



# Nursing Education Newsletter

Fall 2023

Texas Board of Nursing

Volume 11 Number 2

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## Greetings from the Education Team

Editor: Gayle P. Varnell, PhD, APRN, CPNP-PC (our FROG Expert)



### Find, Reflect, Organize, & Generate news = FROG

The Texas Board of Nursing (BON) Education Team have prepared this newsletter for information purposes for programs. Please share with the nursing faculty in your school. If you have comments about what you would like to learn about for the next newsletter, please send me an email.

## Kudos to Texas Nursing Programs!



Your preparation for the NGN, strategies for teaching clinical judgment, and new energies after experiencing the pandemic have produced an amazing outcome on the NCLEX – even with the addition of the Next Generation NCLEX Questions. Pass rates for three different time spans for VN and RN programs are provided below:

Type of Program	Before NGN January 1 – March 31, 2023	NCLEX with NGN April 1 – August 31, 2023	NCLEX for 2023 January 1 – August 31, 2023
VN Programs	88.24% (945/1071)	96.17% (1,104/1,148)	92.34% (2,049/2,219)
RN Programs	84.74% (4,438/5,237)	94.72% (6,975/7,364)	90.57% (11,413/12,601)

Individual reports for programs are not available at this time but these numbers are a positive indicator that NCLEX pass rates are improved at this point in 2023.

## Upcoming Events

### 2023 Quarterly Board Meetings

October 19-20, 2023

BON Board Meeting agendas and minutes are available on the Board of Nursing website under the **News** heading.

### Nursing Education Resources

[Education Guidelines](#)

[Education FAQs](#)

[Education Newsletters](#)

### Nursing Education Inquiries

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## News About the Army Practical Nurse Program in San Antonio, Texas



Texas is the only Board of Nursing that approves a nursing education program where the governing entity is the United States. The Army Practical Nurse Program (APNP) has been continuously approved by the Board of Vocational Nurse Examiners (BVNE) since 1954, except for a four-year hiatus between 1978 and 1982. When the BVNE and the Board of Nurse Examiners (BNE) merged in 2004, all approved nursing programs were under the purview of the Board of Nursing (BON).

The APNP is taught in two sections: Phase I, an eight-week instructional period taught exclusively at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and Phase II, a 48-week instructional program conducted at five US Army medical facilities. The five bases offering Phase II sections are:

- Brooke Army Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston, Texas
- Eisenhower Army Medical Center in Fort Gordon, Georgia
- Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, Washington
- Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland
- William Beaumont Army Medical Center (WBAMC) in El Paso, Texas

The APNP program notified the Board that the program will be under the administrative control of a new entity known as the Medical Center of Excellence. This change will offer the advantage to graduates from the APNP of awarding students with an associates of applied science degree and an academic transcript.

There are currently no anticipated changes to the APNP philosophy, mission, or program hours.

The number of NCLEX candidates from the APNP program for 2022 was 435 with a pass rate of 91.26%. The current director for the program is LTC(P) Juliet N. Morah. Major John Tagavilla, Deputy Director of the Program, attended the July 2023 Board Meeting to present the changes to the Board and answer any questions.

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Dr. Janice Hooper, left, and Major John Tagavilla, right.

## Contact Information for the Education Team

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## FAQs Regarding Standardized Examinations

### Frequently Asked Questions regarding the use of Standardized Examinations

These FAQs are also available on our website: [SB1429](#).

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#### What are standardized examinations?



**STANDARDIZED EXAMINATIONS** have been around for a long time. We have all taken them such as:

- Myers-Briggs to learn our personality type
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test to measure our IQ
- SAT or PSAT or ACT or GRE to evaluate our educational readiness
- LSAT or MCAT to determine if we are ready for a particular discipline or study

The exams are measured in different ways including:

- Norm-referenced where scores are compared to performance of other test-takers
- Criterion-referenced where scores are compared to a predetermined reference

A standardized examination is any form of test that asks the same questions in the same way and is scored in a standard or consistent manner, which allows comparison. Most standardized tests are forms of assessments that attempt to measure the learning of the participants at the end of an instructional unit.

The use of standardized examinations has been an ongoing topic in the literature. Standardized tests are not a good measure of educational quality because they are prone to test-teaching mismatches, omitted items, and confounded causation problems. Many outside variables affect student performance, and they are used to compare students, not to evaluate their education.

Controversy exists about the use of standardized tests/exams in nursing education based on the purpose served by the test scores. SB 1429 was passed during the 88<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative session and became effective on September 1, 2023.

#### What is the legislative process? How do bills get passed?

The Texas Legislature meets every two years in odd-numbered years January through May to engage in establishing laws for the state. Proposed bills arise from issues recognized by State leaders and expressed by the public. State agencies, including the Board of Nursing, do not have authority to participate in legislative decisions or lobby for or against legislation. Opportunities exist for members of the public to offer input on proposed legislation, for example by testifying at committee hearings and visiting with legislators.

New bills that pass during the legislative session are delivered to the Governor for signature. If bills are not signed or vetoed, they become effective on the date specified in the bill. If no date is specified, the default effective date is 90 days following sine die (the last day of the regular legislative session).

During the 88<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session, **Senate Bill 1429** relating to the use of standardized examinations by a school of nursing or educational program passed.

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## What does this bill say?

*Senate Bill 1429, passed during the 88<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, Regular Session, authorizes the adoption of rules relating to the use of standardized examinations by a school of nursing or educational program as well as amends the Nursing Practice Act.*

*SECTION 1. Subchapter D, Chapter 301, Occupations Code, is amended by adding Section 301.1571 to read as follows:*

*Sec. 301.1571. USE OF STANDARDIZED EXAMINATIONS. (a). The board shall adopt rules related to the use by a school of nursing or educational program offered in Texas of a standardized examination prepared by a private entity. The rules must prohibit the use of a standardized examination as a graduation requirement or to deny students an affidavit of graduation. The rules may authorize the use of a standardized examination only to:*

- (1) familiarize students with computerized testing;*
  - (2) assess potential or enrolled students for purposes of:*
    - (A) serving as one component of admissions criteria;*
    - (B) evaluating a student's strengths and weaknesses for remediation purposes; or*
    - (C) identifying students experiencing academic difficulties who require early remediation; or*
  - (3) assess the effectiveness of the school of nursing or educational program by providing:*
    - (A) trend data on student performance;*
    - (B) a comparisons of student performance with nationwide averages;*
    - (C) feedback of student knowledge of program content;*
    - (D) data to monitor the effectiveness of specific course, level, and program curriculum revisions;*
    - (E) a measure of student mastery of content; or an evaluation of the effectiveness of curriculum content for revision purposes.*
- (b). The rules adopted under Subsection (a) must provide that a score on a standardized examination may not account for more than 10 percent of a course grade for a course in a school of nursing or educational program.*
- (c). A school of nursing or educational program that determines a student is in need of academic remediation on the basis of a standardized examination may not require the student to attend any course offered by the examination provider.*
- (d). Failure to comply with the rules adopted under Subsection (a) may subject the school of nursing or educational program to disciplinary action, including removal of the school's or program's approval status, as determined by the board.*

*SECTION 2. As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the Texas Board of Nursing shall adopt the rules required by Section 301.1571, Occupation Code, as added by this ACT.*

*SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.*

## What does the new law aim to accomplish?

The key meaning in the bill is to *prohibit the use of a standardized examination as a graduation requirement or to deny students an affidavit of graduation*. The bill also includes ways in which standardized examinations may be used that are consistent with the Board of Nursing's 2017 [Education Guideline 3.7.4.a. The Use of Standardized Examinations in Nursing Education Programs](#)

Important details to remember:

- If standardized examination scores account for part of a course grade, those scores must not account for more than 10% of that course grade.
- When it is decided that students need remediation based upon a standardized exam score, the school may not require the student to attend a course offered by the exam provider (vendor) nor simply switch to another vendor.
- The program should provide faculty-developed/guided remediation.
- Compliance with the law is a necessary component for ongoing program approval.

### **Does SB 1429 apply to all programs?**

SB 1429 applies to all Board-approved VN and RN nursing programs effective September 1, 2023, regardless of whether or not rules have been adopted.

### **Is the bill retroactive?**

Any use of standardized examination scores that contradicts the prohibitions set forth in SB 1429 must be amended for compliance by September 1, 2023. The bill does not apply to programs and courses offered prior to September 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **How can we change policies mid-stream?**

The governing entity, faculty, and students should be notified immediately that a mandated change is eminent and the new policy released as soon as possible. Seek assistance from the legal counsel, include faculty in policy development, and implement the new policy.

It is most important to make sure the policy follows the intent of the bill.

### **When will Board rules be adopted?**

Enacting the bill is not dependent on BON rules. The rules will follow the bill and its intent. Rules are developed to clarify implementation of the laws. SB 1429 is clearly written and efforts should be made to follow the bill in ways that are legally defensible in light of the bill.

Board rules will be proposed following September 1, 2023. An updated Education Guideline will be posted on the website that will provide at a minimum the exact wording of SB 1429.

### **How can we continue to use the standardized exams?**

The bill lists a number of acceptable ways to use standardized exams:

- Providing practice for students using NCLEX type questions.
- Serving as one among other criteria for admission.
- Evaluating a student's strengths and weaknesses in different content areas.
- Recognizing students who need extra help or remediation.
- Evaluating the program's curriculum and teaching strategies.
- Including in trend data for the nursing program over time.
- Comparing your students' knowledge base with national data.
- Measuring students' knowledge of curriculum content.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction.
- Determining areas for possible curriculum revision.

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## **Can we switch to another vendor for a remediation course vs. providing in-house, faculty-developed remediation when it is determined that a student requires remediation based upon a standardized examination score?**

When it is determined that a student requires remediation based upon a standardized examination score, the program may not simply switch to another vendor but must provide in-house, faculty remediation.

### **Explain the 10% limit for different courses and for different exams:**

A course grade cannot be comprised of more than 10% by standardized examinations prepared by a private entity. The intent is that these types of exams should not prevent students from progressing in the program, graduating, or receiving the affidavit of graduation (AOG).

Multiple standardized exams each capped at 10% of the course grade is contradictory with the bill intent. Multiple exams with an unsatisfactory grade could prevent the student from receiving a passing grade in a course necessary to progress in the program and ultimately prevent the student from graduating or receiving the AOG, which is prohibited by the bill language.

### **How can we get started?**

When giving a standardized exam, advise the students of their performance, how they compare with other nursing students, and areas of strength and weakness (for special attention). This approach suggests taking the opportunity to develop faculty test-writing and remediation skills.

The score on the standardized exam cannot be used as a determinant for student progression.

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## **Conducting Clinicals in Texas: Pre-licensure Out-of-State Nursing Programs**

Periodically, the Board of Nursing receives requests from out-of-state nursing education programs desiring to conduct clinicals in Texas. A pre-licensure nursing education program outside of Texas must seek approval from the Board to conduct these clinical learning experiences in our state.

In order to be approved by the Board, a program must be:

1. fully approved/accredited by the state board of nursing in their home state and have an NCLEX® examination pass rate of at least 80% for the current examination year.
2. approved/licensed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and/or the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), to conduct business/educational activities in Texas or deemed exempt from needing to be approved/licensed by the Texas agencies mentioned above. The THECB and/or TWC process must precede the Board approval process.

Once the appropriate documents are submitted to the Board, the process of approval may take up to four months. A completed application, approval fee (Rule 223.1[20]), and required supporting documentation must be submitted to the BON office. The credentials for the individual(s), representing the program in Texas, shall be equivalent to credentials required in Texas BON Rule 214 or Rule 215.

If an out-of-state program is approved, the program is required to submit any changes to the information originally submitted for approval. All new/updated requests must be submitted prior to beginning clinical learning experiences.

For detailed information, please see the Education Guideline (to be updated soon) on the Board website addressing the approval process.

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## Variations on Clinical Learning Activities

The experiences during and after the global pandemic have opened the door for innovation and thinking about what constitutes clinical experiences for nursing education.

Questions have arisen such as:

- How many clinical hours are adequate to prepare a competent nurse to enter practice?
- How much high-fidelity is optimal for a nursing education program?
- What alternate clinical settings can we include in programs?

### **THESE ARE BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF POSSIBILITIES FOR NURSING CLINICALS:**

#### Clinical Partnerships:

Academic-Practice partnerships were encouraged during the pandemic when a critical need for nursing care in hospitals arose. The arrangement includes a clinical agreement that places a qualified student in a mixed role of student nurse and team member, serving the needs for the learning experience and nursing care as part of the staff. The student may be paid wages by the hospital but remains a student. Agreement between the program and the clinical setting includes:

- Scheduling that meets facility needs while allowing the student to fulfill clinical objectives;
- Consideration of the class schedules;
- Trained preceptors in the facility;
- Plans for faculty oversight of the experience; and
- Agreement on responsibilities for any errors.

#### Department of Labor Apprenticeship Program:

- With Department of Labor Approval of the clinical setting and the nursing program, selected students provide required hours (2000/year) as working members in the clinical setting in a student apprentice role while they continue with regular nursing curriculum. This requires faculty and preceptor involvement in a schedule that allows the student to complete the nursing program.
- This model involves the Texas Workforce Commission who handles managing the DOL funding.
- The program will likely be lengthened but the student usually has tuition paid and earns wages.

#### Observation Experiences:

- These are experiences where the student is assigned to follow a health care professional in a facility or unit to observe activities within the facility/unit and or the role of nursing within the facility/unit, but where the student does not participate in hands-on patient/client care. Observation experiences should meet clinical learning objectives. Observation experiences should not be a major part of the clinical time but can be valuable adjuncts.

#### Traditional Scheduled Clinical Assignments:

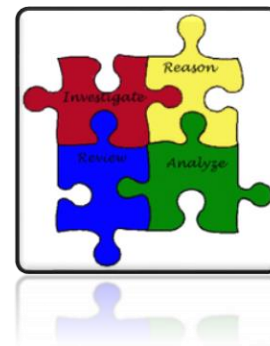
Contracted scheduled times for clinical groups in hospitals or other clinical settings with a qualified faculty member supervising 10 students for six or eight weeks. Patients are assigned and students provide the nursing care for the time slot. A post-conference may be held on the unit at the end of the clinical time where students share their experiences about providing nursing care to their assigned patients during the shift.

There are numerous other clinical possibilities. Education Consultants invite faculty to provide other successful ideas for clinical learning experiences. [\(back to topics\)](#)

## Exercising Sound Clinical Judgment – Tips for Students

### Looking for Cues (Clues)

- What is the assessment telling me about this patient?
- What else do I need to know?
- Does the assessment match information in the chart and in the report?
- What patient concerns and questions do I hear?
- What information is shared by the family?



### Analyzing Cues

- What is most important?
- What do I determine is URGENT? IMPORTANT BUT NOT URGENT?
- What nursing interventions would be appropriate for the patient?
- Do the orders in the chart seem appropriate for the cues?

### Hypotheses

- What hypotheses for nursing interventions come from an analysis of the cues?
- What medical orders are consistent with the hypotheses and deserve priority?
- What nursing interventions shall be planned? What is the order or preference?

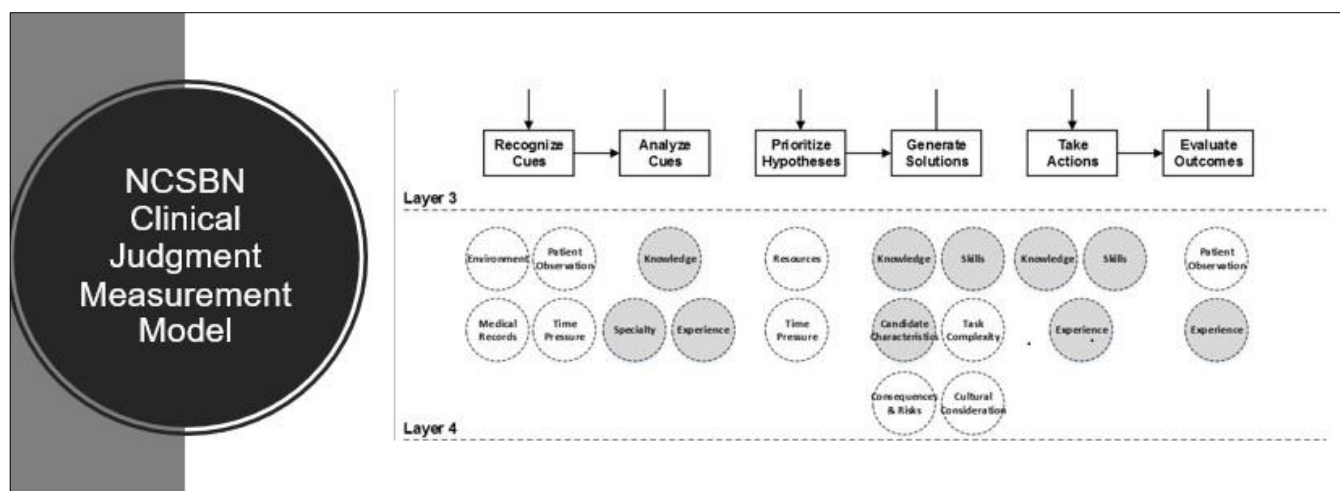
### Take Action

- Proceed with nursing care and medical orders, carefully observing for any new clues or responses to interventions.
- Retrieve necessary equipment and document care given.

### Evaluating the Outcomes

- What were the outcomes for nursing care, procedures, medications, and nursing actions?
- What else is needed for the patient?
- What are the cues at this new point?
- What is the patient communicating verbally or nonverbally?
- What actions are next from new cues, new information?

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## The Texas Two-Step! . . .

### It's NEPIS/CANEP Time!

The purpose of the **Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS)** is to collect data on the



supply of nursing students and faculty in Texas. The data will assist the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies, the Texas Board of Nursing, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, as well as other state organizations and the legislature, in projecting the future workforce needs of nursing education programs in the state. The Faculty Profile, an essential element of the NEPIS, captures data related to all individuals employed as of September 30, 2023, as nursing faculty even though their salaries may be paid from a number of schools of nursing revenue sources.

The **Compliance Audit for Nursing Education Programs (CANEP)** is an audit to measure a program's compliance with the Texas Board of Nursing rules and regulations governing nursing education in Texas. The CANEP also includes a Supplemental Survey designed to collect data on non-nursing faculty, clinical teaching assistants, program support faculty, in-state clinical sites, out-of-state clinical sites, and a curriculum analysis. During odd-numbered years, both the NEPIS and CANEP are distributed, whereas in even-numbered years, only the NEPIS is disseminated. Since the year is 2023, it is the **Texas Two-Step!**

The 2023 VN-NEPIS, 2023 VN-CANEP, 2023 RN-NEPIS, 2023 RN-CANEP, and 2023 preliminary materials have been distributed via e-mail communication to all program deans and directors. Please utilize the provided worksheets to gather and organize information before electronic data entry. The online survey will be active from **October 2, 2023, through October 13, 2023.** [\(back to topics\)](#)

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## A Reminder to Nursing Programs

Please check your Faculty & Student Handbooks and change the Texas Board of Nursing's address to our new address:



**Texas Board of Nursing  
1801 Congress Avenue,  
Suite 10-200  
Austin, Texas 78701**

The phone numbers remain unchanged.

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## Nursing Students with Disabilities

The Education consultants are often asked by directors about students with disabilities. I wanted to share with you information that we obtained at one of our NCSBN Education



meetings. The guest speaker was Karen McCulloh, the co-founder and co-director of the National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities (NOND) and four members of the NOND Board of Directors and one member of their Advisory Committee. They spoke to us about students with disabilities and their organization. I was not aware of this organization and it truly gave me a new perspective about nursing students with disabilities. I have since reached out to Dr. McCulloh when a faculty member had a very serious automobile accident, and the support was overwhelming. I encourage everyone to take the opportunity to go to their website [www.nond.org](http://www.nond.org) I believe that you will have a totally different perspective once you have visited their website.

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## For Affidavit of Graduation (AOG) Questions

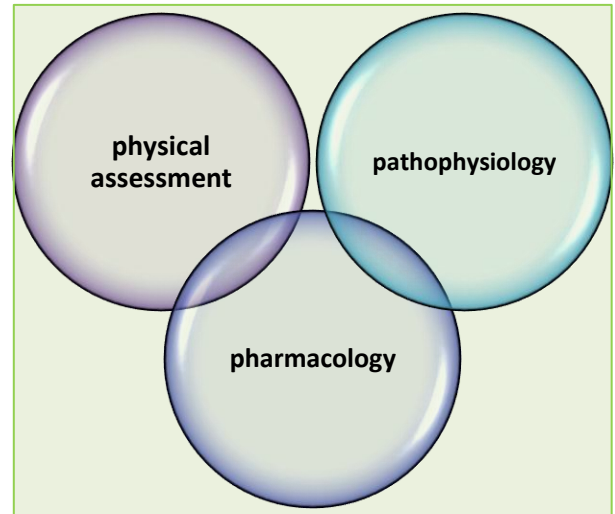
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## APRN Education Reminder: The 3 P's

Board Rule 221.3 sets forth the education requirements for licensure as an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) in the State of Texas. All applicants for licensure, including those seeking licensure by endorsement as well as those applying for licensure in an additional role and/or population focus must provide evidence of meeting the education requirements specified in this rule. The rule includes a requirement for separate, dedicated graduate level courses in advanced health **(physical) assessment**, advanced **pharmacology**, and advanced **pathophysiology** that are often referred to as the 3 Ps [see Board Rule 221.3(f)(1)] that is consistent with national standards for APRN education. Applicants who complete additional education in a different APRN role and/or population focus are evaluated based on the education requirements in effect at the time the applicant completed the new education program. This is not a new rule nor is this a new application of the rule requirements; rather, the requirement for dedicated courses for these content areas has been included in Board Rule since it became effective in 1998 and has been consistently enforced by Board staff when applications for licensure are reviewed.



When students are granted credit for prior learning, it is incumbent upon program faculty to ensure that each student has completed appropriate graduate level courses in advanced assessment, pathophysiology, and pharmacotherapeutics. Recently, Board staff have noted some situations in which students were given credit for prior learning for courses that did not meet the requirements of Board Rule. One example seen is credit given for integrated courses. Board staff often see courses in pathophysiology integrated with pharmacology in education tracks designed to prepare nurses to practice in advanced nursing roles that do not lead to APRN licensure. While this is acceptable for nurses in these roles, it is not acceptable for graduates of APRN education tracks. Those students who completed integrated pathophysiology and/or pharmacotherapeutics courses must complete separate, dedicated graduate level courses in these content areas to be eligible for APRN licensure.

Board staff have also noted some concerns related to advanced assessment courses. One example that staff have seen with some frequency is credit given for a limited population-focused assessment course for a student who is completing formal education in a broader or different population focus area. For example, a student who completed an advanced pediatric assessment course in a master's level pediatric nurse practitioner program completed additional education leading to licensure in a population focus across the lifespan. However, no additional coursework was required related to assessment of adults. Other concerns related to advanced assessment include credit given for assessment courses that were not considered appropriate for APRN track students by the program that offered the course.

Board staff understand that in some cases, admissions officers who are not qualified faculty may be reviewing applications and determining whether credit for prior learning will be awarded. It is important for faculty to be able to review these determinations before a student completes an APRN program to ensure all education requirements for licensure are met. If questions arise regarding the Board's requirements, faculty and staff are welcome to contact the APRN Office at [aprn@bon.texas.gov](mailto:aprn@bon.texas.gov) to discuss these issues with Board staff. [\(back to topics\)](#)

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## Certificates of Approval

Texas Board of Nursing *Certificates of Approval* are e-mailed to all Board approved program directors during May of even-numbered years by Jackie Ballesteros. These documents are suitable for framing! The timing of this distribution is designed to follow formal Board approval of the NCLEX pass rates at each April quarterly Board meeting and after the Board's IT Department has updated the Board website to indicate the program's approval status.



If you have any questions or concerns about the *Certificates of Approval*, please contact your assigned Education Consultant. When the consultants conduct a face-to-face survey visit and see the documents framed and prominently displayed in the program's reception area, we are delighted!

This process is set forth in Board Rule 214.4/215.4, as stated below:

Ongoing Approval Procedures. Ongoing approval status is determined biennially by the Board on the basis of information reported or provided in the program's NEPIS and CANEP, NCLEX examination pass rates, program compliance with this chapter, and other program outcomes. Certificates of Board approval will be e-mailed to all Board-approved nursing programs biennially in even-numbered years.

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