



Spiritual Care Education Standard

Core Spiritual Care Competencies for Undergraduate Nursing/Midwifery Students

Preamble

Introduction

This EPICC Spiritual Care Education Standard describes the spiritual care competencies expected from undergraduate nursing and midwifery students. For every competence, the learning outcomes are described in aspects of knowledge, skills and attitudes. These competencies are based on studies on spiritual care competencies¹, which were discussed and agreed upon during the EPICC Teaching and Learning Events 1 and 2². It should be considered that these competencies are practiced within a compassionate relationship and founded in a person-centred and reflective attitude of openness, presence and trust, that is fundamental for nursing and midwifery as a whole.

Spirituality

EPICC has adopted the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC)³ definition of spirituality and an adapted version of NHS Education Scotland's definition of spiritual care⁴ (to reflect wellbeing as well as illness).

Spirituality: *"The dynamic dimension of human life that relates to the way persons (individual and community) experience, express and/or seek meaning, purpose and transcendence, and the way they connect to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, to the significant and/or the sacred."*

¹ These studies are:

- Van Leeuwen, R., & Cusveller, B. (2004). Nursing competencies for spiritual care. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 48, 234-246. doi: 10.1111/j.1365.2648.2004.03192.x
- Van Leeuwen, R., Tiesinga, L. J., Middel, B., Post, D., & Jochemsen, H. (2009). The validity and reliability of an instrument to assess nursing competencies in spiritual care. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 18, 2857-2869. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2702.2008.02594.x
- Attard, J. (2015). *The design and validation of a framework of competencies in spiritual care for nurses and midwives: A modified Delphi study* (Doctoral dissertation). University of South Wales, UK.

² Teaching and Learning Event 1 (30th October – 3rd November, 2017), Zwolle, Netherlands. Teaching and Learning Event 2 (24th September – 28th September, 2018), Valletta, Republic of Malta.

³ EAPC (n.d.). *EAPC Task Force on Spiritual Care in Palliative Care*. Retrieved from: <https://www.eapcnet.eu/eapc-groups/task-forces/spiritual-care>. Last accessed 18/02/19.

The spiritual field is multidimensional:

1. Existential challenges (e.g., questions concerning identity, meaning, suffering and death, guilt and shame, reconciliation and forgiveness, freedom and responsibility, hope and despair, love and joy).
2. Value-based considerations and attitudes (e.g., what is most important for each person, such as relations to oneself, family, friends, work, aspects of nature, art and culture, ethics and morals, and life itself).
3. Religious considerations and foundations (e.g., faith, beliefs and practices, the relationship with God or the ultimate).

Spiritual care

‘Care which recognises and responds to the human spirit when faced with life-changing events (such as birth, trauma, ill health, loss) or sadness, and can include the need for meaning, for self-worth, to express oneself, for faith support, perhaps for rites or prayer or sacrament, or simply for a sensitive listener. Spiritual care begins with encouraging human contact in compassionate relationship and moves in whatever direction need requires’ (adapted from ⁴).

Cultural context

The content and application of the EPICC Spiritual Care Education Standard should be considered within the cultural context and the language of the country in which it is used.

Terminology

Throughout the EPICC Spiritual Care Education Standard, the terms ‘person and individual’ is used. These terms refer to the ‘patient’, ‘client’, ‘service user’, ‘pregnant woman’, ‘carer’, ‘family member’, ‘relative’, ‘care recipient’ and so on, depending on the country in which the Standard is used, along with the local context.

⁴ NHS Scotland (2010). *Spiritual Care Matters: An introductory resource for all NHS Scotland staff*. Retrieved from <https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/3723/spiritualcaremattersfinal.pdf>. Last accessed 18/02/19.

	COMPETENCIES	KNOWLEDGE (COGNITIVE)	SKILLS (FUNCTIONAL)	ATTITUDE (BEHAVIOURAL)
1	INTRAPERSONAL SPIRITUALITY Is aware of the importance of spirituality on health and well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understands the concept of spirituality. - Can explain the impact of spirituality on a person's health and well-being across the lifespan for oneself and others. - Understands the impact of one's own values and beliefs in providing spiritual care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflects meaningfully upon one's own values and beliefs and recognises that these may be different from other persons'. - Takes care of oneself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willing to explore one's own and individuals' personal, religious and spiritual beliefs. - Is open and respectful to persons' diverse expressions of spirituality.
2	INTERPERSONAL SPIRITUALITY Engages with persons' spirituality, acknowledging their unique spiritual and cultural worldviews, beliefs and practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understands the ways that persons' express their spirituality. - Is aware of the different world/religious views and how these may impact upon persons' responses to key life events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognises the uniqueness of persons' spirituality. - Interacts with, and responds sensitively to the person's spirituality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is trustworthy, approachable and respectful of persons' expressions of spirituality and different world/religious views.
3	SPIRITUAL CARE: ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING Assesses spiritual needs and resources using appropriate formal or informal approaches, and plans spiritual care, maintaining confidentiality and obtaining informed consent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understands the concept of spiritual care. - Is aware of different approaches to spiritual assessment. - Understands other professionals' roles in providing spiritual care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducts and documents a spiritual assessment to identify spiritual needs and resources. - Collaborates with other professionals. - Be able to appropriately contain and deal with emotions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is open, approachable and non-judgemental. - Has a willingness to deal with emotions.
4	SPIRITUAL CARE: INTERVENTION AND EVALUATION Responds to spiritual needs and resources within a caring, compassionate relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understands the concept of compassion and presence and its importance in spiritual care. - Knows how to respond appropriately to identified spiritual needs and resources. - Knows how to evaluate whether spiritual needs have been met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognises personal limitations in spiritual care giving and refers to others as appropriate. - Evaluates and documents personal, professional and organisational aspects of spiritual care giving, and reassess appropriately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows compassion and presence. - Shows willingness to collaborate with and refer to others (professional/non-professional). - Is welcoming and accepting and shows empathy, openness, professional humility and trustworthiness in seeking additional spiritual support.