



Canadian Nursing Students' Association
Association des étudiant(e)s infirmier(ère)s du Canada

Position Statement

The Transitional NCLEX-RN® Examination for Canadian Candidates

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Introduction and Background

In 2011, Canada's ten regulatory bodies announced the formulation of a contract approving the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), the current administrator of the American NCLEX-RN® examination, to be the new administrator of Canada's entry-to-practice nursing exam (CNSA, 2013). As of January 2015, the NCLEX-RN® will replace the long-standing Canadian Registered Nurse Examination (CRNE). Well-founded concerns from Canadian stakeholders regarding the harmonization of the NCLEX-RN® exam are related to the following national elements: (a) appropriate reflection of the Canadian health care system values; (b) consideration of cultural competence with respect to Canada's unique Inuit/First Nation/Northern population; (c) proper reflection of Canadian nursing programs; (d) the consideration of Canada's bilingual population; (e) potential outflow Canadian RNs and emigration to the United States and; (f) the privacy of Canadian nurses personal information (CNA, 2011; Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing [CASN], 2012; Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario [RNAO], 2012). Despite these concerns, there is strong evidence to support the applicability of the 2013 NCLEX-RN® Test Plan to the Canadian testing population. Studies revealed a 98% congruency in nursing practice and competencies between the United States and Canada (NCSBN, 2013a; NCSBN, 2014a). With this decision, a strong and growing partnership with our American counterpart will assist us in making certain our voices are heard.

The direct involvement of Canadian representatives in the NCLEX-RN® Item Development Program symbolizes a positive step forward in Canada's newly founded affiliation with the NCSBN. Canadian regulatory bodies are now active participants in reviewing operational NCLEX items to ensure item congruency with regulatory nurse practice acts and entry-level scope of practice (NCSBN, 2013a). This synergistic relationship supports an effort to ensure that the NCLEX-RN® examination will provide Canadian students with a fair, valid, and psychometrically sound measurement of minimal nursing competencies that are required for safe and effective practice (NCSBN, 2013b)

Canadian Nursing Students' Association Position

As the official representative of Canadian nursing students, CNSA will continue to research and seek ways to increase suitability of the NCLEX-RN® for Canadian students. CNSA can also work towards a potential relationship with different stakeholders such as the Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators (CCRNR) to propose solutions to issues that may arise subsequent to the inaugural writing of the NCLEX-RN® examination. CNSA can advocate for Canadian students to be guided and prepared for exams that consist of computer-adaptive-testing (CAT) and various question formats



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through CNSA's relationship with CASN. This can allow for the creation of partnerships with Canadian nursing schools and the encouragement of integration of such testing into the programs.

CNSA welcomes invitations to be active participants in the annual consultation processes regarding improvements and the continued applicability of selected survey questions for the NCLEX-RN®. CNSA will continually advocate for increasing numbers of Canadian nurse representation to participate in NCLEX-RN® item development panels and support equal inclusion in all aspects of exam planning, item construction, sensitivity screening, and design. It is our ultimate hope for Canadian nurses to be equal partners in the triennial RN practice analysis cycle to ensure that systematic, comprehensive, and defensible methods are used to establish equitable content for the NCLEX-RN® Test Plan (CCRNR, n.d; Williams & Doyoung, 2014). CNSA will continue to be the primary resource for orienting nursing students to this paradigm shift from the traditional hand-written exam delivery model to the computerized model utilized with the NCLEX-RN® (NCSBN, 2013a). This entails ensuring that nursing students are adequately prepared by remaining at the forefront of current events, disseminating information, providing updates, and offering suggested resources such as the CNSA's *NCLEX Tips for Nursing Students* fact sheet. In the spirit of strengthening linkages and harmonization with stakeholders, CNSA will strive to join the collaborative efforts of advancing and innovating nursing programs and research relative to the NCLEX-RN®. To respect the needs of French-speaking Canadian NCLEX-RN® candidates, equitable services will be offered in both languages. CNSA will join stakeholders' efforts to ensure that Canada's distinctive bilingual nature is respected and upheld throughout each step of the NCLEX-RN® process (CNSA, 2014).

CNSA welcomes information from the Office of Privacy Commissioner in Canada with regards to compliance of Canadian privacy legislation, as well as other industry standards (College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia [CRNNS], 2012). CNSA will stay abreast of current events relating to the collection of data and personal information by the NCSBN, advocating for storage that is held to the highest global security standards, including all requirements to uphold national and provincial privacy legislation (CRNNS, 2012).

Relation to Canadian Nursing Schools' Programs

CNSA believes that changes to nursing school programs, available resources, and preparation practices for the NCLEX-RN® can ensure that students are granted equitable opportunities to succeed (CNSA, 2013). CNSA will liaise with stakeholders and interested parties to encourage the implementation of NCLEX-RN® preparatory courses into Canadian programs to prepare students for success. Implementing standardized testing in schools using various platforms to practice CAT methods with alternative NCLEX-RN® question formats has traditionally been met with great success (Alameida et al., 2011; CNSA, 2013; Coons, 2014; Herrman & Johnson, 2009; Hyland, 2012; Schooley & Dixon Kuhn, 2013). A repertoire of strategies being utilized by schools of nursing in response to the increasing need for preparation for the NCLEX-RN® includes identifying at-risk students, designing course-type interventions, tracking student progression, recommending review courses, providing personal supports, using simulation lab scenarios, and holding test anxiety workshops (Herrman & Johnson, 2009; Lavin & Rosario-Sim, 2013). It is recognized that many Canadian schools of nursing are in support of utilizing reliable commercial products that are purported to prepare students for the NCLEX-RN® (Alameida et al., 2011; Nelson, McFetridge-Durdle, & Bradley, 2012).



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Educators are encouraged to become familiarized with the NCLEX-RN® Test Plan, its corresponding content distribution, and examination delivery methodology. Detailed test plans include item-writing exercises, which provide step-by-step instruction on how to develop test questions (CCRNR, n.d.). Educators can subscribe to NCLEX-RN® Program Reports, which will provide a comparative review of each program's performance that is designed to help educators and administrators identify their program's areas of strength and weakness (NSCBN, 2014b).

Conclusion

Although the loss of the uniquely Canadian-developed CRNE has raised valid concerns, CNSA ultimately remains dedicated to serving the best interests of all current and future Canadian nursing students (CNSA, 2013). To ensure the needs of students remain at the forefront of future developments, CNSA will continue to maintain a spirit of inquiry by perpetually igniting requests for the truth, transparency, evidence-informed data, and further knowledge while simultaneously engaging with active stakeholders to uphold the strength of our commitment to the Canadian nursing profession.



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