



College of **Registered Nurses**  
of Newfoundland & Labrador

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# Differentiating Scope of Practice within the Profession

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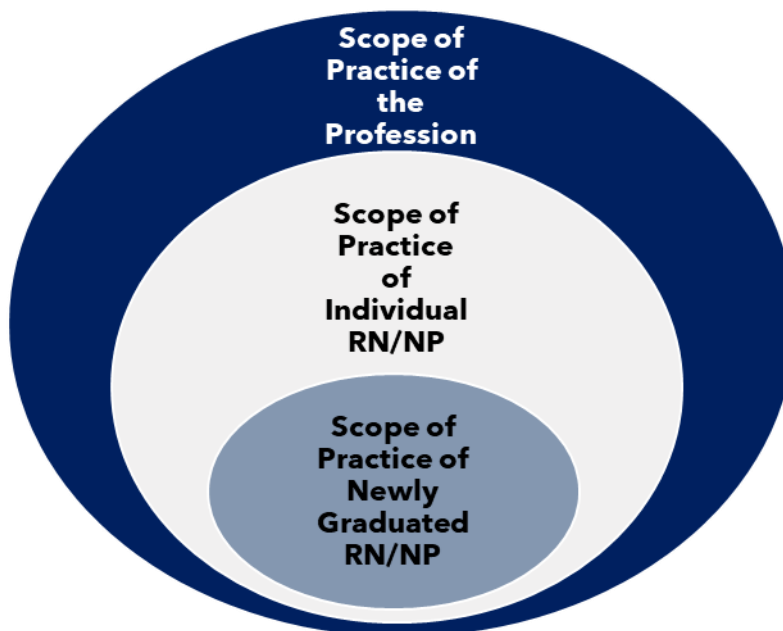


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## Differentiating Scope of Practice within the Profession

When discussing scope of practice, it is helpful to understand how the scope of the profession<sup>1</sup> as a whole can differ in comparison to the scope of each individual registered nurse (RN)/nurse practitioner (NP) and the scope of the newly graduated RN or NP.



### Scope of Practice of the Profession

The scope of practice of the profession represents all that is taught in entry to practice/entry-level (basic) nursing education programs, graduate nursing degree programs, and in continuing education programs. It also includes competencies that are added to the role as the profession evolves in various practice settings and domains of practice to be responsive to the evolving health care environment and health-related needs of the public.

### Scope of Practice of an Individual RN/NP

The scope of practice of the individual RN/NP is defined as the nursing services for which a registrant is educated, authorized, and competent to perform. An individual RN's/NP's scope of practice is based on foundational, entry to practice education and continues to progress with practice experience and continuing education over a career. RNs/NPs add new competencies to their scope throughout their careers as they progress from novice to expert practitioners in various practice settings and domains of practice. The scope of practice of an individual RN/NP will be different dependent on the competencies gained from formal and informal education, skills acquired through nursing experience in various nursing

<sup>1</sup>For further information on scope of practice and the bibliography, refer to the most current version of the College's Scope of Practice Framework.



domains, and services provided to diverse aggregate populations within the context of practice. At all times, RNs/NPs must take responsibility and accountability for ensuring they work within the boundaries of their individual scope of practice.

The scope of practice of the individual RN/NP must fit within the scope of practice of the profession and will always be smaller in comparison to the scope of the whole nursing profession. The outer boundaries of the scope of practice of the individual nurse will always be flexible and will expand or contract over time based upon the required competencies and client needs for the individual nurse's practice setting. For example, as the individual nurse gains experience and expertise in one particular practice setting, the outer boundaries of the scope of practice of the individual nurse may contract in regard to competencies that are rarely or never utilized but expand as new competencies and expertise are gained for that particular area of practice. An individual RN's/NP's scope of practice cannot progress beyond the profession's scope of practice but evolves over time as RNs/NPs gain additional competencies as their context of practice changes.

In addition to the boundaries of the profession, the scope of practice of the individual RN/NP is limited by:

- what the RN/NP is educated, competent, and authorized to perform,
- needs and health goals of clients,
- specific **competencies** held by the RN/NP,
- practice setting or context of practice,
- employer authorization to carry out nursing competencies,
- individual level of competence and ability to manage the outcomes of care, and
- for an NP, the category of practice in which the NP is licenced<sup>2</sup>.

### Scope of Practice of a Newly Graduated Registered Nurse or Nurse Practitioner

The scope of practice of the newly graduated nurse (beginning practitioner) from a practical perspective is the smallest (most limited) and represents the roles, functions, responsibilities, and activities that students learn in their entry to practice nursing education program. Nursing education programs' curricula prepare nurses to meet **entry level competencies** (ELCs) (entry to practice competencies) upon graduation. ELCs are the necessary knowledge, skills, and judgment required to enter into practice and provide safe, competent, compassionate, and ethical care in nursing practice. ELCs further establish the foundation for nursing practice and represents a new practitioner's initial, expected level of competency. As recently graduated nurses, level of competencies will vary, but will evolve in keeping with principles of individual RN/NP scope of practice through experience, orientation and mentorship, professional practice, and continuing education. The most current versions of the Entry-Level Competencies for Registered Nurses and Entry-Level Competencies for Nurse Practitioners in Newfoundland and Labrador can be found on the College's website.

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<sup>2</sup>The Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators' (CCRNR) national working group is currently working to implement processes to move NP regulation to one category of practice. This document will be updated once these changes are implemented.





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