

# Requisite Skills and Abilities for Becoming a Registered Nurse in Alberta

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## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to inform potential nursing students, admission officers, disability service providers and equity officers, and the public of the general demands and performance expectations of registered nurses (RNs) upon initial entry to practice in Alberta. Nursing education prepares students to meet the **ENTRY-LEVEL COMPETENCIES**<sup>1</sup> necessary to be knowledgeable, skilled, and competent to practice nursing safely and ethically.

The College of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CRNA) is the legislated regulatory college for all **REGISTRANTS** of the RN profession. According to the *Health Professions Act* (2000), RNs do one or more of the following in their practice:

- assist individuals, families, groups, and communities to achieve their optimal physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health and well-being
- assess, diagnose, and provide treatment and interventions and make referrals
- prevent or treat injury and illness
- teach, counsel, and advocate to enhance health and well-being
- coordinate, supervise, monitor, and evaluate the provision of health services
- teach nursing theory and practice
- manage, administer, and allocate resources related to health services
- engage in research related to health and the practice of nursing
- provide restricted activities authorized by the regulations

Requisite skills and abilities (RSAs) are the basic skills and abilities that an individual requires to meet the entry-level competencies for RNs to practise as a generalist in Alberta. These allow the individual to transition along the continuum from a nursing student to graduate nurse to RN. An entry-level RN practises nursing in collaboration with the **HEALTH-CARE TEAM** and the health-care system.

The information in this document is intended to assist individuals considering a career as an RN or those advising someone about a career in nursing to identify their fit with the requirements of becoming an RN in Alberta, and/or determining their potential need for accommodation in the nursing education program.

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<sup>1</sup> Words or phrases displayed in **BOLD CAPITALS** upon first mention are defined in the glossary.

## Accommodation

Prospective nursing students may find the following information on requisite skills and abilities particularly useful in identifying their fit with the requirements of meeting the entry-level competencies and/or identifying their potential need for accommodation in becoming a registrant of the nursing profession.

Accommodation is the process of making alterations (to the point of undue hardship) to the delivery of services so that those services become accessible to more people, including people with disabilities (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2021). The Alberta Human Rights Commission interpretive document *Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in Post-Secondary Educational Institutions (2021)* stipulates that

- accommodation does not require post-secondary institutions to lower the academic or non-academic standards to accommodate students with disabilities;
- accommodation does not relieve students of the responsibility to develop the essential skills and competencies expected of all students; and
- educational institutions are required to provide accommodation up to the point of undue hardship.

If a prospective or current student recognizes the need for accommodation in relation to the requisite skills and abilities to progress through a nursing education program, a request for accommodation should be made to the educational institution at the earliest opportunity.

## Entry-Level Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses

At the completion of their nursing education program, all nursing students must meet the CRNA's *Entry-Level Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses (2019)*. RNs must meet the expectations outlined in the CRNA's *Practice Standards for Registrants (2023)*, other standards of practice, and the Canadian Nurses Association's *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses (2017)*.

**APPROVED NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAMS** provide a breadth and depth of nursing knowledge and varied practice learning opportunities and prepare the nursing student to meet the entry-level competencies. The entry-level competencies reflect the minimum requirements expected of RNs to provide the public with safe, competent, and ethical nursing care. The entry-level competencies aim to ensure that entry-level RNs are able to function in today's realities and prepare nurses to recognize, respond, and adapt to client needs within a continually changing health-care system.

## Requisite Skills and Abilities

Nursing students need certain requisite skills and abilities to attain the entry-level competencies for RNs in Alberta that are fundamental to the provision of safe, competent, and ethical nursing care that protects the public and is in the best interest of the public.

There are seven categories of requisite skills and abilities:

1. cognitive
2. behavioural
3. communication
4. interpersonal
5. physical
6. sensory perceptual
7. environmental

### Categories of Requisite Skills and Abilities

The examples following each requisite skill and ability are not exhaustive but provide an example of the nature and kind of activities involved in typical entry-level RN practice.

**Cognitive**

The ability to do the following:

- remember and recall information over a brief or extended period of time
- problem solve and reason to develop professional judgment
- exercise **CRITICAL THINKING** for professional judgment
- apply mathematical skills and abilities as follows:
  - add
  - subtract
  - multiply
  - divide
  - calculate ratios
  - percentages
  - algebraic equations

Examples:

- recalls clinical skills or multiple signs and symptoms and diagnoses from previous clients
- develops plans of care using critical inquiry to support professional judgment and reasoned decision-making and modifies accordingly
- uses past experience to inform current decision-making
- anticipates actual and potential health risks and possible unintended consequences
- perceives when situations require further inquiry
- calculates and verifies medication dosages
- recalls written, oral, or recorded information provided by either colleagues or clients
- analyzes and interprets data obtained in client assessment to inform ongoing decision-making about client health status
- uses critical thinking when reviewing research and **EVIDENCE-INFORMED** information

**Behavioural**

The ability to do the following:

- behave in a manner that promotes safe, competent, and ethical nursing care
- engage with oneself and engage with others to create a safe environment
- respond appropriately in situations that are stressful or that involve conflict
- react appropriately to giving and receiving physical touch and working in close proximity with a full range of clients
- fulfill responsibility as part of a team
- manage time appropriately
- demonstrates honesty, integrity, and respect in all interactions
- reflect on one's own cultural beliefs and practices and their impacts on others
- identify the influence of personal values, and beliefs
- recognize diversity and cultural differences in others

Examples:

- remains calm in stressful situations
- reacts quickly and effectively to unexpected or unusual situations
- uses interpersonal and conflict resolution skills to settle disputes and responds appropriately to conflict maintains **THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIPS** with clients, their families or support person
- sets priorities in the face of multiple demands
- provides safe, competent, ethical, compassionate, and evidence-informed care across the lifespan in response to client needs
- uses social media and information and communication technologies in a way that maintains public trust in the profession
- integrates continuous quality improvement principles and activities into nursing practice
- engages in practices that contribute to lifelong learning
- seeks increased learning about the diverse populations for which they are providing care
- advocates for improvements in social justice and social determinants of health and well-being
- takes action to support **CULTURALLY SAFE** practice environments

**Communication**

The ability to do the following:

- speak and understand spoken English to avoid confusing words and meanings including complex medical and technical terminology
- read, write, and understand written English
- speak and understand spoken English enough to develop a rapport with clients and be able to recognize their physical, mental health and emotional needs
- recognize own non-verbal signals and validate those received from others while considering individual and cultural differences in expression and associated meaning

Examples:

- recognizes their own non-verbal behaviour
- demonstrates awareness that each individual's behaviour has different meanings
- listens appropriately to clients and members of the health-care team
- elicits and attends to information from clients while taking a health history
- communicates clearly and accurately with other health-care team members about clients in a timely manner
- reads and understands client record
- documents and reports clearly, concisely, accurately, and in a timely manner

**Interpersonal**

The ability to do the following:

- demonstrate empathy and compassion
- recognize the needs of others
- establish and maintain boundaries with others
- determine their own responsibilities, and the responsibilities of others
- develop professional relationships and rapport with others

Examples:

- maintains therapeutic boundaries with clients
- recognizes the difference between a therapeutic and non-therapeutic relationship
- supports a client during a painful procedure
- identifies that others have needs and perspectives that might be different
- develops therapeutic relationships and rapport with individuals and groups for the purpose of education, support, and counseling
- educates and supports clients to make informed choices
- recognizes and validates client perspectives and feelings
- provides constructive feedback to promote professional growth of other members of the health-care team

**Physical**

The ability to do the following:

- perform each of the following to provide client care and participate in nursing practice:
  - stand and maintain balance
  - have manual dexterity
  - move within limited spaces
  - push and pull
  - perform repetitive movements
  - perform complex sequences of hand eye coordination
  - bend
  - reach
  - lift
  - walk
  - climb
  - carry objects

Examples:

- prepares clients for, and performs, procedures, treatments, and follow-up care
- changes a sterile dressing on a wound
- assists a person to get out of bed and walk
- climbs stairs carrying supplies up to 8 kg for a home visit
- handles items that weigh up to 20 kg
- helps lift, turn, and/or transfer clients
- prepares and administers intramuscular injections
- removes wound sutures

**Sensory Perceptual**

The ability to do the following:

- perceive, with each of the following senses, to provide care and participate in educational activities:
  - sight
  - hearing
  - touch
  - smell

Examples:

- accurately assesses blood pressure and can feel a client's pulse
- accurately assesses normal heart and breath sounds
- reads the small print on medication packages and bottles
- reads numbers and lines of demarcation on a syringe
- hears alarm bells and verbal communication or sounds of other clients when they are not visible or in the immediate area where the care is being provided
- assesses client colour and skin temperature
- reads text, numbers, and diagrams on computer screens and other electronic devices
- detects foul odors such as strong
- foul-smelling urine

**Environment**

The ability to:

- function in the presence of each of the following commonly encountered and unavoidable environmental factors:
  - noxious smells
  - disease agents
  - distractions
  - noise
  - chemicals
  - unpredictable behaviour of others

Examples:

- recognizes dangers in the client environment
- recognizes the potential exposure to infectious diseases, chemicals, and allergens
- tolerates disposing of body waste (urine, feces, vomit)
- tolerates unpleasant foul odors

## Glossary

**APPROVED NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAM** – A nursing education program in Alberta approved by the nursing education program approval committee in accordance with nursing education standards and criteria approved by the Council.

**CRITICAL THINKING** – Purposeful, informed and outcome-focused thinking that includes clinical reasoning, judgement and decision making (Alfaro-LeFevre, 2013).

**CULTURALLY SAFE** – An outcome based on respectful engagement free from racism and discrimination so that the patient is a powerful player, not a passive receiver, of health care (Yeung, 2016).

**ENTRY-LEVEL COMPETENCIES** – Observable abilities of a registered nurse at entry-level that integrates the knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgment required to practice nursing safely and ethically.

**EVIDENCE-INFORMED** – The process of combining the best available evidence through a variety of sources such as research, grey literature, experience, context, experts, and client experiences and perspectives.

**HEALTH-CARE TEAM** – Health-care providers from different disciplines (often including both regulated professionals and unregulated workers) working together to provide care for and with individuals, families, groups, populations, or communities.

**REGISTRANTS** – Includes registered nurses, graduate nurses, certified graduate nurses, nurse practitioners, graduate nurse practitioners, and RN or NP courtesy registrants on the CRNA registry.

**THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP** – A relationship established and maintained with a client by the nurse using professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to provide nursing care expected to contribute to the client's health outcomes.

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