

Introduction and Purpose

This document outlines seven requisite skills and abilities to meet *Standards and Foundation Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses* (2007) and for successful completion of a generalist nursing education program. The standards and foundation competencies are incorporated into the curriculum of nursing education programs. All basic nursing education programs in Saskatchewan are approved by the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association (SRNA). In addition to the completion of an approved nursing education program students will also need to pass the Canadian Registered Nurse Exam to be eligible for licensure and registration. This document has been designed to assist prospective nursing students, guidance counselors, and educational institutions in understanding the demands necessary and the required capacities needed for the practice of registered nursing.

As defined in *The Registered Nurses Act* (1988) the "practice of registered nursing means the performance of co-ordination of health care services including but not limited to: observing and assessing the health status of clients and planning, implementing and evaluating nursing care; and the counseling, teaching, supervision, administration and research that is required to implement or complement health care services; for the purpose of promoting, maintaining or restoring health, preventing illness and alleviating suffering where the performance or co-ordination of those services requires the knowledge, skill or judgment of a person who qualifies for registration" (p. 2). The SRNA has set out the standards and foundation competencies as "the criteria against which all registered nurses [(RNs)], practicing in all domains of nursing practice (direct care, education, administration, and research, and the evolving domain of policy) will be measured by clients, employers, colleagues, and themselves" (p.3). The establishment of minimum requirements ensures that RNs in Saskatchewan are competent, caring, knowledge-based practitioners.

Requisite Skills and Abilities (RSAs)

In Saskatchewan, "registered nurses practice safely, competently, and ethically along the continuum of health care in situations of health and illness with people of all ages and in a variety of contexts throughout the lifespan" (SRNA, 2007, p.6). Entry into the practice of registered nursing is as a generalist. The SRNA believes the outlined requisite skills and abilities are foundational to being able to meet the standards and foundation competencies for practice and are necessary for all initial applicants.

The following seven categories of requisite skills and abilities were developed by the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (CRNBC), adopted and modified by the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia (CRNNS) and adopted by the SRNA:

Cognitive

1. Remember information over a brief period of time
2. Remember information from past experiences
3. Problem-solve to develop professional judgment
4. Reason to develop professional judgment
5. Exercise critical inquiry* skills to develop professional judgment
6. Apply mathematical skills and abilities in order to: add, subtract, multiply and divide, calculate ratios, percentages and apply algebraic equations

*This term expands the meaning of critical thinking to encompass critical reflection on actions. Critical inquiry means a process of purposive thinking and reflective reasoning where practitioners examine ideas, assumptions, principles, conclusions, beliefs and actions in the context of nursing practice.

Examples: The student can make sense of complex knowledge; use knowledge and theory appropriately; use past experience to inform current decision making.

Behavioural

1. Manage own behaviour well enough to provide safe, competent and ethical nursing care
2. Engage with self and others to create a safe environment
3. Respond appropriately in situations that are stressful or that involve conflict
4. React appropriately to giving and receiving physical touch and working in close proximity with a full range of clients
5. Fulfill responsibility as part of a team
6. Manage time appropriately

Examples: The student remains calm in stressful situations; recognizes client priorities; and responds appropriately in conflict situations.

Communication

1. Speak and understand spoken English well enough to avoid mixing up words and meanings: includes the ability to understand complex medical and technical knowledge
2. Write and understand written English well enough to avoid mixing up words and meanings
3. Recognize own non-verbal signals and interpret those received from others while considering individual differences in expression and associated meaning

Examples: The student recognizes her/his own non-verbal behaviour; demonstrates awareness that each individual's behaviour has different meanings; listens appropriately to clients.

Interpersonal

1. Develop professional relationships and rapport with individuals and groups for the purpose of education, support and counseling
2. Recognize the needs of clients and colleagues
3. Recognize the importance of maintaining interpersonal boundaries

Examples: The student recognizes the importance of maintaining interpersonal boundaries with clients; supports clients to make healthy choices; recognizes the importance of client perspectives and feelings.

Physical

Ability to perform each of the following requisites well enough to provide client care and participate in educational activities:

1. Stand and maintain balance
2. Manual dexterity
3. Move within limited spaces
4. Push and pull
5. Perform repetitive movements
6. Perform complex sequences of hand eye coordination
7. Bend
8. Reach
9. Lift
10. Walk
11. Climb
12. Carry objects

Examples: The student can carry a case weighing 8 kg up a flight of stairs; give intramuscular injections; remove wound sutures.

Sensory Perceptual

Ability to perceive with each of the following senses well enough to provide care and participate in educational activities:

1. Sight
2. Hearing
3. Touch
4. Smell

Examples: The student can accurately assess blood pressure and pulse; read the small print on medication packages and bottles; and assess client colour; perceive changes in odors of bodily fluids.

Environmental

Ability to function in the presence of each of the following commonly encountered and unavoidable environmental factors:

1. Noxious smells
2. Disease agents
3. Distractions
4. Noise
5. Chemicals
6. Unpredictable behaviour in others

Examples: The student can recognize dangers in the client environment; tolerate disposing of body waste; and tolerate unpleasant odors.

Individuals considering a career as a RN should review this document and assess their ability to meet the criteria. The requisite skills and abilities serve as a benchmark, outlining the requirements to meet the minimum standard necessary to ensure public safety. The SRNA supports an equitable process, at the educational institution accommodation may assist a person in meeting the outlined criteria, “accommodation is the process of making changes or adjustments that eliminate discriminatory barriers to equal participation and enjoyment of opportunities in employment, education, public services and other areas covered by the *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. Accommodation means focusing on inclusion and flexibility rather than just one way of doing things” (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2009, p.3). Prospective applicants with a disability are entitled to reasonable accommodation provided that accommodation does not compromise patient safety and well being. “Accommodation does not require that post secondary institutions lower academic or non-academic standards to accommodate students with disabilities [or] relieve the student of the responsibility to develop the essential skills and competencies expected of all students” (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2010, p.3). This criteria does not preclude people with disabilities (defined by Section 2(d.1) of the *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*). If the need for accommodation is anticipated students should contact the educational institution where they are applying. Concerns regarding suitability may be made to the education program where the prospective student intends to apply. Appeals of the decisions of educational institutions can be made to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.

Conclusion

Basic registered nursing education programs prepare graduates for a variety of roles and settings. "Today's practice realities require that RNs possess the necessary knowledge, skill, and judgment to successfully adapt to changes in healthcare and nursing" (SRNA, 2007, p.3). Prospective students must possess a broad range of skills and abilities in order to be successful in the completion of an approved basic nursing program and initial registration and licensure.

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