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**Media release**

**New Competence Standards for Pharmacists and Pharmacist Prescribers become mandatory from 1 April 2024 – see what’s changed.**

**The competence standards set the foundational requirements for pharmacists practising in Aotearoa New Zealand by describing the competencies, knowledge and skills expected of pharmacists. It’s important these standards are revised and updated frequently.**

Competence standards:

- inform the curricula of educational programmes,
- support professional development as a tool for self-reflection,
- facilitate changes in role within the scope of practice, identifying competencies that need attention and possible further training to ensure safe practice, and
- are the basis for a review of a pharmacist’s competence if concerns are raised.

“The competence standards play a crucial role for the pharmacy profession, and it was time for their revision. It was also obvious to us that the whole pharmacy profession needed to be included and participate in the process of updating the standards” says Chief Executive Michael Pead.

The work on the new standards started in 2019. Council engaged with the profession to review the competence standards developed in 2015 and to understand how well they achieved their objective of communicating the behaviours and associated levels of competence required for current pharmacist’s practise. The new competence standards development process was also supported by expertise in cultural safety.

“Since 2015, for example, we progressed our understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and realised that more work was needed for refreshing the standards to set clear expectations for culturally safe as well as clinically safe pharmacy practice”.

Council consulted with pharmacists and the wider health sector and feedback received led to changes and setting the final version published today.

The new standards now include a completely new “Domain 1: Te Tiriti o Waitangi” that describes a number of behaviours applying Te Tiriti o Waitangi to pharmacy practice and Māori perspectives of health and wellbeing.

There is also a new Commentary section that now accompanies the standards, and when read in conjunction with the standards, provides additional clarity and guidance.

A new Glossary section explains definitions and their context in the new competence standards.

“We challenged ourselves to present the new standards in a more approachable and visually clear way”. The new documents provide much more clarity and explanation that, we hope, will resonate with the pharmacists, and become a useful guidance for meeting the new standards.”

In a recent meeting with professional associations, Council raised the importance of providing support for pharmacists to practise to the new competence standards before they become mandatory and onwards.

“Developing modern and up to date standards was the first step to fully enable their beneficial outcome for the profession. We encourage all pharmacists to reach out to associations for professional support in meeting the standards, and associations to provide proactive assistance and motivation in response.”

Today we want to ask every pharmacist to read the new standards and [tell us](#) where additional support may be required in meeting them.

The collected data on the professional support needed by pharmacists to practise to the new expectations in the Competence Standards will allow Council to monitor the availability and suitability of support provided.

## Background

- Pharmacy Council (Council) was established under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 and has a statutory duty to protect the safety of Aotearoa New Zealand public and to promote good pharmacist practice.
- Competence standards are one of the proactive mechanisms Council uses to protect the public by ensuring that all pharmacists practising in the country are competent and provide safe pharmacy practice.
- One of our responsibilities we take pride in, is setting the standards of clinical competence, cultural competence, and ethical conduct to be observed by pharmacists in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- These standards specify minimum knowledge, skills and attributes required of pharmacists to provide their services safely and effectively within their scope of practice.

- There are currently three scopes of pharmacy practice that pharmacists can enter:
  - intern pharmacists,
  - pharmacists,
  - pharmacist prescribers.
- [The Competence Standards for Aotearoa New Zealand Pharmacists](#) specifies the competencies required for intern pharmacist and pharmacists' scopes of practice.
- [The Competence Standards for Aotearoa New Zealand Pharmacist Prescribers](#) is a separate document specifying the competencies required for the (already registered) pharmacists wanting to upscale their practise and be able to enter the most advanced scope of pharmacy practice.

Link to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CompetenceStandards>

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