

Consultation document | Tuhiinga whai tohutohu

Consultation on proposed standards of competence and prescribed qualifications for nurse practitioner and nurse prescriber scopes of practice

July 2026



Contents | Ngā ihirangi

Have your say | Me pēhea te whakatakoto tāpaetanga3

 How to make a submission3

 Next steps.....3

Introduction | Kupu whakataki4

Background | Kōrero whakamuri5

 How were the proposed standards of competence developed?5

Our proposals | Ō mātou marohi.....6

 Structure of consultation.....6

 Standards of competence6

 Registered nurse prescriber standards of competence7

 Nurse practitioner standards of competence7

 Prescribed qualifications8

 When and how will these changes take place?10



Have your say | Me pēhea te whakatakoto tāpaetanga

We want to hear your views on our proposals for standards of competence for nurse practitioners (NP) and registered nurse prescribers (RN prescribers). Alongside this, we are consulting on proposed changes to the prescribed qualifications for the NP and RN prescriber scopes. Your feedback is important and we appreciate the time and effort you put in to respond to this consultation.

The consultation is structured into three parts:

Part One: RN prescriber standards of competence

Part Two: NP standards of competence

Part Three: NP and RN prescriber prescribed qualifications

You do not need to answer all questions. Please respond to the questions that are relevant to you.

Submissions close at **5:00 pm on Monday 7 September 2026**.

How to make a submission

If you are submitting as an individual:

You can complete an [anonymous survey](#) or provide more detailed feedback using our [submission template](#). We will ask you for some information about yourself to help us understand the responses and how our proposals affect different groups. We will only use this information to help the Council decide on the final standards of competence and prescribed qualifications for NPs and RN prescribers.

If you use the submission template, we may publish your submission. If you want your response to stay confidential, please tell us clearly.

If you are submitting on behalf of an organisation:

Please use our [submission template](#). This helps us understand your submission and make sure we consider your views. Please include your name and your organisation's name in your submission.

We may publish your submission. If you want your response to stay confidential, please tell us clearly.

How to send your submission:

Email your submission to consultations@nursingcouncil.org.nz.

If you have any questions about the consultation process, please email us at the same address.

Next steps

The Council will review all submissions before making a final decision. We will share the decision and a summary of the feedback on our website. Any changes to the standards of competence for NPs and RN prescribers will be published as secondary legislation and on the Council's website.



Introduction | Kupu whakataki

The Nursing Council of New Zealand | Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa (the Council) sets scopes of practice and standards under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act). The principal purpose of the Act is to protect the health and safety of the public. The Nursing Council is responsible for fulfilling this purpose by ensuring nurses are fit and competent to practise their profession.

A scope of practice statement describes the general nature of the nursing role and is broad rather than prescriptive. Standards of competence (also known as competencies) define the combination of skills, knowledge, behaviours, values, and abilities that underpin effective performance as a nurse. Standards of competence are used to:

- inform nursing education curriculums
- assess nursing students before registration
- assess nurses returning to the workforce
- assess overseas nurses looking to work in Aotearoa New Zealand
- assess the ongoing competence of nurses.

The Council regularly reviews scopes of practice and competencies to clearly describe what nurses do, and what it means to do that competently. In reviewing these standards, we need to consider the context in which nursing is practised and taught.

As part of the Council's review of RN prescribing and the NP scope of practice, we are now consulting on the NP and RN prescriber standards of competence that need to reflect the changes to the new [NP and RN prescriber scope statements](#) that will be gazetted later in 2026.

The Council is also consulting on proposed changes to the prescribed qualifications for NPs and introducing new prescribed qualifications for RN prescribers. This is in accordance with [Section 12 of the Act](#). The prescribed qualifications will be reflected in the nursing education programme standards for NPs and RN prescribers.

The proposals in this consultation reflect contemporary nursing practice, draw from research and international experience, and build on the foundation of the registered nurse scope of practice. We have also been supported by the expertise and views of sector reference groups, Te Toki and Fautasi o le Moana (Council's Māori and Pacific advisory groups), that have helped to shape these proposals.

The proposals reflect the Council's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the role nurses play in improving health equity and integrating cultural safety into nursing practice.¹

¹ [Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Māori Health, Kawa Whakaruruhau, Cultural Safety: Guidance for Nursing Education and Practice](#)



Background | Kōrero whakamuri

The existing NP and RN prescriber competencies have been in place for over a decade. Since their implementation, there have been significant shifts in models of care, service delivery, workforce development priorities and expectations relating to advanced and extended scopes of practice, including clinical safety, quality and outcome measures.

Between 23 September and 24 October 2025, the Council consulted on proposed changes to the scope of practice statement and education standards for nurse practitioners (NPs). At the same time, the Council consulted on a new scope of practice statement and education standards for registered nurse (RN) prescribers. This review involved extensive research and engagement across the sector, along with the expertise and views of sector reference groups.

Previous consultation materials are available [here](#).

A summary of what we heard from this consultation is found [here](#).

The Nursing Council Board has approved the scopes of practice and associated nursing education programme standards for NPs and RN prescribers. We will publish the scopes of practice and prescribed qualifications later in 2026 when the standards of competence have been completed.

How were the proposed standards of competence developed?

We established three reference groups to separately advise the Council's project design team on the RN prescribing, and NP scope statements, the associated nursing education programme standards and standards of competence. Group members were drawn from the Council, Nurse Practitioners New Zealand, Nurse Practitioner Mātanga Tapuhi Māori rōpū, Registered Nurse Prescribers New Zealand and Māori rōpū, the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (including Te Poari o Te Rūnanga o Aotearoa), Māori and Pacific nursing leaders, District Chief Nurses, education providers delivering RN prescribing and NP programmes, and employers.

We also created an internal reference group to receive advice from relevant technical and subject matter experts to ensure that the revised standards of competence were legally sound and practical in application.

In developing its proposals, the Council has:

- researched relevant academic literature on both RN prescribing and NP scope of practice ([available here](#))
- performed environmental scans of international nursing regulators' practice standards and competencies to identify current approaches, trends and themes in professional practice standards and competencies ([available here](#))
- engaged with key stakeholders both kanohi ki te kanohi (in person) and ipurangi (online).



Throughout the project, Te Toki (the Council's Māori advisory group) and Fautasi o le Moana (the Council's Pacific advisory group) received regular updates and reports to provide feedback and advice on the work.

The Council has included Māori kupu (words) and concepts within the standards of competence, to reflect current practice across the Council's standards. We have avoided direct translations using both Māori kupu and English words to add depth and meaning which are not intended to be a translation of each other.

Our proposals | Ō mātou marohi

Structure of consultation

This consultation is structured into three parts:

Part One: registered nurse prescriber standards of competence

Part Two: nurse practitioner standards of competence

Part Three: NP and RN prescriber prescribed qualifications

You do not need to read all parts. Only read the information and respond to the consultation questions that are relevant to you. You can find more information in the accompanying background documents [available here](#).

The proposed NP and RN prescriber standards of competence can be found in full [available here](#).

Standards of competence

The proposed standards of competence represent the standard of knowledge, skills and behaviours expected of NPs and RN prescribers. They set out for health consumers and the public what NPs and RN prescribers know and can do when they join the Nursing Council's register.

The new RN prescriber and NP scope statements and proposed changes to the standards of competence build on the platform of the [RN scope of practice](#) and [standards of competence](#).

The proposed changes aim to:

- maintain alignment with the Council's regulatory framework by building on the updated registered nurse and enrolled nurse standards of competence
- embed cultural safety in everyday practice by aligning with Kawa Whakaruruhau and cultural safety principles, and making obligations to health equity and responsiveness clear
- reflect updated requirements for scientific knowledge, clinical assessment and diagnostic reasoning to inform therapeutic treatment plans and prescribing practice



- clarify professional accountability and responsibility to provide safe nursing care, including when to seek guidance and support
- reflect contemporary values and expectations, including diversity, equity, and inclusion
- support breadth of knowledge and skills in areas of practice consistent with educational preparation and level of competence
- reflect the complexity of health needs and the interventions required for nursing practice and the provision of care, including interprofessional collaboration within the healthcare team
- reflect collaboration and partnerships with whānau and communities across the life span and range of healthcare settings
- strengthen clarity and accessibility by simplifying the language and structure so the standards are easy to understand and apply in practice, while retaining their professional integrity
- update the design and format to ensure the pou (standards) and descriptors are logically structured and consistent with international best practice.

Registered nurse prescriber standards of competence

The proposed standards of competence for the RN prescriber are added to the RN standards of competence as a seventh pou. The existing six registered nurse pou will remain unchanged. Registered nurses who have completed the required education and meet the standards of competence outlined in pou seven will be eligible to register in the new scope of practice for the RN prescriber.

The [international review of RN prescribing](#) found strong consistency across jurisdictions in expectations for safe and effective RN prescribing, focused on a person-centred prescribing process that includes assessment, shared decision-making, prescribing, and monitoring. It also showed that prescribing competence is consistently supported by interdisciplinary frameworks, professional and governance expectations, flexible competence assurance through education and oversight, and clear regulatory stewardship for public protection.

Nurse practitioner standards of competence

The proposed NP standards of competence build on the six pou of the RN standards of competence to reflect the NP scope and advanced practice requirements. They are structured as four pou:²

- Tika and safe and accountable advanced practice
- Pūkengatanga and evidence-informed nurse practitioner practice
- Rangatiratanga and leadership; and

² A carved wooden post or pillar that serves as a symbol of strength and support. Pou is an important symbol in Māori culture. Its identity, meaning and significance reflect the deep connection that Māori have to their land and traditions. The pou tells a story of the core values of nursing and the connection with a Māori worldview.



- Manaakitanga and people-centred care.

The proposed pou and descriptors have been developed to stand on their own, reflecting the advanced practice of the NP scope. While the standards have some shared attributes with the RN standards of competence, each set of standards reflects the advanced levels of educational preparation, knowledge, and skills needed to meet the full requirements of the NP scope of practice statement. While NPs' roles and responsibilities may vary by area of practice, all nurse practitioners must meet these standards to demonstrate competence.

Kawa Whakaruruhau and cultural safety are integral to nurse practitioner competence and underpin all aspects of advanced practice across clinical care, leadership, education, research and health system contribution. When practising, NPs will be integrating aspects of each pou within their area of practice.

The [international review of NP competency frameworks](#) showed advanced practice as a combination of autonomous clinical decision-making, diagnostic reasoning, prescribing, care coordination, and advanced practice across complex and changing contexts. International comparisons also demonstrate that research and leadership are core components of the nurse practitioner's scope of practice.

Across countries, nurse practitioner competency frameworks consistently include the ability to use, translate and generate evidence to improve care, evaluate outcomes, contribute to quality improvement, and strengthen service development. The literature also shows that nurse practitioners lead clinically, influence models of care, support workforce capability, and improve access, equity and system responsiveness.

Prescribed qualifications

The Council has consulted on a revised scope of practice for NPs, a new scope of practice for RN prescribers, and associated nursing education programme standards. We are now consulting on the prescribed qualifications under [Section 12](#) and [Section 14](#) of the Act prior to publishing the nursing education programme standards. Prescribed qualifications are required to be published in the New Zealand Gazette before coming into effect.

NP prescribed qualifications

The Council last published the scope of practice and prescribed qualifications for nurse practitioners in the New Zealand Gazette on 2 March 2017, with the notice coming into effect on 6 April 2017.

The Council is proposing to make minor changes to the current prescribed qualifications for entry to the NP scope of practice for both NZ graduates and NPs from overseas. The current Notice for NP prescribed qualifications and the proposed new Notice are [available here](#).

This also includes changes that would allow internationally qualified NPs from approved jurisdictions to register and practise under conditions (for example, clinical supervision; education specific to the



New Zealand context, and cultural safety, evidence that all standards of competence are met) for their first year of registration as an NP in New Zealand. This removes the requirement for a separate panel assessment prior to registration and enables smoother entry to the New Zealand workforce.

RN prescriber prescribed qualifications

The Council last published the prescribed qualifications for registered nurse prescribers in primary health and specialty teams in the New Zealand Gazette on 11 April 2022, with the notice coming into effect on 30 June 2022.

Because there is a new scope of practice for RN prescribing there are new proposed prescribed qualifications for those who wish to apply and become registered in this new scope³. The current Notice for RN prescribers prescribed qualifications and the proposed new Notice are [available here](#).

The Gazette Notice for the Medicines (Designated Prescriber – Registered Nurse) Notice 2022 will need to be revoked because the new prescribing scope will replace the Notice.

The Council is also proposing to grandparent (move directly) into the new prescribing scope:

- those who are currently registered as a registered nurse with an authorisation on the public register which reads as follows: **“Authorisation: May prescribe within primary health and specialty teams”** and,
- those who are currently registered as a registered nurse with an authorisation on the public register which reads as follows: **“Authorisation: May prescribe in diabetes under the supervision of an authorised prescriber.”**
- However, nurses with the authorisation for prescribing in diabetes health will also have a limiting condition on their scope that they are to only prescribe in the area of diabetes health and under the supervision of an experienced prescriber.⁴

The new scope will not cover those who are currently registered as a registered nurse with an authorisation on the public register which reads as follows: **“Authorisation: May prescribe in community health.”** They will remain as registered nurses with a community health prescribing authorisation and not be able to gain registration into the new scope.⁵

³ As required under section 12 of the Act.

⁴ Registered nurses prescribing in diabetes health currently prescribe under the supervision of an authorised prescriber. Changing this to an ‘experienced prescriber’ aligns with the wording and definition used for the new scope. It is also more enabling as experienced registered nurses in the full prescribing scope will be able to supervise a registered nurse prescriber limited to the area of diabetes health if appropriate.

⁵ RN prescribers in community health (RNPCH) prescribe a limited number of medicines for minor ailments and illnesses in normally healthy people without significant health problems. RNPCH complete a workplace-based programme of learning and prescribe using guidelines. The limited number of medicines RNPCH can prescribe are a subset of medicines from the specified schedule for RN prescribers and are identified by the Council.

When and how will these changes take place?

Following consultation, we will consider and analyse all feedback. Depending on the themes and issues raised, we may seek some additional expert advice or further targeted consultation. We will publish a summary of the feedback and the Council's analysis on our website.

Once final decisions are made by the Council, the new RN prescribing and NP scopes of practice statements, prescribed qualifications and standards of competence will be published in the New Zealand Gazette. They will also be published on the Council website alongside the nursing education programme standards. We expect this will occur later in 2026. Changes to continued competence/recertification requirements will be reviewed in 2027.

We will work with the sector to implement any changes and will give plenty of notice before they take effect.

