

Joint Position Statement

EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION FOR ENTRY TO PRACTICE

POSITION

The Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) and Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) believe the following:

- A baccalaureate degree in nursing is the educational entry-to-practice standard¹ for registered nurses in Canada.
- The responsibility for supporting baccalaureate entry to practice is shared among individual nurses, nursing regulatory bodies, nursing organizations, employers, educational institutions and governments. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, those outlined below.

Responsibilities

*Individual nurses*² have the responsibility to support nursing students to attain the competencies necessary to provide safe, competent, and ethical nursing care.³

Nursing regulatory bodies have the legislated authority to set the educational and other requirements to ensure safe, competent, ethical practice by new graduates entering the practice of nursing.

Nursing organizations have the responsibility to promote collaboration between education and practice settings regarding the preparation of new graduates in nursing.

Employers of nurses have the responsibility to:

- provide access to a variety of clinical placements for students;
- seek out and use the best empirical evidence available concerning recruitment, retention and staffing practices, ensuring that nurses have the appropriate educational levels to meet the needs of the clientele served; and
- Support diploma-prepared registered nurses who wish to obtain baccalaureate education in nursing.

Educational institutions and nurse educators have the responsibility to:

- prepare new graduates with the competencies necessary to provide safe, competent and ethical nursing care in a variety of settings and with a wide range of clients⁴ through a curriculum that responds to the current and evolving needs of the health care system; and
- advocate collaboratively for baccalaureate education with other professional nursing organizations.

¹ For the purpose of this position statement, the term *standard* refers to a “generally accepted practice.” (Neufelt & Guralnik, 1996, p. 1306).

² For the purpose of this position statements, the term *nurse* refers to a registered nurse

³ (CNA, 2002).

⁴ For the purpose of this position statement, the term “*client*” refers to an individual, a family, and group, community or population.

Governments have the responsibility to:

- provide the funding necessary for high quality baccalaureate entry-level programs, including supporting the conversion of diploma programs (where they exist) into baccalaureate programs;
- provide sufficient numbers of seats in nursing programs to meet the health care needs of Canadians;
- foster collaboration between the nursing community and the ministries of health and foster education to ensure that nursing education is responsive to current and future needs; and
- support graduate programs to ensure that there are adequate numbers of well-prepared professors available to teach in nursing programs.

BACKGROUND

Since 1982, all provincial and territorial nurses associations in Canada have agreed that a baccalaureate degree in nursing should be the entry requirement for the profession. Most provincial and territorial regulatory bodies have achieved this goal. To become a nurse, in most Canadian provinces and territories, a student must obtain a degree in nursing.⁵ The majority of new graduates in Canada today hold a degree in nursing.⁶

Nurse graduates require a broad-based preparation that includes a breadth of knowledge and skills from nursing and related disciplines to meet the complex client health needs in constantly evolving practice environments. Preparation at the baccalaureate level provides the foundation necessary for safe interdisciplinary practice and for the ethical, accountable and competent professional nursing practice required to enter the profession. Preparation at the baccalaureate level prepares nurses to work with individuals, families, groups, communities and populations in diverse settings. Baccalaureate preparation is a foundation for interdisciplinary practice.

In every province except Quebec, new graduates must pass the Canadian Registered Nurse Examination (CRNE) once they have graduate from an approved program. This examination is updated continuously by CNA to reflect the growth in knowledge and evolving standards of practice of Canadian registered nurses.

There is growing evidence that baccalaureate-prepared nurses are most able to provide safe, ethical, cost-effective and high quality nursing care for Canadians.⁷

Approved by the CNA Board of Directors, June 2004

Replaces:

CNA Position Statement: *Educational Support for Competent Nursing Practice* (1998)

References:

Aiken, L., Clarke, S., Cheung, R., Sloane, D. & Silber, J. (2003). Educational levels of hospital nurses and surgical patient mortality. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 290(12), 1617-1623. Retrieved September 24 2003 from <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/290/12/1617>

Canadian Institute for Health Information (2002) *Supply and distribution of registered nurses in Canada 2001*. Ottawa: Author.

⁵ (CNA, 2003).

⁶ (CIHI, 2002).

⁷ (O'Brien-Pallas, Doran, Murray & Cockerill, 2001; O'Brien-Pallas, Doran, Murray & Cockerill, 2002; Aiken, Clarke, Cheung, Sloan & Silber, 2003).

Canadian Nurses Association. (2002). *Code of ethics for registered nurses*. Ottawa: Author.

Canadian Nurses Association. (2003). *Nursing in Canada: Entry to practise*. (Fact Sheet). Ottawa: Author.

Neufelt, V. & Guralnik, D. (Eds.). (1996). *Webster's New World College Dictionary* (3rd ed.). Cleveland: MacMillan.

O'Brien-Pallas, L., Doran, D., Sidani, S., Murray, M., Laurie-Shaw, B., Cockerill, R., et al. (2001). Evaluation of a client care delivery model, part 1: Variability in nursing utilization in community home nursing. *Nursing Economic\$, 19*(6), 267-276.

O'Brien-Pallas, L., Doran, D., Sidani, S., Murray, M., Laurie-Shaw, B., Cockerill, R., & Lochhaas-Gerlach, J. (2002). Evaluation of a client care delivery model, part 2: Variability in client outcomes in community home nursing. *Nursing Economic\$, 20*(1), 13-23.

Also see:

Related provincial and territorial documents:

Alberta Association of Registered Nurses
Position Statement on Baccalaureate Education for Nurses (1999)

College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba
Entry Level Competencies for RNs in Manitoba 2000-2006 (2002)

College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia
Position Statement: *Educational support for competent nursing practice* (1998)

Nurses Association of New Brunswick
Position Statement: *Educational preparation of nurses* (2002)

Nursing Education Council of British Columbia, Health Care Leaders' Association of BC & Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia
The Nursing Shortage and Nursing Education in British Columbia (n.d.)

Registered Nurses Association of Northwest Territories and Nunavut
Entry-Level Competencies for Registered Nurses in the Year 2002 (2000)

Registered Nurses Association of Ontario
The Education of Registered Nurses (1998)

Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association
Position Statement: *Basic nursing education* (1997)

Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association
Position Paper: *The future role of nursing* (1997)

Related International Council of Nurses (ICN) policy statements:

Scope of Nursing Practice (1998)

Promoting the Value & Cost-Effectiveness of Nursing (2001)

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