

# BCcampus Provincial Practical Nursing Program Curriculum Revision Project 2016 - 2017

Recommendations for Alternate Admission Pathways into the  
Access to Practical Nursing Program  
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This report was prepared for the Ministry of Advanced Education Skills and Training  
by the BCcampus' Collaborative Projects team as a deliverable in the Provincial Practical  
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This report was completed in collaboration with the members of the 2016-2017 BCcampus Provincial Practical Nursing Curriculum Revision Project Subcommittee to Review Access to Practical Nursing (APN) Admission Requirements.



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## 1 Subcommittee to Review APN Admission Requirements

The BCcampus Provincial Practical Nursing Program Curriculum Revision Project Subcommittee to review Access to Practical Nursing (APN) admission requirements included representation from BC public and private post-secondary institutions that offer the Access to Practical Nursing Program (APN), the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of British Columbia (CLPNBC), the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) and BCcampus. The contributors included:

Heather Hepworth (College of the Rockies)  
Regina Saimoto (Northwest Community College)  
Debbie Sargent, co-facilitator (Vancouver Community College)  
Heather Klatt (Nicola Valley Institute of Technology)  
Esther Aguilar (Sprott Shaw College)  
Janice Penner (College of Licensed Practical Nurses of British Columbia)  
Kevin Perrault (Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training)  
Karla Biagioni (Ministry of Health)  
Michelle Glubke, project lead, co-facilitator, writer (BCcampus)  
June Kaminski, writer (BCcampus contractor)

## 2 Purpose

The purpose of the 2016-2017 Subcommittee was to explore and recommend alternative admission pathways into the APN Program. The Subcommittee provided recommendations on the following:

- Scenario 1: Removal of the required 600 Health Care Assistant (HCA) clinical hours for entry into the APN program
- Scenario 2: Development of a new APN stream with front-end loaded English requirements for Internationally Educated Nurses.

## 3 Subcommittee Approach

The scope of the Subcommittee engagement was to provide an agreed upon recommendation for an alternate admissions pathway into the APN program that addresses the two scenarios listed above. The Subcommittee approached the two scenarios as described below.

### 3.1 Scenario 1

The Subcommittee discussed the history of the 600-hour work experience requirement, the perceived barriers and outcomes of requiring these hours, the lack of criteria defining the type of work experience required, and the absence of clarity regarding what competencies are expected

to be achieved by the 600 hours. The group also discussed the needs of their respective communities, the learner knowledge gaps and the supports required for student success in the Access to Practical Nursing program.

There was agreement that an alternative to the 600 hours of work experience could be the administration of a provincial standardized competency-based assessment. It is believed that administering such an assessment will enable institutions to ensure applicants without the 600 hours could demonstrate competence in knowledge and skills expected to be achieved with the 600 hours of work experience. It is proposed that such a recommendation be implemented as a pilot project to determine if this strategy is a suitable alternative to the 600-hour work experience requirement.

### 3.2 Scenario 2

The Subcommittee discussed the needs of Internationally Educated Nurses, and through this discussion, it was determined that out of province Canadian nursing students experience similar challenges as International applicants regarding entry to practice as a Licensed Practical Nurse in BC. As a result, the Subcommittee chose to focus on the benefits of an additional pathway for all students and health care professionals from outside of British Columbia. Offering an alternate pathway into the APN Program for this group increases opportunities for learning and employment in Nursing in BC.

## 4 Recommendations

The recommendations that will address both Scenario 1 and 2 are to:

1. develop, implement and evaluate a pilot project that requires the successful completion of a provincial standardized competency-based entrance exam as an alternative to the 600-hour work experience requirement; and
2. include the acquisition of a BC Care Aide Registry number as an alternative to the requirement of having a BC Health Care Assistant (HCA), Resident Care Attendant (RCA) or Home Support/Resident Care Attendant (HS/RCA) certificate; and
3. update the definition of the 600-hour work experience requirement.

## 5 The Alternate Pathway

As an amendment to the admission requirements identified in the 2012 Access to Practical Nursing Program: Provincial Curriculum Guide Supplement: Program Core Standards and Teaching and Learning Resources, 2017, the new pathway replaces the "Additional Admission Requirements for the Access to PN program" and requires that the applicants meet **both** Additional Requirements 1 and 2 as outlined below:

### **Additional Requirement 1** (must complete one)

A BC certificate in one of the following programs: Health Care Assistant (HCA), Resident Care Attendant (RCA) or Home Support/Resident Care Attendant (HS/RCA)

**Or**

A BC Care Aide Registry Number

### **Additional Requirement 2** (must complete one)

600 Hours of Work Experience as an HCA or RCA or an HS/RCA within the last two years, in a hospital or residential care facility where care is provided to a group of clients, with these conditions:

- work experience must include providing care to multiple patients/residents at one time whereby prioritizing and critical thinking are required; and
- work experience must be verified by an official employer letter.

Note: working in a home care environment where you are caring for one person at a time will not meet this 600-hour requirement.

**Or**

Successful completion of a provincial standardized competency-based theory and skill entrance exam that includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Practical Skills
- Critical Thinking
- Organizational Skills
- Prioritizing Care
- Collaboration and Teamwork
- Communication Skills

## 6 Rationale

Providing this alternative pathway for entry includes the following potential benefits:

- Creates more opportunity for applicants
- Enhances accessibility for HCA, RCA, HS/RCA applicants
- Offers options for entrance to PN programs
- Provides increased flexibility in career/education laddering opportunities
- Enhances applicant and employer opportunities in rural, remote and Indigenous communities
- Enhances potential for graduate retention in rural, remote and Indigenous communities
- Increases potential for higher HCA program recruitment
- Removes 600-hour barrier for career laddering of HCAs to LPNs

Providing this alternative pathway will enable health care professionals from other provinces and other countries, as well as nursing students from other provinces and countries to enter the APN program. This will provide even greater opportunities for educational institutions to increase their enrolments and for BC to have more Practical Nurses in the future, especially in rural and remote communities. As well, this is a model that could be transferable to other academic programs.

## 7 Pilot Project Considerations

The Subcommittee considered high-level requirements for the pilot project. The recommendations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Define a long-term pilot implementation plan
- Organize a planning steering committee to further define and plan the pilot
- Implement strategic institutional engagement
- Complete rigorous collaborative research
- Develop an assessment instrument
- Develop a rubric
- Develop skill-testing resources
- Develop exam parameters (e.g. length of time, repeats)
- Determine institutional resources to administer assessment
- Identify success determinants
- Consider development of a pre-learning package
- Complete pilot evaluation (includes graduate success)
- Identify learner cost
- Organize guidance and program advising
- Develop and disseminate a communication plan (internal and external)
- Ensure the assessment is accessible and standardized for implementation across the province.

## 8 Appendix A: Sector Feedback

In addition to working with the Subcommittee, a survey was shared broadly with stakeholder groups to include: private and public post-secondary institutions at the CLPNBC annual meeting, PN articulation committee meeting and the health deans and directors meeting. In addition, BCcampus published an article that directed readers to this document in draft form with a survey link. Respondents were from CLPNBC, private post-secondary institutions, with representation from BC Career Colleges Association. Two themes emerged from the feedback: 1) a need for clarifying language in the document, and 2) considerations for the pilot.

### 8.1 Survey Feedback: Clarifying Content

The survey data showed support for Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 with the following considerations which have been adopted in this document:

- The Subcommittee's approach to Scenario 2 is needed to help readers understand the shift from focusing solely on Internationally Educated Nurses to all students and healthcare professionals from outside of BC.
- The alternate paths described in each scenario should be combined into one alternate pathway.

### 8.2 Survey Feedback: Pilot Considerations

The survey data included considerations for the pilot, which can be reviewed in the future by a pilot project steering committee should the recommendations in this document be adopted. The considerations include:

- Investigation of barriers for our Indigenous populations and ways to support Indigenous learners
- Support for and pre-testing of learners who choose the provincial standardized competency-based assessment option
- Long-term evaluation of graduates who successfully complete the provincial standardized competency-based assessment