

PROFESSIONAL
STANDARDS
NURSING &
MIDWIFERY

Digital Health Competency Standards and Requirements for Undergraduate Nursing and Midwifery Education Programmes

Consultation Report



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

Contents

Introduction	2
Digital Health Competency Standards and Requirements	2
The Consultation Process	3
Phase 1: Internal Consultation	3
Phase 2: Establishment of Working Group	3
Phase 3: Public Consultation	5
Responses	6
Findings	7
Summary	15
Acknowledgements	15
Appendix	16

Introduction

Digital Health Competency Standards and Requirements

There is a significant global focus on strengthening health systems through the application of digital health technologies for consumers, health professionals, healthcare providers and industry towards empowering patients and achieving the vision of health for all (World Health Organization 2020). The Health Service Executive (HSE) Service Plan (2022), the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan 2021 – 2023 and the Health Services People Strategy 2019 - 2024 all set out the priority of digital health as a key enabler to support the significant redesign of services required to realise the Sláintecare model of care.

The Report of the Expert Review Body (ERB) on Nursing and Midwifery (2022) also recognised that digital health is a crucial element in enhancing the delivery of person-centred healthcare and makes significant recommendations in the areas of:

- Nursing and Midwifery Leadership for Digital Health
- Meaningful Use of Nursing and Midwifery Data
- Resourcing Digital Technologies
- Building Nursing and Midwifery Digital Capacity.

The Digital Roadmap for Nursing and Midwifery (2019) and the All-Ireland Nursing and Midwifery Digital Health Capability Framework (2021) are clearly signposted as key documents in the ERB. They highlight what actions need to happen for nursing and midwifery and what capabilities can support the individual, the organisation and the professions.

Digital health education develops an understanding of the pragmatic use of digital technologies. Staff should feel confident accessing up-to-date, quality-assured digital health systems and solutions. Currently, there is a gap between what is expected and the education of nursing and midwifery students. Digital health education needs to be current and universally included within nursing and midwifery school curricula, training and continuing professional development activities.

In May 2022, NMBI began a scoping exercise to inform the development of standards and requirements for digital health competencies for undergraduate education programmes. In December 2022, NMBI established a Working Group with experts in the field of digital health to inform the project.

This report sets out the consultation process undertaken by NMBI to develop the *Digital Health Competency Standards and Requirements for Undergraduate Nursing and Midwifery Education Programmes*.

The Consultation Process

The consultation process consisted of three distinct phases.

Phase 1: Internal Consultation

The initial scoping exercise for the project started in May 2022 with Ms Loretto Grogan (National Chief Nursing and Midwifery Information Officer), Dr Vanessa Clarke (Assistant Director of Nursing, Nursing and Midwifery Planning and Development) and Ms Carolyn Donohoe (NMBI, Director of Education, Policy and Standards).

The first draft version was developed in October 2022 and invitations for representation on the working group were issued to stakeholder groups in November 2022.

Phase 2: Establishment of Working Group

A working group was established in December 2022, with experts in the field of digital health to review the draft standards and requirements. The working group comprised of the following members:

Table 1: Working Group membership

Representing	Name	Title
Nursing and Midwifery Board Ireland (NMBI)	Carolyn Donohoe	Director of Education, Policy and Standards and Committee Chair
Health Service Executive (HSE) Chief Nursing and Midwifery Information	Loretto Grogan	National Chief Nursing and Midwifery Information Officer
Nurses and Midwifery Planning Development Unit (NMPDU)	Dr Vanessa Clarke	Assistant Director of Nursing (NMPDU)
Irish Universities Associations (IUA)	Dr Síle A. Creedon	Lecturer, University College Cork
Irish Universities Associations (IUA)	Dr Ruth Ryan	Lecturer, University of Limerick
Technological Higher Education Authorities (THEA)	John Larkin	Lecturer, TUS Athlone

Continued

Representing	Name	Title
Technological Higher Education Authorities (THEA)	Elaine Walsh	Lecturer, ATU Donegal Letterkenny
Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director (ONMSD)	Dr Anne Gallen	Area Director (ONMSD)
Department of Health	Kelly Mofflin	Deputy Chief Nursing Officer
Group Director of Nursing and Midwifery	Patrick Browne	eHealth Director of Nursing-Nursing and Midwifery Information Officer with Saolta University Health Care Group
Practice Development Coordinators Group	Dorothy Hanly	NPDC, Muiriosa Foundation
Midwifery	Lucille Sheehy	Clinical Practice Development Co-ordinator/ ADOMN (National Maternity Hospital)
Children's Nursing	Emma Cooney	Chief Nursing Information Officer (Director of Nursing), Children's Health Ireland
Mental Health Nursing	Jennie Synnott	Area Director of Nursing, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
Intellectual Disability Nursing	Judy Ryan	Director NMPDU, South East, Intellectual Disability Nursing National Lead
Public Health Nursing	Sinead Lawlor	National Practice Development Coordinator (PHN), ONMSD
Older Persons Services	Deirdre Lang	Care of the Older Persons National Lead
Clinical Placement Coordinator	Carol Mulqueen	Clinical Placement Coordinator (Portiuncula University Hospital)
Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU)	Bernadette Heneghan	Nursing executive member
Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO)	Steve Pitman	Head of Education and Professional Development
Psychiatric Nurses Association of Ireland (PNA)	Aisling Culhane	Research and Development Advisor
Nursing and Midwifery Board Ireland (NMBI)	Delaine Pillay	Consultation Research Officer

The working group met on the following dates to discuss the document:

- Friday, 16 December 2022
- Tuesday, 17 January 2023
- Monday, 20 February 2023
- Monday, 24 April 2023

Phase 3: Public Consultation

On 28 February 2023, NMBI launched a public consultation seeking feedback on the Draft Digital Health Competency Standards and Requirements.

The public consultation was open for six weeks and closed on 11 April 2023. The draft document was published on the NMBI website as part of the consultation, alongside an online questionnaire (see Appendix 1) to gather feedback.

Key stakeholders were emailed directly, inviting them to participate in the consultation, including a link to the questionnaire.

Additional communication methods were used to promote the consultation. These included social media platforms, such as LinkedIn and Twitter, and the NMBI eZine newsletter, which is emailed to all nursing and midwifery registrants as well as other subscribers.

Additionally, a press release was issued to media.

Responses

Table 2: Methods of consultation

Method	Number of respondents
Online survey	80
Incomplete online survey	35
Written responses	4

Only respondents that completed at least 80% of the questions in the survey were included in the data analysis.

As such, the number of responses considered for the analysis from the online survey was 45 (n=45).

The total number of responses from the online survey and written responses combined was 49 (n=49).

The rationale for not including all online responses in the analysis was that 17 responses only completed demographic information but did not comment on the standards.

12 responses clicked on the survey link but there was no data added in response, while six responses completed less than half of the survey (34% to 47% of the questions recorded).

Findings

In **Question 1**, respondents to the online survey were asked to identify which option best represented them. Below is the breakdown of respondents.

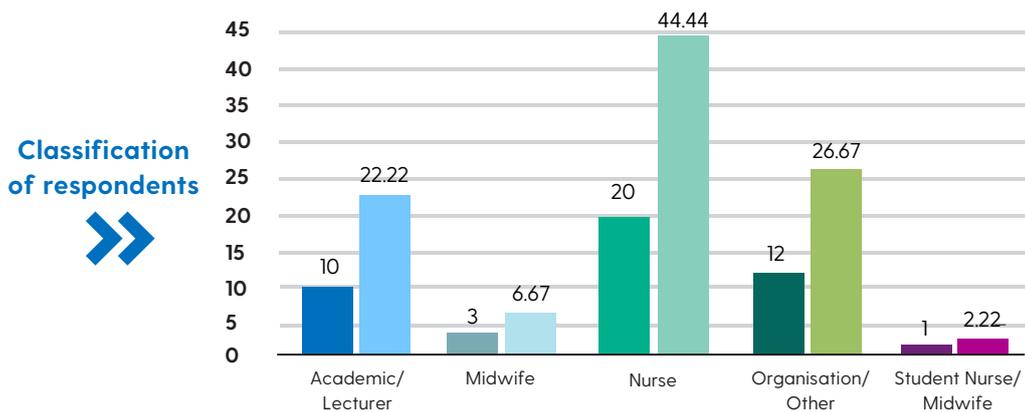


Figure 1: Classification of respondents

The majority of the respondents were nurses (44%) followed by Organisations/Other (26.67%). One response was received by the category ‘student nurse/midwife’.

Written responses received from key stakeholders included:

- Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)
- NMBI’s Education, Training and Standards Committee (ETS)
- Individual response from Practice Development Co-ordinator (Community)
- The Pharmacy Regulator Ireland (PSI)

In **Question 2**, we asked If you selected nurse/midwife for question one, how long have you been practising?

The bar graph below is represents all the respondents.

40% of nurses and 6.67% midwives who responded have been practising for over 10 years.

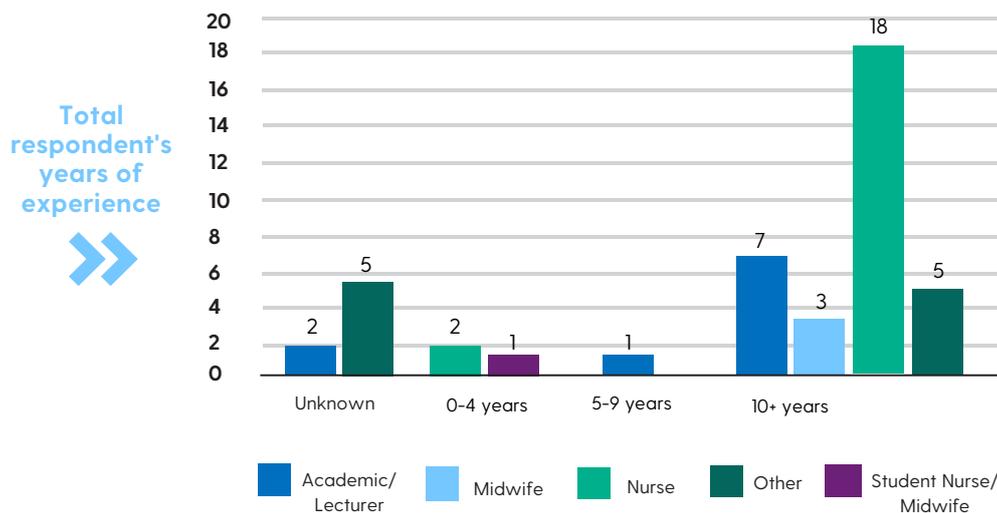


Figure 2: Representation of the number of years respondents have been practicing.

In **Question 3** we asked, 'how familiar are you with digital health systems?'

93.33% of the overall respondents said that they are familiar with digital health systems.

24 respondents provided more details on their familiarity with digital health systems. These have been categorised into three areas as outlined below:

- 46% mentioned their area of work is digital (11 responses)
- 29% mentioned having a general awareness of digital health (7 responses)
- 25% mentioned university programmes (6 responses).

Question 4 asked respondents to rate their confidence in using digital health systems.

46.67% (21) of respondents said they feel ‘very confident’ using digital health systems and 37.78% (17) said that they were ‘somewhat confident’, while 15.56% (7) of respondents said that they were ‘not sure’. One response indicated ‘not applicable’ as it was an organisation.

The graph below provides a breakdown of the responses by category of respondents.

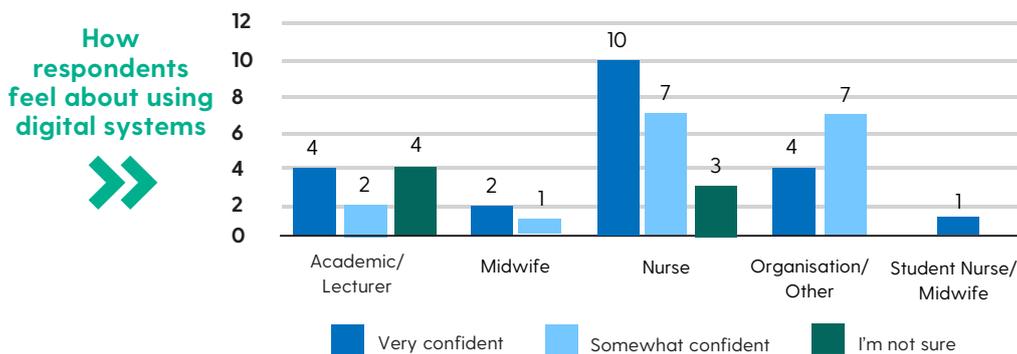


Figure 3: Bar graph representation of the confident scale of respondents to digital systems

The next section of **Questions 5-10** focused on the domains of digital health competence from the online survey (n=45). Two questions were asked on each domain:

- Do you think this section provides adequate information? The results are outlined in table 3.
- Could this section be improved? The suggestions for improvement have been incorporated into themes, which are discussed later in the report.

Table 3: Response to adequacy of information per domain

Domains of competence	Adequate information given	Could be improved
Digital Professionalism	62% respondents (n=28)	38% respondents (n=17)
Leadership and Advocacy	60% respondents (n=27)	40% respondents (n=18)
Data and Information Quality	71% respondents (n=32)	29% respondents (n=13)
Information Enabled Care	80% respondents (n=36)	20% respondents (n=9)
Technology	76% respondents (n=34)	24% respondents (n=11)
Assessment Section	67% respondents (n=30)	33% respondents (n=15)

The majority of respondents (on average, between two thirds and three quarters) found that the information given was adequate for the needs of the programme.

Thematic responses were derived from both the online survey and the written responses received (n=49).

Overall, the document was well received. Below are some of the comments provided by respondents.

“These Draft Standards are well thought out & clearly demonstrate the competencies required for Undergraduate going forward”

“I am delighted to see this draft document for Digital Health Competency Standards for undergraduate Nurses and Midwives.”

“Overall covers all areas and is very welcome. Undergraduate awareness of digital health and competencies is essential in preparing nursing for digital transformation.”

“We would like to acknowledge what a positive initiative this is, and its potential to act as a template for other professional bodies and academic institutions.... It is very well organised, comprehensive, accessible, and thought through. We welcome the development of the new education programme in digital health for nurses and midwives”

“..the *National standards for information management in health and social are currently under review. The content of this NMBI document aligns with the updated content of the revised standards, which will be available towards the end of 2023”

Main Themes for Improvement

Following a review of feedback across all five domains, three key themes emerged. This report presents the findings of the feedback, followed by our responses.

Theme 1: Unclear language

What you said

Over half of respondents (n=25) felt that some aspects of the competencies were unclear and suggested that re-ordering some of the competencies within the domain would allow for better readability. Others said that they would like better clarity on the language or terminology used, and a more comprehensive glossary.

“..rearranging the content so that Information Creation and Use comes before Data Sharing, as information can only be shared after it has been created”

“ ..Information creation and use ‘Understands the potential of digital health to support practice and enable new models of care’ was first it would set the scene better for the first point ‘Sources and critically evaluates information to support evidence-based decision-making for practice and research”

“There is reference made to ‘data integrity’ which is not included in the glossary I think an inclusion of this in the glossary would be useful.”

“A precise definition of Information Enabled Care may be informative and enhance one’s ability to fully understand with domain 4.”

Our Response

The digital health competency standards and requirements for undergraduate nursing and midwifery education programmes have been developed as the first step in preparing undergraduate nurses and midwives to meet the challenges of delivering digitally-enabled care. This initiative is part of a wider national programme for improving digital capability among nurses and midwives at all levels. It is envisaged that as the digital capability of nurses and midwives in the practice environment increases, so too will their ability to support the development of student digital competencies.

Actions

To address these comments, NMBI has:

- Re-ordered Domains 3, 4 and 5.
- Reworded or expanded on some competencies to provide better clarity; for example, 5.3 Digital health governance now includes three additional competencies.
- Updated the introduction section to provide more context for the standards.
- Expanded the Glossary section adding seven terms.

Theme 2: More examples to be included

What you said

20% of respondents (n=9) said that the document should provide specific examples of digital software and tools. Others would like the inclusion of legislation and policies to be referenced in the document.

“give examples of tools/technology.”

“Give examples of such situations or types of IT software solutions”

“Include examples of how digital tools in healthcare are used for the undergraduate student.”

“Safety is referenced within 5.1 under the point on Appropriate Technologies.....is important the undergraduate has an understanding of Cybersecurity, DPIA etc”

“Overall it is sufficient; however, data management needs to be more in-depth - for example, an understanding of user access restrictions, understanding of the data protection legislation.....”

Our Response

The development of digital health competencies is seen as an integral part of the development of nursing and midwifery professional competencies and as such the principles and standards outlined in Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives (NMBI, 2021) will apply to digitally enabled practice. The development of these standards has taken into account that the principles and standards for professional conduct will already have been included as part of other NMBI educational standards and requirements. Similarly, as Data Protection legislation refers to all data, it is assumed that this legislation is included as part of other educational programmes at undergraduate level.

Digital technologies are being implemented at an ever-increasing pace nationally and while there is a drive for national guidance and consistency in the use of technologies, there is wide variation in the range of technologies being implemented and the contexts in which they are applied. Therefore, as each student's experience of digital technologies may be unique, no attempt has been made as part of these standards to recommend one particular system or digital tool. It is anticipated that given the speed with which digital technologies are being adopted and the range of clinical placements that students complete, students will be afforded opportunities to engage in a range of digital technologies to support competency development.

As digital healthcare continually evolves, so too does applicable national and international legislation. Policy guidance is also changing and developing rapidly, varying across organisations. Therefore, no attempt was made in the development of these standards to refer to specific legislation or policies.

Actions

To address these comments, NMBI has:

- Provided broad examples of tools in the assessment section.
- Included the NMBI *Code of Conduct and Ethics for Nurses and Midwives* (2021) as the overarching principles for use when undergraduates become qualified practitioners.
- Reviewed digital health legislation and found that examples identified are still in draft format, not yet ratified by the State and so not included in the document.

Theme 3: The National Competency Assessment Document (NCAD)

What you said

18% of respondents (n=8) asked if the competencies will be included in the National Competency Assessment Document (NCAD) and for clearer guidance of the assessment process.

“Need to include assessment of competence in relation to digital health in NCAD especially in relation to Data Protection, not uploading onto Social Media forums eg tiktok, snapchat etc.”

“the overall assessment of competence instrument is the NMBI National Competency Assessment Document (NCAD)... will there be an addendum to the NCAD or will this be an added document? what stage is the student assessed and what level?”

“Will the NCAD have to be amended to incorporate these Standards and Requirements?”

Our Response

The National Competency Assessment Document (NCAD) is the overall assessment competency tool for undergraduate practice competency achievement. The digital health competencies may be included as an addendum to the current document. There is a review of the undergraduate curriculum underway for 2023-2024. The NCAD will be full revised following this review.

Actions

To address these comments, NMBI will:

- Provide a digital health competencies addendum for the NCAD when the standards and requirement are approved by the Board pending further national review of the curriculum.

Summary

An expert working group was established in December 2022 to produce standards and requirements for digital health competency for undergraduate nursing and midwifery education programmes.

A draft of the standards was devised and prepared for public consultation. The public consultation was live from 28 February to 11 April 2023.

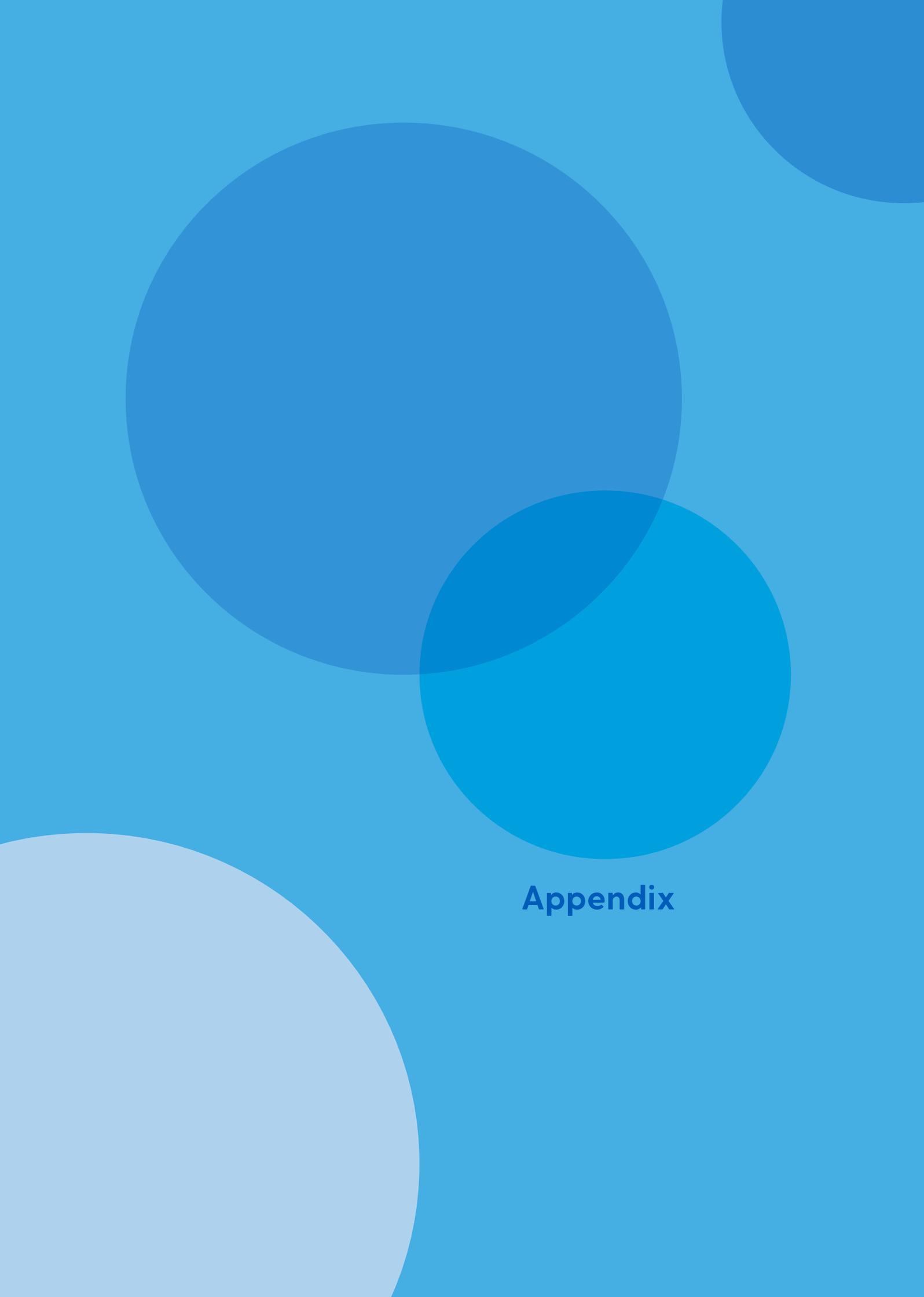
An invitation to consult and provide feedback was circulated to stakeholders including the HSE, education bodies, practice partner sites, representative groups and other relevant Irish regulators. Additional communication methods were used to promote the consultation and encourage participation in the survey including on social media, the NMBI eZine (online newsletter), and through a press release.

49 responses were received and analysed. Satisfaction rates were good with regard to providing adequate information in the draft standards and requirement document, with between two thirds to three quarters of respondents indicating their agreement with this. Three themes for improvement emerged; unclear language, more examples to be included and the National Competency Assessment Document.

Revisions were made based on the feedback, and the expert working group drafted and revised a final version of the undergraduate digital health competency standards and requirements to be reviewed by the NMBI Education, Training and Standards Committee for recommendation to the Board. An agreement was reached to submit the final draft to the Board which was approved in May 2023.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those who took the time to be part of our consultation process. This report on the consultation process was reviewed by the Board of NMBI and the final version of the Digital Health Competency Standards and Requirements for Education Programmes was published on our website in June 2023.



Appendix

Appendix 1

Online Survey Questions

Draft Digital Health Competency Standards and Requirements

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) has developed its draft digital health competency standards and requirements for undergraduate nursing and midwifery education programmes.

The draft document aims to ensure that digital health is incorporated into education programmes which lead to registration to ensure nurses and midwives learn about digital tools as part of their education. The draft standards aim to align with national and international evidence-based practice in a changing digital health environment.

NMBI would like to capture your experience and opinion of the draft standards and requirements for the digital health competencies for undergraduate education programmes. The new draft is on broad public consultation from Tuesday, 28 February to Tuesday, 11 April 2023. This survey is anonymous. Your responses will not be linked to your identity in any way and will be kept confidential. The information collected in this survey will be used solely for research purposes and will not be shared with any third parties.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Thank you for your time.

Please respond no later than 5pm on Tuesday, 11 April 2023.

STEP 1: View the Draft Digital Health Competency Standards and Requirements [here](#).

STEP 2: Take the survey. The survey should take you 15 minutes to complete.

Survey questions

Q1. Which of the below best represents you?

- Nurse
- Midwife
- Academic/lecturer
- Service user/patient
- Student nurse/midwife
- General public
- Organisation/other

Q1.1 If organisation/other, please specify below:

Q2. If you selected nurse/midwife for question one, how long have you been practising?

- 0-4 years
- 5-9 years
- 10+ years

Q3. Are you familiar with digital health?

- Yes
- No

Q3.1 If yes, please provide details in the comment box below:

Q4. How do you feel about using digital systems?

- Very Confident
- Somewhat confident
- I'm not sure
- Not confident
- Definitely not confident

Domain 1: Digital Professionalism

Q5. Do you think this section provides adequate information?

Yes

No

Q5.1 If no, please provide details in the comment box below:

Q5.2 Could this section be improved?

Yes

No

Q5.3 If yes, please provide details in the comment box below:

Domain 2: Leadership and Advocacy

Q6. Do you think this section provides adequate information?

Yes

No

Q6.1 If no, please provide details in the comment box below:

Q6.2 Could this section be improved?

Yes

No

Q6.3 If yes, please provide details in the comment box below:

Domain 3: Data and Information Quality

Q7. Do you think this section provides adequate information?

- Yes
- No

Q7.1 If no, please provide details in the comment box below:

Q7.2 Could this section be improved?

- Yes
- No

Q7.3 If yes, please provide details in the comment box below:

Domain 4: Information Enabled Care

Q8. Do you think this section provides adequate information?

- Yes
- No

Q8.1 If no, please provide details in the comment box below:

Q8.2 Could this section be improved?

- Yes
- No

Q8.3 If yes, please provide details in the comment box below:

Domain 5: Technology

Q9. Do you think this section provides adequate information?

- Yes
- No

Q9.1 If no, please provide details in the comment box below:

Q9.2 Could this section be improved?

- Yes
- No

Q9.3 If yes, please provide details in the comment box below:

Assessment

Q10. Do you think this section provides adequate information?

- Yes
- No

Q10.1 If no, please provide details in the comment box below:

Q10.2 Could this section be improved?

- Yes
- No

Q10.3 If yes, please provide details in the comment box below:

Q11. NMBI welcomes any additional commentary that you may have on the draft standards and requirements for the digital health competencies for undergraduate education programmes

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