

CONTINUING COMPETENCE SELF ASSESSMENT: Have You Met Your Professional Responsibility?



Objective

At the completion of this learning activity, the participant will be able to describe the self assessment step of the continuing competence process.

The mission of the North Carolina Board of Nursing (NCBON) is to protect the public by regulating the practice of nursing. One way the Board meets this mandate is through the Continuing Competence requirement for nurses. All licensed nurses in North Carolina (NC) must meet Continuing Competence requirements in order to renew or reinstate their license.

Continuing Competence, according to the NC Nursing Rules, means *the ongoing acquisition and application of knowledge and the decision making, psychomotor, and interpersonal skills expected of the licensed nurse resulting in nursing care that contributes to the health and welfare of clients served*" (NC Nursing Rules, 21 NCAC 36.0120[10]). Initial competence is demonstrated when one completes an approved program of nursing education and passes the licensure examination, but nursing practice changes quickly, and in order to provide safe care, all nurses must engage in reflective practice to maintain competence. Reflective practice is a process used to assess one's own practice to identify and seek learning opportunities to promote continuing competence. Reflective practice helps nurses identify goals and progress from "novice to expert" (Benner 1984). Effective July 1, 2008, NC licensees seeking renewal or reinstatement must attest to having completed the Continuing Competence process (including a self assessment, development of a learning plan, and completion of specific learning activities) and be prepared to submit evidence of completion if requested by the Board. This means, that if you have an active license, you will complete the entire Continuing Competence process every renewal cycle. A good way to stay on top of this is to remember as soon as your license is renewed, it is time to begin the two year continuing competence cycle again: complete your self assessment, develop your plan, select learning opportunities, and implement your plan so that you have completed the cycle by the time you once again renew your license. This means that you will have a new self assessment, plan, and action implementation every two years! If your license is currently inactive, you will have to demonstrate that you have met the continuing competence requirements within the immediate two years before your license will be reinstated.

The first step of the reflective practice process is for the nurse to assess his or her practice. This is depicted in the NCBON Continuing Competence Cycle diagram (see attached Figure 1). This *self assessment* includes four dimensions, is based on NCBON standards, and provides the basis from which to identify learning needs, develop a plan to meet those needs, and ultimately to meet the Continuing Competence requirements for NC nurses. This may sound very intimidating, but although the process is a bit more formal and involves a few more steps, it is not really different from what you do every single day in your practice.

Think about the following situations:

- a patient you are caring for has a problem with which you are unfamiliar;
- a medication has been ordered that you have never given before and don't know anything about;
- you will need to use a new, unfamiliar piece of equipment for patient care;

- you have moved to a new specialty of practice, or a new patient population is now part of your clinical area;
- you are part of a team examining a process, but do not have all of the information you need to participate fully; or,
- you are a faculty member who has been asked to teach using a new methodology.

What is the first thing that you do in every one of these situations? Right! You do a *self assessment* of what you need to know!

Now that you see how self assessment is part of your practice every day, let's look at the specific self assessment steps for NCBON-required Continuing Competence. This self assessment includes four dimensions of nursing practice that are applicable in any practice setting. The dimensions are founded in NC nursing law and rules and are general in nature, allowing them to be applicable regardless of nursing practice setting or role. When selecting standards that apply to your area of practice, you may also consider professional or specialty organization standards or agency policies. Your performance evaluation and feedback from your colleagues or manager may be other resources to help you complete a self assessment. The NCBON has created four worksheets to assist you as you examine the self assessment dimensions. Each worksheet includes broad statements that you need to rate in terms of your own practice. The possible ratings for each statement are from "1" (novice) to "5" (expert). Only you will see this self assessment, and it is important that you are honest in your rating as your self assessment will be the basis for your learning plan. Keep in mind that often it is difficult to honestly assess oneself, and you will need to carefully consider the items on the worksheets so that you do not rate yourself too high or too low. Once you complete all four of the

worksheets, you will use this information to identify areas of your practice that are strong, and areas where you would like to improve or gain additional knowledge and/or experience. This will lead you to the next step in the Continuing Competence process (development of a learning plan), but that is beyond what will be discussed in this article. Directions for accessing each of the self assessment worksheets is included with each individual dimension discussion below so that you can pull them up now on your computer and/or print them off for this exercise.

Let's examine the four dimensions, one at a time.

Dimension One: Professional Responsibility

(Type in <http://ncbon.com/content.aspx?id=664> and then click on the link for Dimension Worksheet 1).

This dimension examines your knowledge and understanding of your responsibility and accountability for ensuring that your practice and conduct meet the standards of the profession and comply with the NC Nursing Practice Act. On this worksheet you are asked to rate items related to the NC Law and Rules governing nursing practice, policies relevant to your practice setting, safely accepting an assignment and providing care, and seeking advice or guidance when uncertain. Take a few moments now to complete this worksheet for Dimension One.

Dimension Two: Knowledge-Based Practice

(Type in <http://ncbon.com/content.aspx?id=664> and then click on the link for Dimension Worksheet 2).

This dimension examines your knowledge and understanding of your responsibility and accountability for having the knowledge and skills necessary to provide safe, competent nursing practice. On this worksheet you are asked to rate items related how you gain and use knowledge, how you remain current in your practice, how you share knowledge with others, and how you use technology in your practice. Take a few moments now to complete the

worksheet for Dimension Two.

Dimension Three: Legal-Ethical Practice

(Type in <http://ncbon.com/content.aspx?id=664> and then click on the link for Dimension Worksheet 3). This dimension examines your understanding of legal

and ethical aspects of practice. Here you are asked to rate items related to your knowledge of required NCBON reporting situations, client advocacy responsibilities, maintaining confidentiality, assuring professional boundaries, your role in creating or supporting a professional healthcare envi-

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ronment, and identification of alternate approaches to maximize outcomes for clients. Take some time now to complete this worksheet for Dimension Three.

Dimension Four: Collaborative Practice

(Type in <http://ncbon.com/content.aspx?id=664> and then click on the link for Dimension Worksheet 4).

This dimension examines your understanding of the nurse's responsibility to maintain safe, effective nursing care in collaboration with clients, significant others, and other health care providers. You are asked to rate the way that you are able to communicate and collaborate with others, maintain accountability for your assignment, maintain sensitivity to the client(s) and provide care that meets individual needs, and include appropriate teaching in your care. You are also asked to look at the effectiveness of your interactions with clients and health team members. Take a few moments now to complete this last worksheet for Dimension Four.

Now that you have completed the four worksheets, here are the next steps in your self assessment process:

- Using your worksheets, identify areas where you feel strong in your practice. Is there anything in these areas that you want to make even stronger? Do you want to consider ways that you can share your areas of strength with other nurses?
- Using your worksheets, identify areas where you have opportunities to improve your knowledge and/or skill, or where you are uncomfortable in your nursing practice. Are there any areas that could potentially cause you to provide care that is not of the highest quality, or is actually unacceptable or unsafe?
- Talk with your peers if you are comfortable asking for feedback. If you do not want to ask directly, think back - have you gotten any feedback from your peers about areas where you were strong, or areas that could use some improvement? Do these areas coincide with your

self assessment?

- Talk with your manager, or look at your last performance evaluation. What areas were identified as strong? Which areas need some improvement? Do these areas match your self assessment?
- Think about your area of practice, the clients you care for, and any goals you have for yourself (for example, are you planning to become certified in a specialty?).

Using all of the information you have gathered from these sources, you now have a self assessment that will allow you to develop a plan, identify appropriate actions, and complete your Continuing Competency requirements for the current two year license renewal cycle.

Detailed information on the Continuing Competency requirements can be found on the NCBON website (see links below). Should you have questions once you review the information on the website, please contact Tammy Edelen at tammy@ncbon.com.

Required reading for successful course completion can be found on the NCBON website at www.ncbon.com. Click on Quick Links; click on Continuing Competence. Read and/or print the following documents:

- ABCD Sheet
- Self-Assessment - Dimension Worksheet 1
- Self-Assessment - Dimension Worksheet 2
- Self-Assessment - Dimension Worksheet 3
- Self-Assessment - Dimension Worksheet 4
- Rule definitions
- Rule 232
- Continuing Competence Cycle Diagram (PDF) (see page 27 Vol 7 N2 Edition 20)

Reference

Benner, P. (1984). *From novice to expert: Excellence and power in clinical nursing practice*. Menlo Park:CA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

EARN CE CREDIT

INSTRUCTIONS

Read the article and on-line reference documents (if applicable). There is not a test requirement, although reading for comprehension and self-assessment of knowledge is encouraged.

RECEIVE CONTACT HOUR CERTIFICATE

Go to www.ncbon.com and select "Events, Workshops & Conferences"; then select "Board Sponsored Workshops"; under "Bulletin Articles", scroll down to the link "Continuing Competence Self Assessment." Register, complete and submit the evaluation, and print your certificate immediately.

Registration deadline is November 1, 2014

PROVIDER ACCREDITATION

The North Carolina Board of Nursing will award **1.0 contact hours** for this continuing nursing education activity.

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