Competencies:
an integrated career and competency framework for in-flight nurses
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who have led the work on this competency document, the past and present members of the In-flight Nurses Association (the forum of in-flight nurses in the RCN) steering group:

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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.

The information in this booklet has been compiled from professional sources, but its accuracy is not guaranteed. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the RCN provides accurate and expert information and guidance, it is impossible to predict all the circumstances in which it may be used. Accordingly, the RCN shall not be liable to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by what is contained in or left out of this website information and guidance.

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Competencies:

an integrated career and competency framework for in-flight nurses

Approved until January 2008

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Foreword

Competencies: an integrated career and competency framework for in-flight nurses was written by in-flight nurses, for in-flight nurses with the support of the RCN to provide a comprehensive document that will help nurses give a high standard of in-flight nursing throughout the UK. It is the result of four years of extensive work and consultation. The framework is the product of collaboration between in-flight nurses from all over the UK and service users, and specialists in other areas such as insurers and assistance companies. Evidence from the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) was also used to ensure that the framework is fit for purpose, and considers areas where in-flight nurses may be active in the future.

The catalyst for this work was the recognition that a competence framework was needed to enable in-flight nurses to describe and show their competence in a complex, and little understood, nursing specialty. The limited access to formal education, the variability of educational provision and the lack of portability of complex skills, were key issues raised by in-flight nurses when the competence framework was initially discussed.

The In-flight Nursing Forum steering group welcomes further comments and suggestions from practitioners. We want to ensure the framework remains current and relevant to those involved in the care of people while travelling by air. Please contact: ifna@rcn-ifna.org.uk
Introduction

Competence can be defined as: “The state of having the knowledge, judgement, skills, energy, experience and motivation required to respond adequately to the demands of one's professional responsibilities” (Roach, 1992).

The changing context

The fields of nursing are highly specialised, and subject to dramatic change as innovations and new techniques are adopted. The In-flight Nursing Forum believes that professional advice and support are required for nurses developing their roles in a dynamic and rapidly advancing field.

The competency framework has been developed in this context, as well as taking into account other professional and political factors such as:

✦ Agenda for Change (DH, 1999)
✦ need for leadership in specialist nursing
✦ need for the development of UK-wide standards in in-flight nursing
✦ NHS Plan (DH, 2000) and its equivalent in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
✦ increased focus on work-based and lifelong learning plus supervision
✦ increasing patient and user expectations
✦ inconsistency of provision and access to in-flight nursing education in the UK
✦ need for professional accreditation of skills and knowledge in practice
✦ national service frameworks and service modernisation
✦ Future Nurse (RCN, 2003)
✦ pioneering work by the RCN Accident and Emergency Association and the Faculty of Emergency Nursing
✦ knowledge and skills framework (DH, 2003).

Agenda for Change

Agenda for Change (AfC) was implemented in the NHS, across the UK in December 2004. It was the biggest overhaul of NHS-wide pay, terms and conditions in over 50 years. It applies to all NHS organisations and therefore sets a UK framework for pay, terms and conditions of employment.

AfC and its knowledge and skills framework (KSF) means that all staff will have clear and consistent development objectives; can develop in such a way that they can apply the knowledge and skills appropriate to their level of responsibility; and are helped to identify and develop knowledge and skills that will support their career progression.

Under AfC jobs are evaluated using a bespoke NHS job evaluation scheme. This gives each job a ‘weighting’ that then determines where each job slots into the new pay bands. Common ‘job profiles’ continue to be developed and are applicable across the UK, and where a job fits a profile it is possible to place it straight onto an appropriate new pay band. For the relatively few jobs that don't automatically fit a profile, trained job evaluators drawn from management and staff side carry out the evaluation using a Job Analysis Questionnaire (JAQ). Each pay band has a number of pay points. Staff below the maximum point can expect to progress to the next point each year.

There are two points on each pay band called gateways where staff knowledge and skills are assessed using the knowledge and skills framework. Pay progression at the gateways is linked to the demonstration of applied knowledge and skills to support continuing professional development. The presumption in the KSF is that staff will pass through these gateways unless there are reasons as to why they shouldn't.

For more comprehensive information on Agenda for Change please refer to www.rcn.org.uk/agendaforchange/ This site is your guide to the ins and outs of the pay, terms and conditions for the NHS. It will help you to understand AfC, how it was developed, what you can expect from your new pay, terms and conditions and how you can make the most of the new system, particularly the KSF. To ask questions and debate issues use the RCN’s Discussion Zone in the members-only area.
How to use the framework

The framework focuses on knowledge, skills and interventions that are heightened or specific to nurses working in any in-flight setting. Although the intention is for this framework to have a stand-alone function it should be used in conjunction with other frameworks that focus on core skills and competencies for all qualified nurses. In addition the specific frameworks developed by specialist nurses can be used to support and enhance in-flight nursing practice.

Benefits of the framework

The competency framework provides benefits for nurses, their employers, patients and the public.

Nurses benefit because it helps you to:
✦ deliver consistently high standards of care
✦ identify your level of practice and plan your career in a more structured way
✦ pinpoint personal education and development needs
✦ realise your potential more effectively
✦ seize opportunities to influence the direction of nursing.

Employers benefit because it provides:
✦ a model to ensure consistently high standards of care
✦ clearer insight into the expertise and competence of staff. For example, in assessment of risk management.

Patients and the public benefit because it makes it possible to deliver:
✦ consistently high standards of patient care
✦ increased effectiveness to service provision
✦ improved access and choice for care provision.

The competency levels

The framework has three levels of competency and has the potential to be cross-referenced with the knowledge and skills framework in greater detail at a later date. There is also scope to add non-qualified (health care assistants) and consultant nurse levels as and when appropriate.

The levels are:
Level 1: competent nurse
Level 2: experienced/proficient nurse
Level 3: senior practitioner/expert nurse.

The framework is intended to:
✦ help individual nurses plan their professional development in in-flight nursing
✦ act as a model of care for nurses in all settings who care for in-flight patients
✦ provide guidance to employers about expectations of competency at different levels of in-flight nursing practice
✦ act as a framework for educationalists to use when planning and revalidating educational provision to reduce the ‘theory/practice’ gap, and show consistency in in-flight nursing
✦ capture the unique contribution to care that in-flight nurses make
✦ provide a model to use in the development of new in-flight nursing roles such as those in primary care or in visual rehabilitation
✦ provide a framework for career progression in in-flight nursing.

The building blocks for professional development

The clearly defined competency levels make it possible for in-flight nurses to identify their level of practice. The framework gives you the ability to plan your career in a more structured way, and supports your continuing professional development by pinpointing individual development and training needs.

By developing competencies for in-flight and other nursing specialisms, the RCN is providing the key building blocks for improving professional practice in nursing. This will raise the quality of care, and ensure that patients and employers benefit from consistently high standards.

Using the framework

This document is intended to complement the UK-wide RCN Core competency framework and focuses on specific nursing interventions. The framework should be used as a developing, empowering and aspirational tool, as well as a means of managing performance within professional development and appraisal schemes.
It is envisaged that this framework could be used by any nurse working in an in-flight setting. The core competences have been written so that whatever the care setting, most are achievable. The specialist competencies are designed to enable each nurse to map competence across the whole range.

When the competencies are added to the RCN Core competence framework, the model works as the diagram above illustrates. However, it will also work as a model of in-flight nursing practice without the generic competences.

**Producing evidence**

You are responsible for gathering evidence for each competency to demonstrate that you have achieved it at the identified/desired level. Forms of evidence that you can use include:

- case histories
- self-appraisal via a reflective diary
- 360-degree feedback
- verification of practice and structured observation of practice.

When you gather evidence it is important that you consider the following:

- what is the competency statement asking of you?
- is the existing evidence appropriate? For example, certificates of attendance at training events are insufficient to demonstrate knowledge or competence in practice. You will need to demonstrate the knowledge that you have gained and how you use this in practice. Assessment of competence in practice also requires supervised practice by a competent practitioner until you both agree that competence has been demonstrated
what else do you need to do to develop evidence? For example, consider reflection and feedback on practice
do you have any further development needs, and how could these be met?
could the evidence that you have been used to cover several competencies? For example, one case study may demonstrate that you have used a variety of knowledge and skills in caring for a patient. In this instance you should be able to measure the evidence against several competencies.

What is evidence?

There is a variety of material that you can collect to capture evidence of competence. This may include:
- evidence of supervised practice such as signed observation of undertaking a procedure
- work-based projects
- practice developments/changes in practice
- tape recordings
- critical incidents
- reflective diaries
- log books
- evidence of qualification
- assessments and appraisals
- publications and presentations
- audits
- teaching packages
- poster
- certificates of attendance with reflection on learning
- evidence of group work
- policy and protocol development
- standard operating procedures
- evidence of membership of advisory groups
- research and evidence-based reviews
- witness statements when focused and well structured.

Professional accountability

The NMC Code of professional conduct: standards for conduct, performance and ethics (2004) states:

“As a registered nurse, midwife or specialist community public health nurse, you are personally accountable for your practice. In caring for patients and clients, you must:
- respect the patient or client as an individual
- obtain consent before you give any treatment or care
- protect confidential information
- co-operate with others in the team
- maintain your professional knowledge and competence
- be trustworthy
- act to identify and minimise risk to patients and clients.”

The code goes on to state that as a practitioner:

“You are personally accountable for your practice. This means that you are answerable for your actions and omissions, regardless of advice or directions from another professional.”

It also goes on to state:

“You have a duty of care to your patients and clients, who are entitled to receive safe and competent care”, and that “you must adhere to the laws of the country in which you are practising.”
## Competencies

### Core competency 1: self-assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent nurse</th>
<th>Experienced/proficient nurse</th>
<th>Senior practitioner/expert nurse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under the direct supervision of an expert nurse</td>
<td>Under the minimum guidance and supervision of an expert nurse</td>
<td>Without guidance or supervision</td>
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</table>

**Pre-transfer:**
- undertake a pre-flight assessment of self - including health, competency to practise (knowledge base, expertise, physical skills), rest, appropriate visas etc
- plan an assessment for a range of patients using an evidence-based approach to practice
- evaluate data available and select appropriate equipment and tools required for planned repatriation
- undertake a full pre-flight assessment of patient using an evidence-based approach to practice with regard to patient’s medical condition, taking into account individual needs and proposed itinerary

**Pre-transfer:**
- offer support/mentorship to less experienced nurses
- challenge care practices (where appropriate) and decide on care priorities
- plan an assessment for multiple patients or assess complex cases.

**Pre-transfer:**
- use evidence-based research to implement policy and protocols relating to in-flight procedures
- receive and provide highly complex information
- be able to allocate to repatriations to flight nurses according to qualification, expertise, skill and personal strengths
- plan an assessment for large numbers of patients and/or highly complex cases
- develop specialised programmes of care
- develop in-flight care services
- provide clinical and logistical advice on aeromedical transfer and care
- plan and implement competency training and personal development protocols
- reconcile inter and intra-professional differences of opinion
- lead on developments in nursing practice actively.

**During transfer:**
- assess, plan implement and evaluate the care for a range of patients using an evidence based approach to practice
- ability to adjust care according to need.

**During transfer:**
- assess, plan, implement and ongoing evaluate care delivered and adjust to own sphere of competency
- adjust nursing care and therapeutic interventions in own range of skills and competencies.

**During transfer:**
- provide support for others as necessary and offer practical advice and information if required
- evaluate care provided by others and appraise critically as necessary
- prepare to address shortfalls of standards sensitively.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Post-transfer:</th>
<th>Post-transfer:</th>
<th>Post-transfer:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• provide discharge to the appropriate authority (including medical documentation that relates to medical history, transfer history, investigations etc, personal documentation and property)</td>
<td>• assess patient for appropriate discharge arrangements, and act in the patients best interest</td>
<td>• evaluate team’s care practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evaluate own care practices against accepted standards and guidance</td>
<td>• evaluate own care and act as a resource to other nurses in ensuring their care is evaluated against accepted standards and guidelines</td>
<td>• evaluate local policies around discharge, documentation and confidentiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure appropriate documentation is provided to both patient and/or care setting, and assistance organisation, maintaining confidentiality at all times.</td>
<td>• support others in appropriate document management and appraise others critically in record keeping within professional and legal boundaries.</td>
<td>• audit documentation to ensure appropriate standards and guidance are maintained, and appraise individuals on progress as required.</td>
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<tr>
<th>General:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• demonstrate an awareness of other agencies involved (such as travel underwriter, assistance companies, agents, airlines, ground transport agencies) their role and responsibilities</td>
<td>• liaise with other agencies involved</td>
<td>• co-ordinate and make judgements and decisions relating to the facilitation/relationship with other agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• follow a recognised pathway of professional development and ensure acute clinical practice is maintained</td>
<td>• decide clinically on priorities in the care setting</td>
<td>• manage conflicting views where decisions affect safety and/or clinical governance in the in-flight environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide a flexible plan of care for a variety of patients to include pre, in and post-flight settings using evidence-based approach</td>
<td>• challenge care practices and processes and decide on care priorities</td>
<td>• take responsibility for deciding on the priorities in patient care without guidance or supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evaluate all such care using an evidence-base approach to practice</td>
<td>• interpret care practices and processes in the care setting, and evaluate them</td>
<td>• organise independently all aspects of nursing care for patients relating to in-flight nursing repatriations and transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide appropriate discharge procedures such as handover of patient, care, medical/personal documentation and property</td>
<td>• take responsibility for leading a team</td>
<td>• provide an active lead in the development of nursing practice that is relevant to in-flight nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate the foundation skills to practise in the in-flight setting (BLS/ILS/ALS as appropriate)</td>
<td>• provide support and mentorship to others in the competency framework</td>
<td>• continue to improve and enhance evidence-based practice for in-flight nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate the process of professional development relating to planning to achieve next level status</td>
<td>• liaise with other agencies in the in-flight setting to ensure the care and wellbeing of the patient/family/carer is paramount</td>
<td>• undertake research activities and improve current research with own work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• implement treatment plans</td>
<td>• follow the developmental pathway and show evidence of it (portfolios etc)</td>
<td>• implement policy and protocols relating to in-flight procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• assess fitness for aeromedical transfer and have a comprehensive understanding of the procedure should a patient not be fit to undertake the pre-arranged transfer or require additional facilities (than that already arranged)</td>
<td>• continue to develop self and others in all professional activities</td>
<td>• train and develop staff in the developmental framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate awareness of all advisory resources</td>
<td>• demonstrate ability to anticipate effects of flight including stress, long haul travel, circadian rhythm changes on patients, travelling companions and self.</td>
<td>• continue to develop excellence in practice and encourage the same in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• know how to access relevant information regarding a patient and the appropriateness of communication of that information to other parties</td>
<td>• demonstrate ability to initiate specific treatment prior to transfer</td>
<td>• assess priorities, plan, treat and safely discharge patients presenting for in-flight repatriation or transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• support junior nurses in dealing with unfit clients/patients</td>
<td>• evaluate data clinically to select and implement appropriate care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• provide training to enhance competent nurse assessment skills</td>
<td>• make operational judgements and provide advice in all aspect of in-flight nursing care</td>
</tr>
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</table>
• assess all patients accurately and recognise actual and potential problems
• demonstrate a working knowledge of observations that are appropriate to the clinical needs of the patient both pre, during and post-flight
• assess, prioritise and plan care holistically for patient requiring in-flight care
• assess and implement treatment regimens
• demonstrate awareness of procedures for dealing with the unfit patient
• demonstrate awareness of advisory resources available
• anticipate the effects to individuals of in-flight environment including time zones, stress and long haul flights
• maintain own personal development plan
• demonstrate awareness of health and safety legislation around in-flight transfers and make appropriate risk assessments.
• have appropriate skills to research and evaluate effectively and accurately to promote excellence
• realise the importance of compiling research evidence as a part of the working routine of an autonomous in-flight nurse
• communicate all research findings to the multidisciplinary team, realising its value as a learning tool.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• contribute to the knowledge base of aeromedical practice by applying and critiquing research/innovations to practise</td>
<td>• act as an advisory source for suitability to fly for patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• integrate specialist theoretical and research evidence base into the continued development of clinical practice</td>
<td>• give advice and direct policy in the repatriation of patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• attend and review relevant clinical meetings to discuss research findings in order to streamline future protocols.</td>
<td>• make operational judgements in relation to assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure that tools and protocols designed for patient assessment in the in-flight setting are research-based and current</td>
<td>• teach and develop the skills of team members to ensure effective, evidence-based care is provided that reflects up-to-date guidance relevant to in-flight nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• contribute to the evidence base for in-flight nursing practice to support and promote in-flight nursing</td>
<td>• identify areas for further research and directly contribute to that body of knowledge for aeromedical practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop educational tools and packages to present research evidence to the multidisciplinary team</td>
<td>• implement relevant clinical meetings and update databases with changes and developments.</td>
</tr>
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Core competency 2: being patient and person-centred

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent nurse</th>
<th>Experienced/proficient nurse</th>
<th>Senior practitioner/expert nurse</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate knowledge of the rationale behind the management of the physiological, social and spiritual needs of the patient in the in-flight and transport environment</td>
<td>• ensure policies and procedures are followed to maintain patient care and safety in the aero medical/transport environment</td>
<td>• develop and implement policy with regard to patient-centred care appropriate to the in-flight environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate awareness of their role in providing a duty of care</td>
<td>• use advanced nursing skills to assess and provide high quality therapeutic nursing care in the aeromedical environment</td>
<td>• demonstrate skills to receive complex clinical information to make safe patient-focused decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide patient-centred care in the limit of experience and training</td>
<td>• receive and communicate highly sensitive information</td>
<td>• demonstrate ability to present highly complex patient/clinical information to all stakeholders while maintaining confidentiality as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide care for all patients and relatives in an appropriate manner, maintaining empathy, sensitivity and reassurance</td>
<td>• apply policies and procedures in practice to ensure that all care provided is patient-centred</td>
<td>• ensure actions are appropriate to being the patient's advocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be accountable for own professional practice</td>
<td>• demonstrate awareness that policies and procedures are in place to address the needs of dying patients/death in transit or in-flight</td>
<td>• support colleagues in advocating high quality care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• receive and communicate sensitive condition-related information in a caring and confidential manner appropriate to the situation and location</td>
<td>• demonstrate accountability (unsupervised lead in certain areas) for all areas of practice</td>
<td>• use patient's views and feedback to inform and adjust the provision of treatment and care of future patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• assess appropriately a patient's suitability for flight and can act to ensure safe repatriation</td>
<td>• demonstrate patient-centred care related to extended training and professional experience</td>
<td>• ensure appropriate selection of suitably registered and trained nurses to patient specific needs, allowing for sensitive care and protection of patient and nurse within national guidance or recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate appropriate clinical and non-clinical assessment skills for patients, ensuring safe repatriation and transfers</td>
<td>• provide supervision of the welfare of staff including equal opportunities and related legislation</td>
<td>• ensure that nurses/practitioners provide patient-centred care with relation to advanced practice and higher level of training and experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure the spiritual needs of patients are met when possible and in the confines of environment of care.</td>
<td>• decide on nature and type of discharge for patients including appropriate policy development for the competent level nurse</td>
<td>• instigate and monitor equal opportunities training and comply with related legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• conduct an assessment of treatment accurately, undertake a physical examination and interpret findings to an enhanced level</td>
<td>• ensure nurses are supported as lone workers in the in-flight environment, and work appropriate hours as per the European Working Time Directive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Core competency 3: using evidence-based practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent nurse</th>
<th>Experienced/proficient nurse</th>
<th>Senior practitioner/expert nurse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate an up-to-date knowledge of the physiological aspects of aviation and how this affects the care of patients</td>
<td>• share advanced knowledge of physiological aspect to others to reduce risk and enhance patient care</td>
<td>• undertake clinical audit of in-flight practices and act on findings to develop and improve standards of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• comply with audit procedures and policy changes</td>
<td>• assist in the collation and development in the audit of in-flight care clinical practice</td>
<td>• conduct research within legal and ethical codes and disseminate findings to in-flight nurses regarding care delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• conduct audit of own work</td>
<td>• conduct and assist in research in areas of in-flight clinical practice within appropriate legal and ethical codes for research.</td>
<td>• ensure appropriate evidence-based policies and procedures are in place to ensure the highest standard of treatment and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• implement revised and new care protocols that are evidence-based and support care in the in-flight environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>• provide evidence for revision of policies and protocols on a regular basis in liaison with other in-flight health care providers and stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide feedback with regard to practices and procedures.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• benchmark care against national or international indicators and standards and use findings to enhance care.</td>
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- Core competency 3: using evidence-based practice

Experienced/proficient nurse:
- Share advanced knowledge of physiological aspects to others to reduce risk and enhance patient care.
- Assist in the collation and development in the audit of in-flight care clinical practice.
- Conduct and assist in research in areas of in-flight clinical practice within appropriate legal and ethical codes for research.

Senior practitioner/expert nurse:
- Undertake clinical audit of in-flight practices and act on findings to develop and improve standards of care.
- Conduct research within legal and ethical codes and disseminate findings to in-flight nurses regarding care delivery.
- Ensure appropriate evidence-based policies and procedures are in place to ensure the highest standard of treatment and services.
- Provide evidence for revision of policies and protocols on a regular basis in liaison with other in-flight health care providers and stakeholders.
- Benchmark care against national or international indicators and standards and use findings to enhance care.

Competent nurse:
- Demonstrate an up-to-date knowledge of the physiological aspects of aviation and how this affects the care of patients.
- Comply with audit procedures and policy changes.
- Conduct audit of own work.
- Implement revised and new care protocols that are evidence-based and support care in the in-flight environment.
- Provide feedback with regard to practices and procedures.
Core competency 4: practice expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent nurse</th>
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| • demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of the gas laws, the effects of altitude and travel and the principles of aviation medicine in day-to-day practice  
• ability to anticipate the effect of a nursing diagnosis, respond appropriately and adjust care to enhance wellbeing and maintain safety in the air and in transit  
• demonstrate competence in the monitoring of clinical signs in-flight in relation to aviation medicine and use a problem-solving approach to providing care  
• demonstrate self-awareness of own competencies, and ask for help, and seek assistance appropriately  
• undertake a full risk assessment prior and during each stage of transfer or start of clinical procedure  
• administer treatment and medicines within agreed professional conduct standards and national protocols and procedures  
• follow care pathways in own field of expertise and registration on NMC register  
• demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of all body systems  
• demonstrate an enhanced knowledge of all body systems relevant to aviation medicine  
• work within level of clinical competency to ensure clinical standards are maintained  
• develop and conduct appraisals of nursing staff performance and ensure ongoing development  
• develop IT systems to support in-flight practice. | • demonstrate an enhanced knowledge of in-flight nursing.  
• ability to explain to patients, carers and other non-aviation experienced health personnel using examples  
• assist in the development of care pathways relevant to in-flight nursing  
• demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of all body systems  
• Demonstrate an enhanced knowledge of relevant drug therapies and their use in the in-flight setting  
• develop and use drug protocols  
• demonstrate a proven enhanced knowledge of the effects of altitude and principles of aviation medicine  
• develop this knowledge in others  
• demonstrate an enhanced knowledge of gas laws  
• demonstrate comprehensive in-flight monitoring skills and ability to relate them to aviation medicine principles  
• work within level of clinical competency to ensure clinical standards are maintained  
• develop and act on audit in the clinical setting to enhance in-flight practices  
• develop and use in-flight documentation. | • demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of logistical and nursing issues of travel and aeromedical care  
• ability to present information to large groups/other health care professionals  
• anticipate the likely course of a patient's disease process/treatment and use own specialist knowledge to effect best outcome  
• develop protocols and procedures for specialist monitoring in the aviation medicine field  
• develop care pathways in a clinical framework that reflects both international and national standards  
• audit and disseminate evaluation of decisions made  
• develop and appraise audit tools specifically for in-flight nursing care  
• use expert knowledge to anticipate the likely effects of flight and act appropriately to limit risk to patient.  
• initiate and supply relevant therapy/treatment using specialist knowledge  
• develop tools and protocols for aviation medicine and in-flight monitoring  
• develop and conduct appraisals of nursing staff performance and ensure ongoing development  
• develop IT systems to support in-flight practice.
Core competency 4: practice expertise

Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent nurse</th>
<th>Experienced/proficient nurse</th>
<th>Senior practitioner/expert nurse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• assess, prioritise and plan care for patients requiring in-flight repatriation or transfer holistically and accurately. Care should be appropriate to individual and clinical needs recognising actual and potential problems</td>
<td>• ability to anticipate effects of flight including stress, long haul travel, circadian rhythm changes on both patients, travelling companions and self</td>
<td>• assess, prioritise, plan, treat and safely discharge patients presenting for in-flight repatriation or transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• implement agreed treatment plans and protocols</td>
<td>• conduct an assessment of treatment, accurately, undertake a physical/mental health examination (as appropriate) and interpret findings to an enhanced level</td>
<td>• evaluate clinical data to select and implement appropriate care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ability to assess fitness for aeromedical transfer and have a comprehensive understanding of the procedure should a patient not be fit to undertake the pre-arranged transfer or require additional facilities (than that already arranged)</td>
<td>• ability to initiate specific treatment prior to transfer</td>
<td>• make operational judgements and provide advice on all aspects of in-flight care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• know how to access relevant information regarding a patient and the appropriateness of communication of that information to other parties</td>
<td>• provide training to enhance competent nurse's assessment skills.</td>
<td>• anticipate the effects to individuals of in-flight environment including time zones, stress and long haul flights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate a working knowledge of observations that are appropriate to the clinical needs of the patient both pre, during and post-flight</td>
<td>• act as an adviser on whether patients and relatives are suitable to fly</td>
<td>• give advice and direct policy in the repatriation of patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• assess and implement treatment regimen</td>
<td>• assess a patient's suitability for flight and act to ensure safe repatriation</td>
<td>• ensure that tools and protocols designed for assessment of patients in the in-flight setting are research-based and current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• assess a patient's suitability for flight and act to ensure safe repatriation</td>
<td>• demonstrate awareness of procedures for dealing with the unfit patient</td>
<td>• teach and develop the skills of others in the team to ensure effective, evidence-based care is provided that reflects up-to-date guidance relevant to in-flight nursing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate awareness of the advisory resources that are available.</td>
<td>• demonstrate awareness of the advisory resources that are available.</td>
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</table>
# Core competency 4: practice expertise

Planning, providing and evaluating specific interventions, treatment and therapies

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• understand and demonstrate practical skills in the logistics of in-flight transfer</td>
<td>• ability to risk assess critically a logistical transfer and recommend alternatives based on robust evidence and clinical parameters</td>
<td>• demonstrate highly developed specialist knowledge of the whole range of the logistics of in-flight transfer. Demonstrate how to apply this knowledge to highly clinical, and complex situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• relate theory to practice</td>
<td>• maintain UKRC/ERC basic life support and hold a UKRC Intermediate Life Support certificate as appropriate to the aeromedical care environment</td>
<td>• possess intermediate/advanced life support skills (as appropriate) as recognised by the UKRC and demonstrate competence to use these in the aeromedical environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• possess basic life support skills as recognised by the UKRC/ERC (UK Resuscitation Council/European Resuscitation Council) and demonstrate competence to use these in the aeromedical environment</td>
<td>• recognise limitations to practice in an emergency and demonstrate awareness of how to give medical advice and assistance overseas</td>
<td>• develop and challenge established expertise in own specialty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ability to intervene in an emergency basis while working within the scope of professional practice</td>
<td>• ability to co-ordinate others in the event of a critical situation</td>
<td>• ensure others work within their own sphere of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• anticipate, perform and evaluate ongoing patient assessment requirements in the aeromedical environment</td>
<td>• demonstrate the ability to assess critically the medico-legal aspects of own practice.</td>
<td>• educate others to the medico-legal and health and safety aspects of in-flight care provision and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure that the needs of the patient and travel companions are met during transfer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate and maintain expertise in own specialty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• demonstrate the medico-legal aspects of in-flight practice.</td>
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</table>
Core competency 5: leadership and management in-flight nursing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent nurse</th>
<th>Experienced/proficient nurse</th>
<th>Senior practitioner/expert nurse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under the direct supervision of an expert nurse</td>
<td>Under the minimum guidance and supervision of an expert nurse</td>
<td>Without guidance or supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ability to self-assess competence using national in-flight competencies, and identify limitations through lack of experience and seek advice and training from appropriate sources</td>
<td>• ability to build on existing competencies and experience and share knowledge through networking and communication directly with junior and senior staff</td>
<td>• develop systems and audit packages to ensure more junior and less experienced staff have a constant source of information, updates and educational opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate where to acquire appropriate in-flight nursing knowledge and expertise and support and guidance to ensure optimum appropriate specialist knowledge base</td>
<td>• be available to support less experienced flight nurses and encourage development through peer group support and be involved in specialist educational packages</td>
<td>• ensure all staff are aware of available specialist educational opportunities related to in-flight care, and commission training as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate a sound knowledge of cultural, legislative and customs issues related to international travel and aviation procedures</td>
<td>• demonstrate awareness of the responsibility of the registered in-flight practitioner to report any changes with known cultural, legislative and customs issues to junior and senior flight nurses, while balancing the confidentiality issues of care</td>
<td>• develop up-to-date databases to keep all staff fully informed of changes with cultural, legislative and customs issues involved in in-flight care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate the issues around financial versus clinical aspects of care, and demonstrate appropriate skills in discussing and advocating care.</td>
<td>• endorse cost effective practice and contribute to budgetary issues.</td>
<td>• demonstrate budgetary management skills that promote safe practice within the limitations laid down by insurance underwriters, and be prepared to influence change where it may be seen to be unrealistic.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
References

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


www.rcn.org.uk/downloads/futurenurse/nurse-education.doc