

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ITEM WRITING FOR THE CANADIAN REGISTERED NURSE EXAMINATION

PREAMBLE

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) develops and maintains the Canadian Registered Nurse Examination (CRNE) through its testing company, Assessment Strategies Inc. (ASI), and in collaboration with the provincial and territorial nursing regulatory authorities. The regulatory authorities administer the exam and determine eligibility to write it.

The purpose of the CRNE is to protect the public by ensuring that the entry-level registered nurse possesses the competencies required to practise safely and effectively. All questions on the CRNE are based on nursing competencies that have been approved by the CRNE Council.

As of February 2008, the CRNE consists of multiple-choice questions only. There are approximately 300 multiple-choice questions, each designed to measure a specific competency required of entry-level registered nurses. About 60 per cent of the questions are presented within cases, in which a brief description of a case is followed by a group of three to five questions. The remainder of the exam consists of single, independent questions that are unrelated to a case or to other questions on the exam.

Every question (also referred to as an “item”) contains a stem and four options. The stem typically consists of one to three sentences that provide relevant information and the specific nursing question that is being asked. One of the four options is the correct (or best) answer, and the remaining three are incorrect or less appropriate options.

The questions that appear on the CRNE are developed by registered nurses under the guidance of a test consultant during item-writing sessions.

MANDATE

- To develop multiple-choice items based on the CRNE Blueprint and the guidelines for writing multiple-choice items.
- To develop rationales for the correct and incorrect options for each multiple-choice item by following the guidelines for writing rationales and finding appropriate references.

MEMBERSHIP

Composition

Item writers are nominated by their jurisdictions following an application process, and their names are forwarded to ASI for inclusion on a national list maintained by ASI. Participants are selected from the list to take part in item-writing sessions. Each session involves a group of four to six participants who represent different jurisdictions and different areas of nursing expertise.

Criteria for the selection of item writers

- current registration/licensure;
- nursing expertise beyond the basic level, acquired either through education preparation or through clinical experience;
- knowledge of current practice for entry-level registered nurses;
- ability to think conceptually and transform competencies into multiple-choice items;
- ability to view nursing and the nursing process in broad, general terms;
- flexibility in using different approaches to solving problems;
- ability to think critically and creatively, and express ideas effectively both orally and in writing;
- ability to accept criticism of one's ideas and written materials and use this criticism effectively;
- ability to work well in a group; and
- basic computer knowledge and an active e-mail address.

Term of Commitment

Applications for item writing are valid for a period of three years. At the end of three years, the nominee's name is removed from the national list. Nominees may reapply for another term. Nominees are invited to participate in one item-writing session at a time. There is no guarantee that a nominee will participate in any session or more than one session.

Item-Writing Period

Item-writing groups meet for a period of five days, as required, throughout the year.

Staff Resources

ASI test consultant and project assistant