

**Johns Hopkins University
School of Nursing**

Utilizing your Skills and Abilities:

**Nursing core performance standards and capabilities
and emotional intelligence**

Nursing is a challenging profession because it requires expertise in a broad range of skills and abilities. In addition to the emotional qualities necessary to care for sick individuals and their families, nurses need to operate sophisticated medical equipment, work as part of a multi-disciplinary team, and adapt to constantly changing environments. They have to remain calm during times of intense stress and be able to make critical decisions with short notice. The clinical experience and your coursework will provide a strong foundation for your success.

The following core performance standards and capabilities for nursing students provide descriptions of analytical, psycho-social-behavioral, physical, and sensory abilities. Mastering these qualities will help ensure your success as a nurse.

Analytical abilities

Students must be able to examine, understand, interpret and synthesize material present in English, using verbal, written and experiential formats. Students must use critical thinking for problem-solving, diagnosis and evaluation of patient situations and own performance.

Examples: Identify cause-effect relationships in clinical situations, develop nursing care plans, make sound judgment in clinical situations.

Psycho-Social-Behavioral Abilities

Students must possess the emotional health necessary for full utilization of their abilities, exercise good judgment, complete promptly all responsibilities relevant to patient care, and develop mature, sensitive and therapeutic relationships. Students must be able to function effectively within rapidly changing and potentially stressful environments in the various classroom and clinical settings. Students must be able to interact sensitively with others, including patients, families, faculty, other students and health care providers, from diverse social, emotional, cultural and intellectual backgrounds. Students must communicate effectively in English with others using verbal, nonverbal, written, electronic and visual forms of communication.

Example: Educate patients and families, interact appropriately with other members of the health care team, delegate tasks appropriately and document assessments and care provided

Physical Abilities

Students must be able to perform demands of physically taxing workloads. Students must possess gross and fine motor abilities sufficient to provide safe and effective general and emergency nursing care.

Examples: Perform palpation, administer cardio pulmonary resuscitation procedures, calibrate and use equipment, maneuver safely in the work environment

Sensory Abilities

Students must possess adequate sensory abilities or demonstrate appropriate compensation for sensory deficits. Abilities must permit acquisition and demonstration of knowledge through a variety of methods. Students must be able to use abilities to assess, plan, provide and evaluate nursing care.

Examples: Promptly recognize and respond to calls for help, accurately draw up and administer intramuscular injections, smell smoke, perform percussion, auscultation, inspection and other aspects of physical assessment

(The above behaviors must be accomplished in a timely manner appropriate to the situation. Examples are illustrative, but not all-inclusive.)

Emotional Intelligence

In addition to the standards and abilities described above, emotional intelligence is often included in the discussion of skills necessary for career and personal success. Emotional intelligence is defined as: a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Mayer and Salovey, 1993:433).

It is suggested that one's level of emotional intelligence is a better predictor of job performance than IQ. Hunter and Hunter estimated that, at best, IQ accounts for about 25% of the variance while EI accounts for the rest. What are the qualities of emotional intelligence? Daniel Goleman proposes the following in this best-selling book, Emotional Intelligence (1995):

Coupled with the core performance standards described above, these emotional competencies will help you effectively respond to the circumstances you'll face in the nursing profession. Take a look at the list below and ask yourself, "how successful am I in each of these areas?" See if you can come up with examples of each. If not, look for ways to develop in those areas.

Personal Competence

SELF - AWARENESS

Emotional awareness: Recognizing one's emotions and their effects. People with this competence:

- Know which emotions they are feeling and why
- Realize the links between their feelings and what they think, do, and say
- Recognize how their feelings affect their performance
- Have a guiding awareness of their values and goals

Accurate self-assessment: Knowing one's strengths and limits. People with this competence are:

- Aware of their strengths and weaknesses
- Reflective, learning from experience

- Open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning, and self-development
- Able to show a sense of humor and perspective about themselves

Self-confidence: Sureness about one's self-worth and capabilities. People with this competence:

- Present themselves with self-assurance; have "presence"
- Can voice views that are unpopular and go out on a limb for what is right
- Are decisive, able to make sound decisions despite uncertainties and pressures

SELF - REGULATION

Self-control: Managing disruptive emotions and impulses. People with this competence:

- Manage their impulsive feelings and distressing emotions well
- Stay composed, positive, and unflappable even in trying moments
- Think clearly and stay focused under pressure

Trustworthiness: Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity. People with this competence:

- Act ethically and are above reproach
- Build trust through their reliability and authenticity
- Admit their own mistakes and confront unethical actions in others
- Take tough, principled stands even if they are unpopular

Conscientiousness: Taking responsibility for personal performance. People with this competence:

- Meet commitments and keep promises
- Hold themselves accountable for meeting their objectives
- Are organized and careful in their work

Adaptability: Flexibility in handling change. People with this competence:

- Smoothly handle multiple demands, shifting priorities, and rapid change
- Adapt their responses and tactics to fit fluid circumstances
- Are flexible in how they see events

Innovativeness: Being comfortable with and open to novel ideas and new information. People with this competence:

- Seek out fresh ideas from a wide variety of sources
- Entertain original solutions to problems
- Generate new ideas
- Take fresh perspectives and risks in their thinking

SELF - MOTIVATION

Achievement drive: Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence. People with this competence:

- Are results-oriented, with a high drive to meet their objectives and standards
- Set challenging goals and take calculated risks
- Pursue information to reduce uncertainty and find ways to do better
- Learn how to improve their performance

Commitment: Aligning with the goals of the group or organization. People with this competence:

- Readily make personal or group sacrifices to meet a larger organizational goal
- Find a sense of purpose in the larger mission
- Use the group's core values in making decisions and clarifying choices
- Actively seek out opportunities to fulfill the group's mission

Initiative: Readiness to act on opportunities. People with this competence:

- Are ready to seize opportunities
- Pursue goals beyond what's required or expected of them
- Cut through red tape and bend the rules when necessary to get the job done
- Mobilize others through unusual, enterprising efforts

Optimism: Persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks. People with this competence:

- Persist in seeking goals despite obstacles and setbacks
- Operate from hope of success rather than fear of failure
- See setbacks as due to manageable circumstance rather than a personal flaw

Social Competence

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Empathy: Sensing others' feelings and perspective, and taking an active interest in their concerns. People with this competence:

- Are attentive to emotional cues and listen well
- Show sensitivity and understand others' perspectives
- Help out based on understanding other people's needs and feelings

Service orientation: Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customers' needs. People with this competence:

- Understand customers' needs and match them to services or products
- Seek ways to increase customers' satisfaction and loyalty
- Gladly offer appropriate assistance
- Grasp a customer's perspective, acting as a trusted advisor

Developing others: Sensing what others need in order to develop, and bolster their abilities. People with this competence:

- Acknowledge and reward people's strengths, accomplishments, and development
- Offer useful feedback and identify people's needs for development
- Mentor, give timely coaching, and offer assignments that challenge and grow a person's skills.

Leveraging diversity: Cultivating opportunities through diverse people. People with this competence:

- Respect and relate well to people from varied backgrounds
- Understand diverse worldviews and are sensitive to group differences
- See diversity as opportunity, creating an environment where diverse people can thrive
- Challenge bias and intolerance

Political awareness: Reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships. People with this competence:

- Accurately read key power relationships
- Detect crucial social networks
- Understand the forces that shape views and actions of clients, customers, or competitors
- Accurately read situations and organizational and external realities

SOCIAL SKILLS

Influence: Wielding effective tactics for persuasion. People with this competence:

- Are skilled at persuasion
- Fine-tune presentations to appeal to the listener
- Use complex strategies like indirect influence to build consensus and support
- Orchestrate dramatic events to effectively make a point

Communication: Sending clear and convincing messages. People with this competence:

- Are effective in give-and-take, registering emotional cues in attuning their message
- Deal with difficult issues straightforwardly
- Listen well, seek mutual understanding, and welcome sharing of information fully
- Foster open communication and stay receptive to bad news as well as good

Leadership: Inspiring and guiding groups and people. People with this competence:

- Articulate and arouse enthusiasm for a shared vision and mission
- Step forward to lead as needed, regardless of position
- Guide the performance of others while holding them accountable
- Lead by example

Change catalyst: Initiating or managing change. People with this competence:

- Recognize the need for change and remove barriers
- Challenge the status quo to acknowledge the need for change
- Champion the change and enlist others in its pursuit
- Model the change expected of others

Conflict management: Negotiating and resolving disagreements. People with this competence:

- Handle difficult people and tense situations with diplomacy and tact
- Spot potential conflict, bring disagreements into the open, and help deescalate
- Encourage debate and open discussion
- Orchestrate win-win solutions

Building bonds: Nurturing instrumental relationships. People with this competence:

- Cultivate and maintain extensive informal networks
- Seek out relationships that are mutually beneficial
- Build rapport and keep others in the loop
- Make and maintain personal friendships among work associates

Collaboration and cooperation: Working with others toward shared goals. People with this competence:

- Balance a focus on task with attention to relationships
- Collaborate, sharing plans, information, and resources
- Promote a friendly, cooperative climate
- Spot and nurture opportunities for collaboration

Team capabilities: Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals. People with this competence:

- Model team qualities like respect, helpfulness, and cooperation
- Draw all members into active and enthusiastic participation
- Build team identity, esprit de corps, and commitment
- Protect the group and its reputation; share credit

SOURCES: This generic competence framework distills findings from: *MOSAIC competencies for professional and administrative occupations* (U.S. Office of Personnel Management); Spencer and Spencer, *Competence at Work*; and top performance and leadership competence studies published in Richard H. Rosier (ed.), *The Competency Model Handbook, Volumes One and Two* (Boston : Linkage, 1994 and 1995), especially those from Cigna, Sprint, American Express, Sandoz Pharmaceuticals; Wisconsin Power and Light; and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maryland. Much of the material comes from *Working with Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman (Bantam, 1998).

This framework as well as other resources on emotional intelligence is available on-line at www.eiconsortium.org.