

Consideration of Summary and Analysis of Self-Study Reports 2014 Professional Nursing Education Programs

Background:

Thirty (30) professional nursing education programs were required to submit a Self-Study Report to Board Staff in 2014 after their 2013 NCLEX examination pass rates fell below 80%. Effective April 1, 2013, the passing score for the NCLEX-RN® examination was raised based upon recommendations from the NCLEX Examination Committee, from a group of experts appointed to a Standard Setting Panel, and subsequent approval from the NCSBN Board of Directors. The new passing score was approved by the NCSBN Delegate Assembly in August, 2012. Rationale for the change in the passing score included consideration of the data in the current NCLEX-RN Practice Analysis and the growing complexity of nursing practice and nursing roles.

Rule 215.4(c)(2)(B) *Ongoing Approval Procedures* requires that "When the passing score of first-time NCLEX-RN® candidates is less than 80% on the examination during the examination year, the nursing program shall submit a Self-Study Report that evaluates factors that may have contributed to the graduates' performance on the NCLEX-RN® examination and a description of the corrective measures to be implemented."

Because of the large number of professional nursing programs' annual pass rates falling below 80% and the requirement for the programs to compile and submit Self-Study Reports, Board Staff engaged each individual program director and their respective nursing faculty in hour-long conference calls to discuss program issues and to provide guidance for writing the Self-Study Report. All of the Education Consultants participated in most of the calls to all of the programs. This was an unexpectedly valuable experience for Board Staff since it provided an opportunity to talk with program directors and many faculty across the state. Every effort was made by the Consultants to extend assistance to the programs.

This report collapses information from the Self-Study Reports and focuses on common factors that may have contributed to the lowered pass rates for 2013. The range of pass rates among the thirty (30) programs was between 60.00% and 79.02%, with twenty-one (21) programs experiencing a pass rate between 70.07% and 79.02%. To keep perspective, it is important to remember that an additional sixty-five (65) professional programs had acceptable pass rates for the examination year.

The thirty (30) programs who developed the Self-Study Reports included:

- 20 ADN programs in public institutions,
- 1 ADN program in a career school,
- 3 BSN programs in public institutions,
- 5 BSN programs in private academic settings, and
- 1 BSN program in a career school.

Information from the Self-Study Reports was categorized into sections following the format in the Education Guideline 3.2.1.a. *Writing a Self-Study Report on Evaluation of Factors that Contributed to the Graduates' Performance on the NCLEX-PN® or NCLEX-RN® Examination* and is presented in the following table. Factors have been categorized under headings in the Self-Study Report and are arranged from high to low frequency of being identified as factors in the Reports.

<p>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX Examination Pass Rates – Students</p> <p><u>Admission Criteria:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria not adequate (too low). • Admission criteria not being followed (Students were enrolled who did not meet admission criteria). <p><u>Remediation Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remediation activities that were inadequate or lacking. <p><u>Readmission Policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readmitted or transfer students likely to have poor outcomes. <p><u>At-Risk Students:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At-risk students include evening students, working students, other personal stresses. <p><u>Progression Policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low GPA for progression allows students who are ill-prepared to move forward. <p><u>Miscellaneous (mentioned once):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of recruitment plan. • Length of time between graduation and taking NCLEX. • Lack of adequate student services. • Low reading proficiency. • Insufficient advising of pre-nursing students. • English as second language students. 	<p>Suggested Corrective Measures to Improve Success – Students</p> <p><u>Admission Criteria:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise admission criteria. • Establish policies for adherence to criteria. <p><u>Remediation Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and add or strengthen remediation plan. • If using remediation plans from vendors, review for effectiveness and pertinence to didactic content <p><u>Readmission Policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise readmission policies. • Provide helpful interventions for at-risk students (readmitted, transfer). <p><u>At-Risk Students:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop criteria to recognize at-risk students. • Provide student services and tutoring as possible. <p><u>Progression Policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust policies for passing scores in didactic and clinical to promote success.
<p>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX Examination Pass Rates – Policies</p> <p><u>Inadequate admission and selection, readmission, and progression policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See section under Students above. <p><u>Inconsistent use of student policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See section under Students above. • Student policies not enforced. <p><u>Lack of Policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related to Faculty to Student Ratios. 	<p>Suggested Corrective Measures to Improve Success - Policies</p> <p><u>Inadequate admission and selection, readmission, and progression policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise admission and selection, readmission, and progression policies based upon student data. <p><u>Inconsistent use of student policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a process to ensure that policies are followed. <p><u>Lack of Policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop enrollment policies that will support adequate ratios of faculty to students. • Develop enrollment management plan for 5 years.

<p>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX Examination Pass Rates – Faculty</p> <p><u>Inadequate faculty orientation and mentoring:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing use of part-time faculty with little orientation. • Lack of adequate faculty orientation plan. • Lack of follow-through in faculty orientation. • Hiring of new inexperienced faculty. • High faculty and director turnover. <p><u>Insufficient number of faculty to effectively carry out teaching, clinical instruction, and other responsibilities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased workload related to growth in enrollment without additional resources. • Faculty teaching outside of areas of expertise. 	<p>Suggested Corrective Measures to Improve Success – Faculty</p> <p><u>Inadequate faculty orientation and mentoring</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise faculty orientation plan for all part-time and full- time faculty. • Clarify faculty expectations for classroom and clinical instruction. • Provide ongoing faculty development. <p><u>Insufficient number of faculty to effectively carry out teaching, clinical instruction, and other responsibilities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek administrative support for new faculty positions or for reducing admissions. • Consider where new staff might alleviate workload (lab coordinator, advisor, tutor). • Revise faculty salary structure to attract qualified candidates. • Plan new recruitment efforts.
<p>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX Examination Pass Rates – Curriculum</p> <p><u>Need for major curriculum revision:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to align curriculum with DEC's and NCLEX test plan (curriculum mapping). • Lack of rigor across nursing curriculum. • Lack of student preparation for clinical experiences. • Inadequacy of support courses. • Inability of students to integrate knowledge from previous courses . • Less focus on patient care in clinical model. • Heavy course loads and clinical schedules for students and faculty. <p><u>Ineffective clinical evaluation tools:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical evaluation tools inconsistent and unclear. • Clinical assignments not congruent with clinical objectives. • Inconsistency in grading. <p><u>Growing scarcity of clinical practice sites:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited clinical opportunities and loss of some sites. • Spaces for pre- and post-conferences in clinical settings. • Lack of faculty trained in simulation. <p><u>Need for More Alternate Clinical Sites:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for options for clinical practice. 	<p>Suggested Corrective Measures to Improve Success – Curriculum</p> <p><u>Need for major curriculum revision:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review entire curriculum, mapping against NCLEX test plan and DEC's. • Provide faculty development to improve teaching strategies and student engagement. • Re-examine effectiveness of support courses. • Redesign sequencing of curriculum to ensure congruency between didactic content and clinical objectives. • Ensure that safe, patient-centered care is pervasive in all clinical courses. • Evaluate schedules for classes and clinicals. <p><u>Ineffective clinical evaluation tools:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise clinical evaluation tools for ease of use, clarity, leveling, and standard expectations of behaviors. • Faculty inter-rater reliability policies should include grading of clinical objectives and clinical assignments. <p><u>Growing scarcity of clinical practice sites:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign clinical experiences with more time in planned simulation activities and creative instructional activities in skills lab. <p><u>Need for More Alternate Clinical Sites:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to seek alternate clinical sites where students can achieve clinical objectives under proper supervision.

<p>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX Examination Pass Rates – Teaching and Evaluation</p> <p><u>Inconsistencies in Exam Processes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty lack test-writing skills and knowledge of test analysis. • Lack of alternate form exam items. • Lack of use of test plan and blueprint. • Lack of testing policies. <p><u>Insufficient Test Security:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of security measures during testing. <p><u>Use of Standardized Examinations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliance on standardized exams sometimes not reliable. • Lack of use of evaluation data from standardized examinations. <p><u>Need for Student Preparation to take the NCLEX:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate use of NCLEX test plan. • Lack of alternate form exam questions in tests. • Need for formal NCLEX review course. <p><u>Inadequacy of Total Program Evaluation Plan and Use:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to gather and use data for program decisions. <p><u>Reliance on Preceptors in Clinical Instruction:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program question this model. 	<p>Suggested Corrective Measures to Improve Success – Teaching and Evaluation</p> <p><u>Inconsistencies in Exam Processes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan faculty development in test writing skills, use of test blueprints, and item-analysis for improvements in testing. • Develop faculty policies for exam processes. • Faculty development in alternate form items. • Establish a Testing and Evaluation Committee. <p><u>Insufficient Test Security:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new policies and procedures for exam security. • Utilize new testing methods, like multiple versions of exams. <p><u>Use of Standardized Examinations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how standardized examinations may be used most effectively as a benchmark. • Determine best ways to use data provided from student testing results. <p><u>Need for Student Preparation to take the NCLEX:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for faculty to learn how to make best use of NCLEX test plan. • Faculty development activities to become skilled in writing NCLEX-type test items. • Schedule NCLEX review course at the end of the program of study. <p><u>Inadequacy of Total Program Evaluation Plan and Use:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty to review and revise Total Program Evaluation Plan in a format that will be usable and provide data for decision-making. <p><u>Reliance on Preceptors in Clinical Instruction:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use more face-to-face faculty instruction in the clinical setting.
<p>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX Examination Pass Rates – Evaluation Methods for Class and Clinical</p> <p><u>Grading Issues:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible grade inflation. • Grading inconsistencies. • Use of bonus points. • Faculty subjectivity in grading. 	<p>Suggested Corrective Measures to Improve Success – Evaluation Methods for Class and Clinical</p> <p><u>Grading Issues:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage faculty in discussion and develop policies to eliminate bonus points and other grade inflation. • Provide faculty development in inter-rater reliability and practice time to ensure consistency in grading.

<p><u>Lack of Possibility for Computerized Testing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate supply of computers for testing. • No plans for computer testing. <p><u>Need for Revision of Clinical Evaluation Tools:</u> See section under Curriculum above.</p>	<p><u>Lack of Possibility for Computerized Testing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petition administration to provide resources for computerized testing to prepare students for NCLEX. <p><u>Need for Revision of Clinical Evaluation Tools:</u> See section under Curriculum above.</p>
<p>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX Examination Pass Rates – Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program director multiple responsibilities. • Financial challenges. • Inconsistency in student performance at extension sites. • Increased passing score on NCLEX examination. 	

Summary of Commonly-Cited Areas of Concern in Self-Study Reports in Order of Frequency:

1. Lack of policies or failure to adhere to and enforce student policies, especially those related to admission, readmission, and progression.
2. Need for effective faculty orientation programs for all nursing faculty (full-time and part-time), followed by ongoing faculty development.
3. Lack of remediation programs and assistance for at-risk students.
4. Insufficient number of nursing faculty to provide quality education for increased enrollments.
5. Need for major curriculum changes to meet the educational needs for nurses of the future.
6. Ineffective clinical evaluation tools for formative and summative evaluation of student outcomes, and for timely feedback to students.
7. Scarcity of clinical practice settings.
8. Inconsistencies in examination processes including inadequate faculty skills in test construction and analysis, lack of availability for students to use computer-based testing, and problems with test security.
9. Ineffective use of standardized examinations.
10. Inadequate use of the Total Program Evaluation.

This report is for information only. No Board action is necessary.