



## National Entry-to-Practice Competency Profile for Naturopathic Doctors

### Overview

The practice of naturopathic medicine is regulated in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Northwest Territories. Consistency between jurisdictions supports the workforce mobility requirements of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. To harmonize practices and standards, the Canadian Alliance of Naturopathic Regulatory Authorities (CANRA) was formed. Its stated mission is to, “protect the integrity of naturopathic regulation by educating and unifying jurisdictions toward the collective goal of public health and safety.”

In 2023, CANRA embarked on developing a national entry-to-practice Competency Profile. This Competency Profile describes the minimum expectations (i.e., professional competencies) of an individual applying for a naturopathic doctor (ND) license<sup>1</sup> in one of Canada’s regulated jurisdictions.

These expectations are defined as “A competency is an observable ability of an individual at the point of qualification for a naturopathic doctor license integrating the necessary knowledge, skills, and judgment to ensure safe, competent, and ethical practice.” The Competency Profile may be used for many purposes, including but not limited to:

- Approval of educational programs
- Providing advice/guidance to members
- Developing standards and policies
- Informing matters related to professional conduct
- Assessing applicants for entry and/or re-entry into the profession
- Constructing entry-to-practice exams and related requirements
- Determining continuing/competency education requirements

### Competency Profile Development

A robust methodology based on industry best practices was used to develop the Competency Profile. A team of nine subject matter experts (practicing naturopathic doctors, educators and regulators) drawn from across the country worked to generate the

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the College of Naturopaths of Ontario use the term Certificate of Registration. The College of Naturopathic Doctors of Alberta use the term the Practice Permit. Reference to “license” in this document is intended to encompass all registration titles used by CANRA member regulators.

associated content. Input gathered from a series of interviews with key stakeholders and relevant literature, regulations and legislation were also incorporated. The draft set of competencies was then validated via an online survey of NDs currently registered in participating jurisdictions. A Steering Committee comprised of CANRA members were responsible for overall project guidance and oversight.

### **Acknowledgements**

The development of the competency profile could not have been realized without the contributions of a number of individuals. Great thanks are due to the Steering Committee and the team of subject matter experts for their content generation, oversight and support. The quality of this new document is due in great part to their collective efforts and generosity of time. Recognition and great appreciation are given to the 15 key informants from across Canada who participated in the focus groups. The feedback provided was extremely instructive and greatly informed the entire update process. And finally, the consultants would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the nearly 400 practising NDs who completed the online survey; your input helped to ensure that the final product is grounded in the realities of day-to-day naturopathic medicine.

### **Document Structure**

Two types of competencies are included in the Competency Profile, key competencies and enabling competencies. High-level “Key Competencies” are defined as “the essential knowledge, skills and/or judgement required of a naturopathic doctor at entry-to-practice”. In contrast, Enabling Competencies “outline the relevant knowledge and skills that contribute to the achievement of the Key Competency”. Individuals must be able to demonstrate all key and enabling competencies listed herein to qualify for an ND licence.

The competency profile consists of 22 key competencies and 62 enabling competencies grouped thematically under five domains:

1. Professionalism
2. Communication
3. Assessment and Diagnosis
4. Therapeutic Management
5. Records Management

# 1. Professionalism

Professional standards are created to ensure a safe and therapeutic relationship between doctors, patients and other professionals. Naturopathic doctors have a responsibility to act in a professional and ethical manner which uphold regulatory standards and high-quality patient care.

Key Competencies	Enabling Competencies
1.1 Demonstrates ethical conduct and integrity in professional practice.	1.1.1 Provides care with respect and sensitivity for social and cultural identity. 1.1.2 Demonstrates <b>cultural safety and humility</b> practices in patient encounters. 1.1.3 Recognizes and addresses personal and professional <b>conflicts of interest</b> . 1.1.4 Identifies the effect of own values, beliefs and experiences in carrying out clinical activities; recognizes potential conflicts and takes action to prevent or resolve. 1.1.5 Establishes and maintains appropriate therapeutic relationships and professional boundaries with patients.
1.2 Adheres to regulatory requirements and legislation which govern the practice of Naturopathic Medicine.	1.2.1 Complies with legislation applicable to practice and adheres to professional regulations, bylaws, standards of practice, scope of practice, codes of conduct, obligations of a registrant, guidelines, and policies. 1.2.2 Understands the role of the regulatory body and the relationship of the regulatory body to one's own practice. 1.2.3 Maintains patient privacy, confidentiality, and security by complying with privacy legislation, practice standards, ethics, and policies within a clinic.
1.3 Recognizes <b>personal and professional limitations</b> and acts to resolve them.	1.3.1 Demonstrates accountability, accepts responsibility, and seeks assistance as necessary for decisions and actions within the legislated scope of practice and individual/professional competencies.
1.4 Engages in professional self-reflection and a commitment to lifelong learning.	1.4.1 Recognizes areas for professional growth and development. 1.4.2 Remains current with changing knowledge, developments, and treatments in healthcare.

## 2. Communication

Naturopathic Doctors are expected to develop professional relationships with their patients and other healthcare providers. Effective communication facilitates the gathering and sharing of information for both a therapeutic and competent healthcare delivery and interprofessional collaboration.

Key Competencies	Enabling Competencies
2.1 Uses oral, written and non-verbal communication effectively.	2.1.1 Demonstrates written and verbal communication skills that are clear to the recipient and appropriate to the professional context. 2.1.2 Demonstrates professional judgment in utilizing information and communication technologies in social media and advertising.
2.2 Establishes a therapeutic naturopathic doctor-patient relationship.	2.2.1 Engages in <b>active listening</b> to understand patient experience, preferences, and health goals. 2.2.2 Communicates and facilitates discussions with patients in a way that is respectful, non-judgemental, and culturally sensitive. 2.2.3 Supports the patient in their decision-making.
2.3 Develops collaborative, interprofessional relationships that optimize patient care outcomes.	2.3.1 Communicates with patients or their authorized representatives, colleagues, other health professionals, the community, the regulator, and other authorities. 2.3.2 Consults with and/or refers to other health care professionals when care is outside of scope of practice or personal competence. 2.3.3 Recognizes, respects and values the roles and responsibilities of other professionals within the health care system.
2.4 Demonstrates appropriate use of technology.	2.4.1 Maintains digital literacy to support the delivery of safe care.

### 3. Assessment and Diagnosis

Naturopathic doctors apply naturopathic knowledge, critical inquiry, and clinical skills to analyze and synthesize information to inform assessment and diagnosis. Naturopathic doctors utilize an evidence-informed approach to provide high-quality and safe patient-centred care.

Key Competencies	Enabling Competencies
3.1 Obtains <b>informed consent</b> .	3.1.1 Clearly and accurately communicates the necessary information to obtain and document <b>informed consent</b> for all patient interactions. 3.1.2 Ensures ongoing <b>informed consent</b> is received throughout the term of care.
3.2 Completes a health history to aid in patient assessment.	3.2.1 Conducts a <b>patient-centered</b> interview to establish reason for the encounter and chief concern. 3.2.2 Collects, elicits and synthesizes clinically relevant information. 3.2.3 Identifies non-urgent health related conditions that may benefit from a referral and advises the patient accordingly. 3.2.4 Identifies urgent, emergent, and life-threatening situations, and refers the patient accordingly.
3.3 Performs a physical examination.	3.3.1 Selects relevant assessment equipment and techniques to examine the patient. 3.3.2 Determines and performs relevant physical examinations based on patient presentation and context. .
3.4 Uses diagnostic testing to aid in patient assessment.	3.4.1 Requests, orders or performs screening and diagnostic investigations. 3.4.2 Applies knowledge of naturopathic medicine to ensure accuracy of diagnostic or screening procedure(s). 3.4.3 Prepares and/or refers the patient to undergo testing. 3.4.4 Assumes responsibility for follow-up of test results.
3.5 Formulates <b>differential diagnoses</b> .	3.5.1 Integrates the patient's health history, physical examination, diagnostic results, critical thinking and clinical reasoning to formulate possible <b>differentials</b> . 3.5.2 Continues to monitor patient progression and makes refinements to the differential diagnoses.
3.6 Interprets the results of screening and diagnostic investigations using <b>evidence-informed clinical-reasoning</b> .	3.6.1 Determines if additional diagnostic procedures are required based upon the patient's diagnosis, prognosis, or response to treatment. 3.6.2 Makes appropriate referral(s) if diagnostic testing returns a critical value.
3.7 Formulates <b>working diagnosis</b> .	3.7.1 Applies <b>critical thinking</b> and <b>clinical reasoning</b> to determine a diagnosis. 3.7.2 Integrates the patient's health history, physical examination and diagnostic testing to formulate a diagnosis. 3.7.3 Determines pathogenesis and probable etiology of the diagnosis.

Key Competencies	Enabling Competencies
	<p>3.7.4 Evaluates and amends the diagnosis, prognosis and treatment based on patient outcomes.</p> <p>3.7.5 Identifies the need for additional consultation and/or referral.</p> <p>3.7.6 Communicates assessment findings and diagnosis with the patient including implications for short- and long-term outcomes.</p>

## 4. Therapeutic Management

Therapeutic management encompasses the scope of treatments employed by naturopathic doctors, as well as the relative risks, benefits and considerations regarding treatment options and outcomes. These include factors relating to informed consent, naturopathic principles, monitoring and reassessment. It also outlines the recognition of red flags and emergency management, as well as the protocols necessary for safe practice.

Key Competencies	Enabling Competencies
4.1 Evaluates the risk, benefit, efficacy and quality of evidence of planned procedures, interventions and treatments.	4.1.1 Identifies interactions between pharmaceutical medications and chosen therapeutic agents. 4.1.2 Demonstrates an understanding of indications and contraindications when formulating a <b>therapeutic plan</b> .
4.2 Creates, implements, and monitors a <b>therapeutic plan</b> .	4.2.1 Formulates a <b>therapeutic plan</b> based on patient's diagnosis, <b>determinants of health</b> , evidence-informed practice, patient preferences and <b>naturopathic principles</b> . 4.2.2 Implements the <b>therapeutic plan</b> using <b>naturopathic modalities</b> . 4.2.3 Schedules appropriate follow-up to monitor progress, review responses to therapeutic interventions, assess for adverse effects, and revise the <b>therapeutic plan</b> if necessary. 4.2.4 Reports adverse reactions to therapeutic substances to appropriate agencies as required by legislation.
4.3 Recognizes and manages emergency situations in the clinical setting.	4.3.1 Initiates appropriate intervention(s) for patients in an acute, emergent, or life-threatening situation. 4.3.2 Understands responsibilities and limitations in scope-of-practice when administering emergency procedures. 4.3.3 Activates emergency medical services for patients in emergent or life-threatening situations. 4.3.4 Communicates reportable diseases to the appropriate health authorities.
4.4 Ensures safety of procedures.	4.4.1 Informs the patient about planned procedure(s), including rationale, potential risks and benefits, potential adverse effects, and anticipated aftercare and follow-up. 4.4.2 Performs procedures per provincial guidelines. 4.4.3 Understands and applies safe techniques for procedures. 4.4.4 Maintains <b>universal precautions</b> and <b>routine practices</b> in infection prevention.
4.5 Practices <b>evidence-informed</b> patient care.	4.5.1 Critically appraises and applies evidence to improve patient care. 4.5.2 Demonstrates the ability to use research in clinical decision-making.

## 5. Records Management

Naturopathic Doctors are required to maintain and retain health records in an accurate, safe and secure manner to satisfy legal, professional and ethical obligations and to allow timely access to requested medical records.

Key Competencies	Enabling Competencies
5.1 Maintains patient records in accordance with legislation and <b>regulatory guidelines</b> .	5.1.1 Demonstrates knowledge of security, confidentiality, and access requirements for records in accordance with relevant legislation, policies, and standards. 5.1.2 Adheres to file maintenance and file transfer requirements in accordance with the standards of practice, policies, legislation and guidelines as set by the regulator.
5.2 Ensures patient records and clinical information are accurate and legible.	5.2.1 Maintains accurate and comprehensive files, data and charts. 5.2.2 Provides a reasonable means for patients to access and receive a copy of their medical records upon request.

# Glossary

**Cultural Safety:** An outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the healthcare system and provide an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving health care. (source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/health-system-services/chief-public-health-officer-health-professional-forum-common-definitions-cultural-safety.html>)

**Conflict of Interest:** Where a reasonable person would conclude that a Member's/Registrant's personal, professional interest or financial interest may affect their judgment or the discharge of their duties to the patient and the patient's best interests. A conflict of interest may be real or perceived, actual, or potential, and direct or indirect.

**Personal Limitations:** The point at which your own knowledge, skill and judgement is no longer sufficient to provide safe, ethical competent care.

**Professional Limitations:** The point at which the knowledge, skill, and judgement of the profession, based on the education and training provided is no longer sufficient to provide safe, ethical, competent care.

**Active Listening:** The act of being fully engaged and immersed in what the other person is communicating and being an active participant in the communication process through direct on-going feedback using visual or verbal cues that the communication is being heard and understood.

**Informed Consent:** Informed consent is the process in which a health care provider educates a patient about the risks, benefits, and alternatives of a given procedure or intervention. The patient must be competent to make a voluntary decision about whether to undergo the procedure or intervention.

**Patient-Centered:** Puts the needs, values and expressed desires of each individual patient first and above all other interests.

**Differential Diagnosis/Differential(s):** The process of differentiating between two or more conditions which share similar signs or symptoms (oxford dictionary) OR a systematic process used to identify the proper diagnosis from a set of possible competing diagnoses (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6994315/>).

**Working Diagnosis:** The considered condition, from the list of differentials, determined to be the most probable based on current observations.

**Critical Thinking:** The objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment. (Oxford Dictionary).

**Critical Reasoning:** Note: Critical reasoning seems synonymous with critical thinking, suggest changing the competency wording to “clinical reasoning”: a context-dependent way of thinking and decision making in professional practice to guide practice actions.

**Therapeutic Plan:** A documented plan that describes the patient's condition and procedure(s) that will be needed, detailing the treatment to be provided and expected outcome, and expected duration of the treatment prescribed by the healthcare provider. (<https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/treatment+plan>)

**Determinants of Health:** A range of factors that influence the health status of an individual.

**Naturopathic Principles:** The six guiding principles which define naturopathy/naturopathic medicine.

**Core Naturopathic Modalities:** Central treatment therapies within the scope of practice of the naturopathic profession, as defined by the governing legislation of each jurisdiction that regulates naturopathy/naturopathic medicine.

**Evidence-Informed:** A process for making informed clinical decisions by integrating research evidence with clinical experience, patient values, preferences and circumstances. ([Source](#))

**Universal Precautions:** The standards of practice that should be followed for the care of all patients, at all times, based on the premise that all persons are potentially infectious, even when asymptomatic.