

2015

APPROVAL PROCESS FOR NURSE PRACTITIONER EDUCATION PROGRAMS



Association of
Registered Nurses
of Newfoundland
and Labrador



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the professional self-regulating responsibilities of the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARNNL) is to approve nursing education programs that prepare Registered Nurses for licensure as Nurse Practitioners. This authority is derived from the *Registered Nurses Act* (2008) section 11. (1)(h) which states:

The Council may, with the approval of the minister, make regulations respecting the approval of nursing education programs for the purposes of registration and licensing;

Through the approval process, ARNNL strives to promote excellence in nursing practice by ensuring the nurse practitioner education program is preparing graduates to achieve the entry level competencies to practice as nurse practitioners.

The approval process is based on the premise that nursing education is central to promoting excellence in nursing practice and preventing unsafe nursing practice in the public interest. ARNNL values the role of nursing education in developing and upholding the integrity of nursing as a self-regulating profession. The approval process is grounded in the belief that systematic self-evaluation and external peer evaluation provides for the enhancement of quality education, provides assurance of program improvement and contributes to the improvement of nurse practitioner practice.

The approval process selected shall be appropriate to the nature of the program (e.g., an established program, new program, or substantially changed program). The Education Advisory Committee (EAC) is authorized by Council to select the process appropriate to the program.

The *Approval Process for Nurse Practitioner Education Programs* outlines the standards, criteria and processes approved by ARNNL. The following documents were used in developing the standards for nurse practitioner education:

- *The Registered Nurses Act (2008),*
- *The Registered Nurses Regulations (2013),*
- *Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses (2013),*
- *Standards for Nurse Practitioner Practice in Newfoundland & Labrador (2013),*
- *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses (2008),*
- *Canadian Nurse Practitioner Core Competency Framework (2010),*
- *Nurse Practitioner Education in Canada. National Framework of Guiding Principles & Essential Components. Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (2012).*

The nurse practitioner education standards must be met for nursing education programs to obtain the designation of an “approved nurse practitioner education program” in Newfoundland and Labrador. The criteria define the outcomes which must be achieved in order to meet each education standard. If alternate criterion is proposed, the School of Nursing shall clearly indicate which of the existing criterion it is intended to replace and all proposed criterion must be supported by evidence. It is the responsibility of the education program to provide evidence to demonstrate that the nursing education standards are met or will be met.



2.0 STANDARDS FOR NURSE PRACTITIONER EDUCATION

The *Standards for Nurse Practitioner Education Programs* are measurable, achievable benchmarks against which Nurse Practitioner education programs are assessed and evaluated for the purpose of determining program approval status. There are four Standards for Nurse Practitioner Education Programs: *program, curriculum, students, and graduates.*

Standard I: Program

The nursing education **program** has sufficient structures and resources (human, clinical, physical and fiscal) to support students to achieve the entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.

Criteria

- 1.1 There is support for, and interest in the nurse practitioner education program from the educational institution, government, employers and the public.
- 1.2 There are structures and processes (e.g. policies and procedures, organizational, clinical, technical, library, etc.) in place to achieve program goals and objectives.
- 1.3 Faculty (theoretical and clinical) qualifications and clinical expertise are congruent with student and program goals and objectives (e.g. nurse practitioners teaching advanced nursing practice course, etc.).
- 1.4 Partnerships with key stakeholder groups are in place to assist with the planning and evaluation of learning and clinical experiences.
- 1.5 Consumers of health care, practitioners, students and employers are provided with opportunities to participate in achieving and evaluating program outcomes.
- 1.6 Ongoing program evaluation results are used to guide program and curriculum revisions.



Standard II: Curriculum

The **curriculum** of nurse practitioner education shall provide learning experiences necessary for students to achieve the entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.

Criteria

- 2.1 The program philosophy, mission, curriculum framework and goals are congruent with the standards of practice for registered nurses and nurse practitioners and the entry level competencies for nurse practitioners.
- 2.2 The entry level competencies are integrated throughout the curriculum (e.g. theory, clinical, technology, simulation, etc.).
- 2.3 The objectives and expected outcomes reflect the competencies required for entry level nurse practitioners in meeting the needs of a client population in the chosen stream of practice.
- 2.4 Curriculum, teaching and learning activities address the current and emerging trends and realities in health care, nursing practice, nursing education and research.
- 2.5 Learning activities (e.g. technology/distance or onsite courses, laboratory work, clinical practice, simulation and teaching strategies) support the achievement of program goals and outcomes.
- 2.6 Learning experiences include interprofessional education.
- 2.7 There is systematic and ongoing evaluation of all curriculum (technology/distance and onsite) including content, learning activities, student evaluation methods, and program outcomes to ensure ongoing development and enrichment of the curriculum.
- 2.8 Clinical learning activities and clinical placements provide opportunities for students to meet the program goals and outcomes and the entry level competencies.
- 2.9 Nurse practitioner faculty advisors supervise clinical placements.
- 2.10 There are methods to track and monitor clinical hours and placements to ensure students have clinical experience in a variety of settings.



Standard III: Students

Students in nurse practitioner education programs are provided with opportunities to demonstrate progress toward achieving entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.

- 3.1 Students are informed of ARNNL's requirements for nurse practitioner licensure and practice.
- 3.2 Policies and procedures are included in the university calendar (e.g. student selection, promotion, withdrawal, appeals and failure, etc.) and are communicated to students.
- 3.3 Data on student progress and program completion are collected, analyzed, and used to guide program decisions and outcomes.
- 3.4 Students are supported in meeting program objectives, entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.
- 3.5 Students have access to resources and opportunities to attain and demonstrate entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.
- 3.6 Students have access to services that strengthen the student's potential (e.g. technology, learning support services, counselling, health services, learning resources and financial aid, etc.).
- 3.7 Students are active participants in developing learning needs, planning learning activities, and appraising progress toward achieving course objectives, program goals and nurse practitioner entry level competencies.
- 3.8 Student clinical placements are designed, selected and evaluated to meet curriculum and program outcomes entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.
- 3.9 Student's courses and clinical placement are leveled and/or sequenced to provide learning experiences to ensure that students meet the entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.
- 3.10 Students are evaluated by nurse practitioner faculty and/or preceptors during clinical placements.
- 3.11 Clinical hours reflect national and jurisdictional practices and/or standards and are satisfactory to allow graduates to achieve curriculum/program objectives and entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.
- 3.12 Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that student's progress toward achievement of the entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice are evaluated.



Standard IV: Graduates

Nurse practitioner education programs prepare **graduates** to practice according to the entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.

- 4.1 Prior to graduating, evaluative processes provide evidence that graduates have met the entry level competencies and standards, course objectives and program outcomes required for nurse practitioner practice.
- 4.2 Graduates successfully meet all ARNNL requirements for licensure in the chosen nurse practitioner stream of practice.
- 4.3 Data is collected and analyzed on the graduates' ability to meet requirements for licensure, standards and entry level competencies required in the chosen stream of practice.
- 4.4 Feedback from graduates, employers, and the public provide evidence that program graduates are meeting the standards for safe, competent and ethical nurse practitioner practice.



3.0 THE EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EAC)

The EAC's role in the approval process is to ensure that an assessment of nursing education programs offered in NL is conducted at intervals approved by Council and validate the school of nursing's compliance with the education standards.

4.0 APPROVAL PROCESS

The process chosen shall be appropriate to the nature of the program (e.g. established program, new program, or a substantively changed program). The Education Approval Committee (EAC) is authorized by ARNNL Council to select the process appropriate to the program. If educational institutions are part of a collaborative/partnership arrangement in which the partners share a curriculum, one report will be submitted that identifies the contributions of each institution.

Overview

1. The ARNNL will notify the Dean/Director of the School of Nursing offering Nurse Practitioner education program(s) of the dates for the review/approval process. At least six months' notice will be given prior to the onsite visit.
2. The EAC provides ARNNL Council with the names of individuals selected by the committee as members of the review team. Council approves the review team.
3. A self-assessment of the Nurse Practitioner education program in relation to the *Standards for Nurse Practitioner Education* is completed by the School of Nursing and submitted to ARNNL at six (6) weeks prior to the onsite review.
4. ARNNL in collaboration with the School of Nursing, prepares a schedule for the review team and a date for the onsite visit.
5. ARNNL in collaboration with the EAC assumes responsibility for the orientation of the review team.
6. The review team examines the self-assessment report(s) and advises the EAC if there is additional information/documentation required from the School of Nursing.
7. The review team visits the School of Nursing and other settings (as required) to clarify, gather, and validate the self-assessment data with the appropriate program representatives.
8. The review team may provide the education program representatives with a summary of its observations.
9. The review team submits a report to the EAC three (3) weeks following the onsite visit.
10. The EAC reviews the report and prepares recommendation(s) on approval status to Council.
11. Council makes the final decision of the approval status of the nurse practitioner education program under review.
12. Council notifies the Dean/Director of the education program's final approval status.



Review Team Criteria

The Program Review Team will:

- Review the self-assessment report(s) and documents provided by the School of Nursing.
- Conduct the site visit (e.g., interviews, observations, document reviews, etc.).
- Collect and document data for the purpose of assessing program compliance with the education standards and related criteria for nurse practitioner education programs.
- Following review of the self-assessment report and the onsite visit, provide program faculty with a summary of observations gathered during the onsite visit.
- Confirm with supporting evidence that the standards and related criteria have been met by the program.
- Prepare a (written) report, including recommendations, for the EAC within three (3) weeks of the onsite visit.
- Be available to the EAC to clarify findings in the report.

Members of the Program Review Team are selected for their expertise in nurse practitioner education, practice and program evaluation. The leader of the team is responsible for coordinating the activities of the team and communicating with the ARNNL and the EAC as required.

The EAC will select two registered nurses from outside Newfoundland & Labrador and not employed in a NL School of Nursing, one of whom will be the team leader.

Team leader:

- a) A minimum of a master's degree in nursing (doctorate in nursing preferred).
- b) A minimum of five years recent or current teaching experience in a nurse practitioner program equivalent to the nurse practitioner education program under review.
- c) Experience in nursing education program evaluation.

Nurse Practitioner member:

- a) A master's degree in nursing.
- b) Recent teaching experience in a nurse practitioner education program.
- c) Recent clinical practice as a nurse practitioner.

The members of the Program Review Team will conduct the review process in an impartial manner and refrain from acting as consultants to or advocates for the program during the review process.

Review of Program Self-Assessment Report(s)

Each member of the Program Review Team will receive a copy of the self-assessment report prepared by the School of Nursing at least six (6) weeks before the onsite visit. The report introduces the team to the education program, and contains documentation to which the School of Nursing deems the program is meeting the education standards. Each member of the Review Team will independently review the submission from the education program for relevance, clarity, and consistency.

The Program Review Team will meet within 14 days following the receipt of the self-assessment report to:

- Discuss the report and documentation prepared by the School of Nursing.
- Determine if the program has addressed the criteria under each standard for the education program.
- Identify additional documentation required from the School of Nursing.
- Determine the focus of data collection during the site visit (i.e., formulating the interview questions and guidelines for observations).
- Determine team member responsibilities during onsite visit.
- Review onsite visit schedule, recommend changes as required, and confirm the schedule for the onsite visit.
- Schedule a meeting (if required), with the EAC



Review Team Onsite Visit

Based on the self-assessment report, the Review Team will decide the nature and extent of the site visit. The purpose of a site visit is to validate to what extent the extent the School of Nursing meets the education standards and related criteria for nurse practitioner education programs.

The sources of data collected during a site visit may include observations of teaching and learning strategies in clinical and onsite settings, interviews with students and faculty and documentation review.

Onsite visits may take place over a three to five day period depending on the decision of the Review Team in consultation with the EAC.

The schedule of activities for the Review Team may include:

- Meeting with the Program Chair and/or Dean/Director, faculty and student representatives.
- Meeting with university administration.
- Observing teaching and learning activities (traditional onsite and distance delivery) and interviewing faculty and staff.
- Observing and interviewing students in clinical practice settings.
- Meeting and interviewing staff and preceptors from clinical practice settings.
- Meeting and interviewing other relevant individuals.
- At the completion of the onsite visit, meeting with faculty and staff, to provide a summary of observations and an opportunity for faculty and staff to provide feedback.

The Program Review Team will meet at the end of each day of a site visit to complete documentation, discuss findings and identify additional requirements from the School of Nursing.

The Review Team will meet with ARNNL Resource and/or the chair of the EAC, on the last day of the site visit to provide the EAC with an overview of the onsite review.

5.0 NURSE PRACTITIONER PROGRAMS

5.1 An Established Nurse Practitioner Program

The School of Nursing will:

- Collaborate with the EAC in the development of a schedule and date for the onsite visit.
- Submit a self-assessment report(s) and documentation of program activities, accomplishments and outcomes to the EAC within six (6) months of receiving official notification from the ARNNL that the program will be reviewed.
- Select dates for the site visit at a time when the nurse practitioner program is being delivery and students are available to be interviewed (onsite and/or distance).
- Prepare a schedule for the site visit, ensuring that the review team has the opportunity to observe a diverse range of teaching and learning activities (e.g. onsite, laboratory, simulation, clinical settings, etc.).
- Arrange meetings and interviews with learners, health agencies personnel and others of the scheduled onsite visit.
- Provide documents and other materials as requested by the review team.
- Provide the EAC with feedback on the review and approval process.
- Act on recommendations made by the ARNNL's Council and report progress toward implementing recommendations in the SON annual report to the EAC.



5.2 New Nurse Practitioner Education Program

A new nurse practitioner education program is required to receive preliminary approval before admitting students to the program. The purpose of the preliminary approval is to assess the ability of the School of Nursing to deliver the proposed program including:

- a. Establishing the plan for addressing Standard I: Program and Standard III: Students.
- b. Determine if the intended curriculum meets the criteria in Standard II: Curriculum.

Nurse Practitioner Education Program shall receive preliminary approval by meeting Standard I: Program demonstrating progress toward meeting Standard Two: Curriculum and Standard III: Students.

The requirements for the preliminary approval process as outlined below are a modification of the full approval process, as follows:

- An educational institution proposing to offer a new Nurse Practitioners education program shall notify the ARNNL.
- The School of Nursing shall submit a self-assessment report(s). The report shall address (a) background information supporting the need for the program, (b) how and to what extent Standard II **Curriculum** is met, and (c) preliminary plans for addressing Standard I: **Program** and Standard III: **Students**.
- The EAC shall collaborate with the School of Nursing to schedule the specific date for submission and review of the self-assessment report(s).
- The EAC reviews the program's self-assessment report and seeks clarification as required about the educational program.
- The EAC will determine the progress towards meeting Standard I and the plan to address Standard II and III.
- The EAC discusses its assessment with the Dean/Director or appointed representative of the School of Nursing.
- The EAC submits a report and recommendation(s) to ARNNL Council regarding a preliminary approval for the educational program.

A program receiving preliminary approval must undergo an assessment for full approval in the academic year following the first class of graduates.

5.3 A Changing Program

The EAC will review information provided by the School of Nursing on a proposed change in the education program and will recommend the process to be followed. If a change is determined to be substantive but viewed as an enhancement, a review may not be required.

A School of Nursing shall advise the ARNNL if a substantive change is being proposed to the Nurse Practitioner Education Program.

- A substantive change is defined as change in the modification or revision of an approved nurse practitioner education program which may affect the program outcomes and the ability of graduates to achieve the entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.
- A substantive change in program philosophy, curriculum framework, goals, curricular outcomes, or curriculum.
- A change in program implementation.
- A change in program length.
- A change in resources (e.g. fiscal, clinical, etc.) that will have a direct impact on a school's ability to implement the approved nurse practitioner program.

Questions related to whether a change to a program is substantive shall be referred to ARNNL Council by The EAC and Council will make the final decision.



6.0 PROGRAM APPROVAL STATUS

To assist ARNNL Council in determining an approval status for a nurse practitioner education program, the EAC is required to provide Council with the following:

1. Program Approved

The rating granted to an educational program that has met the standards for nurse practitioner education or is progressing toward meeting all criteria. This approval status may be granted for a period of up to five (5) years.

- There is evidence of how the program processes, structures, and outcomes support the recommendation to grant *Program Approved* status.
- There may be recommendations to enhance specific aspects of the education program.

2. Preliminary Approval

The rating granted to a new nurse practitioner education program that has met Standard I: Program and demonstrates progress toward meeting Standard Two: Curriculum and Standard III: Students. Preliminary approval is required before admitting students to a program.

3. Conditional Approval

The rating granted to an educational program seeking approval to accept students, and has met Standard I and II and progressing toward achieving Standard III and IV; and when an existing education program that previously received *Program Approved* status is undergoing substantive changes that impact on the program's continued ability to meet the *Standards for Nurse Practitioner Education*.

Conditional approval is granted for a designated time period. The ARNNL Council makes recommendations to the School of Nursing regarding criteria that are not met or only partially met. The education program will be reassessed within a designated time period as established by Council, to determine if it meets the standards and criteria for approval.

Graduates of a nurse practitioner education program that have received *Conditional Approval* status will be considered graduates of an approved program and are deemed to have met the requirements for licensure as a nurse practitioner.

- There is evidence that Standard I and II are met and there is evidence of progress towards meeting Standard III and IV.
- There is specific conditions, timelines, and outcomes to demonstrate the program's progress in meeting Standard III and IV.

4. Approval Denied/Withdrawn

The rating granted to an education program that does not meet the *Standards for Nurse Practitioner Education*, as evidenced by program deficiencies which, in the opinion of Council, are such that program students and graduates does not meet the entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.

The rating granted to a new education program that received *Conditional Approval*, however does not meet the *Standards for Nurse Practitioner Education* by the end of the conditional period; or when, at the end of the conditional period, a program undergoing substantive changes does not meet the *Standards for Nurse Practitioner Education* or related criteria for nurse practitioner education.

Graduates of an education program that have received the status of either *Approval Denied* or *Approval Withdrawn* will not be considered graduates of an approved education program and therefore, have not met the requirements for licensure as a nurse practitioner.



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GLOSSARY

Approval: The term used to designate that an education program has met the prescribed standards set by the appropriate provincial body. It is a compulsory process and is based on standards and entry level competencies required for nurse practitioner practice.

Client: The beneficiary of care; may be an individual, family, group, population or entire community.

Clinical: Refers to the time students spend in NP practice with clients. NPs integrate their in-depth knowledge of advanced nursing practice and theory, health management, health promotion, disease/injury prevention, and other relevant biomedical and psychosocial theories to provide direct comprehensive health services. The NP practice context is any setting where a NP-client relationship occurs with the intention of responding to the need or requests for NP service.

Collaboration: Client care involving joint communication and decision-making processes among the client, nurse practitioner student and other members of a health-care team who work together to use their individual and shared knowledge and skills to provide optimum client-centered care. The health-care team works with clients toward the achievement of identified health outcomes, while respecting the unique qualities and abilities of each member of the group or team.

Community: The population residing in the immediate area and in the country where the program is based.

Competence: The integrated knowledge, skills, judgment and attributes required of a registered nurse to practice safely and ethically in a designated role and setting.

Competency: The specific knowledge, skills and personal attributes required for a nurse practitioner to practice safely and ethically in a designated role and setting.

Council: The governing body of the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Criterion: Standard or test by which something can be judged.

Curriculum: The planned process by which a nursing education program achieves its intended outcomes. It includes philosophical foundations, intents, content, sequencing of learning experiences, and evaluation.

Graduate: One who has successfully completed the requirements of an approved nursing education program.

Interprofessional Education: Refers to occasions when students from two or more professions learn together during all or part of their professional education with the object of cultivating collaborative practice for providing client centered care. (Curran & Sharpe, 2007)

New Program: Refers to a program being offered by a new institution and/or the implementation of a new curriculum.

Nurse Practitioner: A registered nurse who provides comprehensive nursing services in a specialized area of practice based on further knowledge and decision-making skills in assessment, diagnosis and health care management including but not limited to prescription of drugs. A nurse practitioner practice is based on in-depth knowledge of nursing and other related fields gained through additional education and practice.



Nursing Faculty: a registered nurse or nurse practitioner faculty that have been hired by the nursing education program and teach nursing content.

Preceptor: Refers to an experienced practitioner who is authorized to supervise a NP student during clinical experiences. Preferably a NP, the preceptor is familiar with the NP competencies and standards of practice and the objectives of the clinical experience. In conjunction with the faculty member, the preceptor provides supervision, support, and feedback related to their area of expertise. (Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, 2009)

Preliminary Approval: The rating granted to a new nurse practitioner education program that has met Standard I: Program and demonstrates progress toward meeting Standard Two: Curriculum and Standard III: Students.

Program: The program is a patterned combination and sequence of courses in a variety of subjects delivered by multiple modalities (e.g. distance, tradition, etc.).

Rating: A status given to a nursing education program as a result of the approval process.

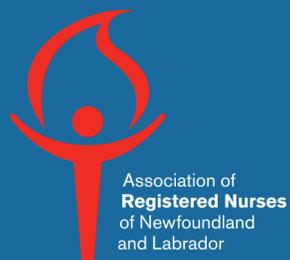
Licensure: A process whereby graduate nurse practitioner is declared by the ARNNL to be eligible to practice in the province.

Self-Assessment Report: provides a comprehensive and systematic analysis of program structures and processes that have been established to support program outcomes

Standard: A desired and achievable level of performance against which actual performance can be compared. It provides a benchmark below which performance is unacceptable.

Substantive change: a change in the modification or revision of an approved nurse practitioner education program which may affect the program outcomes and the ability of graduates to achieve the entry level competencies and standards required for nurse practitioner practice.





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