Nursing Education Program Approval Framework

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Nursing Education Program Approval Purpose

The purpose of Nursing Education Program Approval is so the CRNA can validate that a post-secondary institute's curriculum aligns with the entry level competencies (ELC's).

This alignment ensures that graduates of these programs are eligible for registration in Alberta.

Framework Principles

Trusted Partnerships

Post-secondary institutes in Alberta are established and trusted partners in the health care ecosystem and provide expertise in curriculum delivery in support of high-quality nursing education.

Understanding Our Contribution to the Health Care Ecosystem

Post-secondary institutes in Alberta are more closely situated to the practice setting and are committed to offering the appropriate theory and experiences that enable nursing students to meet the entry-level competencies by program completion.

Proportionate to Risk

The CRNA is one of many safeguards in place to ensure that nursing education programs meet standards and requirements within higher education. For example, programs also undergo rigorous quality assurance assessments under the Post-Secondary Learning Act for Advanced Education.

Commitment to Outstanding Customer (and Partner) Service

The CRNA staff may be leveraged to support the ongoing monitoring of program compliance as they routinely apply the regulatory framework and continuously engage with post-secondary institute representatives, which facilitates consistency, transparency, and agility in regulatory processes.

Directions

a. All applicants for registration with the CRNA are required to meet the post-secondary education requirements as defined in policy RP 3.04. This policy dictates that:

i. Applicants for registration as a regulated member on the registered nurse register must have graduated from an **APPROVED NURSING PROGRAM**, or

ii. Applicants for registration as a regulated member on the nurse practitioner register must have graduated from an **APPROVED NURSE PRACTITIONER PROGRAM.**

b. Post-secondary institutes in Alberta that deliver nursing programs are required to obtain the status of **APPROVED NURSING PROGRAM** or **APPROVED NURSE PRACTITIONER PROGRAM** from the CRNA, under this policy.

c. To become an approved nursing program or an approved nurse practitioner program in Alberta, a post-secondary institute must demonstrate the program of study meets the nursing education standards and criteria approved by Council.

d. Nursing education programs are approved by Council for a duration of seven (7) years.

e. Before Council approves or denies approval for a nursing education program, Council must consult with the Minister of Health and the Minister of Advanced Education and must consider the comments received from those Ministers.

f. If a post-secondary degree-granting institute has multiple partnerships or program locations, the degree program will be reviewed together including all locations and/or collaborative partnerships.

Approval Categories

EDUCATION CATEGORY	REGISTRATION PATHWAY	APPROVAL
APPROVED NURSING PROGRAM	Entry-level nursing or re-entry program offered by a post-secondary institute in Alberta leading to registration under section 3(1)(a) of the *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation.*	Approved by CRNA Council (i.e., NEPAC).
APPROVED NURSE PRACTITIONER PROGRAM	Entry-level nurse practitioner program offered by a post-secondary institute in Alberta leading to registration under section 4(1)(a) of the *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation.*	Approved by CRNA Council (i.e., NEPAC).

COUNCIL
PROGRAM APPROVAL AND REAPPROVAL

OPERATIONS
ONGOING PROGRAM COMPLIANCE

NEW

NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL

NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAM REAPPROVAL

ANNUAL COMPLIANCE SUBMISSION

ANNUAL COMPLIANCE SUBMISSION REVIEW

NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAMS ARE APPROVED BY COUNCIL FOR A DURATION OF SEVEN YEARS

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES ARE SUPPORTED BY THE SECRETARIATE

Program Approval Activities

5.1 CRNA Council Program Approval: New Nursing Education Programs

a. A new nursing education program is defined as a new post-secondary degree-granting institute offering a nursing education program that:

    i. has not yet graduated students; and

    ii. leads to initial entry or re-entry to practice as a registered nurse or initial entry to practice as a nurse practitioner.

b. A proposed new nursing education program must be reviewed and approved by Council prior to admitting students otherwise the institution cannot assume that the program graduates will be eligible for registration.

c. An institution proposing a new nursing education program must notify the CRNA in writing of the intent to offer a new program at least one (1) year before the intended implementation date.

d. A proposed new nursing education program must submit evidence in the form of a written self-report to demonstrate compliance with the nursing education standards and criteria.

e. Council may decide to:

    i. Grant Program Approval: The program will be considered an approved program for a length of seven (7) years. Educational institution representatives may begin implementing the proposed new nursing education program.

    ii. Refuse Program Approval: There are one or more unmet nursing education program approval standards that present a risk to public safety. Educational institution representatives may not implement the proposed new nursing education program and cannot assume that program graduates will be eligible for registration with the CRNA.

5.2 Annual Compliance Submission

a. All approved nursing education programs must submit annual reporting requirements confirming ongoing compliance based on the nursing education standards and criteria, as per Appendix A.

b. Programs that do not satisfy the requirements of Appendix A may be requested to provide supplementary evidence up to a revised self-report.

c. Approved Nursing Education programs that have not yet graduated students may be required to submit additional reporting requirements up to one (1) year post-graduation of a first cohort. Additional submission requirements are based on any deficiencies identified in the program's ability to meet the nursing education standards and criteria determined by the CRNA.

5.3 Annual Compliance Submission Review

Substantive Program Changes

a. All annual compliance submissions will be reviewed to identify any substantive program changes.

b. A substantive program change refers to a major revision to an approved nursing education program beyond formative modifications made at individual course levels, including, but not limited to:

    i. The movement or inclusion of additional campus locations

    ii. The development of a collaborative partnership with another educational institution

    iii. A new offering of a first-degree program at a new level. (e.g., BN to BScN)

    iv. New program infrastructure and resources to support student achievement of the entry-level competencies

    v. New major curriculum initiatives affecting learning opportunities and altering how a program addresses the nursing education standards and criteria (e.g., new entry-level competencies)

    vi. An increase or decrease in the number of students beyond ten (10) percent of previous program approval

c. A substantive change must be reviewed and approved by the CRNA prior to implementation by a program otherwise the institution cannot assume that the graduates of the program will be eligible for registration.

5.4 CRNA Council Program Re-Approval

Major Changes to Approved Nursing Education Programs

a. An established nursing education program proposing major changes may qualify as a new nursing education program when:

   i. Multiple substantive changes result in a significant alteration in critical infrastructure whereby all the nursing education standards and criteria are impacted; or

   ii. CRNA staff determine that a program review warrants escalation to Council based on the extent the standards and criteria may be affected by a proposed change.

Time Elapsed for Currently Approved Nursing Education Program

a. Established nursing education programs must be reapproved by Council in accordance with the timeline of their individual approval status.

b. The term of expiry of an approved program status may be revised if there is evidence to inform the following:

c. Proposed substantive changes impacting a program's ability to meet the current nursing education standards and criteria.

   i. Noncompliance in reporting, including programs that do not satisfy the annual reporting requirements or submit an incomplete or inaccurate report.

   ii. Noncompliance with the education standards and criteria, including unmet terms or conditions, that present a risk to public safety and the ability of the institution to deliver the education program.

   iii. Verified investigation of complaints about program quality or delivery that demonstrate noncompliance with the education standards and criteria.

   iv. Additional factors that may give the CRNA reason to believe that the program may not be meeting the nursing education standards and criteria.

Annual Compliance Submission

All programs must complete an annual compliance submission report prior to September 30th, which serves as the main accountability mechanism for monitoring nursing education programs to monitor ongoing compliance with the nursing education standards and criteria approved by Council.

All approved nursing education programs leading to initial entry or re-entry to practice as an RN or entry to practice as an NP must attest to the meeting the 19 requirements across the four (4) nursing education program approval standards:

Standard 1: Program Structure and Sustainability (2 elements)

The nursing education program has sufficient structures and resources (human, physical, technological, and fiscal) for program sustainability, and supports nursing students in the nursing education program leading to (1) initial entry-to practice as an RN; (2) re-entry-to-practice as an RN; or (3) initial entry-to-practice as an NP.

Standard 2: Curriculum (4 elements)

The curriculum has educational opportunities for nursing students to successfully achieve the CRNA entry-level competencies in the nursing education program leading to initial entry-to-practice as an RN or NP. The CRNA's Practice Standards (2023a) and Entry-Level Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses (2019) are used in the curriculum for measurement of success in the nursing education program leading to re-entry-to-practice as an RN.

Standard 3: Clinical, Laboratory, and Simulation Environments (9 elements)

The nursing education program provides experiences for nursing students to achieve course objectives, program outcomes, and entry-level competencies that include clinical, laboratory, and simulation environments.

Standard 4: Evaluation (4 elements)

The nursing education program has an established plan to evaluate the progression of nursing student achievement, course content, course delivery modes, and program outcomes.

Appendix A:
Annual Compliance Submission
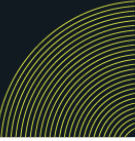
A1. Initial Entry or Re-entry-to-RN Practice Programs

Standard 1: Program Structure and Sustainability

1.1   The nursing education program has sufficient structures and resources (human, physical, technological and fiscal) to sustainably support nursing students in the program leading to initial entry-to-practice or re-entry-to-practice as a registered nurse (RN) (refer to specific Standard 1 criteria in the *Nursing Education Program Approval Standards*).

        Yes   No

1.2   Where applicable, all nursing faculty members who conduct simulation-based experiences are qualified, competent and receive ongoing education, training or certification to maintain their competence.

        Yes   No

Standard 2: Curriculum

2.1   The nursing education program's curriculum, including the course objectives, is structured to support a progression of complexity, acuity of the client's health care needs, accountability of care and the consolidation of nursing students' knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgments required to meet the entry-level competencies for registered nurses.

        Yes   No

2.2   Course objectives and program outcomes are sufficiently mapped to the CRNA's most recent entry-level competencies for registered nurses.

        Yes   No

2.3   The nursing education program has an evidence-informed curriculum that involves processes to identify and incorporate emerging health care trends into the curriculum to prepare students for entry to practice.

        Yes   No

2.4 The nursing education program's curriculum components, including the theoretical and application processes, enable students to achieve the entry-level competencies by completion of the program.

Yes   No

Standard 3: Clinical, Laboratory and Simulation Environments

3.1 The nursing education program has an appropriate degree of facilities, agencies and settings to provide educational opportunities for nursing students to achieve the entry-level competencies.

Yes   No

3.2 Nursing students are provided with a range of clinical learning opportunities with diverse clients (i.e. across the lifespan and ranging in acuity, complexity, social determinants of health and health-care needs) to support entry-to-practice.

Yes   No

3.3 The final clinical preceptorship at the end of the nursing education program is a minimum of 10 weeks and 350 hours of direct client care (simulation, workshops and conferences cannot take the place of any preceptorship hours).

Yes   No

3.4 The nursing education program covers all foundational content prior to the final clinical preceptorship to promote the consolidation of nursing student learning.

Yes   No

3.5 The nursing education program promotes the safe supervision of nursing students in clinical practice in accordance with the *CRNA's Supervision Standards* (2022).

Yes   No

3.6 The nursing education program has nursing faculty-to-student ratios in all applicable learning environments (clinical, laboratory and simulation) to support safe supervision and optimum nursing student learning.

Yes   No

3.7   Theoretical learning is congruent with and prepares nursing students for experiences in all laboratory and simulation environments as applicable to the program.

Yes   No

3.8   The nursing education program does not exceed 50 per cent clinical hour replacement with high-quality simulation.

Yes   No

3.9   Where applicable, the nursing education program has policies and procedures to assure the quality and consistency of simulation-based experiences for nursing students.

Yes   No

Standard 4: Evaluation

4.1   The nursing education program has comprehensive processes to evaluate the progression of nursing student achievement of course objectives, including all applicable learning settings, throughout the program.

Yes   No

4.2   The nursing education program has comprehensive processes to evaluate its curriculum and course components (e.g. classroom, laboratory, simulation and clinical experiences) to inform quality improvement.
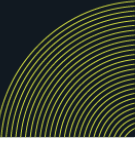
Yes   No

4.3   The nursing education program has a process to evaluate nursing student achievement of the entry-level competencies upon completion of the program.

Yes   No

4.4   The nursing education program has a process to collect and analyze student performance on the entry-to-practice exam (i.e. NCLEX) to inform quality improvement.

Yes   No

A2. Initial Entry-to-NP Practice Programs

Standard 1: Program Structure and Sustainability

1.1 The nursing education program has sufficient structures and resources (human, physical, technological and fiscal) to sustainably support nursing students in the program leading to initial entry-to-practice or re-entry-to-practice as a registered nurse (RN) (refer to specific Standard 1 criteria in the *Nursing Education Program Approval Standards*).

Yes   No

1.2 Where applicable, all nursing faculty members who conduct simulation-based experiences are qualified, competent and receive ongoing education, training or certification to maintain their competence.

Yes   No

Standard 2: Curriculum

2.1 The nursing education program's curriculum, including the course objectives, is structured to support a progression of complexity, acuity of the client's health care needs, accountability of care and the consolidation of nursing students' knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgments required to meet the entry-level competencies for nurse practitioners.

Yes   No

2.2 Course objectives and program outcomes are sufficiently mapped to the CRNA's most recent entry-level competencies for nurse practitioners.

Yes   No

2.3 The nursing education program has an evidence-informed curriculum that involves processes to identify and incorporate emerging health care trends into the curriculum to prepare students for entry to practice.

Yes   No

2.4 The nursing education program's curriculum components, including the theoretical and application processes, enable students to achieve the entry-level competencies by completion of the program.

Yes   No

Standard 3: Clinical, Laboratory and Simulation Environments

3.1 The nursing education program has an appropriate degree of facilities, agencies and settings to provide educational opportunities for nursing students to achieve the entry-level competencies.

Yes   No

3.2 Nursing students are provided with clinical experiences appropriate for their practice focus (i.e. family/all ages, adult, child, neonatal).

Yes   No

3.3 The final clinical preceptorship at the end of the nursing education program consists of direct client care in the student's practice focus (i.e. family/all ages, adult, child, neonatal).

Yes   No

3.4 The nursing education program covers all foundational content prior to the final clinical preceptorship to promote the consolidation of nursing student learning.

Yes   No

3.5 The nursing education program promotes the safe supervision of nursing students in clinical practice in accordance with the *CRNA's Supervision Standards* (2022).

Yes   No

3.6 The nursing education program has nursing faculty-to-student ratios in all applicable learning environments (clinical, laboratory and simulation) to support safe supervision and optimum nursing student learning.

Yes   No

3.7 Theoretical learning is congruent with and prepares nursing students for experiences in all laboratory and simulation environments as applicable to the program.

Yes   No

3.8   The nursing education program does not exceed 50 per cent clinical hour replacement with high-quality simulation.

Yes   No

3.9   Where applicable, the nursing education program has policies and procedures to assure the quality and consistency of simulation-based experiences for nursing students.

Yes   No

Standard 4: Evaluation

4.1   The nursing education program has comprehensive processes to evaluate the progression of nursing student achievement of course objectives, including all applicable learning settings, throughout the program.

Yes   No

4.2   The nursing education program has comprehensive processes to evaluate its curriculum and course components (e.g. classroom, laboratory, simulation and clinical experiences) to inform quality improvement.

Yes   No

4.3   The nursing education program has a process to evaluate nursing student achievement of the entry-level competencies upon completion of the program.

Yes   No

4.4   The nursing education program has a process to collect and analyze student performance on the entry-to-practice exam (i.e. NCLEX) to inform quality improvement.

Yes   No

Appendix B:
Approved Nursing Programs

BACHELOR OF NURSING (BN)	
Institute	**Program**
Athabasca University	• Post-licensed practical nurse Bachelor of Nursing program
Mount Royal University	• Bachelor of nursing program
University of Calgary	• Bachelor of nursing program • University of Calgary Bachelor of Nursing program at Medicine Hat College
University of Lethbridge	• Nursing education in southwestern Alberta: Bachelor of Nursing program (Lethbridge College partner) • Nursing education in southwestern Alberta: Bachelor of Nursing after degree program (Lethbridge College partner)

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING (BSCN)	
Institute	**Program**
MacEwan University	• Bachelor of science in nursing program
University of Alberta	• Bachelor of science in nursing collaborative program (University of Alberta, Keyano College, Northwestern Polytechnic, and Red Deer Polytechnic partners) • Bachelor of science in nursing bilingual / Baccalauréat ès sciences infirmières (Bilingue) program • Bachelor of science in nursing honors program • Bachelor of science in nursing after degree program • Licensed practical nurse to Bachelor of Science in nursing transition program at Red Deer Polytechnic

RE-ENTRY REGISTERED NURSE	
Institute	**Program**
MacEwan University	• Nursing refresher program

Appendix C: Approved Nurse Practitioner Programs

INITIAL ENTRY NURSE PRACTITIONER	
Institute	**Program**
Athabasca University	**Family/All ages practice stream** • Master of nursing - nurse practitioner program • Post-masters diploma - nurse practitioner program
University of Alberta	**Family/All Ages practice stream** • Master of nursing nurse practitioner (advanced clinical focus) program • Post-Master of Nursing nurse practitioner program **Adult practice stream** • Master of nursing nurse practitioner (advanced clinical focus) program • Post-Master of Nursing nurse practitioner program **Neonatal practice stream** • Master of nursing nurse practitioner (advanced clinical focus) program • Post-Master of Nursing nurse practitioner program

Appendix D: Background and Authority

Document	Section(s)
Health Professions Act (HPA)	Section 3(1)(f); College's role Section 3(6)(b): College's role Section 132.1: Approval of programs and courses
Registered Nurses Profession Regulation	Section 1(a): Definitions "Approved Nursing Program" Section 1(a.1): Definitions "Approved Nurse Practitioner Program" Section 1(k): Definitions "Nursing Education Program Approval" Section 9(3) Substantial Equivalence Section 3(1)(a)(i): Registration (RN) Section 3(1)(a)(ii): Registration (RN) Section 4(1)(a)(i): Registration (NP) Section 10.1(2)(a) Currency of practice Section 10.1(2)(c) Currency of practice
CRNA Bylaws	Bylaw 1.1.f: "NEPAC" Bylaw 2.3: Nursing Education Program Approval
Other	*Health Professions Restricted Activity Regulation* (Sections 1,2 and 60)