

PROFESSIONAL  
STANDARDS  
NURSING

**DRAFT**  
**Public Health Nursing**  
**Education Programme**  
Standards and  
Requirements  
(Third Edition)



Bord Altranais agus  
Cnáimhseachais na hÉireann  
Nursing and Midwifery  
Board of Ireland

These standards and requirements were originally published in March 2005 and re-issued in October 2015.

This draft edition will replace Public Health Nursing Education Programme Standards and Requirements (2015).

## About NMBI

Protecting patients and other members of the public is at the heart of what we do at the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI). We are committed to fulfilling this objective by supporting registered nurses and midwives in their provision of the highest standard of patient care.

Among our core functions are:

- maintaining the Register of Nurses and Midwives and a Candidate Register for student nurses and midwives
- setting the standards for the education and training of nurses and midwives
- approving programmes of education necessary for registration and monitor these programmes on an ongoing basis
- supporting registrants by providing appropriate guidance on professional conduct and ethics for both registered nurses and midwives
- investigating and considering complaints against nurses and midwives.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.nmbi.ie](http://www.nmbi.ie).

## Glossary

A full glossary of all the terms used in this and other NMBI publications is published on our website at [www.nmbi.ie/Standards-Guidance/Glossary](http://www.nmbi.ie/Standards-Guidance/Glossary).

## Acknowledgement

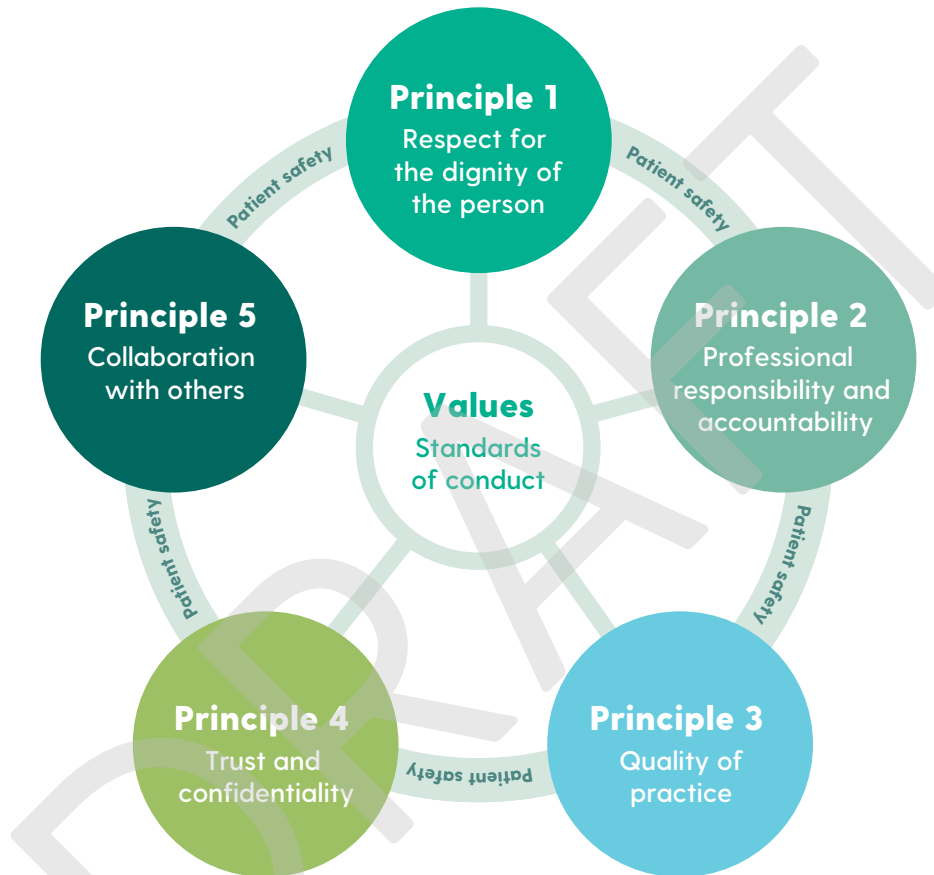
The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland would like to acknowledge the input of all our stakeholders in the revision of this document.

# Contents

<b>The Code of Professional Conducts and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Section 1: Governance and Legislation for Nursing and Midwifery Education Programmes Leading to Registration</b>	<b>5</b>
Nurses and Midwives Act 2011, as amended	5
Approval of education bodies (EBs) and practice partners and programmes leading to registration	5
<b>Section 2: Public Health Nursing Education Programme Standards</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Minimum entry requirements	6
2.2 Purpose of the programme	6
2.3 Programme learning outcomes	6
2.4 Domains of competence and indicative content	7
Domain 1: Professional values and conduct of the Public Health Nurse competencies	7
Domain 2: Public health nursing practice and clinical decision-making competencies	8
Domain 3: Knowledge and cognitive competencies	10
Domain 4: Communication and interpersonal competencies	10
Domain 5: Management and team competencies	11
Domain 6: Leadership potential and professional scholarship competencies	12
2.5 Theoretical and clinical instruction for public health nursing education programmes standards and requirements	13
2.6 Programme evaluation	13
<b>Section 3: Requirements for Education Bodies (EBs), Practice Partners and Education Programmes Leading to Registration as a Public Health Nurse</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>15</b>

# Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives

## Principles of the Code



For information on the Code, please visit: <https://www.nmbi.ie/Standards-Guidance/Code>.

## Introduction

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland's (NMBI's) role is to promote high standards of professional education, practice and professional conduct among nurses and midwives. We are mandated by the Nurses and Midwives Act 2011, as amended, to set standards and requirements for programmes leading to registration. These standards and requirements provide guidance for education bodies (EBs) and practice partners for the preparation of curricula and delivery of nursing and midwifery education programmes leading to registration. The document sets out the draft third edition of the Public Health Nursing Education Programme Standards and Requirements.

The Department of Health and Children's Circular No. 41/2000 states that the Public Health Nurse (PHN) is expected to provide a broad-based integrated prevention, education and health promotion service, and to act as a coordinator in the delivery of a range of services in the community. The PHN, in exercising professional autonomy, is expected to maintain a high standard of nursing care, to share responsibility with the community nursing team for the management of nursing care and the patient's environment and to maintain a high standard of professional and ethical responsibility.

The purpose of this draft document is to provide guidance on flexible, innovative and practice-oriented public health nursing competencies for the PHN education programme for EBs and practice partners.

The standards and requirements have been revised in line with best practice and in consideration of the many changes and challenges facing healthcare and the role of the Public Health Nurse. The changes include:

- The revised programme learning outcomes have been reduced from 13 to 9 and have been streamlined to reflect changes in healthcare policy as outlined in Sláintecare.
- The Domains of Competence have been changed to reflect the six domains of competence in the nursing practice standards (NMBI 2016).
- An extensive review of the indicative content was completed to enable educators to develop a practice-orientated, innovative programme that is principle based to reflect the contemporary practice of public health nursing in the context of Sláintecare. Some of the changes include: a greater emphasis on comprehensive health assessment, principles of chronic disease management, recognition of sepsis, principles of wound care management and principles of caring for children with complex care needs.
- The maternal and child health component of the programme is now to be delivered in two separate modules – one module focusing on the mother and new-born infant and the second module focusing on the child.
- The maternity placement for PHN students will have a greater emphasis on postnatal care and care of the newborn.
- The theoretical and clinical instruction requirements for the programme have been allocated in hours to align with other nursing and midwifery education programmes. Programme hours are measured using the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as per the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) which is used as a standard across all education bodies, rather than counting academic and practice weeks.

The development of these standards involved significant consultation and discussion with key stakeholders and representative groups. Once finalised, they will be validated by the NMBI Education, Training and Standards Committee and approved by our Board.

This document is divided into three sections:

**Section 1** - Outlines the governance and legislation for nursing and midwifery education programmes leading to registration.

**Section 2** - Outlines the standards and requirements for public health nursing education programme.

**Section 3** - Refers to the requirements for the approval of EBs, practice partners and educational programmes leading to registration.

## Section 1: Governance and Legislation for Nursing and Midwifery Education Programmes Leading to Registration

### Nurses and Midwives Act 2011, as amended

The Nurses and Midwives Act 2011, as amended and accompanying Nurses and Midwives Rules provide for the titles of recognised qualifications under the Register of Nurses and Midwives.

For information on the Act and the Rules please visit: <https://www.nmbi.ie/What-We-Do/Legislation>.

### Approval of education bodies (EBs) and practice partners and programmes leading to registration

The Nurses and Midwives (Education and Training) Rules 2018 and (Amendment Rules) 2020 provide the regulatory framework for the approval of programme applications and monitoring of education programmes.

- [Nurses and Midwives \(Education and Training\) Rules 2018 - SI No 218 of 2018](#)
- [Nurses and Midwives \(Education and Training\) \(Amendment\) Rules 2020 \(SI No 501 of 2020\)](#)

The Rules establish:

- Criteria for application of programmes
- Requirement for annual reports and notification of any proposed material changes to a programme
- Review and monitoring of programmes
- Inspections of EBs and AHCPs
- Responses and resolutions following reporting of inspections.

## Section 2: Public Health Nursing Education Programme Standards

### 2.1 Minimum entry requirements

- All candidates must be currently registered on the general nursing division of the NMBI Register of Nurses and Midwives.
- Candidates should have a minimum of two years of general nursing experience or a combination two years of post-registration nursing and midwifery experience.

### 2.2 Purpose of the programme

Upon successful completion of this education programme, the graduate can apply to join the Public Health Nurse division of the Register.

### 2.3 Programme learning outcomes

For the graduate of a public health nursing programme to be eligible to practise as a PHN, the terminal programme learning outcomes will enable the student to:

- Conduct a comprehensive health needs assessment, identify a plan to implement and evaluate care interventions.
- Develop, implement and evaluate health promotion and wellbeing, health education strategies and interventions.
- Work collaboratively with individuals and their carers, families, groups and communities to support their rights and empower them to make decisions concerning their care.
- Work collaboratively within interdisciplinary and integrated care teams to maximise contribution to health and wellbeing improvement.
- Identify health inequalities and work with communities, population and others to address issues of health, social inequalities and social exclusion.
- Work in partnership with the voluntary sector and Health Service Executive (HSE) in health and wellbeing enhancing activities within the community.
- Screen, assess, plan and implement maternal and child healthcare in a family context in line with legislation and national policy.
- Apply leadership skills to practise as an autonomous public health nurse based on research and evidence-based knowledge.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the impact and application of policy development and strategic planning in health services.



## 2.4 Domains of competence and indicative content

### Domains of competence

The domains of competence are distinguishable areas of competence that collectively represent a general descriptive framework for the nursing profession (Englander et al., 2013). Each domain comprises a specific competency statement with corresponding indicators of capacity, the aim of which is to assist with the assessment of a student's professional competence.

### Indicative content

Due to the changing nature of nursing and healthcare services, the Public Health Nurse must be able to respond effectively to the existing and emerging health needs and demands of the population. The list of topics provides an indication of the content for the public health nurse education programme. This allows for the continuing development of subject matter and to accommodate evolving trends.

#### Domain 1: Professional values and conduct of the public health nurse

##### Performance criteria

*Knowledge and appreciation of the virtues of caring, compassion, commitment, integrity, honesty, respect and empathy as a basis for upholding the professional values of nursing and identity as a nurse.*

##### Competencies

The student demonstrates the capacity to:

- 1.1. Critically analyse and incorporate principles of ethics in nursing care and abide by the ethical and professional values and standards as set out in the *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives*.
- 1.2. Select and apply relevant legal, regulatory, governance and ethical requirements and policies and the *Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework*.
- 1.3. Demonstrate ability to practise as a competent, accountable and autonomous practitioner.
- 1.4. Engage in timely referral and collaboration for those areas outside their scope of practice, experience and competence.
- 1.5. Integrate best evidence with clinical expertise and service users' preference and values for the delivery of clinically effective healthcare.
- 1.6. Articulate safe boundaries and respond appropriately to instances of unsafe practice.
- 1.7. Provide empathetic care that is non-judgmental and supports the health and wellbeing of service users on their caseload.
- 1.8. Articulate and promote the role of the Public Health Nurse in a clinical, political and professional context.

### Indicative Content: Professional values and conduct of the Public Health Nurse

- *Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives, incorporating the Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework.*
- Principles of autonomy, accountability and advocacy.
- Principles of public health within a national and international context.
- Principles of primary healthcare.
- Theoretical foundations and key concepts of public health nursing.
- Legislation and policy relevant to the practice of public health nursing.
- Principles of human rights, equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Sociological dynamics shaping care in a contemporary society.

## Domain 2: Public health nursing practice and clinical decision-making competencies

### Performance criteria

*Knowledge and understanding of the principles of delivering safe and effective public health nursing care by using a systematic and problem-solving approach to developing and delivering a person-centred plan of care.*

### Competencies

The student, in partnership with the person, the primary carer and other health professionals, demonstrates the capacity to:

- 2.1 Conduct a comprehensive health assessment using an evidence-based framework to determine nursing needs.
- 2.2 Synthesise and interpret assessment information in order to prioritise care and support optimal outcomes.
- 2.3 Identify expected care outcomes, including a timeline for achievement and an evaluation of the expected outcomes.
- 2.4 Implement evidence-based public health nursing interventions with individuals, families, groups and communities.
- 2.5 Evaluate person-centred outcomes and undertake a comprehensive timely re-assessment.
- 2.6 Critically analyse the social determinants and impact of trauma that may lead to inequalities in health outcomes.
- 2.7 Use culturally appropriate and inclusive evidence-based approaches to assess, support and monitor the health and wellbeing of people and refer to specialist services if necessary.
- 2.8 Assess the impact of complex health issues and comorbidities on people, communities and populations, in order to share knowledge and lead on person-centred public health nursing.

2.9 Identify and advocate for families at risk, while adhering to current safeguarding legislation.

2.10 Promote mental health and wellbeing in the assessment and early identification of adverse mental health outcomes.

**Indicative content: Public health nursing practice and clinical decision-making**

- Comprehensive health assessment in a public health nursing context.
- Nursing models and care planning frameworks relevant to primary care.
- Recognition of and responding to the deteriorating patient (e.g. sepsis).
- Assessment and early identification of mental health concerns.
- Health education and promotion in a public health nursing context.
- Principles of postnatal care and adaption to parenthood.
- Principles of caring for the new-born, to include promotion of breastfeeding and other types of infant feeding.
- Principles of bereavement/pregnancy loss.
- Screening for and promoting healthy development and wellbeing of infants and children.
- Principles of caring for children with complex care needs.
- Principles of child welfare and protection.
- Principles of women's health.
- Principles of adult safeguarding.
- Principles of wound care management.
- Principles of chronic disease management focusing on empowering the self-management of chronic diseases within a primary care context.
- Principles of care of the older person.
- Palliative care, supporting the person with a life-limiting condition and supporting primary carers.
- Provision of social support to individuals, families and communities in times of change.
- Principles of cultural competence in a public health nursing context.

## Domain 3: Knowledge and cognitive competencies

### Performance criteria

*Knowledge and understanding of the health continuum, life and behavioural sciences and their applied principles that underpin a competent knowledge base for public health nursing practice.*

### Competencies

The student demonstrates the capacity to:

- 3.1. Translate evidence-based knowledge to practice.
- 3.2. Apply critical thinking, reflection and clinical judgment to inform practice.
- 3.3. Apply knowledge of demographics and social determinants of health to inform public health nursing practice.
- 3.4. Demonstrate a vision for public health nursing based on competent knowledge devised from research, critical thinking and experiential learning.

### Indicative content: Knowledge and cognitive skills

- Principles of critical thinking and reflection, problem-solving, reasoning, evaluation and synthesis.
- Population profiling and epidemiology.
- Population health and wellbeing: inclusive of social determinants of health and wellbeing.
- Principles of digital health, informatics and data analysis.

## Domain 4: Communication and interpersonal competencies

### Performance criteria

*Knowledge, appreciation and development of empathic communication skills and techniques for effective interpersonal relationships.*

### Competencies

The student demonstrates the capacity to:

- 4.1. Communicate effectively and professionally through sharing of information in accordance with legal, professional and regulatory requirements.
- 4.2. Document public health nursing care in accordance with legislation and organisational policies and procedures.
- 4.3. Communicate and promote health information in a variety of inclusive formats.

### Indicative content: communication and interpersonal skills

- Principles and methods of person-centred communication with an emphasis on equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Principles and methods of communicating information sensitively and in a clear and meaningful way that can be understood by all.
- Principles of good practice in reporting, recording and documentation.
- Principles of effective interprofessional communication for collaborative teamwork.
- Principles of communicating in challenging circumstances and breaking bad news.

## Domain 5: Management and team competencies

### Performance criteria

*Utilisation of management and collaborative partnerships with interdisciplinary teams to promote health and wellbeing of the person, family and communities.*

### Competencies

The student demonstrates the capacity to:

- 5.1. Manage a caseload effectively through collaborative practice, flexibility and the ability to plan, prioritise and delegate, if required.
- 5.2. Use community and population profiling to identify and assess health and wellbeing needs for caseload management.
- 5.3. Engage with interdisciplinary teams to coordinate the delivery of a range of services in the community.
- 5.4. Empower people, communities and populations to connect effectively with local initiatives, programmes and resources that support their health and wellbeing.
- 5.5. Implement audit strategies, continuous improvement activity, risk management and change management to enhance the public health nursing service.

### Indicative content: Management and team working

- Caseload management – identifying priorities, time management and resources for quality of care.
- Coordinating, delegating and supervising care.
- Principles of collaborative practice, teamwork and conflict resolution.
- Principles of lone working.
- Principles of quality and continuous improvement.
- Principles of change management.
- Principles of clinical audit, action planning and evaluation of care provision.
- Principles of risk, hazards and adverse outcomes and management of risks identified.

## Domain 6: Leadership potential and professional scholarship competencies

### Performance criteria

*Develop leadership skills and professional scholarship through self-directed learning, critical analysis and decision-making skills in public health nursing. Maintain competency through continuous professional development (CPD).*

### Competencies

The student demonstrates the capacity to:

- 6.1. Engage in self-directed learning and use continuous professional development to inform and enhance decision-making.
- 6.2. Critically reflect on how to advance and improve public health nursing practice.
- 6.3. Lead compassionately by applying the principles of human rights, equality, diversity and inclusion, to improve the health and wellbeing of people, communities and populations.
- 6.4. Engage in health policy development, implementation and evaluation.

### Indicative content: Leadership potential and professional scholarship

- Principles of effective leadership.
- Principles of health economics and resource allocation.
- Principles of self-care, resilience and holistic wellbeing.
- Principles of personal and professional development through clinical supervision, reflection and evaluation.
- Principles of lifelong learning and research.
- Principles of effective preceptorship for pre-registration and mentorship for post-registration learners.

## 2.5 Theoretical and practice instruction for public health nursing education programmes standards and requirements

Duration	1 academic year
NFQ	Level 9
<b>Total programme</b>	<b>60 ECTS</b>
To include:	
· Maternal and infant health module	10 ECTS
· Child health module	10 ECTS
PHN practice placement	675 hours (minimum)
Maternal and infant health practice practicum	180 hours (Of which 150 hours must be postnatal care in an acute maternity service to include 50 postnatal examinations of mother and infant).

Maternal and Child Health is a requirement of the programme, which is divided into two separate modules:

- Maternal and infant health
- Child health.

Student Public Health Nurses who are registered on the midwifery division of the NMBI Register can seek recognised prior learning (RPL) for the maternal and infant health component of this programme.

## 2.6 Programme evaluation

The PHN education programme should be evaluated by participants, PHN managers, community nursing staff, preceptors and educators and, where possible, by service users. Ongoing evaluation and final evaluation of participants will take place during the programme. Programmes should be periodically reviewed, based on evaluation findings.

This must include an analysis of participant completion and attrition rates. Evaluation forms should be developed at local level.

## Section 3: Requirements for Education Bodies (EBs), Practice Partners and Education Programmes Leading to Registration as a Public Health Nurse

NMBI has a statutory responsibility to approve EBs and practice partners in respect of educational programmes leading to registration as a Public Health Nurse.

Our role in relation to the approval of professional education is distinct from academic accreditation of a programme by the EB or by its awarding body. We set the standards and requirements, including supporting guidance that must be achieved by the EBs and practice partners to ensure educational quality. These benchmark how an application for approval is considered.

Education bodies are required to comply with the criteria for programme approval.

These requirements apply to all programmes developed to meet the needs of nurses and midwives on the following divisions of the Register: Public Health Nursing.

Further information on the programme approval process and monitoring procedures are available at: <https://www.nmbi.ie/Education/Standards-and-Requirements/Policy-for-Programme-Approval-and-Monitoring-Proce>.



## References

Department of Health and Children. (2000a) Job Description of the Public Health Nurse. Circular 41/2000. Dublin: Department of Health and Children.

Englander R., Cameron T., Ballard AJ., Dodge J., Bull J., & Aschenbrener C. (2013) Towards a common taxonomy of competency domains for the health professions and competencies for physicians. *Acad Med*. 2013 Aug 88(8): 1088-94. Doi:10.1097/ACM.0b0131829a3b2b.PMID:23807109

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland. (2021) [\*Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Midwives\*](#). Dublin: Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland. (2016) [\*Nurse Registration Programmes Standards and Requirements\*](#). Dublin: Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland. (2015) [\*Public Health Nursing Education Programme Standards and Requirements\*](#). Dublin: Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland. (2015) [\*Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework\*](#). Dublin: Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland.

Government of Ireland. (2022) *EU Child Guarantee: Ireland's National Action Plan*. Dublin: <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/227064/4f56a03b-c6a2-45ca-ae6e-6ec99bebb8ec.pdf#page=null>

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland  
18/20 Carysfort Avenue,  
Blackrock,  
County Dublin, A94 R299.  
Tel: (01) 639 8500  
Email: [EducationandGuidance@nmbi.ie](mailto:EducationandGuidance@nmbi.ie)  
Web: [www.nmbi.ie](http://www.nmbi.ie)



**Bord Altranais agus  
Cnáimhseachais na hÉireann**  
**Nursing and Midwifery  
Board of Ireland**