



FACT SHEET

NCLEX-RN: One Step in Ensuring Safe Care (2015)

What is the NCLEX-RN?

The National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN) is an examination for the registration of nurses. It tests the competencies nurses need at the beginning of their careers.

Who has to take it?

Anyone applying to practise as a registered nurse in Newfoundland and Labrador must pass the NCLEX-RN exam as well as meet additional requirements to become a member of the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARNNL).

Why do we need it?

Ultimately, we need it for patient safety. As the regulator of the nursing profession in Newfoundland and Labrador, ARNNL is accountable for ensuring that registrations are granted to only those who demonstrate the ability to apply nursing knowledge and provide safe care. The exam is one of the requirements specified in legislation.

What is it testing?

The exam tests whether an applicant to the nursing profession has the knowledge, skill and judgment needed to provide safe care to the public. For example, the exam tells us whether an applicant is able to: assess and respond to changes in vital signs; perform comprehensive health assessments; assess a client's need for pain management; perform calculations needed to safely administer medications; and maintain client confidentiality and privacy.

How was it developed?

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) developed the NCLEX-RN test to be a psychometrically sound and legally defensible examination consistent with current nursing practice. Canadian nurses from the 10 provinces/territories using the test participated in the development of the NCLEX-RN currently in use. They will continue to participate in its review to ensure it meets the needs of regulators. The exam portal is administered by computer-based testing provider Pearson VUE.

Is it an American test?

The same NCLEX-RN exam is used for Canadian and U.S. entry to nursing practice. While the exam was originally developed by the NCSBN, it is a test of the competencies deemed necessary for a nurse — starting in the profession — to provide safe care. It does not test the writer's knowledge of a particular health care system, history or legislation. The exam's continuous, multi-layered review processes include Canadian representatives 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.

How were applicants tested before this?

Applicants were tested using the Canadian Registered Nurses Exam (CRNE), a paper-based exam administered three times a year by Assessment Strategies Inc.

Why did we change?

Regulators regularly review processes for assessing knowledge in order to determine which assessment approach is most accessible, fair and efficient. The NCLEX-RN met our requirement for being a valid, secure and psychometrically sound exam that also met the needs of writers, such as year-round access to the exam and faster issuing of exam results.

What is being done to ensure students have what they need to take the test?

A Canadian nursing education should prepare a student to write the NCLEX-RN since the exam is testing the competencies agreed upon and set by the regulatory bodies of Canada, and upon which nursing schools base their curriculum. Resources for students are referenced on ARNNL's website and available through NCSBN, including [Test Plans](#) and information about computer-adaptive testing ([CAT](#)), which is the format of the exam.

What happens if a writer fails?

Provincial legislation determines the frequency of writes allowed in a jurisdiction. The Registered Nurses Regulations were amended on September 20, 2016, changing the specified number of attempts on the RN registration exam to an unspecified number that may be attempted within the period of provisional registration. If a writer fails, they receive information about how they performed in each test area of the exam. They can use this information to create study plans that focus on the areas of the exam on which they under-performed. They can also consult the [exam resources](#) on the NCSBN's website.

What information was provided to educators and schools?

Canadian regulators announced the change to the NCLEX-RN in 2011, allowing three years to prepare for the exam's launch on January 1, 2015. Throughout that time, students and educators had access to several resources through ARNNL and NCSBN to prepare for the exam. These resources included: webinars, regularly updated FAQs, a quarterly NCLEX-RN newsletter, a series of conferences organized by NCSBN, and NCSBN links to resources, such as [Test Plans](#), information about computer-adaptive testing ([CAT](#)), and an online course, [Understanding the NCLEX](#).