



Educational Needs Assessment Tool for Nurses

A questionnaire and educator analysis guide for identifying professional development priorities, perceived learning needs, educational preferences, and potential knowledge, skill, or practice gaps.

Purpose

Use this tool as one source of information when planning nursing professional development. Learner self-report is valuable, but it should be considered alongside other evidence when available, such as quality or performance data, regulatory changes, competency findings, stakeholder input, professional standards, and current evidence.

Instructions for participants: Please answer based on your current role and professional development needs. Your responses can help educators identify priorities for future education. An expressed interest or low confidence rating does not by itself establish a knowledge, skill, or practice gap.

1. About Your Practice

Primary role/title	
Practice setting	
Specialty/area of practice	
Years in nursing	

Current role (select all that apply):

- ☐ Direct care
- ☐ Leadership/management
- ☐ Education/NPD
- ☐ Case management/care coordination
- ☐ Quality/safety
- ☐ Other:

2. Professional Development Priorities

For each area, indicate whether you believe you need additional knowledge or skill, whether you are interested in learning more, and whether the topic is a high priority for your current role.

Topic / Development Area	Need more knowledge/skill	Interested in learning more	High priority for my role
Clinical assessment and recognition of changes in condition	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Patient safety and quality improvement	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Communication, documentation, and handoffs	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Care coordination and transitions of care	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Chronic disease management	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Medication safety and pharmacology	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Evidence-based practice and research	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Ethics and professional practice	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Leadership, delegation, and team development	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Health equity, health literacy, and patient education	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Technology, informatics, and artificial intelligence	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Emergency preparedness and workplace safety	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Professional identity, resilience, and career development	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No
Regulatory or compliance requirements relevant to my role	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No

Other topic(s) important to your practice:

3. Current Practice Challenges

What situations, responsibilities, or changes in your practice currently make you feel that additional education or support would be helpful?

Are there areas in which you understand what should be done but would benefit from additional practice, coaching, or skill development?

Are there new policies, technologies, equipment, regulations, patient populations, or role expectations creating new learning needs?

4. Learning Preferences

Preferred learning formats	☐ Self-paced online module ☐ Live webinar ☐ In-person education ☐ Case-based learning ☐ Simulation/skills practice ☐ Microlearning ☐ Audio/video learning ☐ Job aids/checklists ☐ Other:
Most useful learning features	☐ Real-world cases ☐ Demonstrations ☐ Practice questions ☐ Discussion/Q&A ☐ Downloadable resources ☐ Reflection activities ☐ Other:
Preferred session length	☐ 15 minutes or less ☐ 30-60 minutes ☐ 1-2 hours ☐ Multi-part series

5. Barriers to Professional Development

Which factors make it more difficult for you to participate in education? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Time/workload
- ☐ Scheduling
- ☐ Cost
- ☐ Staffing/coverage
- ☐ Technology/access
- ☐ Relevance of available topics
- ☐ Learning format
- ☐ No significant barriers
- ☐ Other:

6. Professional Goals

What professional goal would you most like education or development opportunities to help you achieve during the next 12 months?

What is one topic or skill that, if strengthened, could make the greatest difference in your current practice?

Educator Analysis Guide

Turning responses into meaningful professional development decisions.

1. Start With the Purpose

Review the reason the assessment was conducted and the population represented. Consider response rate, role mix, practice settings, and whether important learner groups are underrepresented.

2. Separate Interest From Evidence of a Gap

Important distinction: A frequently requested topic demonstrates learner interest or a perceived learning need. It does not automatically establish a knowledge, skill, or practice gap. Likewise, low confidence does not necessarily indicate low competence.

Look for patterns across responses and determine what additional evidence is needed before defining the educational gap.

3. Triangulate the Findings

Source	Examples
Learner-reported information	Survey responses, interviews, focus groups, course evaluations, questions, requests
Practice/performance information	Competency findings, audits, quality indicators, incident trends, documentation reviews, workflow observations
External or organizational drivers	Regulatory changes, policies, accreditation requirements, new technology, professional standards, current evidence
Stakeholder perspectives	Nursing leadership, educators, interprofessional colleagues, patients/families, organizational partners

4. Identify the Type of Gap

Gap	What it may indicate
Knowledge	Learners need additional information or understanding.
Skill	Learners need greater ability or proficiency in performing a task or behavior.
Practice	Current professional practice differs from the desired or expected practice.

5. Prioritize Educational Needs

For each potential priority, consider the number of learners affected, importance to professional practice, evidence supporting the gap, regulatory or organizational significance, feasibility of addressing the need through education, and potential impact.

Potential educational need	Evidence/source	Priority (H/M/L)	Education appropriate?

6. Close the Loop

Use prioritized findings to develop learning outcomes, select appropriate educational strategies, and determine how outcomes will be evaluated. Reassess needs periodically and compare new findings with prior data to identify emerging needs and changes over time.

Suggested cycle: Assess needs -> Identify and validate gaps -> Prioritize -> Plan education -> Implement -> Evaluate outcomes -> Reassess



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Customization note: This tool is intended as a flexible starting point. Organizations and nurse educators should adapt questions, terminology, topic areas, and analysis methods to their learner population, practice setting, regulatory environment, and educational goals.