



Cook Islands Nursing Council

# SCOPE AND STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

For Nurses and Midwives in  
the Cook Islands



## Cook Islands Nursing Council

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### ABBREVIATIONS

BN	Bachelor of Nursing
CINC	Cook Islands Nursing Council
EN	Enrolled Nurse
HCA	Health Care Attendant
ICM	International Confederation of Midwives
ICN	International Council of Nurses
MOH	Ministry of Health
NP	Nurse Practitioner
NZ	New Zealand
RM	Registered Midwife
RN	Registered Nurse
TMO	Te Marae Ora
WHO	World Health Organization



## GLOSSARY

<b>Expanded practice</b>	A change in the role of an individual nurse or midwife to include areas of practice that have not previously been within their scope of practice but are within the overall scope of practice of the nursing and midwifery professions such as intravenous cannulation or prescribing medication.
<b>Recognised Institution</b>	Suitability of an institution to provide a recognised program of study is determined by the Cook Islands Nursing Council (CINC).
<b>Recognised program of study</b>	Suitability of a program leading to qualification as a nurse or midwife is determined by the CINC.
<b>Scope of Practice</b>	What a nurse or midwife can do based on their training, qualification, and the law.
<b>Standard of Practice</b>	The minimum acceptable benchmark of care provided by nurses and midwives. Standards set the level of education and performance for entry into practice



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### FOREWARD FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COOK ISLANDS NURSING COUNCIL

On behalf of the Cook Islands Nursing Council (CINC), I am pleased to present the Scope and Standards of Practice for Nurses and Midwives in the Cook Islands. This document marks an important step forward in strengthening the regulation of nursing and midwifery practice and upholding our commitment to protecting the public through safe and competent care.



For the first time, the Cook Islands now has a formal Scope of Practice.

Its introduction is a significant milestone as it clearly sets out the baseline expectations required for all nurses and midwives to practise safely in the Cook Islands. Alongside this, the Standards of Practice have been updated from the previous Competencies to reflect contemporary practice and the realities of our health system today.

These two components work hand in hand. The Scope of Practice outlines the minimum requirements and professional boundaries for practice, while the Standards of Practice describe how nurses and midwives maintain competence and deliver safe, high-quality care throughout their careers. This document is intended for everyone who interacts with our professions. It serves as a guide for nurses and midwives, a reference for employers, educators, and managers, and a source of transparency for the public. Having this shared understanding strengthens trust, safety, and confidence in the profession.

We also acknowledge the many people who have contributed to regulatory work over the years. Previous Councils, senior nurses, midwives, and health leaders created the foundation that has enabled this progress. To all nurses and midwives across Rarotonga and the Pa Enua who took part in consultations, and to Te Marae Ora, sector partners, and regional advisers for their guidance and support. Your insights and experiences have ensured that this document aligns with the needs of our workforce and remains grounded in our Cook Islands context.

As Chair of the Cook Islands Nursing Council, I encourage everyone to engage with this document, understand its expectations, and apply it in daily practice. We look forward to



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continuing the important work of strengthening the systems that uphold safe, effective, and culturally grounded care for our people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mirella Simpson".

Mirella Simpson

Chair, Cook Islands Nursing Council



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### MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF NURSE OFFICER

On behalf of the Ministry of Health and in my capacity as Chief Nurse Officer, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all nurses across the Cook Islands on the successful establishment of the *Scope and Standards of Practice for Nurses and Midwives in the Cook Islands*. This achievement marks a significant milestone for our profession and is a testament to the collective dedication, leadership, and commitment shown by our nursing and midwifery workforce.



This document is an essential pillar that defines the standards, responsibilities, and professional boundaries of nursing practice in the Cook Islands. It provides clarity and direction, ensuring that our services are safe, consistent, and aligned with international best practices. Importantly, it strengthens public confidence in the care we deliver and support the ongoing development of our nursing and midwifery professions.

As we move forward, it is vital that all nurses and midwives comply with and uphold the guidance outlined in both documents. This document is designed not only to protect the public but also to safeguard and support each of you in your professional roles. Adhering to these standards promotes accountability, fosters continuous improvement, and ensures we are delivering the highest quality of care to our communities.

Thank you all for your unwavering dedication and for contributing to this important milestone. Together, we continue to elevate the standard of nursing and midwifery in the Cook Islands and reinforce the strong foundation on which our health system is built.

**Nga Manea**

Chief Nursing Officer

Cook Islands Ministry of Health



## Introduction

The Cook Islands Nursing Council (CINC) regulates nurses and midwives practicing in the Cook Islands. The main purpose of regulation is to ensure that the public receives safe and ethical care from competent nurses and midwives.<sup>1</sup> A regulatory body establishes, promotes and enforces standards for education and practice.<sup>1</sup> By doing this, they demonstrate to the public, government, employers and other stakeholders that the profession is committed to retaining the public's trust and delivering quality services.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the key role of the CINC is to protect the public by ensuring nurses and midwives are appropriately qualified and competent to practice. The CINC does this by developing standards, codes and guidelines which together establish the requirements for the professional and safe practice of nurses and midwives in the Cook Islands.

A scope of nursing practice outlines the parameters and boundaries within which nurses practice.<sup>2</sup> It clarifies the educational outcomes, provides examples of core activities and fundamental differences between each nursing category.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the scope of practice of a midwife is defined as providing women with support, care and advice during pregnancy, labour, and the postpartum period including conducting births and providing care for newborns and infants.<sup>4</sup> Simply put, a scope of practice defines *what* a nurse or midwife can do based on their training, qualification, and the law. A scope of practice is not limited to specific tasks, functions or responsibilities it is dynamic and responsive to health needs, development of knowledge, and technological advances.<sup>5</sup>

A standard of practice refers to the minimum acceptable benchmark of care provided by nurses and midwives. Standards set the level of education and performance for entry into practice.<sup>6</sup> The ICN believes that profession-led nursing regulation contributes to public protection and quality patient outcomes through establishing, promoting and enforcing standards of practice.<sup>1</sup> This document forms part of the nursing regulation that supports the CINC to protect the public.

This ***Scope and standards of practice for nurses and midwives in Cook Islands*** has been developed as guidance for stakeholders such as employers, private and public health services, and other health practitioners, on the varying roles and scope of practice of nurses in the Cook



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Islands. Nurses and midwives can use this to guide their work to ensure they are practicing in a safe manner. Employers can use the information as a starting point, when determining which practitioner best suits the needs and requirements of their health service, and the public can use this document to seek clarity when receiving care and treatment from a nurse or midwife.

### Development of the Scope and Standards of Practice

This ***Scope and standards of practice for nurses and midwives in Cook Islands*** has evolved from significant consultation with nurses and midwives in the Cook Islands through a series of workshops in October 2025. Further consultation occurred with other professionals in the TMO MOH, as well as key stakeholders. The scopes of practice also take in to account other nursing and midwifery scopes of practice in the region from Australia and New Zealand (NZ).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Given that undergraduate nurses in the Cook Islands are currently educated and trained through a NZ nursing programme, particular attention has been paid to the NZ scope of practice as well as the educational outcomes of the Bachelor of Nursing (BN) Pacific at Whitireia Polytechnic.

The standards of practice for Midwives align to essential competencies for Midwives outlined by the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM).<sup>4</sup> While the standards of practice for nurses are derived from the *Competencies for nurses in the Cook Islands (2022)*.<sup>15</sup> This version also considers other competencies and standards of nursing practice in the region and has evolved through significant consultation with nurses and midwives in the Cook Islands, as well as other professionals and key stakeholders.

The standards of practice for nurses are underpinned by the Nursing Process (assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation), a systematic, 5-step approach to delivering quality, holistic and person-centred nursing care that is universally known by nurses and midwives and is incorporated into many curriculums across the globe.<sup>16</sup> Principles of leadership and professional practice, therapeutic relationships and culturally competent care, and communication and collaboration also form part of the standards. Each standard is interrelated and demonstrated in practice simultaneously. When practising, a nurse will be integrating aspects of each standard where they relate to their area of practice using a range



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of scientific, relational and cultural, evidence-based knowledge to provide effective care to people, families and communities.

### Categories of nursing and midwifery in Cook Islands

In the Cook Islands, all nurses, including those practicing in specialized areas, are collectively referred to as 'nurses.' This unified designation recognizes that specialised nurses first qualify as Registered Nurses (RN), and their advanced practice builds upon the foundational knowledge, skills, and professional standards of general nursing. Referring to all as 'nurses' ensures consistency, acknowledges their shared professional identity, and reinforces the integral role of nursing in health care delivery. The categories of Nurse and Midwife in Cook Islands are aligned to the following definitions from the International Council of Nurses (ICN) for 'Nurse'<sup>17</sup> and the ICM for 'Midwife'.<sup>4</sup>

*A nurse is a professional who is educated in the scientific knowledge, skills and philosophy of nursing, and regulated to practice nursing based on established standards of practice and ethical codes. Nurses enhance health literacy, promote health, prevent illness, protect patient safety, alleviate suffering, facilitate recovery and adaptation, and uphold dignity throughout life and at end of life. They work autonomously and collaboratively across settings to improve health, through advocacy, evidence-informed decision-making, and culturally safe, therapeutic relationships. Nurses provide people-centred, compassionate clinical and social care, manage services, enhance health systems, advance public and population health, and foster safe and sustainable environments. Nurses lead, educate, research, advocate, innovate and shape policy to improve health outcomes. Further, nurses play a unique role in health and care for populations of all ages, and in all settings, building trust with individuals, families and communities and gaining valuable insights into people's experiences of health and illness. Building on a foundation of personalized direct and social care, nurses advance their capabilities through ongoing education, research and exploration of best practices.*

*A nurse's scope of practice is defined by their level of education, experience, competency, professional standards and lawful authority. They play a key role in the coordination, supervision of, and delegation to others who may assist in the provision of health care.*

*Often at the front line, they respond to disasters, conflicts and emergencies, demonstrating courage, dedication, adaptability and commitment to the health of*



**A midwife is a person who has successfully completed a midwifery education programme based on the ICM Essential Competencies for Midwifery Practice and the Framework of the ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Education, recognised in the country where it is located; who has acquired the requisite qualifications to be a registered and/or legally licensed to practice midwifery and use the title 'midwife' and who demonstrates competency in the scope of practice. (ICM 2024)**

There are four divisions of nursing and midwifery in the Cook Islands, namely Enrolled Nurse (EN), Registered Nurse (RN), Registered Midwife (RM), and Nurse Practitioner (NP). Each of these titles has different education, knowledge, skills and standards for practice and different responsibilities and activities. Only the those registered by the CINC can use these titles. The CINC publishes a list of all nurses and midwives registered in the Cook Islands under these categories.

### Educational pathways

The following qualifications are necessary for registration or endorsement by the CINC. The eligibility of nursing programs such as BN, Bachelor of Midwifery, and postgraduate qualifications that qualify an individual to be a title holder in the Cook Islands context will be determined at the discretion of the CINC.

Enrolled Nurse (EN)	Registered Nurse (RN)	Midwife (MW)	Nurse Practitioner (NP)
Certificate or Diploma*	Cook Islands Certificate of Nursing (pre-2001)  OR  Cook Islands Diploma of Nursing (pre-2021)  OR  BN* degree	Diploma of Nursing (pre-2021)  OR  BN* degree  AND  Postgraduate certificate or diploma in Midwifery*  OR  Bachelor of Midwifery*	Diploma of Nursing (pre-2021)  OR  BN* degree  AND  Postgraduate certificate or diploma in Midwifery*  AND  Masters level degree in Nursing*



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\*The suitability of the programme of study an individual has undertaken will be determined by the CINC

Over time, in the Cook Islands there have been different pathways leading to the title of RN. In 1977 the Cook Islands established a certificate in nursing. The certificate was run in country with a duration of 3 years. The certificate was upgraded to a Diploma in 2001. The Diploma was also run in country and had a duration of 3 years. To align with regional and global directions in nursing, a decision was made in 2022 that the diploma pathway will be phased out and that the qualification leading to the title of RN in the future is a BN. This is reflected in the educational pathway above.

### Expanded Practice

Expanded practice is understood as a change in the role of an individual nurse or midwife to include areas of practice that have not previously been within their scope of practice, but are within the overall scope of practice of the nursing and midwifery professions.<sup>14</sup> Throughout their career nurses and midwives will continue to expand and grow their scope of practice as they develop their knowledge and skills through experience, education, training, and influenced by the setting they work within. Examples of expanded practice in the Cook Islands have included but are not limited to intravenous cannulation, nurse and midwife prescribing of medicines, and nurse and midwifery-led clinics in community settings. Nurses and midwives who expand their roles must assume the associated responsibility, while managers and employers share the responsibility to facilitate role expansion, including access to further education, allocation of necessary resources, policy development and assessment of competence.<sup>14</sup>

### Scope and standards of practice of Enrolled Nurses (EN)

The following outlines the scope and standards by which ENs in the Cook Islands must demonstrate to seek entry on to the nursing register and abide by throughout their career. The CINC will use this as a measure to determine competency of practice and ensure safety to the public.



## Definition of an Enrolled Nurse

An Enrolled Nurse is a person who:

- has successfully completed a recognised program of study at certificate or diploma level
- has acquired the necessary requirements to be registered to practise nursing in Cook Islands and use the title 'Enrolled Nurse'; and
- demonstrates and maintains competency on the practice of nursing.

## Scope of Practice of an Enrolled Nurse

- Enrolled Nurses are accountable and responsible for their nursing practice, ensuring that all health care provided is consistent with their education, assessed competence, relevant legislative requirements, and is guided by the CINC standards for Enrolled Nurses.
- Enrolled Nurses provide nursing care as part of a team under the direct supervision of an RN or NP.
- Enrolled Nurses have the knowledge and skills to gather and interpret data using observation, interview, physical examination and measurement and contribute to the assessment, planning, and provision of nursing care in diverse settings including home, hospital, health clinic, schools, and prison.
- The role of an EN is informed by their educational preparation and practice experience and may include a leadership or coordination role within the healthcare team.
- Enrolled Nurses work in partnership and collaboration with individuals, families, communities, the interprofessional healthcare team to deliver equitable person-centred, culturally relevant nursing care across the life span while promoting equity, inclusion, and diversity.

The types of activities an Enrolled Nurse may do, but are not limited to, include:

- Supporting and assisting people with activities of daily living
- Recording, monitoring, and interpreting patient vital signs



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- Recognising and communicating changes in patient condition to the RN or NP
- Providing wound care and dressing changes
- Supporting RNs and NPs in implementing care plans
- Collecting specimens for laboratory tests (e.g., urine, swabs, blood glucose).
- Observing and reporting changes in patient condition
- Educating patients and families on basic health care and self-care practices
- Assisting in admissions, transfers, and discharges of patients
- Maintaining accurate and timely documentation
- Participating in health promotion and preventive care activities.

### Standard of Practice of an Enrolled Nurse

This document outlines the standards by which ENs in the Cook Islands must demonstrate to seek entry on to the nursing register and abide by throughout their career. The CINC will use these standards as a measure to determine competency of practice and ensure safety to the public.

Standard	Criteria
<b>Standard 1. Leadership and professional practice</b> Actively contributes to the integrity of the nursing profession through professional behaviour, recency of knowledge, leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Practices according to scope of practice, relevant policies, guidelines, regulation, and legislation under delegation of an RN or NP.</li><li>2. Maintains recency of knowledge and skills through training, education, and professional development</li><li>3. Participates in data collection, analysis of data, and other research activities that will inform nursing practice</li><li>4. Actively seeks to participate in health policy development and evaluation, and programme planning</li><li>5. Identifies, assesses, and responds to emerging risks and challenging situations by adjusting priorities and escalating to the appropriate person</li><li>6. Conducts regular assessments of the work environment and maintains a safe working environment in line with occupational health and safety guidelines</li><li>7. Recognises and advocates for gender equity, disability, and social inclusion for people in their care</li></ol>



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<b>Standard 2.</b> Therapeutic relationships and culturally competent care  Develops therapeutic relationships with patients, families, and communities to deliver care that is people centred, inclusive and, culturally safe	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Respects the values, customs, spiritual beliefs and practices of individuals and groups and recognizes own beliefs and values and how these may influence care giving</li><li>2. Respects the patient's right to access information, informed consent, privacy, choice, and self-determination and</li><li>3. Establishes therapeutic relationships with the people in their care and empowers patients to make decisions regarding their care</li><li>4. Maintains patient confidentiality and discussions concerning patients are restricted to settings/ relevant members of the health care team and are conducted in private surroundings</li></ol>
<b>Standard 3.</b> Communication and collaboration  Maintains effective communication with patients, families, communities and members of the multidisciplinary health team, and other key stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Documentation and reports are legible, accurate, and completed in a timely manner</li><li>2. Uses health and information systems and technology to effectively support safe patient care</li><li>3. Communicates and works collaboratively with nursing colleagues and members of the health care teams in decision making concerning patients and ensuring continuity of care</li><li>4. Advocates for the needs and rights of people in their care</li></ol>
<b>Standard 4.</b> Evidence-based and contemporary nursing practice  Aligns their nursing practice to the nursing process integrating best practice evidence, critical thinking and judgement to make safe, effective decisions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Conducts regular assessments of the work environment and maintains a safe working environment in line with occupational health and safety guidelines</li><li>2. Effectively plans and implements nursing care under the delegation of the RN or NP</li><li>3. Appropriately selects from a wide range of assessment techniques to systematically collect relevant and accurate information and data to inform practice</li><li>4. Collects data about patients and incidents and trends and implements to inform decision making and make remedial changes to improve care delivery</li><li>5. Identifies, assesses and responds to emerging risks and challenging situations by adjusting priorities and escalating to the appropriate person</li></ol>
<b>Standard 5.</b> Reflective practice and quality improvement  Regularly reflects on their practice and outcomes to identify strengths, address gaps, and contribute to continuous improvement in quality and safety.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Evaluates and documents progress towards expected outcomes and uses evaluation data to modify the plan of care</li><li>2. Responds to changes in patient's conditions and responds accordingly</li><li>3. Participates in continuous quality improvement and quality assurance activities.</li></ol>



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### Scope and standards of a Registered Nurse (RN)

The following outlines the scope and standards by which RNs in the Cook Islands must demonstrate to seek entry on to the nursing register and abide by throughout their career. The CINC will use this as a measure to determine competency of practice and ensure safety to the public.

#### Definition of a Registered Nurse

A Registered Nurse is a person who:

- has successfully completed a recognised program of study at diploma or bachelor level
- has acquired the necessary requirements to be registered to practise nursing in Cook Islands and use the title 'Registered Nurse'; and
- demonstrates and maintains competency on the practice of nursing.

#### Scope of Practice of a Registered Nurse

- Registered Nurses are accountable and responsible for their nursing practice, ensuring that all health care provided is consistent with their education, assessed competence, relevant legislative requirements, and is guided by the CINC Standards for RNs.
- Registered Nurses are responsible and accountable for the supervision, direction and delegation of nursing care or activities to ENs, student nurses and other healthcare workers
- Registered Nurses are accountable for the management of people in their care. They apply scientific knowledge, cultural expertise, evidence, critical thinking and analysis to inform comprehensive assessments, determine health needs, plan and prioritise care, determine appropriate interventions, and coordinate other health workers and resources to provide nursing care in diverse settings including home, hospital, health clinic, schools, and prison.
- Registered Nurses may use their expertise in areas and roles such as leadership, management, education, policy and research.
- Registered Nurses empower and advocate for individuals, families and communities to participate in decisions affecting their health and well-being.



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- Registered Nurses practise autonomously and collaboratively with individuals, their family, communities, and the interprofessional healthcare team, to deliver equitable person-centred, culturally relevant nursing care across the life span while promoting equity, inclusion, and diversity.

The types of activities a Registered Nurse may do, but are not limited to, include:

- Supervising and delegating to nursing students, ENs, Health Care Attendants (HCA), and other healthcare workers
- Responsibility for the assessment, planning, delivery, and monitoring care to people across the life span
- Providing education and information to patients, their families, and their community
- Conducting or assisting with diagnostic tests and investigations as ordered, under the direction or authorisation of a medical practitioner or NP, and contributing to the interpretation and follow-up of results
- Performing procedures for treatments, commencing and administering medication including intravenous therapy under the prescription or direction of a medical practitioner or NP.
- Provide primary health care, health promotion, and disease prevention services including prevention of complications and disease progression in noncommunicable diseases (e.g. diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidaemia), within communities as identified by the Cook Islands Health Strategy and population needs
- Identify and refer clients requiring advanced or specialist care
- Coordinating community health resources by identifying and developing local support systems and linking patients and families to appropriate health and social services.

### Standards of Practice of a Registered Nurse

This document outlines the standards by which RNs in the Cook Islands must demonstrate to seek entry on to the nursing register and abide by throughout their career. The CINC will use these standards as a measure to determine competency of practice and ensure safety to the public.



Standard	Criteria
<b>Standard 1.</b> Leadership and professional practice  Actively contributes to the integrity of the nursing profession through professional behaviour, recency of knowledge, leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Practices according to scope of practice, relevant policies, guidelines, regulation, and legislation</li><li>2. Maintains recency of knowledge and skills through training, education, and professional development</li><li>3. Participates in data collection, analysis of data, and other research activities that will inform nursing practice and uses these findings to inform improvements in nursing practice, facility management, health systems, and policy development</li><li>4. Actively seeks to participate in health policy development and evaluation, and programme planning</li><li>5. Demonstrates leadership and management skills/attributes to achieve best practice outcomes and engages in learning and professional development to enhance these skills</li><li>6. Identifies, assesses, and responds to emerging risks and challenging situations by adjusting priorities and escalating to the appropriate person if necessary</li><li>7. Conducts regular assessments of the work environment and maintains a safe working environment in line with occupational health and safety guidelines</li><li>8. Recognises and advocates for gender equity, disability, and social inclusion for people in their care</li><li>9. Accountability for actions and decision making</li></ol>
<b>Standard 2.</b> Therapeutic relationships and culturally competent care  Develops therapeutic relationships with patients, families, and communities to deliver care that is people centred, inclusive and, culturally safe	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Seeks out knowledge of specific traditional healing practices and incorporates traditional knowledge and practices when appropriate</li><li>2. Respects the values, customs, spiritual beliefs and practices of individuals and groups and recognizes own beliefs and values and how these may influence care giving</li><li>3. Respects the patient's right to access information, informed consent, privacy, choice, and self-determination</li><li>4. Establishes therapeutic relationships with the people in their care and empowers patients to make decisions regarding their care</li><li>5. Discussions concerning patients are restricted to settings/ relevant members of the health care team and are conducted in private surroundings</li><li>6. Involves family and care givers in decisions pertaining to patient care, where appropriate</li><li>7. Maintains appropriate professional boundaries with patients, their families and care givers.</li></ol>
<b>Standard 3.</b> Communication and collaboration  Maintains effective communication with patients, families,	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Documentation and reports are legible, accurate, and completed in a timely manner</li><li>2. Uses health and information systems and technology to effectively support safe patient care</li></ol>



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Standard	Criteria
communities and members of the multidisciplinary health team, and other key stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Communicates and works collaboratively with nursing colleagues and members of the health care teams in decision making concerning patients and ensuring continuity of care</li><li>4. Engages with community partners and stakeholders to identify and strengthen local health and social support resources, and facilitates linkages between patients, families, and appropriate community services to promote continuity of care.</li><li>5. Supports the learning of other nurses, students, and members of the multidisciplinary health team</li><li>6. Supervises enrolled nurses, junior nursing staff, and other health care workers. Delegates where appropriate.</li><li>7. Advocates for the needs and rights of people in their care</li></ol>
<b>Standard 4. Evidence-based and contemporary nursing practice</b> Nurses align their nursing practice to the nursing process integrating best practice evidence, critical thinking and judgement to make safe, effective decisions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Effectively plans and implements nursing care in collaboration with the patient, their family, and the multidisciplinary team</li><li>2. Appropriately selects from a wide range of assessment techniques to systematically collect and record relevant and accurate information and data to inform practice</li><li>3. Evaluates and documents progress towards expected outcomes and uses evaluation data to modify the plan of care</li><li>4. Collects, analyses and utilizes data about patient incidents, and trends to inform ethical decision making and make remedial changes to improve care delivery</li><li>5. Demonstrates an understanding of efficient and safe management of human and material resources.</li></ol>
<b>Standard 5. Reflective practice and quality improvement</b> Regularly reflect on their practice and outcomes to identify strengths, address gaps, and contribute to continuous improvement in quality and safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Responds to changes in patient's condition and responds accordingly</li><li>2. Participates in continuous quality improvement and quality assurance activities.</li><li>3. Commits to lifelong learning and continuously reflects on and evaluates their own practice, adjusting practice or improving knowledge and skills as necessary</li><li>4. Contributes to organisational learning by sharing reflections and quality improvement outcomes to strengthen overall nursing</li><li>5. Embraces self-care and actively promotes health and wellbeing of self and colleagues</li></ol>



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### Scopes and Standards of a Registered Midwife (RM)

The following outlines the scope and standards by which RMs in the Cook Islands must demonstrate to seek entry on to the nursing register and abide by throughout their career. The CINC will use this as a measure to determine competency of practice and ensure safety to the public. In the Cook Islands the pathway to becoming a RM is via a postgraduate qualification in midwifery after qualification as a RN has been obtained. As such many nurses and RMs hold dual registration. However, to be able to practice as either a RN or RM, practitioners must have competency in the relevant scope of practice. Without regular practice in one or other of the cadres (RM or RN), competency cannot be assured and consequently, the CINC may not be able to register the individual under that cadre.

#### Definition of a Registered Midwife

A Registered Midwife is a person who:

- has successfully completed a recognised program of study at certificate, diploma or bachelor level
- has acquired the necessary requirements to be registered to practise midwifery in Cook Islands and use the title 'Registered Midwife'; and
- demonstrates and maintains competency on the practice of midwifery.

#### Scope of Practice of a Registered Midwife

- Registered Midwives are accountable and responsible for their midwifery practice, ensuring that all care provided is consistent with their education, assessed competence, relevant legislative requirements, and is guided by the CINC standards for RMs.
- Registered Midwives work in partnership with women to give the necessary support, care and advice during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period, to conduct births at the RMs own responsibility and to provide care for the newborn and the



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infant. This care includes preventative measures, the promotion of normal birth, the detection of complications in mother and child, the accessing of medical care or other appropriate assistance and the carrying out of emergency measures.

- Registered Midwives provide health counselling and education, not only for the women and gender diverse people they serve, but also within families and communities. This work should involve antenatal education and preparation for parenthood and may extend to sexual and reproductive health care, and care for infants and young children.
- Registered Midwives are responsible and accountable for the supervision, direction and delegation of nursing care or activities to ENs, HCAs, student nurses and other healthcare workers.
- Registered Midwives work in close collaboration with other members of the health care team including doctors to provide care to women, newborns, and their families.

The types of activities a Registered Midwife may do, but are not limited to, include:

- antenatal care including abdominal palpation, performing clinical observations on mother and unborn baby
- reviewing and ordering diagnostic and/or screening tests, and risk assessments from a clinical, health, lifestyle and psychological perspective in collaboration with or under the direction of a medical practitioner when indicated
- intrapartum care including monitoring and support of women during labour, monitoring the foetus during labour and medication management
- birthing the baby, identifying variances to normal birth and escalating as necessary to specialist staff
- managing medication and intravenous therapy within the context of midwifery practice
- managing the third stage of labour, perineal assessment and suturing, facilitating initial mother and baby interaction, including skin to skin and breastfeeding support
- advising and supporting parents on the daily care of their newborn babies



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- identifying where there may be concerns about the health and wellbeing of the mother and the newborn baby
- offering breastfeeding and nutritional support
- supporting parents who experience miscarriage
- termination, stillbirth and neonatal death
- women's health, reproductive and sexual health, and child and family health care.

### Standards of Practice of a Registered Midwife

This document outlines the standards by which RMs in the Cook Islands must demonstrate to seek entry on to the nursing register and abide by throughout their career. The CINC will use these standards as a measure to determine competency of practice and ensure safety to the public. These standards align to essential competencies for Midwives outlined by the ICM.<sup>3</sup>

Standard	Criteria
<b>Standard 1.</b> Cross-functional competencies for Midwifery practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Assume responsibility for own decisions and actions as an autonomous practitioner within the midwifery scope of practice</li><li>2. Assume responsibility for continuing education and personal wellbeing as an RM</li><li>3. Adapt to and adopt new and emerging technologies that have been proven to enhance midwifery practice and care</li><li>4. Appropriately delegate and oversee aspects of care</li><li>5. Use research to inform practice</li><li>6. Adhere to national legislation and regulatory requirements</li><li>7. Uphold fundamental human rights of individuals when providing midwifery care</li><li>8. Support women to make choices and decisions about care</li><li>9. Demonstrate respectful and effective interpersonal communication with women and families, healthcare professionals, teams, and community groups</li><li>10. Collaborate effectively with other healthcare professionals</li><li>11. Assess health status, screen for health risks, and promote general health and wellbeing of adolescent girls and women</li><li>12. Prevent and treat common health problems within the scope of midwifery practice</li><li>13. Recognise abnormalities and complications and provide appropriate treatment and referral when necessary</li></ol>



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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>14. Facilitate normal/physiological birth processes in institutional and community settings, including women's homes</li><li>15. Prescribe, dispense and administer medicines or products</li><li>16. Provide midwifery care for women and newborns affected by humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters, climate change, pandemics, and disasters</li></ol>
<b>Standard 2.</b> Sexual and reproductive health and rights	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Provide education on sexual and reproductive health, contraception, and family planning</li><li>2. Provide support on natural family planning and barrier methods</li><li>3. Administer contraceptives within scope of practice</li><li>4. Provide pre-conception care</li><li>5. Care for girls and women who experience physical and sexual violence and abuse</li></ol>
<b>Standard 3.</b> Antenatal care	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Determine health status of a woman and assess pregnancy</li><li>2. Assess foetal wellbeing</li><li>3. Monitor and assess progression of pregnancy</li><li>4. Promote and support health behaviours that improve wellbeing</li><li>5. Provide anticipatory guidance related to pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, parenthood, and change in the family</li><li>6. Detect, stabilise, manage, and refer women with complicated pregnancies</li><li>7. Assist the woman and her family to prepare for birth</li></ol>
<b>Standard 4.</b> Care during labour and birth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Promote normal/physiological labour and birth</li><li>2. Manage a safe, spontaneous vaginal birth, prevent and manage complications</li><li>3. Provide care of the newborn immediately after birth</li></ol>
<b>Standard 5.</b> Ongoing care of women and newborns	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Provide postnatal care for the healthy woman</li><li>2. Provide care to healthy newborns</li><li>3. Promote and support breastfeeding</li><li>4. Detect, treat, and stabilise postnatal complications in women and refer as necessary</li><li>5. Detect, stabilise, and manage health problems in newborns and refer if necessary</li></ol>



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### Scope and standards of a Nurse Practitioner (NP)

The following outlines the scope and standards by which NPs in the Cook Islands must demonstrate to seek entry on to the nursing register and abide by throughout their career. The CINC will use this as a measure to determine competency of practice and ensure safety to the public.

#### Definition of a Nurse Practitioner

A Nurse Practitioner is a highly educated and experienced nurse who can diagnose and treat healthcare needs or refer clients/patients to an appropriate specialist as needed. A NP is a person who:

- Has successfully completed a recognised program of study at diploma or bachelor level degree and has acquired the necessary requirements to be registered to practise nursing in Cook Islands and use the title 'Registered Nurse'; and
- Has successfully completed a recognised program of study at postgraduate level and has acquired the necessary requirements to be registered to practise midwifery in Cook Islands and use the title 'Registered Midwife'; and
- has successfully completed a recognised program of study at postgraduate level and has acquired the necessary requirements to be registered to practise advanced nursing in Cook Islands and use the title 'Nurse Practitioner'; and
- demonstrates and maintains competency in advanced practice nursing.

#### Scope of Practice of a Nurse Practitioner

- Nurse Practitioners are accountable and responsible for their nursing practice, ensuring that all health care provided is consistent with their education, assessed competence, relevant legislative requirements, and is guided by the CINC standards for NPs.
- Nurse Practitioners have advanced education, clinical training and the demonstrated competence and legal authority to practise beyond the level of an RN. They work autonomously and in collaborative teams with other health professionals to promote health, prevent disease and improve access and population health outcomes for a specific patient group or community.



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- Depending on the individual scope of practice, the NP may have the ability and authority to work at an extended or specialist level. This includes providing or assisting with medical or surgical procedures, or advanced care in range of specialist and/or generalist clinical areas.
- Nurse Practitioners are responsible and accountable for the supervision, direction and delegation of nursing care or activities to ENs, HCA, student nurses and other healthcare workers
- Nurse Practitioners are accountable for the management of people in their care. They apply scientific knowledge, cultural expertise, evidence, critical thinking and analysis to inform comprehensive assessments, determine health needs, develop differential diagnoses, plan and prioritise care, determine appropriate interventions, and coordinate other health workers and resources to provide nursing care in diverse settings including home, hospital, health clinic, schools, and prison.

The types of activities a Nurse Practitioner may do, but are not limited to, include:

- Advanced health assessment that includes ordering and interpreting diagnostic tests (pathology and medical imaging)
- Diagnosing and treating acute and/or chronic physical and mental health conditions
- Provide skilled and competent care for patient's health and social care needs, involving other members of the healthcare team as appropriate.
- Independent prescribing of scheduled pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions
- Independent referral to medical doctors, medical specialists, allied health professionals, and other health providers
- Provide health service leadership
- Function independently and collaboratively with a healthcare team.



## Standards of Practice of a Nurse Practitioner

This document outlines the standards by which NPs in the Cook Islands must demonstrate to seek entry on to the nursing register and abide by throughout their career. The CINC will use these standards as a measure to determine competency of practice and ensure safety to the public.

Standard	Criteria
<b>Standard 1. Leadership and professional practice</b>  Actively contributes to the integrity of the nursing profession through professional behaviour, recency of knowledge, leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Practices autonomously according to scope of practice, relevant policies, guidelines, regulation, and legislation</li><li>Practices within safe boundaries around a clearly defined area of practice (client/population group) and demonstrates timely referral and consultation when an issue is outside of scope, area of practice, experience, or competence</li><li>Confidently and autonomously practices the full spectrum of healthcare services in relation to the client/population group including health promotion and protection, disease prevention, guidance and counselling, disease management, maintenance and restoration of health, rehabilitation and palliative care</li><li>Continually reviews and updates knowledge and skills through training, education, and professional development</li><li>Demonstrates clinical leadership in design and evaluation of services for individuals and communities in health promotion, health protection and prevention of injury and/or illness</li><li>Conducts regular assessments of the work environment and maintains a safe working environment in line with occupational health and safety guidelines</li><li>Recognises and advocates for gender equity, disability, and social inclusion for people in their care</li></ol>
<b>Standard 2. Therapeutic relationships and culturally competent care</b>  Develops therapeutic relationships with patients, families, and communities to deliver care that is people centred, inclusive and, culturally safe	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Respects the values, customs, spiritual beliefs and practices of individuals and groups and recognizes own beliefs and values and how these may influence care giving</li><li>Respects the patient's right to access information, informed consent, privacy, choice, and self-determination and</li><li>Establishes therapeutic relationships with the people in their care and empowers patients to make decisions regarding their care</li></ol>



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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Discussions concerning patients are restricted to settings/ relevant members of the health care team and are conducted in private surroundings</li></ol>
<b>Standard 3. Communication and collaboration</b>  Maintains effective communication with patients, families, communities and members of the multidisciplinary health team, and other key stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Documentation and reports are legible, accurate, and completed in a timely manner</li><li>2. Uses health and information systems and technology to effectively support safe patient care</li><li>3. Collaborates with other health professionals to make and accept referrals as appropriate</li><li>4. Acts as an educator and/or mentor to students, nursing colleagues and others in the healthcare team</li></ol>
<b>Standard 4. Conducts Comprehensive assessments</b>  Conducts comprehensive assessments, applies diagnostic reasoning and informed decision making to identify health needs and develop differential diagnosis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Demonstrates complex and critical thinking to conduct comprehensive, relevant and holistic health assessments</li><li>2. Demonstrates accountability in the timely and considered use of diagnostic investigations to inform clinical decision making</li><li>3. Assesses the impact of comorbidities, including the effects of co-existing, multiple pathologies and prior treatments in the assessment of the person receiving care</li><li>4. Conducts regular assessments of the work environment and maintains a safe working environment in line with occupational health and safety guidelines</li><li>5. Demonstrates an understanding of efficient and safe management of human and material resources</li><li>6. Applies analysis, clinical reasoning, and problem solving to comprehensive and systematic assessments and clinical examinations to inform differential diagnosis</li></ol>
<b>Standard 5. Plans care</b>  Integrates evidence-based information to plan care and engage others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Is responsible and accountable for the interpretation of results and for following up the appropriate course of action</li><li>2. Educates and supports patients, families and communities to enable active participation in their care</li><li>3. Integrate comprehensive knowledge of medicines and their therapeutic interventions when planning care</li><li>4. Verifies the suitability of evidence-based treatment options including medicines, regarding commencing, maintaining/titrating or ceasing interventions</li><li>5. Evaluates and documents progress towards expected outcomes and uses evaluation data to modify the plan of care.</li></ol>
<b>Standard 6. Implements patient care</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Provides and implements pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions</li></ol>



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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. Safely and effectively performs evidence-informed invasive/non-invasive interventions for the clinical management and/or prevention of illness, disease, injuries, disorders or conditions</li><li>3. Safely prescribes therapeutic interventions based on accurate knowledge of the characteristics and concurrent therapies of the person receiving care</li></ol>
<b>Standard 7. Reflective practice and quality improvement</b>  Regularly reflect on their practice and outcomes to identify strengths, address gaps, and contribute to continuous improvement in quality and safety.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Engages in reflective practice and evaluates the outcome of their practice</li><li>2. Participates in continuous quality improvement and quality assurance activities to improve health services</li><li>3. Critically evaluates the impact of social determinants of health on both the individual person and the population</li><li>4. Critically appraises scientific literature and shares new knowledge and research through discussions, presentations, publications, and the development of best practice guidelines</li><li>5. Influences and critiques health policy and nursing practice through leadership and active participation in the workplace and professional organisations.</li></ol>



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**This document is approved by:**

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**Chair Person:**

**Mirella Simpson**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mirella Simpson'.

**Te Mara Ora, Cook Islands Ministry of Health:**

**Chief Nursing Officer:**

**Ngatamariki Manea**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ngatamariki Manea'.

**Date: December 12<sup>th</sup> 2025**