

Guidance Document
to support the professional development of
Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialist and
Candidate Nurse/Midwife Specialist

Insert Service Name(s), Directorate and applicable Location(s):

Title of document Development Group:		Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director (ONMSD), Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialist (CNS/CMS), Support Network	
Approved by:		Ms Carmel Buckley, Chair of the ONMSD Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialist (CNS/CMS) Support Network	
Reference Number:		ONMSD	
Version Number:		1	
Publication Date:		February 2024	
Date for revision:		February 2026	
Electronic Location:		ONMSD website	
Version	Date Approved	List section numbers changed	Author

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Introduction and Context

This guidance document supports Chief Group Directors/Area Directors/Directors of Nursing/Midwifery/Directors of Public Health Nursing/Line Managers to enable nurses and midwives to practice to the standard required to work as a Clinical Nurse Specialist/Clinical Midwife Specialist (CNS/CMS) and candidate Clinical Nurse Specialist/candidate Clinical Midwife Specialist (cCNS/cCMS). The document should be used in conjunction with [the CNS/CMS and cCNS/cCMS job specification](#) which details the required scope of practice, roles, responsibilities and competencies for both the CNS/CMS and cCNS/cCMS post holders. It should be read in conjunction with [Career Pathway for CNS CMS](#) which clarifies the introduction of the role of cCNS/cCMS from May 2023. This pathway will be reviewed in September 2026.

It is envisaged that line managers will utilise and enhance this guidance document to inform the development of individual competency documents specific to the area of specialist practice (Table 1). In addition, supporting resources include, local service induction programmes in line with the [HSE Induction Resource Pack](#), the HSE [PDP Framework](#) and continuous professional development including the ONMSD national CNS/CMS webinars [ONMSD CNS CMS webinar series](#) should be accessed.

All registered nurses and registered midwives' practice is underpinned by the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives ([NMBI, 2021](#)), the Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework ([NMBI, 2015](#)) and other relevant organisational, regulatory/policy and statutory guidance. The core concepts of the CNS/CMS ([NCNM, 2008](#)) together with descriptors and indicators within this document guide the nurse/midwife in the development of their specialist role (NCNM, 2008, pp. 2-4).

The delivery of safe, quality, person-centred care for service users and health service organisations is a key priority of professional nursing and midwifery practice.

The NMBI Scope of Practice Framework ([NMBI, 2015](#)) sets out the range of roles, functions, responsibilities and activities which a registered nurse/midwife is educated, competent and has authority to perform (NMBI, 2015 p.6). In this context the Scope of Practice Decision-Making Flowchart (NMBI, 2015 p.32) helps nurses and midwives to define and make decisions

about their own scope of practice and guides them in meeting the core concepts of their specialist role.

About this Guidance Document

This guidance document aims to assist services in supporting CNS/CMS's and cCNS/cCMS's in their roles within specialist practice. Specific competencies relevant to the identified role are outlined in the job description and can be used by line managers to inform the development of individual competency documents specific to the area of specialist practice (Table 1).

It may be helpful to refer to the [PDP Framework](#) for additional guidance, and services may consider reviewing both processes together. When preparing to support a CNS/CMS and cCNS/cCMS in practice the line manager should consider the following:

- A structured induction process in line with the HSE Induction Guidelines and Checklists [HSE Induction Resource Pack](#)
- A structure for clinical supervision, identifying responsible individuals or teams who will provide clinical supervision and support
- Specific competencies relating to the area of specialist practice, NMBI are currently developing a Professional Competency Scheme (NMBI, [draft 2023](#))
- Ongoing support and evaluation mechanisms to promote professional development and career progression. Additional support is available from the ONMSD, including CNS/CMS Support Network and the National Clinical Leadership Centre [ONMSD Specialist Practice in Nursing and Midwifery](#).

Please Note: This is a guidance document only and does not replace local processes. Nurses and midwives are employees of the individual organisation/service area. Any issue relating to the performance or progression of the CNS/CMS and the cCNS/cCMS is subject to local procedures and processes and in line with HSE terms and conditions of employment.

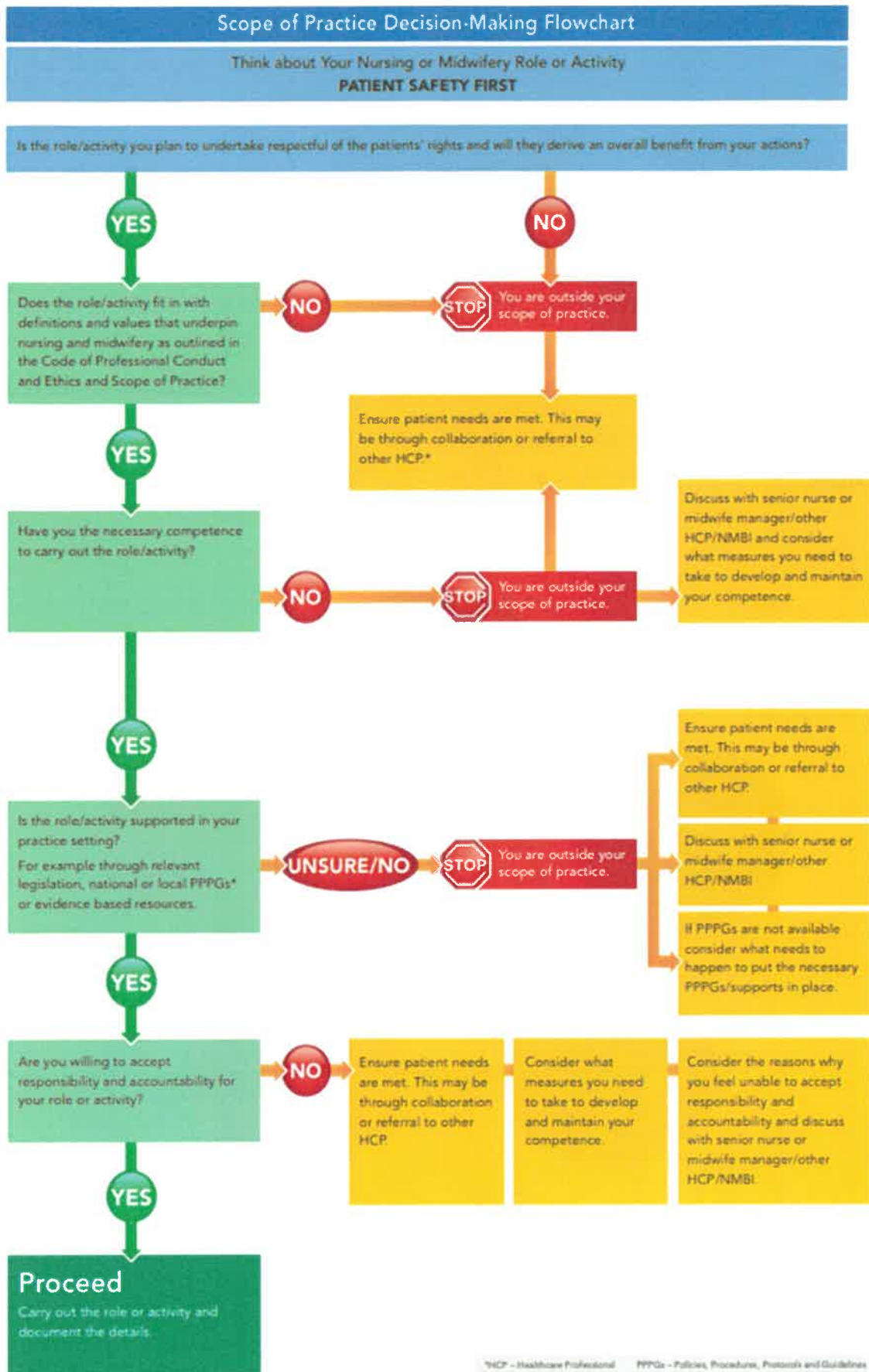


Fig 1. Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework (NMBI, 2015)

The Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework fulfils several functions (NMBI, 2015, p.6) and:

- Acts as a framework to underpin decision-making related to nurses' and midwives' everyday practice
- Helps nurses and midwives to identify professional development needs
- Provides a basis for the expansion of nursing and midwifery roles
- Encourages reflective practice to improve learning and the provision of safe, quality patient care.

The Scope of Practice Framework (NMBI, 2015) and the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives (NMBI, 2021) underpin this guidance document.

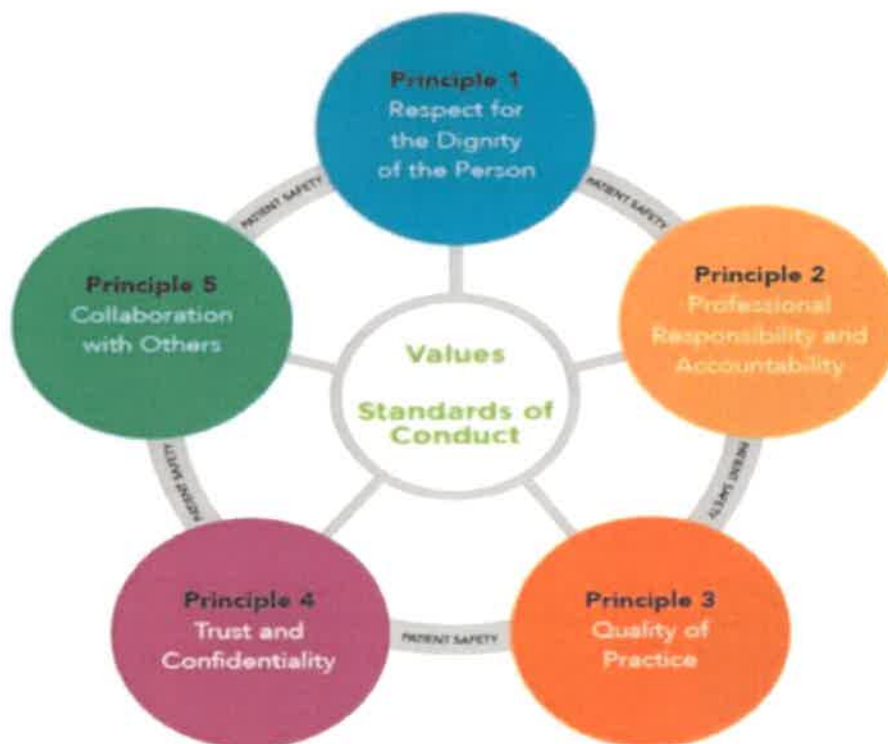


Fig 2. Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives (NMBI, 2021)

Each principle underpins the Code's ethical values and related standards of conduct and practice and guides the relationships between nurses, midwives, patients/service users and colleagues. The ethical values state the primary goals and obligations of nurses and midwives. The standards of conduct and professional practice follow on from these values and show the attitudes and behaviours that members of the public have the right to expect from the nurse/midwife.

The trio of principles, values and standards of conduct are of equal importance and should be considered in association with each other (NMBI, 2021, p.9). Each of the five principles (NMBI, 2021) provide the foundation for the five core concepts of the Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialist included in this guidance framework (Table 1).

Principle 1: Respect for the dignity of the person

This principle is drawn from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) which proclaims that the basis for freedom, justice and peace is founded on the recognition of the inherent dignity and equality of human beings.

Principle 2: Professional responsibility and accountability

This principle focuses on professional responsibility and accountability, personal and professional integrity, and advocacy. It also refers to professional boundaries, insurance, and conscientious objection.

Principle 3: Quality of practice

This principle focuses on safety, competence, kindness, compassion, caring and protection from harm. Patients have a right to receive quality care by competent nurses and midwives who practise in a safe environment.

Principle 4: Trust and confidentiality

Trust is a core professional value in nurses' and midwives' relationships with patients and colleagues.

Principle 5: Collaboration with others

This principle focuses on collaboration, team-working, communication and documentation.

Professional Development Framework

Table 1 connects the Code (NMBI, 2021) and the Scope (NMBI, 2015) to the core concepts of the specialist nursing and midwifery practice roles. It provides professional development guidance and clarity on professional development support needs to Area Directors/Directors of Nursing/Midwifery/DPHN/Line Managers and nurses/midwives practicing in a specialist capacity

Table 1: Professional Development Framework –

This framework can be utilised and enhanced by line managers to inform the development of individual competency documents specific to the area of specialist (CNS/CMS) practice

CNS/CMS Core Concept - Clinical Focus				
The CNS/CMS must have a strong patient focus whereby the speciality defines itself as nursing or midwifery and subscribes to the overall purpose, functions and ethical standards of nursing and midwifery. The clinical practice role may be divided into indirect and direct care				
Defined Area of Practice	Associated NMBI Principle (NMBI 2021)	Nursing/Midwifery Practice Requirements*	Clinical and Professional Indicators	Area DON/DON/DOM/DPHN/Line Manager as appropriate Discussion outcome
<p>Direct Care Direct care comprises the assessment, planning, delivery, and evaluation of care to patients and their families</p> <p>The post will allow for its holder, in consultation where necessary with the multidisciplinary team (MDT), to make clinical decisions based on agreed protocols</p>	<p>Principle 3: Quality of practice</p>	<p>Plans and prioritises the delivery of specialist person-centred nursing care to a defined patient caseload</p>	<p>Undertakes a comprehensive nursing/midwifery assessment, plans and initiates care and treatment modalities within agreed multidisciplinary protocols to achieve patient/client-centred outcomes</p> <p>Participates in medication reconciliation taking cognisance of polypharmacy and support medical and pharmacy staff with medication reviews and medication management in the area of specialist practice.</p> <p>Evaluates nursing/midwifery care and undertakes a comprehensive re-assessment</p> <p>Makes alterations in the management of patient/client's condition in collaboration with the Clinical Lead/MDT and the patient/client in line with agreed treatment pathways and PPP& G's. Provides a central point for continuity of specialist care</p>	
<p>Indirect Care Activities that influence others in their provision of ethical care.</p>	<p>Principle 3: Quality of practice</p>	<p>Practices safely: Adheres to best practice in the delivery of safe, ethical, reliable, and competent nursing and midwifery care across the life continuum</p>	<p>Articulates and demonstrates the concept of nursing and midwifery specialist practice within the framework of relevant legislation, the <i>Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland 2015)</i>, the <i>Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland 2021)</i> and <i>Practice Standards for Midwives (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland 2022)</i>.</p>	

		<p>Practices professionally, responsibly, accountably, and compassionately</p>	<p>Possesses specifically focused knowledge and skills in a defined area of nursing or midwifery practice at a higher level than that of a staff nurse/midwife Identifies health promotion strategies for patient/client groups in accordance with public health agenda.</p>	
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CNS/CMS Core Concept - Patient/Client Advocate The CNS/CMS role involves communication, negotiation and representation of the patient/client values and decisions in collaboration with other health care workers and community resource providers				
Defined Area of Practice	Associated NMIBI Principle (NMIBI 2021)	Nursing/Midwifery Practice Requirements	Clinical and Professional Indicators	Area DON/DON/DOM/DPHN/Line Manager as appropriate Discussion outcome
Knowledge, appreciation and development of empathetic communication skills and techniques for effective relationships with patient/clients and other professionals	Principle 1: Respect and dignity of the person Principle 4: Trust and confidentiality	Communicates in a person-centred manner Communicates effectively with the healthcare team	Enables patients/clients, families, and communities to participate in decisions about their health needs. Implements changes in healthcare service in response to patient/client need and service demand. Articulates and represents patient/client interests in collaboration with the multidisciplinary team. Accurately, concisely, and clearly reports, records, documents, and refers to the healthcare team observations and information received in the management of patient/clients within their agreed caseload. Uses professional language when reporting, documenting, and communicating to nursing and health care teams	

CNS/CMS Core Concept - Education and Training The CNS/CMS education and training remit consists of developing structures and educational opportunities to facilitate staff development and patient/client education				
Defined Area of Practice	Associated NMBI Principle (NMBI 2021)	Nursing/Midwifery Practice Requirements	Clinical and Professional Indicators	Area DON/DON/DOM/DPHN/ Line Manager as appropriate Discussion outcome
Each CNS/CMS in tandem with their line manager is responsible for their continuing professional development, including participation in formal and informal educational opportunities, thereby ensuring sustained clinical credibility among nursing/midwifery, medical and paramedical colleagues	Principle 2: Professional responsibility and accountability Principle 3: Quality of practice	Practices from a specialist knowledge base Uses critical thinking and reflection to inform practice Demonstrates professional scholarship	Applies specially focused knowledge and skills in a defined area of nursing or midwifery, using specialist knowledge to support and enhance generalist nursing/midwifery practice. Provides mentorship, preceptorship, teaching, facilitation and professional supervisory skills for nurses and midwives and other healthcare workers. Educates patients/clients, families, and communities in relation to their healthcare needs in the specialist area of practice. Identifies own Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs to enhance own nursing practice (PDP Framework) Demonstrates professional scholarship through self-directed learning skills, critical questioning, reasoning, and decision-making skills in nursing/midwifery as the foundation for lifelong professional education, maintaining competency and career development Builds professional and education networks to enhance own specialist knowledge and practice	

CNS/CMS Core Concept - Audit and Research Audit of current nursing/midwifery practice and evaluation of improvements in the quality of patient/client care are essential requirements of the CNS/CMS must contribute to nursing/midwifery research which is relevant to his/her area of practice.				
Defined Area of Practice	Associated NMBI Principle (NMBI 2021)	Nursing/Midwifery Practice Requirements	Clinical and Professional Indicators	Area DON/DON/DOM/DPHN/Line Manager as appropriate Discussion outcome
Leading and/or contributing to audit and research within the specialist area of clinical practice	Principle 3: Quality of practice	Undertakes audit and data analysis to inform practice and service planning Contributes to nursing/midwifery research relevant to the specific area of practice.	Identifies, critically analyses, disseminates and integrates nursing/midwifery research and other evidence into the area of specialist practice. Initiates, participates in, and evaluates audit and uses the outcomes of audit to improve service provision. Contributes to service planning and budgetary processes through use of audit data and specialist knowledge. Generates and contributes to the development of clinical standards and guidelines. Keeps up to date with current research to ensure evidence-based practice and participate in and contribute to research in the specialist area of practice.	

CNS/CMS Core Concept - Consultant/Leadership			
The CNS/CMS advocates for, contributes to, and leads systems that support safe quality care, professional partnerships and professional growth of self and others			
Defined Area of Practice	Associated NMBI Principle (NMBI 2021)	Nursing/Midwifery Practice Requirements	Clinical and Professional Indicators
<p>The post involves being a consultant to both nursing/midwifery colleagues and the wider multidisciplinary team, both across sites and across conventional boundaries of care</p>	<p>Principle 5: Collaboration with others</p>	<p>Demonstrates leadership in clinical practice and acts as a resource and role model for specialist practice Develops interpersonal relationships through collaborative communication with the MDT and clear caring communication with service users Provides clinical leadership by demonstrating specialist theoretical knowledge and clinical skills in managing defined conditions (DOH 2019 policy) Uses leadership theories to manage change at service and organisation level (DOH 2019 policy)</p>	<p>Provides leadership in clinical practice and acts as a resource and role model for specialist practice. Develops interpersonal relationships through collaborative communication with the MDT and clear caring communication with service users Provides clinical leadership by demonstrating specialist theoretical knowledge and clinical skills in managing defined conditions (DOH 2019 policy) Uses leadership theories to manage change at service and organisation level (DOH 2019 policy)</p>

*Nursing/Midwifery Practice Requirements adapted from: Return to Nursing Practice Programme Domains of Competence Assessment Tool (NMBI, 2022)
National Self-Assessment Framework to Enhance Knowledge and Skills for the Perinatal Mental Health (PMH) Midwife, Clinical Midwife Manager 2 (HSE National Programme Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Services, 2021)

Conclusion

This guidance document and accompanying framework can be utilised and enhanced by services to address the core concepts of the CNS/CMS and cCNS/cCMS roles and inform the local development of individual competency documents specific to the area of specialist practice. Considering the dynamic nature of healthcare, it is important to be aware of evolving legislation, regulatory frameworks and policies, procedures, protocol and guidelines that exist from an organisational and professional nursing/midwifery practice perspective. For further information on eligibility criteria and job descriptions on CNS/CMS and cCNS/cCMS, please refer to the ONMSD website [ONMSD Specialist Practice in Nursing and Midwifery](#).

References

[Health Service Executive National Programme Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Services \(2021\) National Self-Assessment Framework to Enhance Knowledge and Skills for the Perinatal Mental Health \(PMH\) Midwife, Clinical Midwife Manager 2.](#)

[Office of the Nursing Health Service Executive Professional Development Planning \(PDP\) Framework for Nurses and Midwives \(ONMSD, 2023\)](#)

[Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Service Director \(2023\) CNS/CMS National Webinar Series – available on HSELand](#)

[Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland \(2021\) Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives. Dublin: NMBI.](#)

[Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland \(2022\) Practice Standards for Midwives. Dublin, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland.](#)

[Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland \(2015\) Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework. Dublin, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland.](#)

[Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland \(2022\) Return to Nursing Practice Programme Domains of Competence Assessment Tool.](#)

[National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery \(2008\) Framework for the establishment of advanced nurse practitioner and advanced midwife practitioner posts. 4th Edition.](#)