



Canadian Association
of Schools of Nursing
Association canadienne des
écoles de sciences infirmières

Position Statement

Title: Baccalaureate Education and Baccalaureate Programs

Background:

CASN establishes and promotes national standards of excellence for nursing education. A broad based baccalaureate education¹ is warranted given the:

- increasing complexity in nursing and health care;
- rapidly expanding body of nursing and health-related knowledge;
- rapidly expanded use of digital technologies in knowledge transfer and utilization;
- need for “life-long” learning in order to adapt to these changes and to provide a basis for advanced nursing education;
- accountability to the public for safe, competent, ethical, and effective nursing care;
- need to understand and practice nursing within the pluralistic social, cultural, and political contexts of Canadian society; and
- diversity across Canada including: demographic, socio-economic, cultural and geographic diversity.

CASN’s position on Baccalaureate education and Baccalaureate programs

Baccalaureate education is required for entry to the nursing profession as a registered nurse.

Baccalaureate programs provide the foundation for sound clinical reasoning and clinical judgment, critical thinking, and a strong ethical comportment in nursing. Learners are assisted to develop a broad knowledge base, and to critically reflect upon, integrate and thoughtfully apply various forms of knowledge in a range of health care settings. Learners develop abilities in professional reflection, self-evaluation, ethical decision-making, nursing practice and interprofessional practice. Baccalaureate programs prepare learners to identify, develop and incorporate professional values that respect and respond ethically and sensitively to social and cultural diversity. They foster an understanding of

¹ * A broad -based educational program is one that includes exposure to multiple disciplines in addition to in-depth study in one or more academic areas.

the role of nursing in promoting quality work environments that maximize patient safety. Programs prepare students to be aware of and respond to emerging themes such as new information technologies, and global citizenship.

Baccalaureate nursing programs provide general nursing education to meet the competencies (jurisdictional) required to practice at an entry level (Black et al, 2008) and the five core competencies identified by the *Committee of the Health Professions Education Summit* (provide patient-centered care, work in interprofessional teams, employ evidence-based practice, apply quality improvement, utilize informatics) (IOM, 2003). They may also respond to particular regional health needs. This approach permits programs to prepare nurses to assess and meet the nursing needs of society in general, while respecting and responding to particular demographic, socio-economic, and geographic characteristics of communities in which individual programs are located. All programs prepare graduates with the knowledge and highly developed skills necessary for professional nursing practice and with a foundation for continued learning at advanced levels of education.

Baccalaureate curricula, based on appropriate learning models, address health and health care issues (from simple to complex) that affect clients across the lifespan and in a variety of health care settings. Clients include individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations in a variety of settings. Learners are able to effectively articulate the care they provide. Learners develop mastery in effective, knowledge-based, team-practice that is safe and ethical.

Curricula within baccalaureate programs, taught by well qualified faculty, are concordant with clear statements of expected outcomes derived from the philosophy, mission, values, and goals/objectives of individual programs and institutions. Varied approaches to teaching, learning and evaluation of learners' performance, foster achievement of these expected outcomes.

Baccalaureate graduates enter the nursing profession with the understanding that continued learning is essential for professional practice and with the skills to engage in continued learning. Graduates initiate appropriate, individualized, evidence-informed nursing interventions based on information gathered through skilled assessments, and in consultation and collaboration with other professionals and clients themselves.

Going Forward

It is essential that the standard for competent, safe and ethical practice of registered nursing remains the baccalaureate in nursing. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the relationship between educational preparation for nurses and patient outcomes (Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, & Silber, 2003; Estabrooks, Midodzi, Cumming, Ricker, & Giovannetti, 2005; Tourangeau et al., 2007).

Nursing education programs must constantly incorporate new knowledge and be responsive to the changing needs of students and the health care environment. Graduates

must be prepared to work safely in increasingly complex environments in the context of the constantly changing and growing body of knowledge on which nursing practice is based.

The content and standards of this education, as outlined in the above position statement, must be maintained. One of the tools for doing this is the CASN accreditation process.

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