



**The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing**  
**香港護理專科學院**

## **Position Statement**

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### **Advanced Nursing Practice**

#### **KEY POINTS**

- **Development of advanced nursing practice in Hong Kong is in alignment with the global trend to enhance effective and cost-effective care with quality**
- **Competencies for advanced nursing practice are explicitly defined by The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing and the affiliated academy colleges**
- **The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing has a well-developed mechanism to accredit academy colleges and certify advanced nursing practice in different specialties**
- **Advanced nursing practice eventually needs to be regulated at the statutory level to protect the public and legitimize nursing practice at the advanced level in different specialties**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The demand for health care is ever-increasing due to current demographic trend of longevity and advances in medical and nursing practices. With improved health literacy of the population, public expectations of better health care are rising. This provides an opportunity for nurses to expand and extend their current roles and perhaps create new ones. As nurses accumulate experience in their specialties and advance into higher education, they are keen to integrate theory into practice and build evidence to support their practice. This enables nurses in the modern era to contribute to the health care system in a more impactful way.

The scope of nursing is evolving over time, and the development of advanced nursing practice (ANP) is in alignment with the global trend. The qualification and competence for the initial entry to practise in nursing is not adequate to deal with contemporary health care demands. The contribution of nurses is not only in their sheer volume and numbers, but in their quality, in the sense that they provide expert care at an advanced level. The optimal use of nursing talent is for the benefit and well-being of the people they serve. Systematic reviews of nurses in ANP roles consistently show that their outcomes are equivalent to and sometimes exceed those of other members of the health care team, particularly in the aspects of health enhancement and chronic disease management. Patients consistently report high levels of satisfaction with the care provided by advanced practice nurses.

## **DEFINITION OF ADVANCED NURSING PRACTICE**

Advanced practice nurse (APN) is an umbrella term to describe nurses practising at an advanced level. Advanced nursing practice involves the emergence of new horizons of clinical nursing practice and expertise that go beyond basic nursing care and activities in meeting the health needs of individuals, families, groups and communities across the health wellness-illness continuum. APNs at a higher level of practice analyze and synthesize knowledge, master complex situations, interpret and apply evidence-based practice and research findings, and advance nursing standards and the profession as a whole. APNs assume collegial relationships in an interdisciplinary team and play a leading role in their area of expertise. These attributes are achieved at a higher educational level interacting with substantial years of nursing experience transiting from proficient to expert level. Incorporating professional leadership, education and research through continued professional development, APNs demonstrate clinical reasoning, judgement, and skills at a higher-level capacity.

In Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing (HKAN) was officially inaugurated in 2012. The mission of The HKAN is to advance nursing practice in Hong Kong to eventually reach statutory status in recognition of clinical specialists and leaders. It is supported by 14 academy colleges that represent all specialty areas of nursing practice in Hong Kong. The HKAN adopts the definition of the International Council of Nurses on advanced practice nurses, i.e. 'a registered nurse who has acquired the expert knowledge base, complex decision-making skills and clinical competencies for

expanded practice, the characteristics of which are shaped by the context and/or country in which he or she is credentialed to practice. A master's degree is recommended for entry level.' This requirement is in alignment with the global trend.

## **COMPETENCIES FOR ADVANCED PRACTICE NURSES**

The HKAN has developed the Generic Competence Framework for Advanced Practice Nurses to guide the development of a specialty education program and specialist certification for its 14 accredited academy colleges. The colleges represent the full spectrum of specialty areas in which advanced practice nurses are engaged. The key domains of the competence framework include:

- Domain 1 Managing clients with complex health conditions
- Domain 2 Enhancing therapeutic nurse-client relationships
- Domain 3 Demonstrating effective leadership and team work
- Domain 4 Enhancing quality assurance and improvement
- Domain 5 Managing and negotiating innovative and effective approaches to care delivery
- Domain 6 Enhancing professional attributes of general and advanced practice
- Domain 7 Enhancing personal attributes

There are a total of 54 statements under the 7 domains describing the competences of advanced practice nurses. The details are accessible at the HKAN website [http://hkan.hk/main/images/PDF/HKAN\\_Competence\\_Statements.pdf](http://hkan.hk/main/images/PDF/HKAN_Competence_Statements.pdf)

## **SPECIALTY CATEGORIZATION**

Some of the academy colleges represent a single specialty and some have a broader base at the membership level and then build on to sub-specialties at the fellowship level. The six criteria of the Australia National Specialization Framework in establishing a recognized specialty are used as a reference. They are:

- i) The specialty has broad application in its geographic scope,
- ii) The specialty defines and subscribes to the overall purpose, functions and ethical standards of nursing and/or midwifery,
- iii) The specialty is a distinct and defined area of nursing and/or midwifery practice, which requires an application of specialty, focused knowledge and skill sets,
- iv) There is both a demand and a need for the specialty service from the

- community,
- v) The specialty service is based on a core body of nursing and/or midwifery knowledge, which is being continually expanded and refined with mechanisms exist for supporting, reviewing and disseminating research.
  - vi) Specialty expertise is gained through various combinations of experience, formal and informal education programs, including but not limited to continuing education and professional development.

The 14 academy colleges address individual and population health needs across the lifespan from birth to death in a holistic manner. This covers in-patient, ambulatory and community care. The list of the 14 academy colleges is attached in appendix A.

## **POSITION ON EDUCATION, CREDENTIALING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STATUTORY GOVERNANCE OF ADVANCED NURSING PRACTICE**

### **Education**

Educational preparation for advanced nursing practice should be at master's level to support the competencies expected of nurses practicing at an advanced level. The HKAN stipulates that 500 hours each in both theory and practice need to be fulfilled before the nurse is eligible to undertake the college certification examination for membership in the associated specialty. The theoretical curriculum composes of 3 cores, namely generic, ANP-related and specialty-related areas, and each of them should occupy at least one-third of the total hours. Examples of subjects in generic core are research, healthcare policy and health promotion. Examples of subjects in ANP-related core are advanced health assessment, pharmacology and evidence-based practice. The specialty-related core is specialty-specific, such as advanced medical care, paediatric care and the like. Both the theoretical curriculum and initial guided clinical practice at membership level has to be planned and completed in fulfilling the required competencies, which are to be recorded in the logbook provided by the specialty academy colleges. The Membership will be awarded to the candidates who fulfill the above requirements and have an accumulated 6 years of nursing experience with a minimum of 4 years in the related specialty area. The Post Membership Training programme will continue for at least another one year before the mentee is eligible

for the fellowship exit assessment. The candidate is required to have 5 years of experience working in the specialty in recent 7 years.

### **Credentialing**

To protect the public and the profession, the specialty education programs developed by academy colleges have to satisfy the assessment team of The HKAN Education Committee in their standards and mechanisms in certifying nurses practising at advanced level in the respective specialties. Certified Members, after fulfilling the theoretical and clinical hours, and demonstrating satisfactory performance at admission interview will be admitted as Members of the HKAN. Members accomplishing the certificate examination and Post Membership Training programme will be admitted as Fellows after passing a fellowship exit assessment conducted by the respective academy college.

### **Professional Development**

Nurses in different roles will have different development needs. Nurses need to review their current roles and identify areas in which they might benefit from further training, education and development, as a means of measuring progression and identifying ongoing learning needs. Advanced nursing practice encompasses advanced clinical practice, leadership, evidence-based and service improvement practice. Certified Members/Fellows are expected to complete the required continuous nursing education set by The HKAN.

### **Statutory Governance**

The existence of a mechanism to certify advanced nursing practice in specific specialty areas is important in safeguarding standards of practice to protect the public. In the process of certification, there is a need for a well-defined, structured post-graduate curriculum, both in theory and practice. At present, in Hong Kong, there is only regulation for the entry level of the nursing profession at the registered and enrolled levels. All advanced practice nurses should have a valid certificate to practise at an advanced level in the related specialty, in addition to a general licensure to practise as a Registered Nurse/Registered Midwife. The HKAN has a mission to set standards to ensure nurses practising at advanced level are fit to practise. Specialist practice in medicine in Hong Kong is regulated by the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine (HKAM),

established under the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine Ordinance in 1992, and the specialist registry is managed by the Medical Council of Hong Kong. Advanced practice nurses in Hong Kong can model themselves after the HKAM, with the HKAN being the statutory body to accredit the academy colleges, certify APNs, and place the specialist registry in the Nursing Council of Hong Kong. The mission of the HKAN is to establish a statutory credentialing system to protect the safety of the public and to legitimize the advanced nursing practice with structured education and standards.

## **SUMMARY**

In Hong Kong, nursing is evolving, and nurses are extending and expanding their scope of practice beyond initial registration in different health care settings. There is evidence that advanced nursing practice contributes to better patient outcomes and fills the service gaps. Certification of advanced nursing practice in different specialty areas of practice is a mechanism to provide a clear direction for structured postgraduate curriculum design and continuous education, in order to ensure that the best professional standards of care are provided to patients. A statutory governance framework should be established to ensure fitness for practice and consequent public protection. There is general agreement among the global community that nursing specialization is a trend in the attempt to meet the increasing health care demands. The Nursing Council of Hong Kong (NCHK), as a statutory body, only regulates the basic level registration of nurses at present. Nevertheless, in 2021 the NCHK has started to launch a voluntary recognition scheme on advanced and specialised nursing to pave the way for regulation. The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing has a system in place to accredit academy colleges and certify Members and Fellows who reach the stipulated advanced practice standards in related nursing specialties. The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing has contributed to the voluntary recognition scheme by composing the specialty competencies of the different specialties that are endorsed by the key stakeholders of the related specialties. On a par with international standards, the HKAN will continue to strive for the statutory status of advanced nursing practice in Hong Kong to regulate professional practice and ultimately protect the public.

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## The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing

### 14 Accredited Academy Colleges

Hong Kong College of Cardiac Nursing

Hong Kong College of Community & Public Health Nursing

Hong Kong College of Critical Care Nursing

Hong Kong College of Education & Research in Nursing

Hong Kong College of Emergency Nursing

Hong Kong College of Gerontology Nursing

Hong Kong College of Medical Nursing

Hong Kong College of Mental Health Nursing

Hong Kong College of Midwives

Hong Kong College of Nursing & Health Care Management

Hong Kong College of Orthopaedic Nursing

Hong Kong College of Paediatric Nursing

Hong Kong College of Perioperative Nursing

Hong Kong College of Surgical Nursing

Document No.	HKAN-PS-002-R0
Owner	The Council of The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing
Approved by	The Council of The Hong Kong Academy of Nursing
Date approved	30 November 2021
Date for review	30 November 2024