# **American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN): The Essentials**

**Domains:**

Domain 1: Knowledge for Nursing Practice

Domain 2: Person-Centered Care

Domain 3: Population Health

Domain 4: Scholarship for Nursing Discipline

Domain 5: Quality and Safety

Domain 6: Interprofessional Partnerships

Domain 7: Systems-Based Practice

Domain 8: Informatics and Healthcare Technologies

Domain 9: Professionalism

Domain 10: Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development

**Concepts:**

Concept 1: Clinical Judgment

Concept 2: Communication

Concept 3: Compassionate Care

Concept 4: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Concept 5: Ethics

Concept 6: Evidence-Based Practice

Concept 7: Health Policy

Concept 8: Social Determinants of Health

**Competencies by Domain:**

Domain 1: Knowledge for Nursing Practice

1.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the discipline of nursing’s distinct perspective and where shared perspectives exist with other disciplines

1.1a Identify concepts, derived from theories from nursing and other disciplines, which distinguish the practice of nursing.

1.1b Apply knowledge of nursing science that develops a foundation for nursing practice.

1.1c Understand the historical foundation of nursing as the relationship developed between the individual and nurse.

1.1d Articulate nursing’s distinct perspective to practice.

1.2 Apply theory and research-based knowledge from nursing, the arts, humanities, and other sciences.

1.2a Apply or employ knowledge from nursing science as well as the natural, physical, and social sciences to build an understanding of the human experience and nursing practice.

1.2b Demonstrate intellectual curiosity.

1.2c Demonstrate social responsibility as a global citizen who fosters the attainment of health equity for all.

1.2d Examine influence of personal values in decision making for nursing practice.

1.2e Demonstrate ethical decision making.

1.3 Demonstrate clinical judgment founded on a broad knowledge base.

1.3a Demonstrate clinical reasoning.

1.3b Integrate nursing knowledge (theories, multiple ways of knowing, evidence) and knowledge from other disciplines and inquiry to inform clinical judgment.

1.3c Incorporate knowledge from nursing and other disciplines to support clinical judgment.

Domain 2: Person-Centered Care

2.1 Engage with the individual in establishing a caring relationship.

2.1a Demonstrate qualities of empathy.

2.1b Demonstrate compassionate care.

2.1c Establish mutual respect with the individual and family.

2.2 Communicate effectively with individuals.

2.2a Demonstrate relationship-centered care.

2.2b Consider individual beliefs, values, and personalized information in communications.

2.2c Use a variety of communication modes appropriate for the context.

2.2d Demonstrate the ability to conduct sensitive or difficult conversations.

2.2e Use evidence-based patient teaching materials, considering health literacy, vision, hearing, and cultural sensitivity.

2.2f Demonstrate emotional intelligence in communications.

2.3 Integrate assessment skills in practice.

2.3a Create an environment during assessment that promotes a dynamic interactive experience.

2.3b Obtain a complete and accurate history in a systematic manner.

2.3c Perform a clinically relevant, holistic health assessment.

2.3d Perform point of care screening/diagnostic testing (e.g. blood glucose, PO2, EKG).

2.3e Distinguish between normal and abnormal health findings.

2.3f Apply nursing knowledge to gain a holistic perspective of the person, family, community, and population.

2.3g Communicate findings of a comprehensive assessment.

2.4 Diagnose actual or potential health problems and needs.

2.4a Synthesize assessment data in the context of the individual’s current preferences, situation, and experience.

2.4b Create a list of problems/health concerns.

2.4c Prioritize problems/health concerns.

2.4d Understand and apply the results of social screening, psychological testing, laboratory data, imaging studies, and other diagnostic tests in actions and plans of care.

2.4e Contribute as a team member to the formation and improvement of diagnoses.

2.5 Develop a plan of care.

2.5a Engage the individual and the team in plan development.

2.5b Organize care based on mutual health goals.

2.5c Prioritize care based on best evidence.

2.5d Incorporate evidence-based intervention to improve outcomes and safety.

2.5e Anticipate outcomes of care (expected, unexpected, and potentially adverse).

2.5f Demonstrate rationale for plan.

2.5g Address individuals’ experiences and perspectives in designing plans of care.

2.6 Demonstrate accountability for care delivery.

2.6a Implement individualized plan of care using established protocols.

2.6b Communicate care delivery through multiple modalities.

2.6c Delegate appropriately to team members.

2.6d Monitor the implementation of the plan of care.

2.7 Evaluate outcomes of care.

2.7a Reassess the individual to evaluate health outcomes/goals.

2.7b Modify plan of care as needed.

2.7c Recognize the need for modifications to standard practice.

2.8 Promote self-care management.

2.8a Assist the individual to engage in self-care management.

2.8b Employ individualized educational strategies based on learning theories, methodologies, and health literacy.

2.8c Educate individuals and families regarding self-care for health promotion, illness prevention, and illness management.

2.8d Respect individuals and families’ self-determination in their healthcare decisions.

2.8e Identify personal, system, and community resources available to support self-care management.

2.9 Provide care coordination.

2.9a Facilitate continuity of care based on assessment of assets and needs.

2.9b Communicate with relevant stakeholders across health systems.

2.9c Promote collaboration by clarifying responsibilities among individual, family, and team members.

2.9d Recognize when additional expertise and knowledge is needed to manage the patient.

2.9e Provide coordination of care of individuals and families in collaboration with care team.

Domain 3: Population Health

3.1 Manage population health.

3.1a Define a target population including its functional and problem-solving capabilities (anywhere in the continuum of care).

3.1b Assess population health data.

3.1c Assess the priorities of the community and/or the affected clinical population.

3.1d Compare and contrast local, regional, national, and global benchmarks to identify health patterns across populations.

3.1e Apply an understanding of the public health system and its interfaces with clinical health care in addressing population health needs.

3.1f Develop an action plan to meet an identified need(s), including evaluation methods.

3.1g Participate in the implementation of sociocultural and linguistically responsive interventions.

3.1h Describe general principles and practices for the clinical management of populations across the age continuum.

3.1i Identify ethical principles to protect the health and safety of diverse populations.

3.2 Engage in effective partnerships.

3.2a Engage with other health professionals to address population health issues.

3.2b Demonstrate effective collaboration and mutual accountability with relevant stakeholders.

3.2c Use culturally and linguistically responsive communication strategies.

3.3 Consider the socioeconomic impact of the delivery of health care.

3.3a Describe access and equity implications of proposed intervention(s).

3.3b Prioritize patient-focused and/or community action plans that are safe, effective, and efficient in the context of available resources.

3.4 Advance equitable population health policy.

3.4a Describe policy development processes.

3.4b Describe the impact of policies on population outcomes, including social justice and health equity.

3.4c Identify best evidence to support policy development.

3.4d Propose modifications to or development of policy based on population findings.

3.4e Develop an awareness of the interconnectedness of population health across borders.

3.5 Demonstrate advocacy strategies.

3.5a Articulate a need for change.

3.5b Describe the intent of the proposed change.

3.5c Define stakeholders, including members of the community and/or clinical populations, and their level of influence.

3.5d Implement messaging strategies appropriate to audience and stakeholders.

3.5e Evaluate the effectiveness of advocacy actions.

3.6 Advance preparedness to protect population health during disasters and public health emergencies.

3.6a Identify changes in conditions that might indicate a disaster or public health emergency.

3.6b Understand the impact of climate change on environmental and population health.

3.6c Describe the health and safety hazards of disasters and public health emergencies.

3.6d Describe the overarching principles and methods regarding personal safety measures, including personal protective equipment (PPE).

3.6e Implement infection control measures and proper use of personal protective equipment.

Domain 4: Scholarship for Nursing Discipline

4.1 Advance the scholarship of nursing.

4.1a Demonstrate an understanding of different approaches to scholarly practice.

4.1b Demonstrate application of different levels of evidence.

4.1c Apply theoretical framework(s)/models in practice.

4.1d Demonstrate an understanding of basic elements of the research process.

4.1e Participate in scholarly inquiry as a team member.

4.1f Evaluate research.

4.1g Communicate scholarly findings.

4.2 Integrate best evidence into nursing practice.

4.2a Evaluate clinical practice to generate questions to improve nursing care.

4.2b Evaluate appropriateness and strength of the evidence.

4.2c Use best evidence in practice.

4.2d Participate in the implementation of a practice change to improve nursing care.

4.2e Participate in the evaluation of outcomes and their implications for practice.

4.3 Promote the ethical conduct of scholarly activities.

4.3a Explain the rationale for ethical research guidelines, including Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines.

4.3b Demonstrate ethical behaviors in scholarly projects including quality improvement and EBP initiatives.

4.3c Advocate for the protection of participants in the conduct of scholarly initiatives.

4.3d Recognize the impact of equity issues in research.

Domain 5: Quality and Safety

5.1 Apply quality improvement principles in care delivery.

5.1a Recognize nursing’s essential role in improving healthcare quality and safety.

5.1b Identify sources and applications of national safety and quality standards to guide nursing practice.

5.1c Implement standardized, evidence-based processes for care delivery.

5.1d Interpret benchmark and unit outcome data to inform individual and microsystem practice.

5.1e Compare quality improvement methods in the delivery of patient care.

5.1f Identify strategies to improve outcomes of patient care in practice.

5.1g Participate in the implementation of a practice change.

5.1h Develop a plan for monitoring quality improvement change.

5.2 Contribute to a culture of patient safety.

5.2a Describe the factors that create a culture of safety.

5.2b Articulate the nurse’s role within an interprofessional team in promoting safety and preventing errors and near misses.

5.2c Examine basic safety design principles to reduce risk of harm.

5.2d Assume accountability for reporting unsafe conditions, near misses, and errors to reduce harm.

5.2e Describe processes used in understanding causes of error.

5.2f Use national patient safety resources, initiatives, and regulations at the point of care.

5.3 Contribute to a culture of provider and work environment safety.

5.3a Identify actual and potential level of risks to providers within the workplace.

5.3b Recognize how to prevent workplace violence and injury.

5.3c Promote policies for prevention of violence and risk mitigation.

5.3d Recognize one’s role in sustaining a just culture reflecting civility and respect.

Domain 6: Interprofessional Partnerships

6.1 Communicate in a manner that facilitates a partnership approach to quality care delivery.

6.1a Communicate the nurse’s roles and responsibilities clearly.

6.1b Use various communication tools and techniques effectively.

6.1c Elicit the perspectives of team members to inform person-centered care decision making.

6.1d Articulate impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion on team-based communications.

6.1e Communicate individual information in a professional, accurate, and timely manner.

6.1f Communicate as informed by legal, regulatory, and policy guidelines.

6.2 Perform effectively in different team roles, using principles and values of team dynamics.

6.2a Apply principles of team dynamics, including team roles, to facilitate effective team functioning.

6.2b Delegate work to team members based on their roles and competency.

6.2c Engage in the work of the team as appropriate to one’s scope of practice and competency.

6.2d Recognize how one’s uniqueness (as a person and a nurse) contributes to effective interprofessional working relationships.

6.2e Apply principles of team leadership and management. performance to improve quality and assure safety.

6.2f Evaluate performance of individual and team to improve quality and promote safety.

6.3 Use knowledge of nursing and other professions to address healthcare needs.

6.3a Integrate the roles and responsibilities of healthcare professionals through interprofessional collaborative practice.

6.3b Leverage roles and abilities of team members to optimize care.

6.3c Communicate with team members to clarify responsibilities in executing plan of care.

6.4 Work with other professions to maintain a climate of mutual learning, respect, and shared values.

6.4a Demonstrate an awareness of one’s biases and how they may affect mutual respect and communication with team members.

6.4b Demonstrate respect for the perspectives and experiences of other professions.

6.4c Engage in constructive communication to facilitate conflict management.

6.4d Collaborate with interprofessional team members to establish mutual healthcare goals for individuals, communities, or populations.

Domain 7: Systems-Based Practice

7.1 Apply knowledge of systems to work effectively across the continuum of care.

7.1a Describe organizational structure, mission, vision, philosophy, and values.

7.1b Explain the relationships of macrosystems, mesosystems, and microsystems.

7.1c Differentiate between various healthcare delivery environments across the continuum of care.

7.1d Recognize internal and external system processes that impact care coordination and transition of care.

7.2 Incorporate consideration of cost-effectiveness of care.

7.2a Describe the financial and payment models of health care.

7.2b Recognize the impact of health disparities and social determinants of health on care outcomes.

7.2c Describe the impact of healthcare cost and payment models on the delivery, access, and quality of care.

7.2d Explain the relationship of policy, regulatory requirements, and economics on care outcomes.

7.2e Incorporate considerations of efficiency, value, and cost in providing care.

7.2f Identify the impact of differing system structures, leadership, and workforce needs on care outcomes.

7.3 Optimize system effectiveness through application of innovation and evidence-based practice.

7.3a Demonstrate a systematic approach for decision-making.

7.3b Use reported performance metrics to compare/monitor outcomes.

7.3c Participate in evaluating system effectiveness.

7.3d Recognize internal and external system processes and structures that perpetuate racism and other forms of discrimination within health care.

Domain 8: Informatics and Healthcare Technologies

8.1 Describe the various information and communication technology tools used in the care of patients, communities, and populations.

8.1a Identify the variety of information and communication technologies used in care settings.

8.1b Identify the basic concepts of electronic health, mobile health, and telehealth systems for enabling patient care.

8.1c Effectively use electronic communication tools.

8.1d Describe the appropriate use of multimedia applications in health care.

8.1e Demonstrate best practice use of social networking applications.

8.1f Explain the importance of nursing engagement in the planning and selection of healthcare technologies.

8.2 Use information and communication technology to gather data, create information, and generate knowledge.

8.2a Enter accurate data when chronicling care.

8.2b Explain how data entered on one patient impacts public and population health data.

8.2c Use appropriate data when planning care.

8.2d Demonstrate the appropriate use of health information literacy assessments and improvement strategies.

8.2e Describe the importance of standardized nursing data to reflect the unique contribution of nursing practice.

8.3 Use information and communication technologies and informatics processes to deliver safe nursing care to diverse populations in a variety of settings.

8.3a Demonstrate appropriate use of information and communication technologies.

8.3b Evaluate how decision support tools impact clinical judgment and safe patient care.

8.3c Use information and communication technology in a manner that supports the nurse-patient relationship.

8.3d Examine how emerging technologies influence healthcare delivery and clinical decision making.

8.3e Identify impact of information and communication technology on quality and safety of care.

8.3f Identify the importance of reporting system processes and functional issues (error messages, mis-directions, device malfunctions, etc.) according to organizational policies and procedures.

8.4 Use information and communication technology to support documentation of care and communication among providers, patients, and all system levels.

8.4a Explain the role of communication technology in enhancing clinical information flows.

8.4b Describe how information and communication technology tools support patient and team communications.

8.4c Identify the basic concepts of electronic health, mobile health, and telehealth systems in enabling patient care.

8.4d Explain the impact of health information exchange, interoperability, and integration on health care.

8.5 Use information and communication technologies in accordance with ethical, legal, professional, and regulatory standards, and workplace policies in the delivery of care.

8.5a Identify common risks associated with using information and communication technology.

8.5b Demonstrate ethical use of social networking applications.

8.5c Comply with legal and regulatory requirements while using communication and information technologies.

8.5d Educate patients on their rights to access, review, and correct personal data and medical records.

8.5e Discuss how clinical judgment and critical thinking must prevail in the presence of information and communication technologies.

8.5f Deliver care using remote technology.

Domain 9: Professionalism

9.1 Demonstrate an ethical comportment in one’s practice reflective of nursing’s mission to society.

9.1a Apply principles of professional nursing ethics and human rights in patient care and professional situations.

9.1b Reflect on one’s actions and their consequences.

9.1c Demonstrate ethical behaviors in practice.

9.1d Change behavior based on self and situational awareness.

9.1e Report unethical behaviors when observed.

9.1f Safeguard privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy in all interactions.

9.1g Advocate for the individual’s right to self-determination.

9.2 Employ participatory approach to nursing care.

9.2a Employ the use of intentional presence to facilitate shared meaning of the experience between nurse and recipient of care.

9.2b Facilitate health and healing through compassionate caring.

9.2c Demonstrate empathy to the individual’s life experience.

9.2d Advocate for practices that advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.

9.2e Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and humility in practice.

9.2f Apply principles of therapeutic relationships and professional boundaries.

9.2g Communicate in a professional manner.

9.3 Demonstrate accountability to the individual, society, and the profession.

9.3a Engage in advocacy that promotes the best interest of the individual, community, and profession.

9.3b Demonstrate the moral courage to report concerns related to actual or potential hazards and/or errors.

9.3c Demonstrate professional and personal honesty and integrity.

9.3d Take responsibility for one’s roles, decisions, obligations, actions, and care outcomes.

9.3e Engage in professional activities and/or organizations.

9.3f Demonstrate adherence to a culture of civility.

9.3g Advocate for social justice and health equity, including addressing the health of vulnerable populations.

9.3h Engage in peer evaluation.

9.4 Comply with relevant laws, policies, and regulations.

9.4a Advocate for policies that promote health and prevent harm.

9.4b Adhere to the registered nurse scope and standards of practice.

9.4c Adhere to regulatory requirements and workplace policies consistent with one’s educational preparation.

9.5 Demonstrate the professional identity of nursing.

9.5a Describe nursing’s professional identity and contributions to the healthcare team.

9.5b Demonstrate the core values of professional nursing identity.

9.5c Demonstrate sensitivity to the values of others.

9.5d Demonstrate ethical comportment and moral courage in decision making and actions.

9.5e Demonstrate emotional intelligence.

9.6 Integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion as core to one’s professional identity.

9.6a Demonstrate respect for diverse individual differences and diverse communities and populations

9.6b Demonstrate awareness of personal and professional values and conscious and unconscious biases.

9.6c Integrate core principles of social justice and human rights into practice.

Domain 10: Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development

10.1 Demonstrate a commitment to personal health and well-being.

10.1a Demonstrate healthy, self-care behaviors that promote wellness and resiliency.

10.1b Manage conflict between personal and professional responsibilities.

10.2 Demonstrate a spirit of inquiry that fosters flexibility and professional maturity.

10.2a Engage in guided and spontaneous reflection of one’s practice.

10.2b Integrate comprehensive feedback to improve performance.

10.2c Commit to personal and professional development.

10.2d Expand personal knowledge to inform clinical judgement.

10.2eIdentify role models and mentors to support professional growth.

10.2f Participate in ongoing activities that embrace principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-discrimination.

10.3 Develop capacity for leadership.

10.3a Compare and contrast leadership principles and theories.

10.3b Formulate a personal leadership style.

10.3c Demonstrate leadership behaviors in professional situations.

10.3d Demonstrate self-efficacy consistent with one’s professional development.

10.3e Use appropriate resources when dealing with ambiguity.

10.3f Modify one’s own leadership behaviors based on guided self-reflection.

10.3g Demonstrate self-awareness of one’s own implicit biases and their relationship to one’s culture and environment.

10.3h Communicate a consistent image of the nurse as a leader.

10.3i Recognize the importance of nursing’s contributions as leaders in practice and policy issues.

Reference: American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2021) *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education.* <https://www.aacnnursing.org/essentials>