

# A Competency Framework for Rheumatology Nurses: **Registered Practitioner**

This document should be used in conjunction with the first edition of the RCN's *Competency Framework for Rheumatology Nurses* (2020) as guidance, this includes advice on the assessment process and on providing evidence. The competency framework is available at: [www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-009004](http://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-009004)

Level of competency attainment guidance	Level
Cannot perform/demonstrate this activity satisfactorily or participate in the clinical environment	1
Can perform/demonstrate this activity but not without constant supervision and assistance	2
Can perform/demonstrate this activity with some supervision or assistance – and in clinical settings discussing cases as needed	3
Can perform without supervision or assistance demonstrating more than acceptable speed and quality showing initiative and adaptability to special problem situations – and in clinical settings discussing only difficult cases	4
Can perform without supervision or assistance demonstrating more than acceptable speed and quality showing initiative and adaptability to special problem situations and can lead others in undertaking this activity – and in clinical settings bringing pertinent cases to MDT meetings or appropriate clinician as required	5

Adapted from Benner (1984).

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Competency 1: Specialism knowledge				
Performance criteria	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>				
Develops underpinning knowledge of rheumatological conditions, associated comorbidities and differential diagnoses.				
Develops awareness of complex conditions such as autoimmune connective tissue diseases, vasculitis, rare metabolic bone disease or inherited connective tissue disease and treatment pathways.				
Develops knowledge of evidence-based treatment pathways such as Treating to Target, self-management strategies and national standards.				
Develops understanding of the main classifications of drug therapy including analgesia, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs), immune modulatory drugs and corticosteroids.				
Develops an understanding of the impact of combination therapies, increases in dosage and the risks related to immunosuppression (especially in CYP).				
Develops understanding of bone health, including the importance of diet, vitamin D, micronutrients, exercise and associated risk factors and their importance within the rheumatology context including child development (where appropriate).				
Develops awareness of falls and fracture risk in rheumatology patients and can explain these to patients and carers.  Develops an understanding of the role of the multidisciplinary team (MDT).				
<b>Skills and behaviours</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Level achieved</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessor/self-assessed</b>
Provides person-centred care in relation to the specific health care needs of patients with rheumatological conditions.				
Able to describe multifactorial issues in the development of rheumatological conditions and can explain these to patients and carers.				

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Competency 2: Clinical assessment planning implementation and evaluation				
Performance criteria	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>				
Develops understanding of the importance of carrying out disease activity scoring and other outcome measures relevant to patient or condition.				
Develops understanding of normal body movements and factors which might alter these; including child development, delayed diagnosis and access to care.				
Understands the importance of correctly identifying and managing pain and develops an understanding of pharmacological and non-pharmacological approaches.				
Knowledge of appropriate investigations according to agreed protocols.				
Develops awareness of the importance of potentially serious pathology (red flags) and reports to appropriate clinician.				
Understands risk assessment principles and care planning processes using a shared decision-making approach.				
Understands the specific risks from infections and takes appropriate action.				
Develops an understanding of the potential psychological and social implications of living with a rheumatological conditions.				
Understands the Health and Safety at Work Act, public health issues, services policies, procedures and protocols, local cytotoxic policy for administration of methotrexate and cyclophosphamide – including risk factors to mothers giving treatment to their children while pregnant.				
Develops knowledge of falls risk.				

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Skills and behaviours	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
Complies with infection prevention procedures and is specifically aware of infection risks for rheumatology patients, especially those on immune modulating therapies.				
Can describe infection presentations specifically related to rheumatology.				
Identifies and supports patients to manage acute and chronic pain, referring to appropriate services.				
Ability to carry out venepuncture or cannulation if appropriate.				
Recognises unexpected findings from investigations and reports these appropriately.				
Proactively identifies adult and child safeguarding issues and reports appropriately.				

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Competency 3: Disease management				
Performance criteria	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>				
Knowledge of the implications of long-term conditions, their ongoing management and effects on patients and families.				
Develops an understanding of the mode of action and aims of use of therapies, screening, side effects, monitoring requirements, pre-treatment safety checks and reporting side effects complying with local policy.				
Knowledge and understanding of other therapies and services that may be suitable.				
Knowledge of the use of over the counter (OTC) medication.				
Knowledge of non-pharmacological interventions.				
<b>Skills and behaviours</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Level achieved</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessor/self-assessed</b>
Undertakes risk assessment and capacity of patient and carers.				
Able to support patient and family to select most appropriate administration of medication and provides support for ongoing self-management and assesses treatment concordance.				
Effectively counsels patients and carers, and offers supporting information in relevant format.				
Competent to administer specialist prescribed treatments.				
Recognises and implements strategies to help with needle phobia, e.g., distraction techniques, rewards.				
Safe administration of Entonox for procedures as per local policies.				

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<b>Competency 4: Communication</b>				
<b>Performance criteria</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Level achieved</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessor/self-assessed</b>
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>				
Understands factors affecting self-management and evidence-based approaches to patient education.				
Develops an understanding of national guidance documents within the scope of rheumatology to support safe practice.				
<b>Skills and behaviours</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Level achieved</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessor/self-assessed</b>
Provides accurate information to patients, carers and families when starting treatment and importance of safe medication administration, in a developmentally appropriate manner.				
Describes approaches to diagnosis, treatments and ongoing monitoring to patients and their carers.				
Develops understanding of specific risk factors relating to rheumatology and Making Every Contact Count.				
Provides written contact information regarding rheumatology and home care delivery services and out of hours procedures and access.				
Ensures adequate provision of medication liaising with prescribers as needed.				
Participates in patient and carer teaching sessions.				

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Competency 5: Service delivery				
Performance criteria	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>				
Is aware of pathways used in rheumatology and follows them for patient care.				
Is aware of patient feedback mechanisms.				
Understands the importance of planned smooth transfer of care between primary, community and secondary care settings.				
<b>Skills and behaviours</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Level achieved</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessor/self-assessed</b>
Supports patients and carers to self-manage care as appropriate, and able to describe support systems in place accurately to patients and carers.				
Ability to manage clinical caseload safely, effectively and efficiently.				
Able to carry out clinical annual review using local protocol.				
Demonstrates excellent time keeping skills.				

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<b>Competency 6: Governance and accountability</b>				
<b>Performance criteria</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Level achieved</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessor/self-assessed</b>
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>				
Understands the principles of duty of care and the importance of reporting near misses and errors.				
Develops understanding of quality improvement strategies.				
Understands the processes use of audit in demonstrating effectiveness of own clinical interventions through the use of outcome measures.				
Knowledge and understanding of research approaches and their relevance practice.				
<b>Skills and behaviours</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Level achieved</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessor/self-assessed</b>
Is able to use DATIX or equivalent system for reporting near misses and/or errors.				



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Competency 7: Leadership and development				
Performance criteria	Evidence	Level achieved	Date	Assessor/self-assessed
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>				
Knows the vision, values, principles and policies of the organisation and how to access them.				
<b>Skills and behaviours</b>				
Awareness of importance of organisation goals.				
Able to undertake literature search and take part in research.				
Can undertake relevant literature search to access current evidence for clinical practice.				
Regularly attends professional forums, local teaching, regional network updates on treatments and maintains own knowledge and competence to meet professional standards, CPD and revalidation requirements.				

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Area identified for development	Review date	Outcome

I confirm that the level of competence described above evidences my current skills and capability within the competence framework.

**Signed**

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signed**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Designation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**