



Coalition of National **Nursing** Organisations'

**National Nurse Credentialling Framework**

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# CoNNO Definition of Terms

## Consumer/Consumer representative

A **consumer** is a person receiving a service. In the health context everyone at some time of their lives may become a consumer of health care services. Health care consumers are, however, distinguishable from professionals and others who provide health services because their primary experience is as a consumer. They are better able than to represent the views of consumers as their judgement is not clouded by another perspective. A **consumer representative** is a member of a government, professional body, industry or non-governmental organisation committee who voices consumer perspectives and takes part in the decision-making process on behalf of consumers. This person is nominated by, and is accountable to, an organisation of consumers (CHFA, 2011).

## Continuing Professional Development

The means by which nurses maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence and develop the personal and professional qualities required throughout their professional lives (NMBA 2010).

## Credentiailling

A process of professional validation by which an individual nurse may be designated as having met established professional nursing practice standards.

Note: In Australia, credentiailling is a **voluntary** undertaking initiated by the individual nurse. It is also a **voluntary** service that may be offered to nurses by professional nursing organisations.

## Cultural Respect

Is the recognition, protection and continued advancement of the inherent rights, cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (AHMAC 2004).

## Education

Formal and informal learning activities that are the means by which nurses develop, maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence in their nursing specialty/area of nursing practice and that include, but are not limited to, courses leading to a qualification recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework.

## Professional Nursing Practice Standards

The standards determined by professional nursing organisations that identify the values, attitudes, knowledge and skills that nurses are required to bring to their specialty/area of nursing practice.

## Specialty / Area of Nursing Practice

A specialty/area of nursing practice subscribes to the overall purposes, functions and ethical standards of nursing. It requires application of specially focused knowledge and skills. (Adapted from criteria 1 and 2, 'Specialty in Nursing', NNO, 2004)



## Introduction

The purpose of the Coalition of National Nursing Organisations' (CoNNO) National Nurse Credentialling Project was to provide a nationally consistent framework for nurse credentialling in Australia. The Project was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA).

CoNNO Council formed the Steering Committee overseeing the management of the Project and engaged Ashley Ryan and Associates (the consultants) to complete the project work. The 12 month project commenced in July 2010.

The project deliverables include:

1. A Literature Review of nurse credentialling, nationally and internationally;
2. A review of the National Nursing Organisations (NNOs) 2004 Principles for National Nurse Credentialling;
3. The National Credentialling Standards; and,
4. A Resource Toolkit.

The completed Framework includes credentialling principles (revised from those initially prepared in 2004 by the National Nursing Organisations (NNOs)), standards and criteria. A Resource Toolkit has also been incorporated for national professional nursing organisations wishing to develop a new, or adapt an existing, credentialling program.

The project included four rounds of consultation with CoNNO member organisations, including electronic circulation of materials and templates for feedback, followed by a workshop.

A *CoNNO Definition of Terms* accompanies the Framework, including a revised description of credentialling (based on the original NNO 2004 definition). It should be noted the CoNNO definition of credentialling may not be the same as used by other professions in Australia. The terms credentialling and certification are often used interchangeably in the international literature, however, the term credentialling is preferred for the CoNNO National Nurse Credentialling Framework.

A broad assumption underpinning the CoNNO definition of credentialling and the development of the CoNNO National Nurse Credentialling Framework is that specialist practice may or may not include advanced practice (see Figure 1) and is focused on a broad range of knowledge and activities, rather than the performance of a specific task.

Post graduate qualifications are, in the main, sufficient for the purposes of delivering specialist nursing care. The option of credentialling is the choice of the individual nurse and thus should not be linked to employment.

Figure 1 adapted from NNO Glossary of Terms 2004

Nursing Competence and Nursing Context

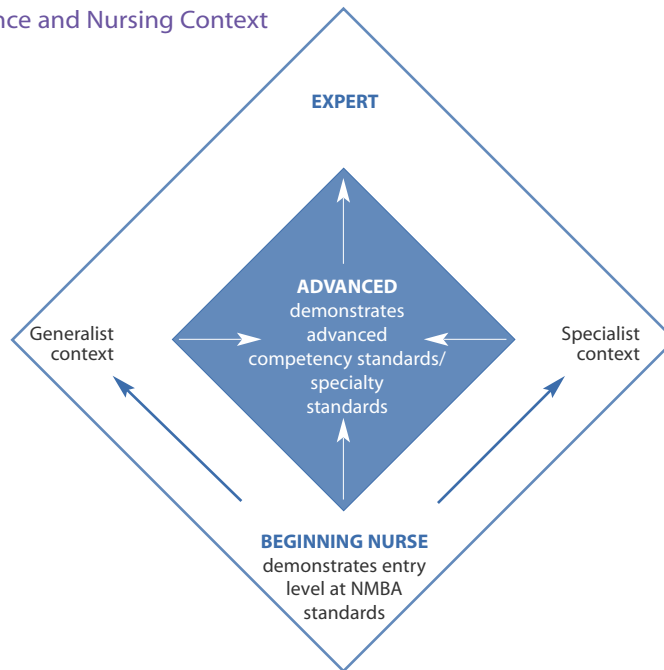


Figure 2 Credentialling Framework as part of a continuum of specialist practice

Figure 2 below represents the concept that developing a credentialling framework is distinct from developing a model for recognising specialty areas of practice. In Australia, the National Nursing Organisations (NNOs) agreed in 2004, to ten criteria for specialty nursing, and, in 2006 the National Nursing and Nursing Education Taskforce (N3ET) developed a Specialisation Framework which provided criteria for recognising specialty areas of practice (N3ET, 2006).



\*Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council



For the purposes of this project, CoNNO maintains that credentialling must remain voluntary for the nursing profession in Australia, and must not be tied to employment outcomes or opportunities. The aim of the framework is to bring national consistency to current and future credentialling options for nurses and may be applied to a specialty or area of nursing practice represented by CoNNO member organisations. Credentialling should not be misused to gain competitive advantage by an individual or organisation.

Figure 2 represents the view of CoNNO member organisations that there is a future role for ANMAC in the development of accreditation standards for the courses leading to specialty practice. Stipulating that all postgraduate nursing programs are accredited through ANMAC would:

- provide a central point of reference on accredited postgraduate nursing programs
- provide assurance of national consistency in the development, implementation and evaluation of postgraduate nursing programs; and,
- ensure the same degree of rigour and objectivity is applied to the accreditation process of postgraduate nursing programs as does currently for undergraduate nursing programs.

## Organisation of the Framework

The Framework consists of:

- CoNNO Definition of Terms
- 13 Principles (based on a revision of the NNO 2004 Principles for Nurse Credentialling)
- 10 Credentialling Standards with criteria, which are grouped under elements of:
  - Governance and Review
  - Operational management
  - Information management
  - Management of re-credentialling and credentialling across specialities/areas of practice
- A Resource Toolkit (including templates for implementing the Framework)

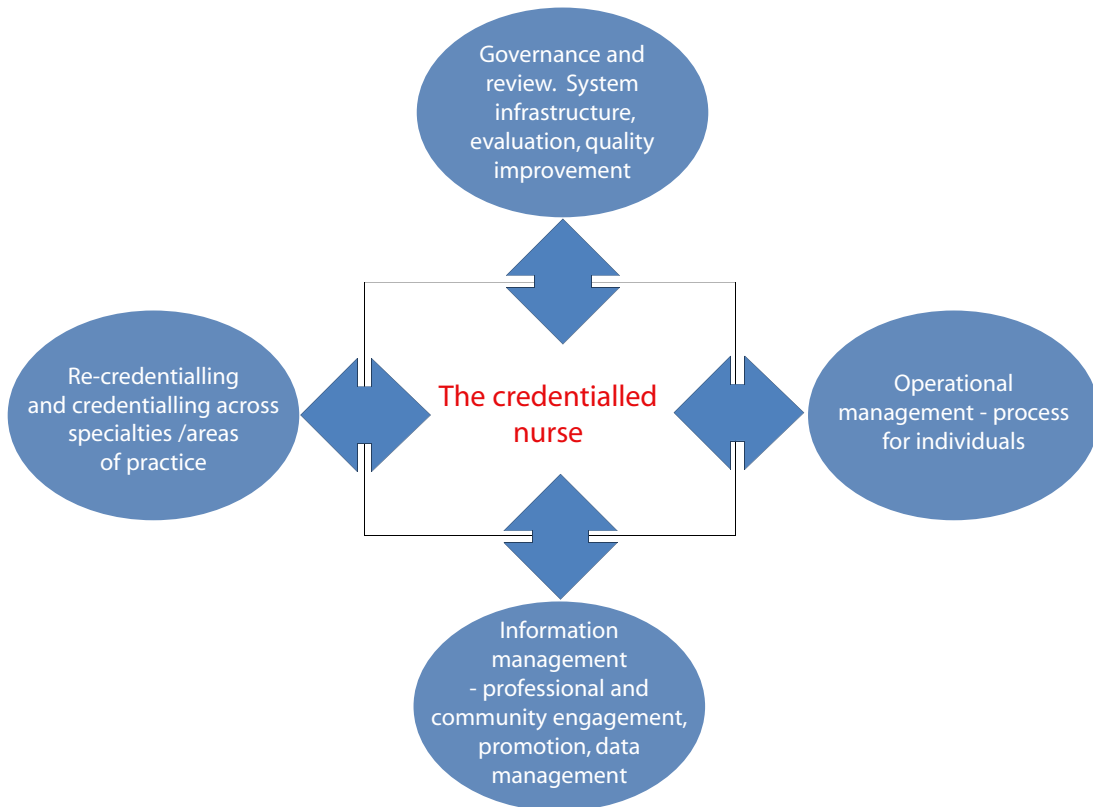
The standards are guided and underpinned by the revised principles. The principles represent the 'high concepts' which on the one hand stand alone and on the other determine the requirements articulated in the standards. Each standard is accompanied by a set of criteria providing more specific guidance with regard to operational requirements and expectations of credentialling (see Figure 3 overleaf).

The revised principles, together with the new standards and criteria, represent the CoNNO National Nurse Credentialling Framework and aim to bring national consistency to nurse credentialling programs in Australia.

The Framework provides practical direction to CoNNO member organisations regarding specific requirements for credentialling programs. They are intended for use by CoNNO member organisations:

- as a benchmark for the development of credentialling specific to their members and area of practice;
- to achieve national consistency with credentialling for other areas of nursing practice.

Figure 3 Elements of the National Nurse Credentialling Framework



## CoNNO Principles for Nurse Credentialling

1. Credentialling is a process that can be used by nurses to promote the provision of quality health care within a given nursing specialty/area of nursing practice.
2. Credentialling applies to the individual nurse.
3. Credentialling is a voluntary process, both for individual nurses and for professional nursing organisations in Australia.
4. The credentialling processes of CoNNO member organisations recognise and are consistent with the CoNNO National Nurse Credentialling Framework.
5. The development of professional nursing practice standards is the responsibility of the nursing profession.
6. Credentialling processes include demonstration of meeting professional nursing practice standards relevant to the nursing specialty / area of nursing practice.
7. Titles relating to credentialling apply only to those persons who hold a current relevant nationally recognised credential.
8. The criteria for eligibility for credentialling reflect evidence of best practice in the nursing specialty/area of nursing practice, and include a combination of: specified minimum levels of postgraduate education, specified minimum levels of practice or experience, and continuing professional development requirements.
9. Credentialling processes are fair, transparent, robust and nationally consistent.
10. Consistent, equitable and defensible assessment procedures apply to all credentialling processes. Such procedures may include written assessment, standards, adequate training for assessors, mechanisms to assure inter-rater reliability of assessors, meeting equal opportunity legislative requirements and providing appropriate appeal mechanisms.
11. Information relating to credentialling processes and current credentialled nurses be in the public domain as a demonstration of professional accountability.
12. Principles 1-11 also apply to re-credentialling.
13. Where a credential may regularly be sought across one or more related areas of practice, the national professional nursing organisation(s) collaborate to discuss means of pursuing appropriate combinations for such credentials within the CoNNO National Nurse Credentialling Framework.

# CoNNO Standards and Criteria

Element: Governance and Review - system infrastructure, evaluation, quality improvement

**Standard 1:** Credentialling processes demonstrate recognition of and consistency with the CoNNO Credentialling Principles, National Nurse Credentialling Framework, and CoNNO Governance Standards

## Criteria

The organisation establishes that the credentialling process:

- is underpinned by and consistent with the CoNNO Principles and Framework
- is consistent with established CoNNO best practice Governance Standards
- demonstrates quality improvement processes, including external review of credentialling processes at a minimum every five years

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**Standard 2:** Credentialling is a voluntary undertaking by organisations and identifies benefits and demand for credentialling within the specialty/area of nursing practice

## Criteria

The organisation establishes that:

- credentialling is offered as a voluntary service to individual nurses
- there is demonstrated need for credentialling in the specialty / area of nursing practice

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**Standard 3:** Credentialling processes demonstrate recognition of and consistency with the current professional nursing practice standards established by the nursing profession

## Criteria

The organisation establishes processes:

- for informing nurses about the professional nursing practice standards relevant to the specialty/area of nursing practice

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**Standard 4:** The criteria for eligibility for credentialling reflect evidence of best practice in the nursing specialty / area of nursing practice, and include a combination of: specified minimum levels of postgraduate education, specified minimum levels of practice or experience, and continuing professional development requirements

#### Criteria

The organisation establishes that credentialling criteria:

- reflect best practice requirements in nursing specialty/area of nursing practice , including research and leadership experience
  - specify minimum levels of practice and/or experience, and recency of practice in nursing specialty/area of nursing practice
  - specify minimum levels of postgraduate education in nursing specialty / area of nursing practice
  - specify continuing professional development requirements in nursing specialty / area of nursing practice, consistent with regulatory requirements
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**Standard 5:** Credentialling processes are voluntary, fair, transparent, robust and nationally consistent

#### Criteria

The organisation establishes that credentialling processes include:

- development of the credentialling program to include external consultation processes, including consumer engagement
- a credentialling committee to assess applications
- application of governance standards for the credentialling program and committee
- minimum training/education requirements for assessors
- processes to measure inter-rater reliability of assessors
- mechanisms to encourage, support and provide equity of access to:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses
  - culturally and linguistically diverse nurses
  - other people underrepresented in the profession
  - geographically isolated nurses

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**Standard 5: Credentialling processes are voluntary, fair, transparent, robust and nationally consistent** *continued*

- application of the principles of cultural respect, equal employment and anti-discrimination throughout the credentialling process
- follow up mechanisms when negative feedback is received about a credentialled nurse
- a documented appeals process
- guidance to applicants about the appropriate use of credentialling status.

**Element: Operational management - processes for individuals**

**Standard 6: Credentialling processes credential the individual nurse**

**Criteria**

The organisation establishes processes to:

- verify current Australian registration or enrolment status of the individual nurse
- detail a nationally consistent pathway for the individual nurse to achieve voluntary credentialling
- determine eligibility for credentialling of the individual nurse
- confer an appropriate title for the credential

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**Standard 7: Applicants for credentialling meet current professional nursing practice standards relevant to the nursing specialty / area of nursing practice**

**Criteria**

The organisation establishes processes:

- that verify relevant education, qualifications and experience of the applicant, including robust processes for establishing legitimacy of documentation
- for assessing the capacity of the applicant to meet the professional nursing practice standards

## Element: Information management - professional and community engagement, promotion, data management

**Standard 8:** Information relating to credentialling processes and current credentialled nurses be in the public domain as a demonstration of professional accountability

### Criteria

The organisation establishes processes/policies to:

- identify and manage confidential and non-confidential information
- securely store all data relating to the credentialling process, applicants and individual credentialled nurses
- publish credentialling policies/processes on nominated websites
- enable publication of credentialled nurses and their title
- maintain currency of credentialling policies, processes and lists of credentialled nurses

## Element: Management of re-credentialling and credentialling across specialties/ areas of practice

**Standard 9:** Credentialling includes processes and criteria for re-credentialling that are consistent with the principles and standards which apply to initial credentialling

### Criteria

The organisation establishes processes for re-credentialling that:

- mandate re-credentialling be undertaken at a minimum every three years
- achieve parity of outcomes with the initial credentialling process
- include requirements and provisions relating to recency of practice, consistent with regulatory requirements

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**Standard 10:** Credentialling includes processes and criteria for recognition of equivalence across specialties/areas of practice where relevant

### Criteria

The organisation establishes processes which include:

- Using the CoNNO Credentialling Principles and National Nurse Credentialling Framework to benchmark with credentialling processes provided by other professional nursing/health organisations to establish equivalence of nurse credentials
- development of Memoranda of Understanding with professional nursing/health organisations offering credentialling processes of equivalence to the CoNNO National Nurse Credentialling Framework

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