

# Review of the prescribing capability of speech pathologists, dietitians and psychologists

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## Background

Podiatrists and optometrists have held prescribing authority in Australia for a number of years. There is growing evidence that extending the scope of practice of other allied health professionals, to include prescribing, will benefit the patient.

In order to safeguard patient safety, it is necessary to ensure that any health professional authorised to prescribe is competent to do so. The national Prescribing Competencies Framework (PCF) provides a valuable standard against which prescribing competence can be assessed.

This project aimed to review current capabilities of speech pathologists, dietitians and psychologists, and determine competency areas that require additional training before a prescribing role can be considered.

## Method

Professional and entry level competency standards were identified for each of the three professions. These standards were mapped against the PCF. Each performance criteria within the PCF was designated as mapping completely, partly or not at all to the identified standards. Results were subsequently mapped against the Health Practitioner Prescribing Pathway safe prescribing models, to determine which competencies were required for each prescribing model, and which professions met these competencies. Additional information was obtained by mapping the learning objectives from representative programs of study for all professions.

## Results

Speech pathology and psychology standards mapped reasonably well to the PCF, dietetic standards were less comprehensive and mapped less closely.

Although there were differences across the professions, competencies around patient interaction, assessment and diagnosis generally mapped well.

Prescribing competencies that did not map well were those related to medicine history, selection, ordering and legislation. Competence gaps were identified in all professions across all models of prescribing.

## Discussion

Mapping professional standards against the PCF is a useful benchmark for identification of gaps in prescribing competence. Gaps are common across the professions, and could be taught by means of a generic allied health prescribing training course.