

**Consideration of Summary of Self-Study Reports for
Vocational Nursing Education Programs
For the 2018 NCLEX-PN® Examination Pass Rates**

Background:

Rule 214.4(c)(2)(B) Ongoing Approval Procedures requires that “When the passing score of first-time NCLEX-PN® 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 examination and a description of the corrective measures to be implemented.” Eight vocational nursing (VN) programs were required to develop a SSR based upon the 2018 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates. The implementation of corrective strategies has usually resulted in programs adjusting their curricula for more rigor; revising their admission, readmission, and progression criteria; and providing more effective faculty development and faculty mentoring programs.

The NCLEX® examination pass rate is not the only indicator of the quality of the educational preparation in the nursing program but usually provides a “red flag” that improvements need to be made. The passing rate of first-time candidates provides the best measure of the effectiveness of the program of study in preparing graduates for entry-level practice. Many graduates succeed on second or third attempts on the NCLEX® and become licensed nurses, but other factors (such as further study and review courses) contribute to the pass rate of repeaters, not just the education provided in the program.

The majority of programs improve their pass rates through successful implementation of corrective measures. The SSR represents a focused self-evaluation by the director and nursing faculty, and most programs testify that it is a valuable insight into their total program.

Of the 94 Board approved VN Programs, 57 programs achieved a pass rate above 90% during the 2018 NCLEX-PN® examination year, January 1 through December 31. Further, 23 of these 57 VN programs achieved an NCLEX-PN® pass rate of 100% for the 2018 examination year.

Pass rates among the eight VN programs that submitted SSRs ranged from 66.67% to 77.78%. The largest candidate pool from a single nursing education program was 169 first-time test-takers while the smallest candidate group was 15 first-time test-takers.

The eight programs required to submit SSRs resultant to the 2018 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates included:

- five VN programs in public community colleges;
- two VN programs in career schools/colleges; and
- one VN program in a private, non-profit school/college.

Although commonalities among the eight programs required to submit a SSR exist, more distinctions than similarities were identified, as follows:

- One program is a Multiple Entry-Exit Program or MEEP. This is an exit option which is a part of a professional nursing education program designed for students to complete course work and apply to take the NCLEX-PN® examination after they have successfully met all requirements needed for the examination.
- One program offers nursing courses via online technology in that select nursing courses are offered entirely online. The SSR noted student dissatisfaction with online courses as the students had limited computer skills upon entry to the program. The planned corrective measure is to deliver online courses as web-enhanced courses with face-to-face class time.
- One program described the need for active participation of a Nursing Advisory Committee to offer non-biased and objective professional feedback in order to evaluate the policies and procedures of the institute. The school will establish a committee and hold regularly scheduled meetings twice a year. Further, the program will increase the Faculty Committee meetings to at least four yearly.
- One program is located in a large city; two programs are in metropolitan, border cities; and five programs are located in small cities.
- Two of the eight programs experienced a change in the Program Director position during the examination year.
- Six of the eight programs require 12 months for completion; one program requires 13 months; and one program requires 16 months.
- Seven of the eight programs indicated the critical need for a rigorous faculty onboarding with continuing faculty development. Currently, a majority of nursing faculty have no graduate coursework in curriculum development and evaluation. To be effective, nurse educators need to be able to assess and evaluate intended learning outcomes. Specifically, faculty are requiring further instruction in test blueprinting, item-writing, and item analysis. Corrective measures include professional development specific to the role of the nursing instructor in the classroom and in clinical. One program plans to assign faculty the viewing of two NurseTim videos addressing the nurse educator role followed by a roundtable discussion of application of this topic.
- All of the programs are well established, one founded in 1952 and the most recently established school instituted in 2011.
- None of the eight programs are accredited by a national nursing accreditation agency.

Board Staff have identified major trends of problem areas that have been common to the SSRs reviewed during the past five years:

- low admission and readmission criteria;
- need for faculty development;
- lack of remediation for at-risk students;
- shortage of qualified faculty;
- need for curriculum revision; and
- ineffective clinical evaluation tools.

In their SSRs, the eight VN Programs identified the following items as possible corrective measures to address the below 80% NCLEX-PN® pass rate for 2018:

- increase student recruitment efforts to have a more qualified applicant pool;
- raise progression standards;
- schedule more time in the nursing skills lab;
- increase clinical learning hours;
- eliminate grade inflation;
- increase test security; and
- teach study skills to students at the program onset.

This report is for information only. No action is required.