



Core competences for genetic counsellors

(Approved by European Society of Human Genetics)

Competence	Learning outcomes
1. Establish relationship and clarify clients' concerns and expectations.	1.1 Establishes an environment which facilitates client to expression of feelings, anxieties, beliefs, and expectations and considers clients' experiences. 1.2 Identifies client needs. 1.3 Enables clients to make informed choices about the implications of their family history. 1.4 Takes appropriate action to meet identified needs with the agreement of the client.
2. Make appropriate and accurate genetic risk assessment.	2.1 Ascertains sufficient medical, family and personal information from the client to make appropriate genetic risk assessment. 2.2 Ascertains medical information from other sources to confirm family information and diagnosis. 2.3 Acts to ensure the genetic counselling provide to the client is based upon an accurate diagnosis. 2.4 Understands the patterns of inheritance and the underlying mechanisms by which genetic disease may occur.

<p>3. a. Convey clinical and genetic information to clients, appropriate to their individual needs.</p> <p>3. b. Explain options available to the client, including the risks, benefits and limitations.</p> <p>3. c. Evaluate the understanding of the individual related to the topics being discussed.</p> <p>3. d. Acknowledge the implications of individual and family experiences, beliefs, values and culture for the genetic counselling process.</p>	<p>3.1 Provides information about the genetic disorder appropriate to the client's assessed needs, reflecting their values, religious and cultural beliefs and preferences.</p> <p>3.2 Provides information based upon appropriate interpretation of genetic and clinical knowledge.</p> <p>3.3. Communicates with respect to the genetic risk assessment and possible options.</p> <p>3.4 Supports dissemination of information about the genetic disorder to at risk relatives by the client.</p> <p>3.5 Ensures clients receive appropriate follow-up care and support in respect of the genetic diagnosis and/or test results.</p>
<p>4. Make an assessment of clients' needs and resources and provide support, ensuring referral to other agencies as appropriate.</p>	<p>4.1 Ascertains psychological and social needs of the individual or family.</p> <p>4.2 Respecting clients' preferences, provides support and makes referrals to other agencies (such as psychologist or patient support groups).</p> <p>4.3 Identify and support clients' access to local, regional and national resources and services.</p> <p>4.4 Applies expert knowledge to facilitate the individual or family to access the appropriate healthcare resources, including a medical diagnosis and resources for management of the condition.</p>
<p>5. Use of a range of counselling skills to facilitate clients' adjustment and decision-making.</p>	<p>5.1 Uses safe, effective and appropriate counselling skills to support clients to make adjustments and decisions.</p>
<p>6. Document information including case notes and correspondence in an appropriate manner.</p>	<p>6.1 Uses a systematic approach to collecting and maintaining comprehensive and accurate records that detail the rationale underpinning any interventions.</p> <p>6.2 Maintains confidentiality and security of written and verbal information.</p>

<p>7. Find and utilise relevant medical, genetic and psychosocial information for use in genetic counselling.</p>	<p>7.1 Collects, evaluates and uses relevant information about the genetic disorder in question, including psychological and social implications of the disorder and/or genetic testing. 7.2 Uses a range of psychological and social information to provide psychosocial adjustment and decision-making. 7.2 Critically appraises current evidence to inform practice and professional development. 7.3 Disseminates evidence of good practice and service improvement through verbal and written media.</p>
<p>8. Demonstrate ability to organise and prioritise a case load.</p>	<p>8.1 Addresses client needs in a sensitive and fair manner , making best use of resources available. 8.2 Prioritises according to patient need.</p>
<p>9. Plan, organise and deliver professional and public education</p>	<p>9.1 Facilitates understanding of how genetics impacts on affected individuals, their families, partners and carers. 9.2 Seeks to raise awareness of available services and resources related to genetic healthcare. 9.3 Acts as a resource for other professionals and lay groups.</p>
<p>10. Establish effective working relationships to function within a multi-disciplinary team and as part of the wider health and social care network.</p>	<p>10.1 Promotes patient-centred care in partnership with the client, their family, and appropriate care providers. 10.2 Facilitates communication via a strong multidisciplinary network of professional and lay colleagues. 10.3 As appropriate, co-ordinates patient and family care. 10.4 Using expert knowledge, contributes to the development of management guidelines or care pathways and implements these, as appropriate.</p>

<p>11. Contribute to the development and organisation of genetic services.</p>	<p>11.1 Evaluates own practice and that of others in the light of new evidence and modifies practice appropriately.</p> <p>11.2 Uses skills of critical appraisal to consider how new evidence may contribute to the improvement of service organisation and delivery.</p> <p>11.3 Actively seeks opportunities to meet with colleagues to discuss professional issues and innovations in care, in order to disseminate best practice and improve standards of care.</p> <p>11.4 Actively seeks opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in audit and research that has the ultimate aim of improving client care</p>
<p>12. Practice in accordance with an appropriate code of ethical conduct.</p>	<p>12.1 Upholds professional standards of safe and ethical practice at all times.</p> <p>12.2 Uses professional standards of practice to evaluate own and others' performance.</p> <p>12.3 Recognises the duty to seek professional advice if standards of care are threatened.</p> <p>12.4 Contributes to the debate on ethical challenges in genetic practice.</p> <p>12.5 In normal circumstances discloses information about individuals to appropriate third parties only with the client's permission.</p>
<p>13. Recognise and maintain professional boundaries and limitations of own practice.</p>	<p>13.1 Recognises practice limitations and demonstrates referrals to other health professionals when appropriate.</p> <p>13.2 Consults other health professionals when the client's needs fall outside the scope of genetic practice.</p> <p>13.3 Refers clients to colleagues when necessary.</p>
<p>14. Demonstrate reflective skills and personal awareness for the safety of individuals and families.</p>	<p>14.1 Demonstrates reflective practice, which informs future clinical interactions.</p> <p>14.2 Utilises clinical supervision to underpin and enhance practice.</p> <p>14.3 Accesses regular counselling supervision to ensure appropriate quality of genetic counselling services.</p>

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15. Present opportunities for clients to participate in research projects in a manner that facilitates informed choice.	15.1 Enables clients to make an informed choice on whether to participate in a research project or not.
16. Demonstrate continuing professional development as an individual practitioner and for the development of the profession.	16.1 Actively seeks opportunities to update knowledge and skills, and reflects on the implications of these for own practice and that of professional colleagues.

These core competences were based on the work by Skirton et al (2010) and modified by members of the ESHG Ad Hoc Committee for Accreditation of Genetic Nurses and Counsellors.

Skirton H, Lewis C, Kent A, Coviello D. (2010) Genetic education and the challenge of genomic medicine: development of core competences to support preparation of health professionals in Europe. *European Journal of Human Genetics* <http://www.nature.com/doi/10.1038/ejhg.2010.64>.