

Unregulated Healthcare Workers Education Framework, 2011

NZNO considers education for unregulated health care workers should be standardised, appropriately funded and nationally accessible. Qualifications should be able to be transferred between employers and provide a supportive career path to becoming regulated nursing roles. NZNO recommends a national certificate for care assistants at level 4, and supports the national diploma for enrolled nurses at level 5 on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. (Refer 2010 decision from Nursing Council regarding Enrolled Nurse education).

Purpose

To provide a nationally recognised, inclusive and transferable education framework for unregulated health care workers, which does not conflict with the regulated nurses' framework, or put public safety at risk.

Background

Unregulated health care workers "assist registered nurses by completing personal care and other activities that do not require specialist nursing knowledge, judgment and skill (Nursing Council 2008, p. 17). They are employed under various titles, including caregivers, health care workers, health assistants, kaimahi hauora and health care assistants. For the purposes of this document unregulated health care workers will be referred to as health care assistants (HCA). An NZNO survey of HCAs indicated this is their preferred title. It differentiates them from unpaid caregivers and acknowledges their role as helping others in the healthcare team (Walker, 2009).

HCAs now constitute a significant and valued part of the health workforce, yet the boundaries between their responsibilities and those of regulated nurses are blurred. HCAs are increasingly undertaking a variety of complex tasks previously considered the domain of the registered or enrolled nurse/ nurse assistant, frequently with little or no educational support (Walker, 2009). NZNO does not advocate the regulation of HCAs, but rather a clear understanding of the extent of their responsibilities as distinct from those of nurses regulated under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act, (HPCAA, 2003).

NZNO does not support the introduction of an "advanced caregiver" **role outside the framework for regulated health workers**. NZNO does not support the introduction of an "advanced caregiver" role which is unregulated. Roles which require clinical nursing knowledge and experience should only be performed by regulated nurses. Rather, NZNO advocates education which offers opportunities for advancement, and recognition of prior learning. A stair-cased approach which enables progression from HCA to enrolled nurse to registered nurse (RN) would be optimal.

There is no consistent nationally recognised or agreed training programme and qualification, nor a nationally consistent process of ongoing/ in-service development for HCAs in New Zealand. HCA training is ad hoc and inconsistent. Not all employers recognize the training HCAs have and it is often not transferable. Such inconsistency makes it difficult for HCAs to further their education or change employment. It also puts RNs at risk as they are legally responsible for directing and supervising the work of HCAs, each of whom may be caring for a number of residents or patients.

NZNO Position

In response to changing health and nursing needs and service delivery models, NZNO recommends urgent action to implement a nationally recognised and consistent education framework for HCA. The framework would have clear boundaries between education for enrolled nurses and HCAs. This will protect public safety.

NZNO wants an Independent Training Organisation (ITO) to administer and monitor education delivery by a variety of providers. This would facilitate national consistency and enhance transferability of qualification and employment opportunities. The ITO would:

- be independent of any particular stakeholder/s in the health sector
- have a governance structure that included all stakeholders, with no one interest group domination and should include industry and professional representation
- promote all training to be within the National Training and Career Framework and the interface between regulated nurses and support workers would be clearly differentiated Ensure all training is to the National Standards
- ensures that there is a monitoring mechanism to ensure national standards are being met
- ensure the training delivered is transferable across the health sector
- ensure the training is flexible and modular

Rationale

NZNO's educational framework would:

- provide HCAs with the required level of preparation and support for their work
- ensure a team with the appropriate skill mix was available to meet the need for care and public safety
- allow a stair-cased approach to obtaining qualifications, recognising prior learning, while maintaining the flexibility of either direct entry into a programme or staged learning
- increase transferability of qualification between employers and optimise patient outcomes by ensuring all HCAs have a base level of knowledge.

NZNO advocates

- the highest level for HCAs on the NZQA framework be level 4.
- employer recognition of education undertaken by HCAs
- acknowledgement of the value of workplace and in-service education programmes
- the development of nationally consistent and accessible training for HCAs, which results in a transferable qualification.
- a staircased approach to education that provides supported transitions between HCA, EN and RN education that recognizes prior learning

NZNO **does not** support

- mandatory national training requirements for HCAs (refer framework)
- education for HCAs being regulated by the Nursing Council as this is not a regulated role

- the introduction of “advanced care giver” roles, as this conflicts directly with the regulated enrolled nurse.

Framework

Qualification	Programme	NZQA level at completion	Post initial education
Unregulated health care worker <i>Health Care Assistant</i>	National certificate <i>Not mandatory, but with agreed components that constitute the programme</i>	4	Continuing education -employer provision of education for job -in-service education -modules -nationally consistent course
<i>Enrolled Nurse</i>	Diploma 18-month programme per NC requirement	5	Continuing education - by employer - in-service education -conferences (NZNO) - specialty modules -specialty endorsements & certificates
<i>Registered Nurse (RN)</i>	Undergraduate degree	7	Continuing education - by employer - in-service education
<i>Specialist nurse & advanced practice roles</i>	Postgraduate certificate, diploma or degree	8	-specialty Conferences (NZNO) Specialized nursing papers (Level 7)
<i>Nurse Practitioner</i>	Postgraduate degree	8	CTA funded postgraduate courses Specific Requirements prescribed by NCNZ

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Mission statement

NZNO is committed to the representation of members and the promotion of nursing and midwifery. NZNO embraces Te Tiriti o Waitangi and works to improve the health status of all peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand through participation in health and social policy development.

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NZNO Policy, Regulation & Legal position statement:

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