



NURSES AND MIDWIVES COUNCIL OF MALAWI

Standards for

Nursing and Midwifery

Education

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi is the sole regulatory body of nursing and midwifery education, training, practice and professional conduct of nursing and midwifery personnel in the country. It was established in 1966 under an Act of Parliament Chapter 36: 02 and revised as No 16 of 1995 (Laws of Malawi) as a non - profit making statutory organisation. The Council's mandate is to develop, maintain, monitor and evaluate the profession of nursing and midwifery thereby contributing to the national health goal of raising the health status of the Malawians.

The Council protects the public from unsafe practices through prescription of nursing and midwifery standards of education and training, practice and professional conduct of its practitioners.

The standards for the nursing and midwifery education require that faculty and service providers work collaboratively to ensure that the learning needs of students are met within the Malawi context.

This document describes the context and process followed in developing the National Nursing and Midwifery Education Standards for Malawi and presents the standards.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Ministry of Health with its development partners developed the Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) 2011-2016 after successful implementation of Sector Wider Approach (SWAP) 1. On section 5.2.2.6, the HSSP stipulates the importance of quality assurance whose objective is to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to quality improvement at all levels for effective service delivery.

The role of Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi is to strengthen the implementation of quality assurance programs in all health facilities in Malawi.

The goal of Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi (NMCM) is to ensure the provision of quality nursing and midwifery service to the public and its strategic objectives are:

- Enhance quality nursing and midwifery education and training.
- Promote safe practice for nurses and midwives according to standards

- Promote evidence based quality nursing and midwifery care
- Strengthen management systems.

It is from this background that NMCM in collaboration with Ministry of Health (MOH) through technical and financial assistance from International Centre for AIDS and Treatment Programs (ICAP) – Nurse Education Partnerships Initiative (NEPI) decided to develop the nursing and midwifery education standards to guide the education and training for nursing and midwifery professions.

3.0 PURPOSE OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY EDUCATION STANDARDS

National Nursing and Midwifery Education Standards in Malawi serve to:

- Design the educational programs that prepare graduates who are responsive to nursing and midwifery needs of the Malawians.
- Provide a benchmark for moving education and learning systems forward to produce a common competency-based outcome in an age of increasing globalization.

It is anticipated that these standards will be used in the nursing and midwifery profession as well as in other health related professions, policy and decision makers, the public, regulatory bodies and stakeholders. The national standards will be used in various activities such as in:

- Establishing a global approach to the provision of evidence - based educational programmes;
- Applying established competencies to provide a guide for curriculum development;
- Stimulating the creation of nursing or midwifery schools and programmes that meet national, regional and societal needs and expectations;
- Establishing benchmarks for continuous quality improvement and the progression of education in nursing and midwifery.
- Acting as a catalyst in advocating for education change, reform

and quality improvement;

- Serving as leverage in building capacity for adequate numbers of nurses and midwives and a competent, high quality nursing and midwifery workforce for strengthening health systems;
- Serve as a basis for the development of national standards for advanced nursing and /or midwifery education.

National Nursing and Midwifery education standards in Malawi are established for the preparation of nurses and midwives based on global norms and also assist nursing and midwifery colleges to evaluate, review and change existing programmes. They will help to define the expectations for performance (competencies) and scope of nursing and midwifery practice for Malawi to promote the health of the population.

The specific objectives of the nursing and midwifery education standards are to:

1. Hold the nursing and midwifery programme accountable to the public, the profession, consumers, employers, students and to colleagues by ensuring that nursing and midwifery programmes have philosophy statements, goals and outcomes that prepare individuals as fully qualified nurses and midwives.
2. Offer the framework for designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the ongoing quality of a Nursing and midwifery education programme, and accreditation.
3. Promote an education process to prepare nurses and midwives who have all the essential competencies for basic Nursing and Midwifery practice.
4. Prepare graduates who meet not only technical knowhow but also professional practice standards and competencies for national registration and licensure.
5. Foster continuing improvement in Nursing and Midwifery education programmes.

4.0 PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The development of these national standards for nursing and midwifery education involved a rigorous process of consultation, evidence gathering through literature review and analysis, consensus building through nominal group process, and expert review. The development process involved five steps:

- (i) organization of a core group of stakeholders who need standards to guide their education and practice; those who have the potential to promote use of the developed standards and organizations which will take leadership and be accountable for standard implementation and reinforcement;
- (ii) a clear understanding of the professional vision, mission and philosophy which form the basis / foundation for standard development as stipulated by NMCM
- (iii) identification of principles which are core to the professional practice of nursing
- (iv) clear description of the beneficiaries of the developed standards;
- (v) the review of different existing frameworks for standards of nursing practice which formed the basis for structuring standards for nursing practice for Malawi. The ICM, WHO & WFME frameworks formed the main basis for the Malawi standards for nursing and midwifery education.

5.0 STANDARDS STATEMENTS AND INDICATORS

The following are the recommended components for the NMCM standards for nursing and midwifery education which have been adapted from various dimensions of global educational standards. The standards are structured according to 10 areas which prescribe the minimum standards that **must** exist for nursing and midwifery professions education programmes:

- 1) Mission, philosophy and objectives
- 2) Educational programme
- 3) Academic staff/faculty
- 4) Educational resources
- 5) Governance and administration

- 6) Student selection, admission and support
- 7) Assessment of students
- 8) Programme evaluation
- 9) Quality Assurance
- 10) Research and evidence

Standard1: Mission, philosophy and objectives

Educational institutions must define their mission, philosophy, conceptual framework and objectives and make them known to its users.

Indicators:

1.1 Vision, mission statement and objectives of the institution must be available and well displayed.

1.2 The philosophy of the nursing and midwifery education programme must be consistent with the NMCM philosophy and model of care

1.3 The vision, mission, philosophy, aims and objectives of the nursing/ midwifery education programme shall support the vision and mission of the parent institution.

1.4 Philosophies and goals of the institution shall depict the social and cultural demands and outline the institution's role in the development of the Malawi society.

1.5 The mission statement and objectives shall describe the educational process of producing a nurse and midwife who is competent at a basic level, with an appropriate foundation for further training in any branch of nursing and midwifery.

1.6 The scope of the goals and objectives shall be in agreement with national health priorities and community health needs.

Standard 2: Educational programme

Learning programs must show evidence of addressing the human resource needs and must fit harmoniously and coherently into the total health professional education system of the country, and in keeping with international trends.

Indicators:

- 2.1 The programme must specify the goal and competencies required for practice reflected in the vision of the institution
- 2.2 The nursing and midwifery programme must offer opportunities for multidisciplinary content and learning experiences that complement nursing and midwifery content.
- 2.3 The purpose of the programme shall be to produce a nurse and midwife who:
 - 2.3.1 has attained/demonstrated, at a minimum, the current essential competencies for basic nursing and midwifery practice;
 - 2.3.2 has met the criteria of the NMCM definition of a nurse and midwife and regulatory body standards leading to licensure or registration as a nurse and midwife.
 - 2.3.3 is eligible to apply for advanced education.
 - 2.3.4 is knowledgeable, autonomous practitioner who adheres to the NMCM code of ethics, standards of the profession and established scope of practice.
- 2.4 The programme shall encompass both theory and practice elements with a minimum of 40% theory and 60% practice.
- 2.5 In clinical practice 40% of a student's time must be spent being supervised by a mentor or practice teacher.
- 2.6 During the clinical placement the student shall spend at least thirty minutes per week with a Sign-off mentor.

2.7 The curriculum must provide the educational experiences necessary for students to achieve the entry to practice, competencies as specified and defined by the Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi.

2.8 The curriculum shall address the client health needs, utilizing the principles of primary health care and must also specify the requirements for registration of entry level practice that meet students' needs and professional practice requirements (e.g. learning experiences, teaching processes and evaluation system) in Malawi

2.9 The sequence and content of the nursing and midwifery curriculum must enable the student to acquire essential competencies for nursing and midwifery practice in accordance with NMCM core competencies.

2.10 The nursing and midwifery programme must use evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning that entail application of participatory learning experiences, using multi-media education and learning methods that promote a culture of lifelong learning and opportunities for students to acquire research skills and facilitate teacher/learner relationships.

2.11 Principles of scientific methods and evidence based practice including analytical and critical thinking should be incorporated into the curriculum.

2.12 Practical learning experiences must be appropriate and be supervised to support learning such as classroom based, seminars, mentoring and clinical demonstration sites.

2.13 The nursing and midwifery programme must define the curriculum models and instructional methods employed and show evidence that a variety of appropriate classroom teaching strategies are used effectively and efficiently.

Standard 3: Student Assessment

Institutions must have assessment policies and procedures which ensure that students meet all the requirements and demonstrate continuous progress towards achieving competencies stated in the curriculum.

Indicators

3.1 Nursing and Midwifery faculty must use valid and reliable formative and summative evaluation/assessment methods to measure student performance progress in learning related to knowledge, skills and attitude.

3.2 The training institution must have means and written criteria for assessment/evaluation of nursing and midwifery student performance and progress must include identification of learning difficulties which must be written and shared with students.

3.3 Policies must be in place for nursing and midwifery faculty to conduct regular review of the curriculum as a part of quality improvement, including input from students, programme graduates, practitioners, public and other stakeholders.

3.4 Memorandum of understanding must be in place for training institutions and health facilities on how to identify mentors and how to manage the mentoring programme for staff and student

3.5 Students shall under-go skill check-offs in the skills laboratory before clinical placements.

3.6 No student shall proceed to the clinical placement before passing skill check-offs.

3.7 Training institutions shall organise Objective Structured Clinical Evaluation (OSCE) as part of clinical grading.

- 3.8 NMCM shall be represented by competent Registered nurse/midwives during the end of programme OSCE.
- 3.9 Students who fail clinical assessment shall not be allowed to proceed to the next class until they master the prescribed competencies at each level.
- 3.10 The Sign-off mentor, Mentor, Associate mentor and practice teacher must be involved in student's learning and evaluation during clinical placement.
- 3.11 In clinical practice 40% of a student's time must be spent being supervised by a mentor or practice teacher.
- 3.12 During the clinical placement the student shall spend at least thirty minutes per week with a Sign-off mentor.
- 3.13 The mentor and practice teacher shall sign for 60% of the clinical competencies while the 40% shall be the signed by the tutor/lecturer. Nursing and Midwifery faculty must conduct ongoing review of practical learning sites and their suitability for student learning/experience in relation to expected learning outcomes.
- 3.14 The institution must have periodic external review of programme effectiveness.
- 3.15 Institutions must define and state methods to be used for assessment of its students, including the criteria for passing examinations.

Standard 4: Students selection, admission and support

Institutions must have policies and procedures related to students' selection, admission and support requirements.

Indicators

- 4.1 The nursing and midwifery programme shall have clearly written admission policies that are accessible to potential applicants.

4.2 These policies shall include a minimum entry requirement of having completed Malawi School Certificate of Education or its equivalent with six credits including science subjects with clear statements of the selection process and admission procedures including mechanisms for taking into account prior learning.

4.3 There shall be statements about students' rights and responsibilities and an established process for addressing student appeals and/or grievances;

4.4 Mechanisms shall exist for the student's active participation in nursing and midwifery programme governance and committees.

4.5 Students shall have sufficient nursing and midwifery practical experience in a variety of settings to attain, at a minimum, the current NMCM competencies for basic nursing and midwifery practice.

4.6 Students shall have access to appropriate career, academic and personal counselling support services essential for the completion of the nursing and midwifery programme

4.7 Institutions shall have student retention policies in place to ensure completion of their programme

4.8 Institutions shall have recreational facilities in place for after school activities.

Standard 5: Nursing and Midwifery Faculty and Support Staff

The Nursing and midwifery faculty and support staff size and composition must be sufficient to provide teaching and guidance to students to ensure that students meet the entry requirements to practice as defined by the Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi

Indicators

- 5.1 The nursing and midwifery faculty shall include lecturers, clinical instructors/ mentors who have nursing/midwifery expertise as well as from other disciplines as needed.
- 5.2 Nursing and Midwifery Lecturers shall have a minimum of two years of clinical experience before recruited as a lecturer.
- 5.3 The nursing and midwifery lecturers must possess a qualification above the level of the programme offered
- 5.4 The Clinical Mentor shall be a Registered Nurse/midwife who has undergone 6 day mentorship training and holds a current licence to practice as a mentor within the field of expertise/specialty.
- 5.5 A clinical mentor shall have a minimum of one year clinical experience before being trained as a mentor.
- 5.6 The clinical mentor shall mentor at least 10 students within a year to remain on the NMCM register.
- 5.7 The nursing/midwifery faculty, sign-off mentor, mentor, associate mentor and practice teacher shall be responsible for his/her own CPD activities to remain on the register.
- 5.8 Lecturers must hold current license/registration to practice
- 5.9 Lecturers must have a formal preparation in education, or undertake such preparation as a condition of continuing to hold the position; and should maintain competence in nursing and midwifery practice and education.

5.10 The nursing and midwifery clinical mentor /clinical instructor shall demonstrate competency in both classroom teaching and clinical practice and must have a formal preparation for clinical teaching or undertakes such preparation.

5.11 Nursing and Midwifery lecturers shall provide education, support and supervision to individuals who teach students in practical learning sites.

5.12 The ratio of lecturer to student in classroom shall be 1:50.

5.13 The ratio of Clinical instructors, lecturers, practice teacher to students in the clinical sites shall be maximum of 1: 10 and 1:5 for nursing and midwifery respectively.

5.14 The ratio of Clinical Mentor to students shall be 1:5 for both nursing and midwifery.

5.15 Nursing/Midwifery faculty shall have a policy and system in place that validates the updated clinical, educational expertise and competency of the faculty.

5.16 Support staff shall be available, have relevant qualifications and are sufficient to meet programme requirements.

5.17 The programme shall have adequate human resources to support both classroom/theoretical and practical learning

5.18 There must be clear human resource policies on recruitment, deployment and retention, Human resources management systems must have clear job descriptions, regular staff performance appraisals, continuing professional development, promotion and / or recognition that support the mission of the institution.

5.19 There shall be a staff development policy to support capacity building of the lecturers/tutors in relation to their roles.

Standard 6: Educational Resources

The nursing and midwifery institution must have physical facilities; clinical training resources; information technology; research facilities; and educational exchange programmes; for the staff and the student population to ascertain that the curriculum can be delivered adequately in line with relevant policies.

Indicators

6.1 There shall be financial and budgetary arrangements for the continual operation of the programme

6.2 The nursing and midwifery programme shall have standard teaching and learning resources to meet programme needs including

6.2.1 Classrooms to accommodate 50 students per sitting time

6.2.2 Skills laboratory to accommodate 25 student per sitting

6.2.3 Library to accommodate 100 students per sitting time

6.2.4 Information Technology and communication to accommodate 20 students per sitting time.

6.2.5 Chemistry laboratory to accommodate 25 students per sitting time

6.2.6 Adequate office space for staff members with standard furniture

6.3 The nursing and midwifery programme shall have, and implement written policies that address student and teacher safety and wellbeing in teaching and learning environments.

6.4 The learning environment for the students shall be improved by regular updating and extending the facilities to match developments in education and practice

6.5 The facilities for clinical training shall be developed to ensure clinical training is adequate to address the needs of the population.

6.6 The facilities for clinical training shall be developed, in the geographically relevant area, in a variety of settings to meet the needs of each student.

6.7 Lecturers, mentors and students shall be enabled to use information and communication technology for self-learning

6.8 The nursing/ midwifery institution shall have a policy that fosters the relationship between research, education and practice.

6.9 There shall be access to educational experts and evidence demonstrated of the use of such expertise for staff development, and research in the nursing and midwifery discipline

6.10 Local, regional and international exchange of academic staff and students shall be facilitated by the provision of required resources

6.11 Clear policies shall be in place for effective collaboration with other institutions and for transfer of educational credits

Standard 7: Programme Evaluation

The nursing /midwifery programme must have a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for effective implementation of the curriculum and student progress.

Indicators

7.1 There shall be mechanisms for valid and reliable programme evaluation and basic data about nursing and midwifery curriculum

7.2 Selection criteria for nursing and midwifery practical learning sites shall be clearly written and implemented.

7.3 Experts from other disciplines shall be regularly/ periodically involved in nursing and midwifery programme provision

7.4 Curriculum committees shall convene periodically and discuss the responsiveness to the needs of the students and evolving health needs

7.5 Course descriptions shall exist and data on student performance must be present with evidence of continuous assessment/ evaluation of the context of nursing and midwifery educational process

7.6 Overall student performances shall be analyzed in relation to the curriculum, mission, and objectives of the nursing and midwifery programme

7.7 Student performance measures shall be taken into consideration: duration of the programme; assessment scores; pass and failure rates at examinations; success and drop-out rates; student reports about conditions in their courses as well as time spent by student in areas of special interest

7.8 Stakeholders shall participate in programme evaluation, governance and administration committees of the nursing/ midwifery programme

Standard 8: Governance and Administration

The nursing and midwifery institution is part of the infrastructure of the society and demonstrates mechanisms to ensure an academic institution with adequate governance and administrative structure for successful implementation of programs in collaboration with health facilities.

Indicators

8.1 The governance structures shall set out committees, that reflect representation from academic staff, students and other stakeholders,

8.2 Students must have direct and adequate representation on decision-making structures within the institution and student organizations and activities must be encouraged and facilitated.

- 8.3 The nursing and midwifery programme shall have a financial policy and designated budget sufficient to prepare competent nurse/midwives.
- 8.4 The nursing/midwifery faculty shall be self-governing and responsible for developing and lead the implementation of policies and curriculum of the nursing/midwifery education programme.
- 8.5 The head of the nursing/midwifery institution shall be a professional nurse/ midwife and academically qualified at master's level or higher with a minimum of five years experience in institutional administration and a first degree in nursing education or its equivalent.
- 8.6 The nursing/midwifery institution shall take into account national and international policies and standards to meet workforce needs.
- 8.7 The nursing/midwifery institution shall stipulate job descriptions for faculty and support staff.
- 8.8 The nursing/midwifery training institution in collaboration with the health facility must stipulate terms of reference for sign-off mentors, mentors, associate mentors and practice teachers.
- 8.9 The institution shall be accredited and licensed to provide nursing/midwifery education and practical experience in clinical sites that meets criteria.
- 8.10 External linkage of the nursing/midwifery program shall reflect leadership, mutual partnership involvement and acceptance in the wider academic and professional community with clear memorandum of understanding and agreements.
- 8.11 The training institution shall have a clear policy on updating and maintaining personnel and students records.

Standard 9: Quality assurance

Programme providers must use effective quality assurance processes to enhance quality nursing/midwifery education.

Indicators:

9.1 Programme providers' quality assurance processes must be aligned with the programme specification, program evaluation and enhancement.

9.2 Nursing/midwifery training institutions must ensure that:

9.2.1 Feedback from students, sign-off mentors, mentors, associate mentors and practice teachers is used to improve the programme and enhance the practice learning experience.

9.2.2 Stakeholders at all levels are involved and contribute to quality assurance and enhancement.

9.2.3 All theory and practice learning experiences meet the recommended criteria.

9.3 Training institutions shall use effective quality assurance processes including conjoint programme approval of minor or major modifications, endorsement and annual monitoring

9.4 The management of the institution shall facilitate annual quality assurance reviews of the institution.

Standard10: Research and evidence

The nursing and midwifery training institution shall have a policy that fosters relationship between research and education and shall describe research facilities and areas of research priorities at the institution.

Indicators

10.1 Research environment shall be available including infrastructure, policy, research committee and support staff systems.

10.2 Interaction between research and education activities shall be reflected in the curriculum and influence current teaching.

10.3 Current and up to date books and materials shall be available for reference.

10.4 Policy must be in place for research and education activities.

10.5 Curriculum and education activities shall be evidence-based.

10.6 The learning environment shall prepare students to engage in research and development. The interaction between research and education shall encourage and prepare students to engage in nursing research and development.

10.7 Dissemination forum within the institution shall be organized and faculty members, sign-off mentors, associate mentors and practice teachers are encouraged to conduct nursing/midwifery research and participate in research conferences.

10.8 Policy on attendance of conference and organization of such activities

10.9 Support systems

10.9.1 Research committee

10.9.2 Library

10.9.3 Publication

GLOSSARY

- CHAM – Christian Health Association of Malawi
- CPD- Continuing Professional Development
- HSSP - Health Sector Strategic Plan
- ICAP – International Centre for AIDS Care and Treatment Programme
- ICM – International Confederation of Midwives
- MOH – Ministry of Health
- NEPI – Nursing Education Partnerships Initiative
- NMCM – Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi
- OSCE - Objective Structured Clinical Evaluation
- SWAp – Sector Wide Approach
- WHO - World Health Organization
- WFME – World Federation for Medical Education

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- Nursing and Midwifery - Human Resources for Health
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This publication is available on the internet at :
http://www.who.int/hrh/nursing_midwifery/en

Copies may be requested from :World Health Education,
Department of Human Resources for Health, CH-1211
Geneva 27, Switzerland

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