



Position Statement

Nursing Professional Development Content in the Graduate Nursing Curriculum

Background

Nursing professional development (NPD) is a specialty nursing practice recognized by the American Nurses Association (ANA) (Harper & Maloney, 2016). This recognition indicates that NPD meets multiple ANA (2017) criteria including having a “well-derived knowledge base particular to the practice of the nursing specialty” (p. 13) and “defined educational criteria for specialty preparation or graduate degree” (p. 13).

According to *Nursing Professional Development: Scope and Standards of Practice* (Harper & Maloney, 2016), an “NPD generalist is a bachelor’s-prepared nurse with or without NPD certification OR a graduate-level prepared nurse without NPD certification” (p. 13). NPD specialists have a graduate degree in addition to certification in NPD. *Nursing Professional Development: Scope and Standards of Practice* (Harper & Maloney, 2016) includes both generalist competencies and advanced competencies for the graduate prepared NPD specialist. As the national specialty association for NPD, the Association for Nursing Professional Development (ANPD), publishes the *Core Curriculum for Nursing Professional Development* (Dickerson, 2017).

Nurses who graduate from master’s degree programs in nursing are prepared with broad knowledge and practice expertise that expands on baccalaureate education (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2011). However, novice NPD practitioners who hold a Master’s degree in nursing education often come to the practice setting with inadequate knowledge of NPD roles and responsibilities as delineated in the NPD scope and standards. In many cases, their graduate education focused on the role and competencies of the academic nurse educator (ANE) with little or no content on NPD.

While ANE and NPD practitioners share some theoretical and practical components of practice, ANE and NPD are distinct nursing specialties (Maloney, 2017). As demonstrated in Table 1, primary differences in ANE and NPD practice include

assessment of educational needs, target audience, short- and long-term goals, roles and responsibilities and practice setting.

Table 1. Comparison of Nursing Professional Development Practitioners and Academic Nurse Educators

	Nursing Professional Development Practitioners	Academic Nurse Educators
Assessment of educational need/requirement	<p>“Analyzes issues, trends, and supporting data to determine the needs of individuals, organizations, and communities in relation to health care” (Harper & Maloney, 2016, p. 30). “Collects data to validate an identified gap in professional practice and determines the specific knowledge, skill, or practice deficit or opportunity” (Harper & Maloney, 2016, p. 31).</p>	Analyzes standards of accrediting bodies and the state board of nursing as well as other data to determine societal and stakeholder needs to develop the program outcomes that guide curriculum development.
Population served	Practicing professionals (individuals and teams)	Students
Short-term goal	Closing of practice gap for individual or team	Success in course for student
Long-term goal	Improved patient outcomes through professional role competence and growth	Degree and, if appropriate, success on licensure/certification exam; Success of graduates as reported by employers and self-report
Setting	Varies: Practice setting (hospital, community health department, clinics, etc.) professional association, continuing education program	Academic: College and university: undergraduate (pre-licensure and post licensure) programs; and graduate programs

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Graduate academic nursing programs are responsible to meet the *Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing* published by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). *Nursing Professional Development: Scope and Standards of Practice* aligns with these essential elements and supports the academic institution's accreditation.

Using the Institute of Medicine's 2010 *Future of Nursing* report as a framework, AACN and AORN recommend that nurses are enabled to "reach the highest level within his/her individual scope of practice" (Guideline 4). If NPD content is not included in graduate programs of nursing education, we risk not being able to meet this recommendation for those in NPD practice.

ANPD Position

In order to adequately prepare nurses who complete Master's programs in nursing education to practice in the academic and practice arenas, NPD content should be included in all graduate curricula that focus on nursing education.

As a separate and distinct nursing specialty from ANE, NPD content that facilitates the achievement of advanced competencies is an important part of the graduate preparation for nurses wishing to practice NPD.

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