

# The Competency Framework for Travel Health Nurses of Australia and New Zealand



THE AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE  
OF TROPICAL MEDICINE



Royal College  
of Nursing

## Foreword:

This Competency Framework for Travel Health Nurses of Australia and New Zealand is a most valuable addition to guide the training and upskilling of nurses who wish to work in the field, which is a relatively new but exciting branch of nursing practice.

The Framework was adapted from the Royal College of Nursing UK (2018) Competencies: travel health nursing: career and competence development, the aim of which was to guide the career development and competencies of nurses working in this field. The Faculty of Travel Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in Glasgow has driven the development of this area, spurred by a number of highly respected and committed nurses who are active, not just in the UK, but in the international travel medicine space.

We are confident this Framework will enable those nurses in our own region who have an interest in travel health to both expand their knowledge and follow their passion, while complying with a comprehensive set of requirements.

The Faculty of Travel Medicine, part of the Australian College of Tropical Medicine, offers their thanks to those nurses who have pursued the development of this guideline.

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**Core competency 2:**

Travel health consultations (including COVID-19 consultations prior to travel)

Competent Nurse (Level 1)		Experienced or Proficient Nurse (Level 2)		Senior Practitioner or Expert Nurse (Level 3)	
<p>1. Demonstrates good geographical knowledge and knows how to access further information regarding global destinations.</p> <p>2. Performs a comprehensive risk assessment and knows how to carry out risk assessment effectively.</p> <p>3. Interprets the risk assessment and accesses latest recommendations for travel health advice (including malaria advice where appropriate), immunisations required, appropriate to the risk assessment for the journey.</p> <p>4. Recognises complex issues beyond personal scope and knows who to contact for further information, advice and support.</p> <p>5. Checks NZ and Australian childhood immunisation schedules are up to date and acts appropriately if not. Know where to find information on incomplete schedules or those undertaken in another country.</p> <p>6. Demonstrates knowledge of malaria and common vaccine preventable, and non-vaccine preventable travel-related diseases for example traveller's diarrhoea, hepatitis A, typhoid, malaria and dengue fever and other travel related hazards such as hepatitis B.</p>		<p>Should be competent in core competency level 1</p> <p>2. Performs and educates other team members in the process of risk assessment and risk management.</p> <p>3. Selects and develops appropriate risk assessment and risk management tools.</p> <p>4a. Provides support and advice to inexperienced colleagues.</p> <p>4b. Interprets risk assessment where advice is not straightforward.</p> <p>4c. Manages routine travel health scenarios independently but refers for more complex issues. E.g., travellers with serious underlying medical conditions.</p> <p>6. Disseminates their knowledge of travel related diseases e.g. rabies, Japanese encephalitis, yellow fever, schistosomiasis, West Nile virus, malaria prophylaxis and treatment and tuberculosis.</p>		<p>Should be competent at all levels in each core competency.</p> <p>2. Develops protocols encompassing risk assessment and risk management. E.g., for travel health consultations, malaria prevention, vaccine storage.</p> <p>3. Interprets risk assessment and risk management in unusual or special circumstances.</p> <p>4. Accepts referral for complex issues.</p>	

**Core competency 2: (continued)**

Travel health consultations (including COVID-19 consultations prior to travel)

<p>7. Provides individual advice to the traveller regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accident prevention and travel insurance</li> <li>• Safe food, water and personal hygiene</li> <li>• Blood borne and sexually transmitted diseases.</li> <li>• Insect bite prevention</li> <li>• Animal bites and rabies.</li> <li>• Environmental risks, e.g., complications due to exposure to extreme temperatures.</li> <li>• Personal safety and security</li> <li>• Malaria awareness, bite prevention, chemoprophylaxis and compliance.</li> </ul> <p>8. Communicates information effectively to explain the disease and other travel related risks, vaccine recommendations and malaria prevention advice appropriate to the risk assessment.</p> <p>9. Prioritises appropriately in situations where a patient's time or financial situation does not allow the optimum recommendations.</p> <p>10. Assesses anxieties, especially to vaccination and acts appropriately.</p> <p>11. Demonstrates an excellent vaccination administration technique.</p> <p>12. Completes patient and administrative records after vaccinations.</p>		<p>7a. Is supported by a doctor/NP experienced in Travel Medicine to advise travellers with more complex travel and special needs. E.g., pregnant traveller, the traveller with diabetes, immunosuppression, cardiac or respiratory disease.</p> <p>7b. Is supported by a doctor/NP experienced in Travel Medicine to advise travellers on more complex health issues. E.g., malaria standby treatment, post-exposure prophylaxis for blood-borne virus such as during medical electives, management of altitude sickness.</p> <p>8. Is supported by a doctor/NP experienced in Travel Medicine to provide more specialised advice to travellers with more complex itineraries that may also require the prescription, provision and administration of vaccines recommended in specific circumstances such as Japanese encephalitis or rabies.</p> <p>9. Demonstrates involvement in the financial governance of travel including vaccination administration, which vaccines are purchased, funded vaccines, provision of malaria prophylaxis and travel health products such as repellents, medical kits, mosquito nets and prophylactic medications.</p>		<p>7a. Meets the New Zealand MOH standards for Yellow Fever Vaccinator authorisation or has completed Australian DOH accredited Yellow Fever Course. Appropriately authorised RN can administer YF without a script/standing order in New Zealand.</p> <p>In Australia, only a Nurse Practitioner who has completed the course can administer the vaccine without a doctor's order.</p> <p>7b. Writes appropriate travel health advice sheets on all topics of travel health advice, where advice sheets are not readily available. Direct travellers to other supporting sources of information e.g., online.</p> <p>8. Provides advice on more complex travel -related issues at a national/board/strategic level.</p>	
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**Core competency 3:**

Professional responsibilities for nurses working in travel health

Competent Nurse (Level 1)		Experienced or Proficient Nurse (Level 2)		Senior Practitioner or Expert Nurse (Level 3)	
<p>1. Endorsed Enrolled Nurse or Registered Nurse (administering vaccinations from a prescription).</p> <p>2. Attends annual update on CPR (Australia) and biennial (New Zealand). Yearly anaphylaxis training/updates is best practice.</p> <p>3. Understands the issues of informed consent and acts accordingly.</p> <p>4. Ensures that travel health knowledge is up to date shown through CPD.</p> <p>5. Evaluates own care practices against accepted standards and guidance.</p> <p>6. Attends annual travel health study session/conference at local/national/international level.</p> <p>7. Uses recognised online databases on a frequent or regular basis to ensure the latest national/international recommendations are always followed and read the update information to ensure awareness of issues such as disease outbreaks.</p> <p>8. Demonstrates awareness of and uses a variety of other recognised travel health resources.</p> <p>9. Joins an organisation that provides regular travel health information and contact. E.g NZ Society Travel Medicine, Asia Pacific Travel Health Society (APTHS), Conference (APTHC), specific employer travel health groups.</p>		<p>1. Authorised Independent Vaccinator/Nurse Immuniser (administering vaccinations from Standard Dug Orders).</p> <p>5. Evaluates own care and acts as a resource to other clinic nurses in ensuring their care is evaluated against accepted standards and guidelines.</p> <p>9. Considers joining the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) and/or International Society of Infectious Diseases (ISID) and/or Wilderness and Expedition Groups. Attends conferences.</p>		<p>Should be competent at all levels in each core competency.</p> <p>5a. Uses expert knowledge to inform protocol development and guide others in this process.</p> <p>5b. Audit's documentation to ensure appropriate standards and guidance is maintained.</p> <p>5c. Appraises individuals on progress as required.</p> <p>6a. Educates doctors and nurses working in the field of Travel Health.</p> <p>6b. Speaks/presents research at travel medicine educational events at a national/international level.</p> <p>7. Uses international databases to ensure awareness of global issues in travel health.</p> <p>9. Is involved at national or international level in travel health, including committee membership of relevant forums.</p>	

**Core competency 3: (continued)**

Professional responsibilities for nurses working in travel health

<p>10. Demonstrates evidence of learning to apply skills and knowledge in field of travel medicine. For example, 15 hours of relevant learning and mentorship in clinical skills before undertaking a full travel health risk assessment and consultation. Demonstrates evidence of CPD in line with current National requirements.</p> <p>11. Insists on adequate time to perform the travel consultation and negotiating sufficient time if this has not been allocated to ensure safe practice.</p> <p>12. Demonstrates adherence to the principles of vaccine storage, administration, and related theory.</p> <p>13. Ensures adequate vaccine stock control, ordering or delegating this process to ensure sufficient stock is always available.</p> <p>14. Is involved in the choice of vaccine products used in relation to clinical evidence and best practice and does not necessarily accept the decision of non-clinicians ordering products based on cost and profit margins alone.</p> <p>15. Works effectively with non-clinical staff who are involved in the travel consultation process.</p> <p>16. Complies with all audit procedures and policy changes.</p>		<p>10a. Considers formal Travel Medicine training at Post Graduate Level.</p> <p>10b. Acts as a mentor to Competent Nurse.</p> <p>11a. Negotiates the provision of travel health to be managed in a dedicated nurse led clinic setting with dedicated time.</p> <p>14. Takes responsibility for deciding which vaccines are used.</p> <p>15. Manages non-clinical staff in a clinic setting.</p> <p>16. Assists in collation and development of audit in travel health clinical practice</p>	<p>10a. Demonstrates highly developed specialist knowledge of the whole range of topics in travel medicine.</p> <p>10b. Acts as mentor to competent and experienced nurses.</p> <p>10c. Identifies areas for further research.</p> <p>10d. Holds a postgraduate qualification in Travel or Tropical Medicine.</p> <p>10e. Completed and passed the ISTM Certificate of Knowledge.</p> <p>11a Demonstrates experience of at least 3 years working as a level 2 Travel Health nurse.</p> <p>16. Undertakes clinical audit in travel health practice and acts on findings to develop and improve standards of care.</p>	
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## References:

Adapted from The Royal College of Nursing (2018) Competencies: travel health nursing: career and competence development, London: RCN

Chiodini J.H, Taylor F, Geary K, Lang S, Moore J, Ross D.A, Evans D.P, Britton A, Coley D, Anderson J, Rossanese A, Allen S.P. (2020) Good Practice Guidance for Providing a Travel Health Service. Faculty of Travel Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow

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