



INFORMATION FOR NURSING STUDENTS

Outlining the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework



Royal College
of Nursing



The benefits of RCN student membership

The Royal College of Nursing is the largest professional association and union of nursing staff and students in the UK and provides support, advice, protection, along with other benefits, to its members.

Supporting you

- ◆ Campaign on behalf of members to raise the profile of nurses and nursing.
- ◆ Entry to the Association of Nursing Students, the RCN's networking, information and lobbying group for student members.
- ◆ Access to the largest nursing library in Europe, including over 400 full-text journals and 200 e-books available to download free of charge from the RCN website.
- ◆ Provide you with access to nursing-specific expertise and knowledge, including 80 national specialist forums.
- ◆ Create opportunities to broaden your experience and enhance your CV by becoming an RCN student steward who offers support to other members.

Offering advice

- ◆ Answer your queries and provide you with clinical and professional advice, including advice about your placement.
- ◆ Advise you about job applications, CVs, interview skills and courses or educational opportunities.

- ◆ Assign you a student steward who will be happy to offer support and advice on any student-related matters.
- ◆ Provide confidential advice on practical financial-related matters like debt counselling and money management.

Protecting you

- ◆ Represent you in the event of a dispute.
- ◆ Insure you during clinical placements against claims of professional negligence for up to £3 million.
- ◆ Ensure the rights of students are protected and help deal with issues, such as bullying and placement problems, if these occur.
- ◆ Offer you free legal advice for 30 minutes on matters not connected to work.

Saving you money

- ◆ Gain access to discounts on financial services, such as travel insurance and personal loans, and cover for home contents and cars.
- ◆ Take advantage of discounts from retailers, including Debenhams, Boots and Waitrose. In addition, you can gain discounted prices on holidays through the RCN Travel Club, or on new and used car purchases through RCN Cars.

Outlining the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework

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Introduction

This RCN booklet has been designed for final year nursing and midwifery students who intend to work in the NHS after graduation. As well as explaining some of the jargon you'll encounter when you enter the NHS, we hope you'll also gain an insight into what is expected of you during your first year in post.

It's important to remember that as an RCN member you can contact the RCN Direct telephone information and advice service on 0845 772 6100, and obtain guidance on any questions or queries you may have.

Over the last six years the NHS has undergone momentous change, one of the most significant of which has been the introduction of a new pay, terms and conditions system for staff entitled Agenda for Change (AfC). The AfC also incorporates an appraisal and career development framework – the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF). The RCN was instrumental in representing the views of nurses during the consultation stage of this new system.

What is the KSF?

The KSF defines and describes the knowledge and skills that NHS staff need to apply in their work, in order to deliver quality services that meet the needs of users. The KSF will be a critical tool for you and your manager in supporting your early career and development needs.

The NHS KSF has been designed to:

- ◆ identify the knowledge and skills that you need to apply in your post
- ◆ help guide your development
- ◆ provide a fair and objective framework on which to base review and development for all staff
- ◆ provide the basis for career progression in the NHS.

The KSF is made up of 'core dimensions' and 'specific dimensions' which describe different aspects of knowledge and skill needed to undertake roles within the NHS. Dimensions can be described as, or linked to, competencies.

Every member of staff in the NHS is expected to have a KSF outline incorporating:

- ◆ all six core dimensions
- ◆ up to an additional seven specific dimensions.

Core dimensions

The following six core dimensions are applicable to every NHS job:

1. communication
2. personal and people development
3. health, safety and security
4. service development
5. quality
6. equality and diversity.

Specific dimensions

There are 24 specific dimensions, grouped into four categories. No hierarchy exists within the NHS KSF dimensions – the grouping and numbering are purely to aid easy recognition and referencing.

Dimension levels and indicators

Each dimension in the KSF is divided into four levels – the higher the level, the greater the expectations of knowledge and skills for that post. Each level has a title which describes what the level is about. An

Specific dimensions

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|---|
| Health and wellbeing (HWB1 10) | HWB1 | Promotion of health and wellbeing and prevention of adverse effects to health and wellbeing |
| | HWB2 | Assessment and care planning to meet health and wellbeing needs |
| | HWB3 | Protection of health and wellbeing |
| | HWB4 | Enablement to address health and wellbeing needs |
| | HWB5 | Provision of care to meet health and wellbeing needs |
| | HWB6 | Assessment and treatment planning |
| | HWB7 | Interventions and treatments |
| | HWB8 | Biomedical investigation and intervention |
| | HWB9 | Equipment and devices to meet health and wellbeing needs |
| | HWB10 | Products to meet health and wellbeing needs |
| Information and knowledge (IK1 3) | IK1 | Information processing |
| | IK2 | Information collection and analysis |
| | IK3 | Knowledge and information resources |
| General (G1 8) | G1 | Learning and development |
| | G2 | Development and innovation |
| | G3 | Procurement and commissioning |
| | G4 | Financial management |
| | G5 | Services and project management |
| | G6 | People management |
| | G7 | Capacity and capability |
| | G8 | Public relations and marketing |
| Estates and facilities (EF1 3) | EF1 | Systems, vehicles and equipment |
| | EF2 | Environments and buildings |
| | EF3 | Transport and logistics |

overview of the dimensions and levels relevant to nursing is provided in *NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework outlines for nursing posts*. *RCN guidance for nurses and managers in creating KSF outlines in the NHS*, published by the RCN, and available from the RCN website at www.rcn.org.uk/publications.

Each dimension level has fixed indicators that describe how knowledge and skills need to be applied for a post at that particular level. Alongside each dimension level are some examples of application; these show how the NHS KSF might be applied in different posts and are purely for illustrative purposes.

You will be required to show how you can apply knowledge and skills to meet all of the indicators in a particular level.

The KSF outlines

Every KSF outline sets out the six core dimensions, together with the selected specific dimensions required for a particular post, establishing a framework for assessment and development of all individuals holding that post.

The KSF outline relates specifically to the job description, so it will be expected that all staff nurses undertaking the same job in a ward or unit will have the same KSF outline. Individual development needs will be identified through performance development plans (PDP); the PDPs recognise that every individual progresses differently, and brings a different range of knowledge and skills to a post.

Role development

As you gain experience, your role will develop and you will probably experience increased job responsibility. This will generally be demonstrated in the KSF outlines by:

- ◆ increasing the levels under the core dimensions, or requiring more demanding examples of application
- ◆ widening or increasing the number of specific dimensions (for example, including managerial or specialist dimensions)
- ◆ This will occur as you progress in your career into the higher pay bands.

While levels for core dimensions will generally increase, levels for specific dimensions may not always do so. It may be

that your levels stay the same, but the specific areas of application become more demanding. In the case of higher pathway stages – where career development is often through management development – the requirement for specialist activity may diminish, while the breadth of work increases.

Any changes will be discussed and agreed with you at your development review.

Personal development reviews

Your reviewer(s) will hold regular informal discussions with you throughout the year, in order to provide constructive feedback on your work and related development. A personal development review (PDR) is the culmination of these discussions. It is an evaluation of your development and your ability to apply your knowledge and skills to meet the demands of your post, as described in your KSF outline. It provides an opportunity for reviewers and those being reviewed to reflect in a structured manner.

The guiding principle of the PDR process is ‘no surprises’. Therefore, if any issues are identified in your work or development during the year, these will be addressed at the time they arise; they should not be left until a review meeting. Any disciplinary issues must be dealt with via the normal channels. In the unlikely event of this not happening, RCN members can ask for a local RCN representative to act as their advocate in the workplace.

Your portfolio of evidence

Your PDR will run smoothly if you can produce a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate how your work compares to the dimensions, levels and indicators relevant to your KSF outline. This will also help you and your manager identify learning and development needs. This does not need to be a paper chase or a large volume of documents.

Regularly updating your portfolio throughout the year will save preparation time for your annual appraisal, and will allow you to continually assess your progress against your personal development plan. You may already have a suitable portfolio that you can use, such as a training record of continuous professional development (CPD). If this is not the case, you may need to discuss with your reviewer whether you need to set up a simple KSF portfolio. You may find it beneficial to contact the RCN Career Service, which can also assist you with establishing a portfolio.

Why do you need to gather evidence?

Evidence should be readily available in the workplace. Evidence provides objective information about the level of knowledge and skills you use to perform different tasks and activities within your post. Your reviewer will not always be aware of all the skills and knowledge you bring to your role, so it is also important to have objective evidence to identify your learning and development needs based on your KSF outline.

Once you have identified your needs, you may find it helpful to enquire about the courses available through the RCN, and any online RCN forums that may provide a useful platform for you to network with other nurses in your specialty area.

What sort of evidence do I need?

Before your first PDR, discuss with your reviewer the type of evidence you should be gathering:

- ◆ there must be sufficient evidence to confirm your work against the dimensions, levels and indicators relevant to your KSF outline – it might be possible that one piece of evidence can be used for more than one indicator across different dimensions
- ◆ evidence should be up to date – even if you have achieved the full KSF outline for your post, you must still provide evidence to your reviewer that your knowledge and skills are being currently and consistently used; if not, further learning and development may be required
- ◆ evidence should be to the appropriate standard – that is, it must relate to the level indicated in your KSF outline.

Pay points

Gateways

Each AfC pay band includes a number of incremental pay points. Two of these incremental points are known as ‘gateways’; where decisions are made on development and pay progression.

Foundation gateway

This gateway occurs no later than 12 months after an individual is appointed to a pay band, regardless of the pay point to which the individual is appointed. Foundation gateways check individuals meet the basic demands of their post.

Second gateway

This is a fixed point towards the top of the pay band. Second gateways involve a formal review of an individual’s development against the full KSF outline for their post. This confirms that individuals are applying their knowledge and skills consistently to meet the full demands of their post.

Preceptorship

Newly qualified staff joining pay band 5 on or after 1 October 2004, experience accelerated progression through the first two pay points (pay points 17 and 18) over a 12-month preceptorship period, providing that a structured development programme is in place and the individual’s standard of practice, is satisfactory.

Within the first 12 months of employment you will have two development reviews (one

at six months and one at 12 months). The first review will establish whether you are on track in your development towards the foundation gateway. A successful review will result in the award of an incremental pay point. The second development review acts as the foundation gateway for this pay band and focuses on the KSF outline for your post. Again a successful review will result in the award of an incremental pay point.

If you are unsuccessful in your second developmental review, a reassessment will be held every three months for a 12-month period. If, following this additional 12 months (24 months post qualification) you are still not assessed as having the knowledge and skills required for a band 5 post, the employing organisation may wish to refer to its local capability procedures. In the unlikely event of this occurring, RCN members can request that a local RCN representative acts as their advocate in the workplace.

References

Department of Health (2004) *The NHS KSF and the development review process*, London: DH.

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Royal College of Nursing (2005) *NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework outlines for nursing posts*. RCN guidance for nurses and managers in creating KSF outlines in the NHS, London: RCN.

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This publication contains information, advice and guidance to help members of the RCN. It is intended for use within the UK but readers are advised that practices may vary in each country and outside the UK.

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www.rcn.org.uk

RCNDIRECT
www.rcn.org.uk/direct
0845 772 6100

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