



FACT SHEET

Registration Exam Facts

What is the purpose of a registration exam?

As the province's nursing regulator, the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARNNL) is accountable to the public to ensure that RN's have the knowledge, skill and judgment to practice competently and safe. As part of a robust set of requirements specified in legislation an applicant must meet to become a RN in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL); ARNNL requires the applicant to have passed an exam selected and approved by ARNNL Council. Applicants include NL graduates, Canadian graduates and internationally educated nurses (IEN's).

Do other health care professionals have a registration exam?

Registration exams are required by law in the nursing profession (e.g. LPN, NP) and several other health professions (e.g. medicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, chiropractors, and dental); many of which require a clinical exam (OSCE).

Describe the relationship between a registration exam, ARNNL's nursing education approval and Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing's (CASN) accreditation program?

The registration exam is a standardized exam each regulator uses to determine whether a candidate is prepared for entry-level nursing practice independent of the nursing program. As the regulator, the entry-to-practice exam is not to test all content delivered in the four-year curriculum. The exam tests whether the candidate has the knowledge, skill and judgement to provide safe competent care expected of a RN during the first 12 months of practice.

Through the RN Act, ARNNL has been granted authority to approve nursing education programs for the purposes of registration and licensure. Registration and licensure are a two-pronged process; therefore, applicants must graduate from an approved nursing program and pass the registration examination. In Canada, basic nursing education programs are evaluated by a provincially regulated approval program and a national voluntary accreditation program through the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN).

ARNNL's approval program is founded on the premise that nursing education is central to promoting good nursing practice and preventing poor practice in the public interest. Therefore, it is an integral part of the licensure process. The approval program assures the basic nursing education program's structures and curriculum includes standards of practice, ethics, competencies required by new graduates, and is compliant with the regulations.

The mission of CASN Accreditation Program is to lead nursing education and nursing scholarship. It does this by fostering the highest standards of professional nursing education, promoting research and innovation that enhance the quality of nursing and health care (CASN, 2012). CASN believes accreditation promotes excellence in education units and nursing education programs. It offers an objective method of assessment of an educational institution and/or programs to determine strengths, vulnerabilities, and opportunities for further development.

What is the regulator's role in the selection of a registration exam?

ARNNL Council is the only authority mandated by law to regulate entry into registered nurse practice in NL. It is the role and within the authority of ARNNL Council to select and implement a registration exam which tests specific competencies the Canadian RN needs to practice safe on their first day of practice.

ARNNL worked with other provincial and territorial regulators for over 10 years to find areas for improvement and ways to incorporate state of the art best practices in a registration exam. This review laid the foundation for a thorough business case and Request for Proposal (RFP) process that was reviewed by an independent third party. The process resulted in ARNNL Council choosing the NCLEX-RN as the exam that can best test RN applicants' readiness for entry to practice.

Is the current registration exam (NCLEX – RN) an American exam?

The same NCLEX-RN exam is used for Canadian and U.S. entry to nursing practice. The exam, developed by the National Council State Board of Nursing (NCSBN), is a test of the competencies deemed necessary for a RN starting in the profession to provide safe care. However, it does not test the writer's knowledge of a specific health care system, history or legislation. The exam's continuous, multi-layered review processes include Canadian representatives (inclusive of educators) at each stage. All new items are administered as pretest items to NCLEX-RN writers. This rigorous process ensures that the NCLEX - RN is free from biases that would impede a Canadian writer's success. For more information on various reviews, visit www.arnnl.ca/information-nclex-rn

How was it determined the NCLEX – RN was reflective of Canadian national nurse competencies?

To ensure the NCLEX - RN would be reflective of the Canadian national nurse competencies, in 2009 Canadian educated nursing candidates in British Columbia and Ontario completed a survey requiring candidates to rate nursing activity statements on how important and how frequently they are performed in Canada. The results of the survey firmly suggested that entry – level RNs in BC and Ontario and the U.S. view entry - level practice similarly.

In 2013, a comparative analysis was conducted by NCSBN of the RN Practice Analysis, the RN Knowledge, Skills, and Ability Survey (KSA), and the integrated processes outlined in the RN Test Plan. 151 entry- level RNs in NL were invited to participate and 36 responded. Results indicate 93.10% of the NL RN competencies possessed a one-to-one relationship with an NCSBN activity statement, KSA statement or integrated process. Only two specific competency categories reflected the presence of less than 93% one-to-one relationships. Five competency categories were reported to have 100% one-to-one match across competencies. Those competency categories that reflected direct client care represented the largest overall percentage of one-to-one competency agreement between NCSBN and Canada nursing care.

The evidence from the analysis indicates that the NCLEX-RN is a suitable assessment of competencies taught in Canadian nursing educational programs. For more information, visit:

[Report on Canadian -NCSBN Entry-Level RN Competency Statement Comparison....pdf](#)

[NCSBN Response Letter RN Competency Comparison.pdf](#)

Is there a process to evaluate the exam validity on an ongoing basis?

A Practice Analysis (i.e. job analysis) to evaluate the validity of the test plan that guides the content and distribution of the NCLEX-RN licensure examination is completed by NCSBN on a three -year cycle and was most recently was completed in 2017. The study demonstrated there was evidence to support the validity of the 142 activity statements included in the test plan. The study included a sample of Canadian RNs who had written NCLEX-RN as the entry to practice exam between April 15, 2016 and March 15, 2017 as well as participation of Subject Matter Experts from Canada. Canadian respondents to the 2017 RN Practice Analysis found the activities listed in the survey to be representative of the work they performed in their practice settings. NL graduates were part of the sample and 29.9% of those invited responded, the overall response rate of all Canadian participants was 37.2%.

For more information, visit: https://www.ncsbn.org/17_RN_US_Canada_Practice_Analysis.pdf

Is the NCLEX – RN's content reviewed by Canadian nurses?

Canadian registered nurses have been and will continue to be involved in the NCLEX – RN Item Development Program (e.g. item writing, item review and expert panels) to ensure it meets the public's needs for safe nursing care and is testing the current knowledge, skills, and judgement to provide safe competent care. Since 2013:

- 63 RN's volunteered for NCLEX related activities. 15 of the 63 volunteers have participated in NCLEX related activities. (including a member who participated in the 2017 Practice Analyses as a Subject Matter Expert.)
- In 2013, 2014 and 2016, NL new graduates participated in a practice analysis which informs the test plan.
- Since 2015, ARNNL staff have completed a yearly review of NCLEX items to identify any conflict with our legislation and entry level competencies.

Questions regarding the registration exam may be directed to registration@arnnl.ca

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