



# Papua New Guinea Specialist Nursing Competency Standards Midwifery

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Papua New Guinea Nursing  
Council

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NCD

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## Introduction

The health status of women and children in Papua New Guinea is poor in relation to the rest of the world, and the worst of all the Pacific Island countries. Mortality rates are high, with estimates of maternal mortality being 320 per 100,000 births (0.32%), infant mortality being 82 /1000 (8%) and under 5s mortality being 40/1000 (4%). The major causes of mortality in mothers are related to pregnancy and childbirth complications (1). Infants and children are dying from conditions that are considered preventable with the most common problems being acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, measles and malaria (2).

One strategy the government has recommended to address maternal mortality is a need for approximately 435 midwives (3). The need for paediatric nurses is recognised but to what extent is unclear (4) – but has been estimated to be about 200.

The School of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), Taurama Campus is currently the only education institution that conducts post graduate nurse training in the country. Approximately 20 midwives and 20 paediatric nurses graduate annually. The output of graduates from these courses is not meeting the demand and the shortfall is growing constantly.

In order to meet the shortfall it is proposed that additional midwifery and child health courses be conducted at the University of Goroka; the Lutheran School of Nursing, Madang; St Mary's School of Nursing, Korpoko; and Pacific Adventist University, Port Moresby.

To ensure graduates from any post basic midwifery and child health courses are able to practice in accordance with the PNG Nursing Council, it was necessary to develop specialist competency standards for nurses in PNG.

In March 2003 a workshop was convened by Human Resource Management (HRM), funded by Women and Children's Health Project, to produce this first draft of PNG Nurse Specialist Competency Standards. Participants represented the Nursing Council of PNG, Community and Hospital services, urban health clinics, Nurse Administrators and Nurse Teachers in certificate and diploma programs.

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

## PNG Nurse Specialist Competency Standards

The Nurse Specialist Competency Standards for Papua New Guinea are set out in seven areas of nursing practice under 'domains'. These are: Professional and Ethical Practice, Critical Thinking and Analysis, Communication, Management of Care, Public Health and Health Promotion, and Partnership with Community and Services. The seven domains are retained from the generic competency standards. Under each domain the standards for practice are separated into 10 Competencies each for both Specialist Nurse Midwife and Paediatric/Child Health level of competence. Each competency is divided again into smaller parts called elements. The performance criteria of each element are used to evaluate whether or not the standard has been reached.

The Code of Ethics identifies the morals of the profession and provides nurses with a basis for self-reflection as a professional, and a guide to ethical practice. The Code of Professional Conduct identifies the minimum requirements for nursing practice and clarifies professional and unprofessional conduct of professional nurses in question.

The Nurse Specialist Competency Standards together with the Code of Ethics and the Code of Professional Conduct provide a framework for professional nursing practice and education in this country.

*“Nursing is a service  
which is authorised  
and valued by  
society.”*



## Development of Professional Nursing Practice Standards

The first drafts of PNG Nursing Specialist Competency Standards, Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct were circulated for your comments and additions. The comments and suggestions received were incorporated in second drafts, and a small group met and finalised the documents for the first edition of the Papua New Guinea Specialist Nursing Competency Standards.

## Adaptation of Professional Specialist Nursing Competency Standards

The PNG Specialist Nursing Competency Standards, Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct are based on the work of our nurses who developed the first edition of the PNG Nursing Competency Standards for First Level Registered Nurses.

*“Nursing is an  
art and a science.”*

## Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

The functions of professional nursing standards are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To inform the community of the standards of practice, values and conduct expected of nurses;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For rationalising the workforce;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To communicate professional nursing standards to others providing health and related services;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess continuing fitness to practice;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by nurses and the complex nature of nursing activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess nurses who wish to return to work after being away from the workforce for a defined period;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For nurses' self-assessment in daily practice;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess nurses who completed nursing courses outside Papua New Guinea;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For ongoing appraisal of staff and workplace performance;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide the basis for developing competencies in specialty nursing areas;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For planning continuing education, staff development and in service courses;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For nursing curriculum development and academic assessment;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure that graduates from accredited programs in various institutions can demonstrate nursing competency standards to become registered as nurses.</li> </ul>	



*“The nurse practices independently and inter-dependently in accordance with professional standards, and employs a problem-solving approach in practice.”*

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

## Professional and Ethical Practice

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 1</b>	
<b>The nurse-midwife practices reproductive health in accord with relevant legislative, common and customary law, and also in accord with ethical standards and professional code of conduct.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Recognises and upholds laws relating to reproductive health appropriate to the circumstances and resources, and in accordance with the policies, rules and regulations of the employing agency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies and interprets laws relevant to reproductive health practice.</li> <li>Provides care within the legal parameters of midwifery practice.</li> <li>Adheres to the policies, rules and regulations of the employing agency.</li> </ul>
2. Provides duty to reproductive health and recognises unsafe practices and prevents their recurrence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs within the parameters of accepted reproductive health practices and relevant legislation.</li> <li>Demonstrates a positive attitude and a duty of care towards the woman.</li> <li>Identifies and reports unsafe midwifery practice and takes corrective action where applicable.</li> </ul>
3. Upholds ethical standards and code of professional conduct relating to reproductive health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates attitudes and behaviours in accordance with ethical standards and code of professional conduct.</li> </ul>

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 2</b>	
<b>The nurse-midwife practices women's advocacy in all settings.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Provides the women with accurate information to enable her to give informed consent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determines the extent of the woman's knowledge, provides relevant information and supports the woman in the decision making process.</li> <li>Respects the rights of the woman and her family in making informed choices on reproductive health.</li> </ul>
2. Protects the women's rights to privacy and dignity in all settings where midwifery is practiced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes the woman's self-worth, self-confidence, self-abilities and self-esteem.</li> <li>Respects the nature of the relationship between the midwife and the woman.</li> <li>Recognises potential and actual domestic violence and reports to the appropriate community and support services.</li> <li>Supports, assists and refers domestic violence victims to appropriate community support services.</li> <li>Takes an active role in contributing to women's health issues including psycho/social issues.</li> </ul>

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

## Critical Thinking and Analysis

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 3</b>		<b>The nurse-midwife is accountable and responsible for own actions and outcomes and acknowledges research as a contributing factor to enhance professional midwifery practice.</b>
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>	
1. Uses code of ethics and code of professional conduct to guide midwifery practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflects critically her own midwifery practice performance.</li> <li>• Seeks additional knowledge through colleague support, self and ongoing professional development.</li> <li>• Seeks avenues to keep up to date with the new development in the specific area of practice.</li> <li>• Coaches and mentors other health care providers/students to assist their development.</li> </ul>	
2. Acknowledges the importance and contributes to the process of reproductive health research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledges that research is an important factor in the advancement of reproductive health.</li> <li>• Makes a clinical judgment using evidence-based knowledge to improve reproductive health.</li> <li>• Seeks opportunities to become involved in research to improve reproductive health.</li> </ul>	

## Communication

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 4</b>		<b>The nurse-midwife communicates effectively to support the woman through the childbearing experience.</b>
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>	
1. Communicates effectively using formal and informal channels of communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates an environment which fosters communication between the midwife and the woman.</li> <li>• Engages in effective primary level counselling as required, such as family planning.</li> <li>• Acts as a woman's advocate to empower her to express her feelings, thoughts and needs.</li> <li>• Offers support to enable the woman to feel in control during her pregnancy, birthing and early parenting experience.</li> <li>• Facilitates and provides an interpreter when a language barrier exists.</li> </ul>	
2. Ensures accurate, retrievable documentation to monitor reproductive health services delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents accurately and promptly all relevant data necessary to monitor reproductive health services delivery.</li> <li>• Correctly and safely files information in such a way that it is retrievable.</li> <li>• Analyses data and uses it to improve reproductive health practice.</li> </ul>	

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

## Management and Leadership

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 5      The nurse-midwife manages resources properly.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Uses information from current National Health Plan, Minimum Standards, Standard Treatment Manuals, Nursing Council Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct, and international agencies such as WHO.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses appropriate reproductive health data in identifying needs and setting priorities for short and long term goals and objectives.</li> <li>• Plans strategies to achieve these objectives and goals.</li> <li>• Participates in the development of activity plans within the parameters of the current policies.</li> </ul>
2. Uses available resources to achieve maximum reproductive health using cost effective measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates correct use of human resources by appropriate allocation of staff (staff-patient ratio), orientation, mentoring, supervision, evaluation and feedback.</li> </ul>
3. Demonstrates leadership ability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts as a role model in healthy living and takes responsibility for own actions and decisions.</li> <li>• Demonstrates initiative in problem solving.</li> <li>• Takes responsibility for professional development of self and junior colleagues.</li> <li>• Applies reproductive health knowledge and skills competently and has a positive attitude towards the midwifery profession.</li> </ul>
4. Provides leadership role in reproductive health services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides clinical supervision (preceptorship) to other health workers to promote reproductive priorities.</li> <li>• Takes responsibility for assessing competency standards of specialist student nurses.</li> <li>• Identifies the needs of other health workers and assists them to develop strategies to address these.</li> <li>• Updates health workers when national reproductive health policies and practices change in PNG.</li> <li>• Informs other health care workers when new initiatives related to reproductive health services are implemented.</li> <li>• Facilitates in-service education of others through a range of activities.</li> </ul>

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

## Management of Care

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 6</b>	
<b>The nurse-midwife promotes an environment which maximises women's' safety.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Promotes a safe environment for reproductive health services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognises potential risk to self, the mother and her foetus/baby.</li> <li>• Takes steps to promote a safe environment during reproductive health care in all settings.</li> </ul>
2. Respects the cultural and spiritual values of the woman.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the needs of the woman and her family in relation to their cultural and spiritual values.</li> <li>• Informs the woman and her family of unsafe cultural and spiritual practices that could have a detrimental effect on her reproductive health.</li> <li>• Acts to maintain the dignity, integrity and self-esteem of the woman.</li> </ul>

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 7</b>	
<b>The nurse-midwife carries out comprehensive and accurate assessment to formulate a plan of care in collaboration with the woman and her family in a variety of settings.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Uses a structured approach in the process of assessment eg. problem solving approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a midwifery standard framework to obtain general and reproductive health history.</li> <li>• Uses appropriate techniques to examine the woman and the foetus/baby in the hospital, health centre or village setting.</li> <li>• Correctly and accurately documents findings in appropriate format.</li> <li>• Confirms data and consults with the clients and members of the health care team eg. nurse, doctors, CHW, VBA, VHV etc.</li> </ul>
2. Analyses and interprets data correctly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognises the normal progress of pregnancy, labour, birthing and puerperium.</li> <li>• Identifies actual and potential reproductive health problems through accurate interpretation of data.</li> </ul>
3. Identifies expected outcomes and develops a plan of care in consultation with the woman and her family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes understanding that pregnancy and birth is a normal life event.</li> <li>• Develops and prioritises a care plan according to the woman's needs.</li> <li>• Educates the woman and her family on the importance of antenatal care.</li> <li>• Demonstrates the capacity to advise the woman and her family on early parenting skills.</li> <li>• Educates the woman and her family according to their needs.</li> </ul>

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 8</b>	
<b>The nurse-midwife implements the woman's care and evaluates the progress towards the expected outcomes.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Implements planned care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates the ability to provide informed planned care.</li> <li>• Identifies any deviation from the norm and revises plan when necessary.</li> <li>• Demonstrates the ability to manage the problem and reports and refers to the authorities as necessary.</li> <li>• Communicates findings to the woman and the appropriate team members and family members.</li> <li>• Directs, supervises, monitors and evaluates the reproductive health care provided by other health workers.</li> <li>• Initiates the immunisation process of the newborn child before discharge.</li> <li>• Provides follow up and home visits where necessary.</li> </ul>
2. Evaluates planned care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates the ability to evaluate the planned outcomes.</li> <li>• Documents findings accurately and correctly.</li> <li>• Ensures accurate and complete birth information form is given to the parents.</li> <li>• Advises the parents to register the baby according to the law.</li> </ul>

## Public Health and Health Promotion

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 9</b>	
<b>The nurse-midwife promotes practices that enhance the health of the woman, her family and the public.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Encourages and guides the woman, her family and the community to take responsibility for their own health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates the ability to use formal and informal approaches to give accurate reproductive health information to the family and community to reduce risk for the woman and her foetus.</li> <li>• Provides the woman, her family and the community with appropriate information about safe family planning practices.</li> <li>• Encourages active participation of the husband/partner throughout the pregnancy, childbirth and early parenting.</li> <li>• Provides relevant information on infertility, STIs and cancer in women.</li> <li>• Promotes breast-feeding.</li> </ul>
2. Assists in management of epidemics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes an active role in promoting safe sexual health.</li> <li>• Promotes infection control measures.</li> <li>• Promotes immunisation programs.</li> <li>• Promotes the use of mosquito nets.</li> <li>• Promotes positive living with HIV/AIDS in a reproductive health setting.</li> <li>• Coordinates care, refers if necessary and reports to the appropriate authorities.</li> </ul>

# Papua New Guinea Nursing Competency Standards

## Partnership with Community and Services

<b>COMPETENCY UNIT 10</b>	
<b>The nurse-midwife promotes a reproductive health perspective to work in partnership with other sectors in promoting health.</b>	
<b>Elements</b>	<b>Performance Criteria</b>
1. Promotes the role of a midwife as a member of the health care team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promotes the professional image of midwives to other health care disciplines and the wider community.</li><li>• Seeks opportunities to participate in policy development in relation to the provision of reproductive health and the health status of women in PNG.</li></ul>
2. Promotes the partnership of the midwife with the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respects cultural beliefs and practices in relationship to reproductive health, which are not detrimental to the woman and child's health.</li><li>• Promotes partnership with the wider community eg. NGOs, schools, women's groups, men's groups.</li></ul>



## **Acknowledgments**

The Nursing Council for Papua New Guinea acknowledges the work of the many nurses in Australia and New Zealand who have produced and refined their professional competency standards over many years. These standards became the foundation for the development of professional nursing practice standards in Papua New Guinea. The Council wishes to thank them for their contribution to the advancement of the practice of nursing in this country.

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Registrar Nursing Council for Papua New Guinea

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## **References**

1. Adapted from Australian Nursing Council Inc. (ANCI) *National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. 2000 and Nursing Council of New Zealand *Guidelines for Competence-Based Practising for the Registered Nurse* May 2000
2. Adapted from *Philosophy and Code of Ethics for Nurses* in PNG 1988 and Australian Nursing Council Inc. (ANCI) *Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia, 1999*
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