Learning to Learn eCourse

Module 2: Continuing Competence
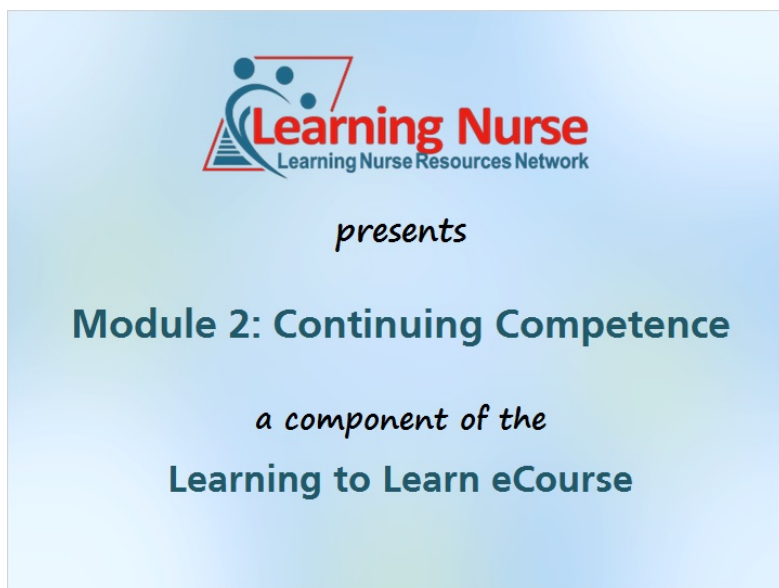
Handout

1. Module 2: Continuing Competence

1.1 Welcome

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Learning Nurse
Learning Nurse Resources Network

presents

Module 2: Continuing Competence

a component of the

Learning to Learn eCourse

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Narration

No narration, only music.

1.2 Topics

Module Topics

Importance of learning

Continuing competence

Six-step competence program

Competence development strategies

Narration

JILL: Hi … I'm Jill, and with me is Carlos. Welcome to Module 2 of *the Learning to Learn* course*.*

CARLOS: I see that this module is about continuing competence. What topics are we going to cover?

JILL: The first topic is the importance of healthcare professionals committing to lifelong learning. Next, we will define and describe continuing competence. We will then explain a recommended six-step continuing competence program. Finally we will look at competence development strategies or the many different ways nurses can learn.

CARLOS: Sounds like some interesting and important topics. Let's begin.

JILL: Okay.

1.3 Importance

Importance of Learning

Healthcare professionals must always be learning to:

Maintain and enhance their competence

Meet regulatory requirements

Protect public health and safety

Enhance work and career satisfaction

Be qualified for career advancements and changes

Narration

JILL: So Carlos, what are some reasons that healthcare professions must engage in ongoing professional development?

CARLOS: The most obvious reason is to keep our nursing knowledge and skills up-to-date.

JILL: Yes, in order to be effective nurses, we must maintain and enhance our professional competence. Any other reasons?

CARLOS: Another important reason is to keep my nursing license! In my jurisdiction, we are required by our college to participate in a continuing competence program.

JILL: And the reason most healthcare professionals are required to participate in continuing competence or education programs is for the protection of public health and safety. Maintaining our professional competence is important in ensuring that we provide safe and ethical care to our clients and patients.

CARLOS: Another good reason to keep on learning is that the more I know, the more comfortable, confident and satisfied I am with my nursing work and career.

JILL: Yes, I agree with you. Related to that reason is that by developing and expanding our competence, we will have more options and choices regarding our work and careers.

CARLOS: So I guess this means that to be a competent nurse these days requires us to engage in continuous professional learning.

1.4 Competence

Professional Competence

Proficient in doing job

Competency includes:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Judgments
- Attitudes and values

Narration

JILL: Let's back up for a moment and define professional competence.

CARLOS: To me professional competence is being proficient in doing a job.

JILL: Yes, that is correct. The technical definition is that competency is being able to perform the work task. Being competent requires a person to have the knowledge, skills, judgment, attitudes and values to do an effective job.

CARLOS: And what is a continuing competence program?

1.5 Continuing competence

Continuing Competence Program

Planned and organized learning

Must meet priority learning needs

Should NOT be solely based on:

- Personal interests
- Convenience and availability
- Recurring certification requirements

Narration

JILL: A Continuing Competence Program or CCP is an organized and systematic way to assess, maintain and monitor the ongoing knowledge, skills, judgments and attitudes of a professional practitioner. The CCP is a way of ensuring a high level of expertise, competence and appropriate ethics in performing the job. Most regulated professions have continuing competence programs in place, although they may be referred to differently by each profession.

CARLOS: I believe that one of the important components of a continuing competence program is that it focuses on the priority learning needs of the practitioner.

JILL: Yes, research has shown that much unstructured, informal professional development involves topics of personal interest; learning opportunities that are convenient and available; or, recurring certification requirements such as CPR and First Aid. This haphazard approach rarely results in development of competencies that are critical to effective job performance. We will talk more about identifying and prioritizing learning needs shortly.

CARLOS: Great!

1.6 Competence development

Competence Development Steps

Six steps for effective competence development:

1. Identify learning needs

2. Prioritize learning needs

3. Plan learning activities

4. Undertake the learning

5. Evaluate the results

6. Document the learning results

Narration

JILL: Here are the six steps in a typical continuing competence program. Let's do this one together. You start.

CARLOS: Okay. As you just mentioned, Step 1 is to identify your learning or professional development needs.

JILL: Once you have identified your learning needs, Step 2 is to prioritize these needs and focus on addressing the most important ones.

CARLOS: Step 3 is to prepare a learning plan. This is a map or blueprint consisting of a list of activities and tasks you intend to undertake to address your learning needs.

JILL: Step 4 is to complete the learning activities and tasks described in your learning plan.

CARLOS: Step 5 involves taking some time to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the various learning activities.

JILL: The final step – Step 6 – is to document and record your professional development activities. In many jurisdictions, documentation of professional development is a requirement to comply with the profession's continuing competence program.

1.7 Step 1: Identify needs

Step 1: Identify Learning Needs

Self-reflection on practice

Self-assessment forms ⓘ

Tests and quizzes ⓘ

Performance reviews / employer feedback

Client, staff or colleague feedback

Hesitancy / lack of confidence

Narration

JILL: The first step in a continuing competence program is to identify your learning needs. There are several different ways of doing this.

CARLOS: The first recommended method is self-reflection about your practice. Ask yourself questions such as: "Can I meet key performance expectations, both for my current work setting, and the nursing profession as a whole?" Another good question is: "Can I meet the current standards of care? Are there any areas that I need to improve upon?"

JILL: Other self-reflective questions include "How up-to-date am I with current theory and practice? Are there areas I need to refresh, review or learn?" "Are there changes in current or planned practice or technologies that I need to learn?"

CARLOS: The second way to identify learning needs is to use self-assessment forms or checklists. One good source for nursing competencies is the Learning Nurse website. They have over 3,000 difference competencies listed in 30 areas of nursing.

JILL: To assess your current nursing knowledge, take the various tests and quizzes that are available online. For example, the Learning Nurse website currently has over 160 nursing quizzes on a wide range of topics.

CARLOS: Performance reviews and employer feedback are excellent sources of information on areas that you may need to improve.

JILL: Feedback from your clients or patients, the staff and colleagues are another valuable source of information.

CARLOS: And finally, if there are nursing tasks or procedures that you are required to do in your practice, but you are often hesitant or lack confidence in doing them, these should be included in your list of learning needs.

1.8 Step 2: Set priorities

Step 2: Prioritize Learning Needs

Performance deficiencies

Efficiency, safety and service

Changes in practice or technology

Career growth, advancement or change

Personal health and wellness

Short and longer time frames

Narration

CARLOS: Okay Jill, now I have this long list of learning needs that I have identified in Step 1. How do I select which ones I should do first?

JILL: Excellent question! The final decision on your learning priorities is of course up to you. However, the following criteria may help nurses decide what is most important.

The first priority should always be to "fix" any significant performance deficiencies! If there are tasks or procedures that you are not doing well, then these need to be addressed first. This is because the effectiveness of your practice and client safety are involved.

CARLOS: The second priority should be to maintain or enhance the competencies that will contribute to improvements in efficiency, safety and client service.

JILL: Competencies that fall into the third category are those that need to be updated or enhanced because of changes in the practice or technology that is being adopted or used.

CARLOS: The fourth priority is competencies you may wish to acquire or enhance that will prepare you for career change or advancement.

JILL: The lowest priority are those competencies related to routine wellness and self-care. We are not saying that looking after yourself is unimportant! Keeping physically and mentally fit is important; but it should be a lower priority compared to the others.

CARLOS: Although most continuing competence programs operate on an annual basis, it is OKAY to have a list of priority learning needs that you can work on over a longer period of time such as 3 to 5 years.

JILL: To summarize, nurses should evaluate each of their learning needs against this list of suggested criteria. This will provide them with a list of their priority learning needs that should be entered into their Learning Plans. These learning priorities may not be the ones they are keen to undertake. BUT they are the ones that will benefit them, their current practice and their clients the most!

CARLOS: Good point.

1.9 Step 3: Learning Plan

Step 3: Learning Plan

Define the specific competencies

Specify learning objective – WHAT you want to learn

Select learning methods / events / activities – HOW you plan to learn

Set target completion dates

Update annually or when circumstances change

Narration

JILL: Now that we have a list of priority learning needs, the next step is to prepare a Learning Plan. The format and content of the plans may differ across jurisdictions, but will likely contain the following data.

CARLOS: The first thing that needs to be done is translate the learning needs into specific competencies that are to be developed or enhanced. If your jurisdiction has a Competency Profile, reference the relevant competencies.

JILL: Once you have defined the competencies, the next step is to specify several learning objectives, that is, WHAT do you want to learn to improve or enhance each competency?

CARLOS: The next bit of data to be entered into your Learning Plan is HOW you plan to learn. This includes a short description of the learning methods, events or activities you plan to undertake to do the actual learning.

JILL: You should set target dates for expected completion of the learning activities. Setting targets is helpful in planning and executing your activities in a timely manner.

CARLOS: Your Learning Plan is NOT meant to be a fixed document. You should update it annually or whenever there are changes in your circumstances or practice.

1.10 Step 4: Do learning

Step 4: Do the Learning

Courses, workshops or seminars

Manuals or documents

Professional conferences

On-the-job experiences

Self-study: online, textbooks, research

Narration

JILL: Step 4 is to do the learning as outlined in your Learning
Plan. There are many ways to do the learning. Here are some examples. We will provide a much more extensive list a bit later in this presentation.

1.11 Step 5: Evaluate learning

Step 5: Evaluate Learning Results

Quality

Learning needs met

Impact on practice

Cost-effectiveness

Recommendations

Comments / notes

Narration

JILL: Once you have completed a learning activity, you should evaluate the results. These evaluations may be useful to you in the future. You can also share your evaluations with your supervisor or manager and colleagues.

CARLOS: That is an important point Jill. I'm sure all of us have attended a seminar, workshop or other event that didn't prove to be very useful. We're all busy so anything that helps us find excellent learning opportunities is much appreciated.

JILL: Here are some things you should assess when doing an evaluation of a learning activity. First is the overall quality of the learning experience. This could involve many different factors, but most people can judge the quality.

CARLOS: Another important factor to assess is to what extent were your learning needs and expectations met? It may have been an excellent event or activity, but you were not able to learn what you wanted.

JILL: A related evaluation factor is what impact did your learning have on your practice? To answer this question may take some time. Also, impact on your performance may be a difficult factor to assess.

CARLOS: Another factor is cost-effectiveness. If there were costs associated with this activity or event such as registration fees, travel, etc., did you feel the learning benefits were worth it? Are there other, more cost-effective ways, you could have gained the same knowledge and skills?

JILL: And lastly, include recommendations along with comments and notes.

1.12 Step 6: Document results

Step 6: Document Learning Results

Dates completed

Results in meeting learning objectives

Evaluation comments

Recommendations and notes

May be requirement for CCP

Narration

JILL: And the last step, as every nurse knows, is the documentation. The documentation should include such information as the dates the Learning Plan activities were completed; and the results and impacts on your practice of successfully completing the learning.

CARLOS: It is probably useful to also include any evaluation comments and recommendations and notes.

JILL: If you are part of a formal continuing competence program, then you probably are required to report on your Learning Plan achievements on an annual basis. Most likely you will be required to submit some type of confirmation or proof that you actually completed the learning.

1.13 Learning format

Learning Format

Your most effective learning format will be influenced by:

- personal commitment and time

- need for a flexible schedule

- resources– money, technology, transportation, support group

Narration

JILL: Learning can be done in many different formats. The format that works best for you will be influenced by several factors. These include your personal commitment and the time you have available to learn.

CARLOS: Your choice of learning format will also depend on your need for a flexible schedule; and the resources you have available such as money, technology and knowledge about how to use it, transportation, and support groups.

JILL: So it is important for you to choose the learning format that works best for you. Otherwise, it may be difficult to achieve the objectives laid out in your Learning Plan.

1.14 Competence strategies

Competence Development Strategies

Many different ways you can learn:

Formal credit courses

Review of manuals and documents

Review of videos and publications

Employer in-services and workshops

Vendor specific training

Attendance at topic-specific conferences

Narration

JILL: There are many different ways to learn in order to
maintain and enhance your professional competence. Here are a few ways you can learn:

CARLOS: Formal credit courses taken at accredited institutions … review of workplace manuals and documents … review of related videos or professional publications … attendance at employer provided in-services, seminars or workshops … vendor specific training with or without a certificate … and, attendance at topic-specific conferences.

1.15 More strategies

More Competence Strategies

More ways you can learn:

Job mandated in-services

Professional conventions / conferences

Profession AGM and meetings

Professional committee work

Training / mentoring staff or students

Internet research and learning

Narration

CARLOS: And here are several more different ways to learn.

JILL: Job mandated in-services and reviews … attendance at professional conventions, conferences … annual and general meetings … participation on committees at work … training and mentoring new staff and students … and Internet research and learning.

1.16 Still more strategies

Still More Competence Strategies

Still more ways you can learn:

    Case reviews and rounds

    Presentations at meeting and conferences

    Study groups or clubs

    Revision of policies and procedures

    Working with experienced professionals

    Online tutorials and courses

Narration

JILL: And finally, here are a few more.

CARLOS: Case reviews and rounds … presentations at meetings, convention and in-service workshops … study groups or clubs … development and revision of policies and procedures … observation and working with other experienced healthcare professionals … and, e-Learning tutorials and courses.

WOW, that is some list!

JILL: Yes, there are many, different ways to learn. So there are no excuses about not being able to find a suitable learning activity! Select the ones that work best for you!

1.17 Summary

Narration

JILL: Well, that brings us to the end of this second module. Carlos, care to summarize what we covered?

CARLOS: Okay! We began this module by discussing the importance of ongoing learning and professional development for nurses. We then defined competency and a continuing competence program. Next, we took a fairly detailed look at a six-step continuing competence program. The six steps were: identifying learning needs; prioritizing learning needs; preparing a Learning Plan; executing your Learning Plan; evaluating and documenting the results.

We then listed the many different ways that learning and professional development could take place. Did I miss anything?

JILL: You've covered the key points. Goodbye for now. Carlos and I will see you again in the next module.

CARLOS: Bye.

1.18 The End

Narration

No narration, only music.