Canada and internationally because it helps to ensure that RNs engage in the CCP.

If you are selected for verification:

1. you will be notified of your selection by email and mail around April 1;
2. you will be required to send your learning plan for the upcoming licensure year by a defined deadline which will be included in the notification letter. Please note: the contents of your self-reflection and self-assessment are confidential and are not to be sent with your learning plan.
3. NSCN staff will review your learning plan against the NSCN's learning plan criteria.
 - a. If your learning plan meets the criteria, the verification process will be complete and you will receive notification by email that you have completed the verification process.
 - b. If your learning plan does not meet the requirements, you will receive notification by email and NSCN staff will submit your learning plan to the CCP Advisory Committee once it has been de-identified.
 - c. The CCP Advisory Committee, will review your learning plan against the criteria.
 - d. If the committee determines your learning plan meets the criteria, the verification process will be complete and you will receive notification by email that you have completed the verification process.
 - e. If your learning plan does not meet the requirements, you will receive feedback by email to assist you in revising your learning plan. NSCN staff will be available to support you with your revisions. You will submit your revised learning plan to NSCN for another review. You will be required to re-submit your learning plan until the learning plan is approved.

CCP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The role of the CCP Advisory Committee is to review any learning plans that have been identified by NSCN staff as possibly not having met the learning plan criteria and to support the development of mandatory education study material and quiz, if required. The review of learning plans by the committee is an anonymous process and any identifying personal information about the RN, like their name and/or registration number, will be removed before the learning plan is submitted to the committee for review.

The CCP Advisory Committee is comprised of members of NSCN who hold a current active-practising license and are in good standing. To learn more about volunteering for the CCP Advisory Committee please contact us at ccp@nscn.ca.

CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH CCP

You will be issued a time-limited licence for up to 3 months with or without conditions and/or restrictions on October 31 if one of the following occurs:

1. You do not confirm on your application for initial or annual licensure that you have completed a learning plan based on your self-assessment; or
2. You do not submit your learning plan as part of the verification process
3. Your submitted learning plan does not meet the NSCN criteria (if required); or
4. You have not successfully completed the mandatory education (when required).

Your time-limited licence will expire the earliest of these three scenarios:

- a. When a you provides NSCN with evidence that you have met the criteria, or;
- b. Three months after it was issued, or;
- c. On October 31 of the licensure year for which the time-limited licence was issued.

You may not work as a nurse if your license has expired.

Once you have met the CCP requirements you will be issued a licence for the remainder of the licensure year.

If you do not meet the practice hour requirement for the CCP, please contact Registration Services to discuss next steps.

MANDATORY EDUCATION

Every two years, a nursing regulatory topic relevant to all active-practising nurses is selected for mandatory education as part of CCP. Currently, there are no mandatory education requirements. You will be notified by January in any year that you are required to complete mandatory education.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any document or information prepared by an RN for the purpose of satisfying the requirements of the NSCN's Continuing Competence Program (CCP) will be considered confidential. In a legal proceeding, no person will be authorized or required to disclose any information related to the content of a self reflection or self-assessment without the expressed consent of the RN.

To maintain the confidentiality of others, do not document any information in these tools, including your learning plan, which could be used to identify clients, family members or colleagues.

Please remember that NSCN is here to help if you have any questions.

Contact us at ccp@nscn.ca.