

Understanding how to get ready for your NPTP application

The purpose of this document is to guide you through reflecting on your clinical and organisational readiness for Nurse Practitioner practice.

Nurse Practitioner (NP) training has continued to evolve to respond to increasing demand within the health care sector to address health care disparities. With the investment and support of Ministry of Health, New Zealand has developed a National Nurse Practitioner Training Program which currently provides training for over 50 Nurse practitioner candidates annually.

In 2016 the Nursing Council New Zealand (NCNZ) revised the Nurse Practitioner scope of practice, qualifications, standards and competencies in order to meet the shifting needs of the population and workforce development requirements.

Completion of a NCNZ accredited NP master's programme, is inclusive of clinically supervised learning to broaden and develop the candidate's advanced skills to facilitate their achievement of Nursing Council registration as a Nurse Practitioner.

These competencies define the minimum required knowledge, skills and attributes required of nurse practitioners to achieve this scope of practice. The Council acknowledges that experienced nurse practitioners will develop additional knowledge and skills as they progress throughout their careers.

The six competencies are organised into five themes:

1. Provides safe and accountable advanced practice
2. Assesses, diagnoses, plans, implements and evaluates care
3. Works in partnership with health consumers
4. Works collaboratively with healthcare teams
5. Works to improve the quality and outcomes of healthcare

To register as a NP candidates must develop a professional portfolio which provides evidence of how each competency is met. This portfolio is then assessed by a panel of senior NP's in order for them to progress to the final step of a panel verbal assessment of competence.

Ensuring that nurses are ready for this expansion in role has been a critical element in the design and application of Nurse Practitioner education. There has been significant work done to streamline and align resources to ensure that there is better equity for nurses pursuing this career path. However, there is a need to identify nurses earlier in their career to ensure that barriers to career progression are minimised and that there is overt support into NP roles.

The key themes in developing senior nurses for Nurse practitioner involves readiness.

There are 4 key themes that can provide a clear framework for nurses, academic institutions and organisations to use to support candidate's preparation for NPTP:

1. Clinical readiness

2. Organisational readiness
3. Academic readiness
4. Pastoral readiness

Clinical Readiness:

Getting ready for a new scope of practice requires you to have expert level clinical experience in a senior/extended RN capacity. (eg. NS roles, running nurse-led clinics). Having access to clinical roles which can evolve your advanced clinical knowledge/skills is essential to build senior nurse capability for clinical reasoning, leadership and teaching readiness. This will include opportunities to undertake leadership and teaching activities.

Evidence and experience have shown that nurses who have a well-established relationship with a clinical service for at least a year and who are supported by a senior clinical mentor are better equipped for the rigor of the NPTP as the final year to achieve NCNZ NP registration.

Opportunities to advance clinical skill development and experience is a key foundation for getting ready for a new scope of practice – this is dependent on services facilitating space for skill extension and development of advanced clinical reasoning.

Key strategies to develop readiness in this domain are

- a. working at a expert level for at least 12 months in the service you intend to complete your NPTP year.
- b. Establish a clinical relationship with an experienced mentor (experienced NP or experienced medical practitioner) who is familiar with the Nurse practitioner scope of practice as well as understanding the key NCNZ NP competencies that the candidate is expected to meet at the end of the programme
- c. Connection/participation with a NP peer group and/or NP to gain a better understanding of NP level of practice.

To support your development in this area please see the [self-audit clinical readiness tool](#).

Organisational readiness:

Health care infrastructures that support and champion the development of Nurse Practitioners roles are vital for the success for NP development. Significant investment in developing senior nurses prior to their application to NPTP is essential to develop expert clinical skills in order to meet NCNZ NP registration requirements. The current NCNZ requirement is at least 4 years of full-time practice in the area that the nurse intends to seek registration as a NP.

Services that have created stepped career pathways have been successful in developing Nurse Practitioners roles which are responsive to service and population needs. Services who intend to support NP candidates through the NPTP do well when they

- a. Have strategic plans to provide NP positions within the organisation.
- b. Have established the candidate in a senior clinical role/pathway at least 1-2 years prior to the NPTP.
- c. Have supported the development of in-house clinical mentorship
- d. Are equipped to provide the supernumerary hours as a minimum standard for the duration of the NPTP.
- e. Have a defined Nurse Practitioner position at completion of NPTP

Academic readiness:

Nationally approved education programmes seek to identify nurses early in their careers and support an academic trajectory that develops a systematic approach to successfully aligning their studies and clinical development. Nurses are supported early in their careers to take appropriate courses that further galvanise their academic preparation and support core clinical requirements. Applicants must complete an accredited Masters programme by the completion of the NPTP programme.

The following strategies have seen previous candidates thrive

- a. Connection to an academic advisor to develop a post-graduate study plan
- b. Support to develop academic writing, and utilisation of evidence-based practice and research skills
- c. Completion of the prerequisite courses for NP preparation
- d. Grades that reflects mastery of the core skills required by the NP competencies. (Universities may differ slightly in exact grade requirements)
- e. If it has been more than 5 years since you completed your prerequisite courses, it is recommended that your knowledge and skills are up to date. For example, if you have completed your assessment course as a new graduate, you do need to assure that your assessment skills must be current.

Whanau/pastoral readiness:

The NPTP year is a rigorous and demanding year. The full support of whanau, workplaces, communities and friends is necessary to provide the support that keeps candidates healthy and productive in their learning. Awareness of the extra burden the NPTP will create is necessary when considering preparing for the NPTP year. Previous students have informed us that the following have made their journey easier:

- f. External professional supervision
- g. Extra support to support personal commitments such as caring for family members
- h. Self-care strategies
- i. Time and priority management skills

Readiness takes time and a plan. To help individuals and organisation prepare for the NPTP programme we have developed readiness audits to highlight potential areas where more growth or development may be necessary. This tool aims to provide a framework for users to illuminate both strengths and potential gaps with practical advice of how to get ready. [Find it here](#)