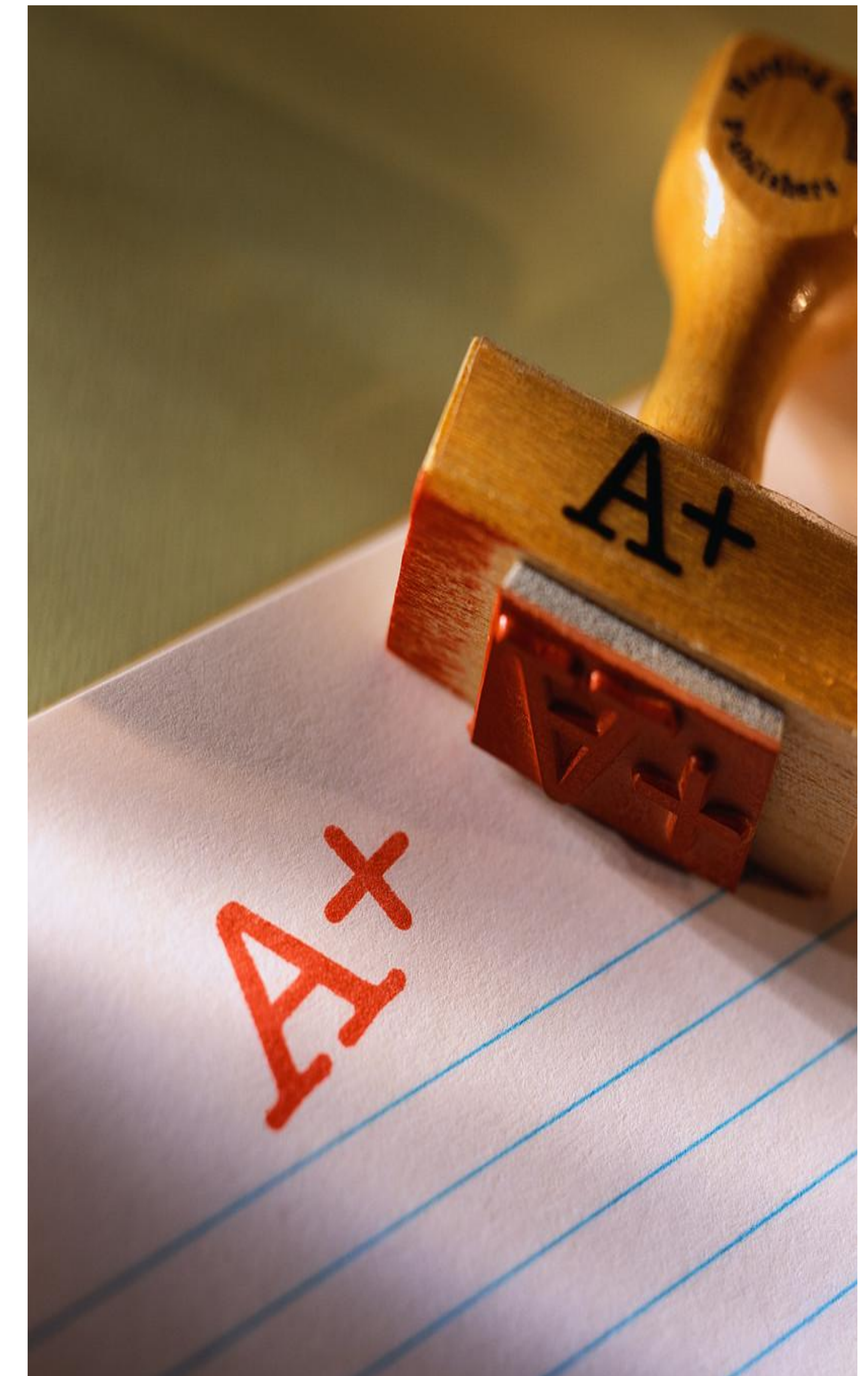


COMPETENCY STANDARDS: A QUESTION OF 'FIT'

Carina Anderson, Lorna Moxham & Marc Broadbent.

Background: Competence-based education and training has been traced back middle of the 1800s in Moscow (Biemans et al. 2004). Competencies are often aligned with trades and the work place. In 1997 the Australian Nursing Council Inc declared that “national competency standards are core standards which all nurses must possess” and competency based education for nurses commenced in 1989. Nursing competency standards were developed to ensure a high standard of nursing service to the general public. National competency standards also apply to Mental Health Nursing.

Issue: The notion of competence and what it is, can be a contentious issue and causes confusion. In its simplest form competent practice could be described as the ability to perform a specific task, function or action. This is often how competence is assessed and checklists abound to ‘measure’ competence. There is more to competence than simply performing a task successfully. In 2007 there were 245,491 Registered Nurses in Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2009), Given the significance of this number and combined with the fact that every RN is assessed against the ANMC competency standards, it is imperative that these standards are applicable across all nursing disciplines.



Mental Health Nursing: Being able to provide safe, competent care to consumers is rooted into the very foundations of mental health nursing. Competent mental health nursing practice incorporates skills, abilities, values, expert knowledge, personal qualities and a desire to engage in reflective practice.

Ask yourself this: Do the ANMC Competency standards ‘successfully measure’ *your* mental health nursing practice? And more to the point – does the ACMHN credentialing programme?