



NURSING
MASTERS
EDUCATION
IN CANADA
FINAL
REPORT
2012

CASN
ACESI 



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

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Background

During discussions at the 2011 CASN Graduate Studies Forum, participants identified a need for more data on the current state of Nursing Masters' Programs in Canada to inform the development of a national vision on Nursing Master's Education in Canada. To this end, CASN conducted a survey on current practices and program delivery modalities among the 32 Masters of Nursing Programs across the country.

The objectives in carrying out this survey included:

- Developing a current inventory of educational programs for Masters of Nursing Programs in Canada;
- Gaining more information on the content of Masters of Nursing Programs in Canada;
- Informing the discussion at the CASN Graduate Studies Forum, scheduled for November 2012; and,
- Informing decisions related to National Consensus Based Educational Guidelines for Masters of Nursing Programs.

The CASN Masters of Nursing Programs Environmental Scan was sent electronically to each of the Schools of Nursing offering a Master's program (Appendix A). Of the 32 programs, 31 programs had responded as of September 10, 2011. This represents a response rate of 96.9%.

This report provides data on the programs that had responded prior to September 10, 2012, and has been prepared to inform discussions about the future of Nursing Master's programs in Canada.

Key Findings on Nursing Master's Education Programs in Canada

Nursing Programs in Canada

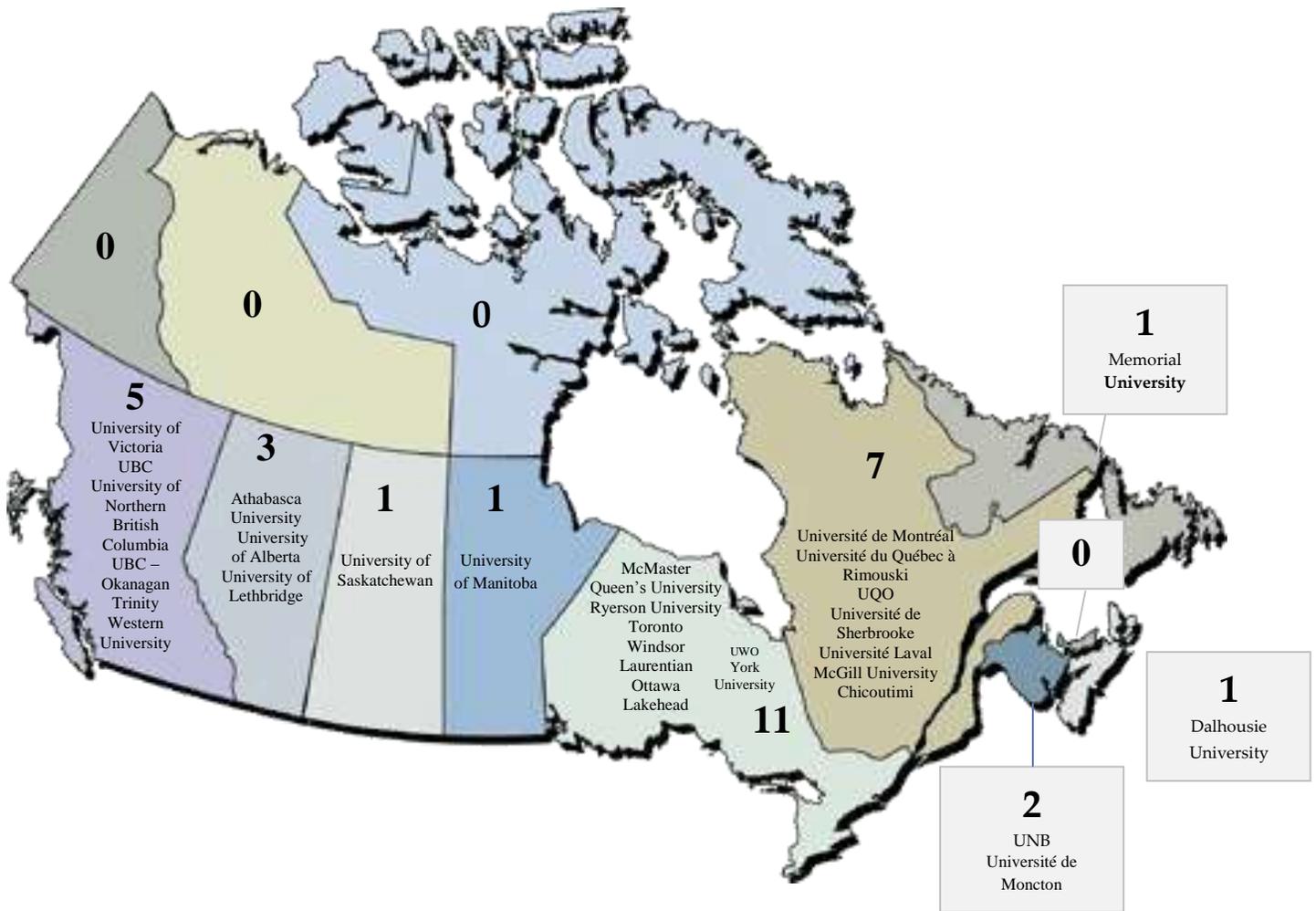
- Currently, 32 universities in Canada offer Master of Nursing/Master of Science in Nursing programs.
- MN/MScN programs are offered in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, each have at least one.

Master of Nursing/Master of Science in Nursing Programs in Canada

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Dalhousie University | ✓ |
| McGill University | ✓ |
| Laurentian University | ✓ |
| University of Ottawa | ✓ |
| The University of Western Ontario | ✓ |
| Athabasca University | ✓ |
| University of Alberta | ✓ |
| University of Saskatchewan | ✓ |
| University of Victoria | ✓ |
| Memorial University | ✓ |
| Université de Moncton | ✓ |
| Université de Montréal | ✓ |
| Université du Québec à Rimouski | ✓ |
| Université du Québec en Outaouais | ✓ |
| Université de Sherbrooke | ✓ |
| Université Laval | ✓ |
| University of New-Brunswick | ✓ |
| McMaster University | ✓ |
| Queen's University | ✓ |
| Ryerson University | ✓ |
| University of Toronto | ✓ |
| University of Windsor | ✓ |
| York University | ✓ |
| University of British Columbia | ✓ |
| University of Calgary | ✓ |
| University of Northern British Columbia | ✓ |
| University of Lethbridge | ✓ |
| Trinity Western University | ✓ |
| University of Toronto | ✓ |
| University of British Columbia – Okanagan | ✓ |
| Lakehead University | ✓ |
| Université du Québec à Chicoutimi | ✓ |
| Canada Total | 32 |

Source: MN/MScN environmental scan 2012

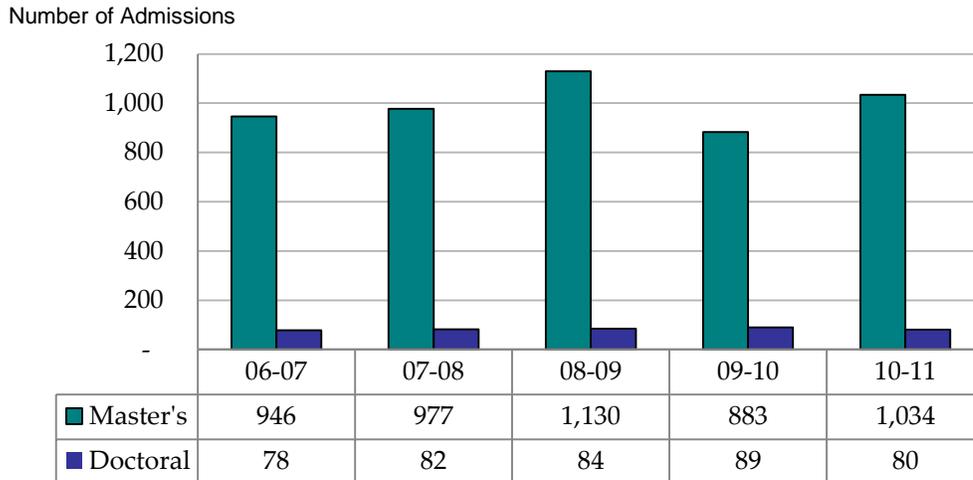
Distribution of Nursing Master's Programs in Canada



- Master's Programs in Nursing are available in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland.

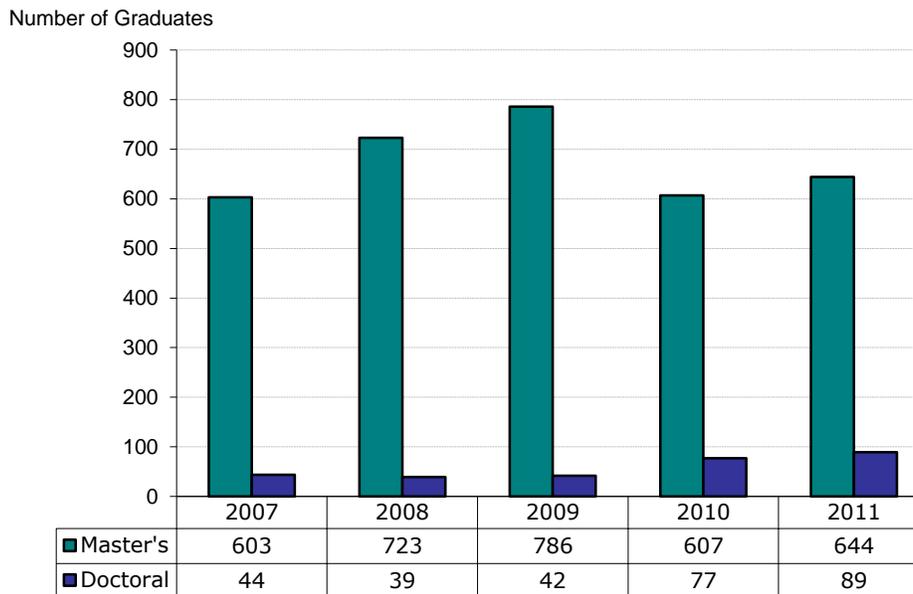
Admissions and Graduates from Doctoral Programs

Admissions to Master's and Doctoral Programs, 2006-2007 to 2010-2011



Source: *National Student and Faculty Survey of Canadian Schools of Nursing 2010-2011*

Graduates from Master's and Doctoral Programs, 2007 to 2011



Source: *National Student and Faculty Survey of Canadian Schools of Nursing 2010-2011*

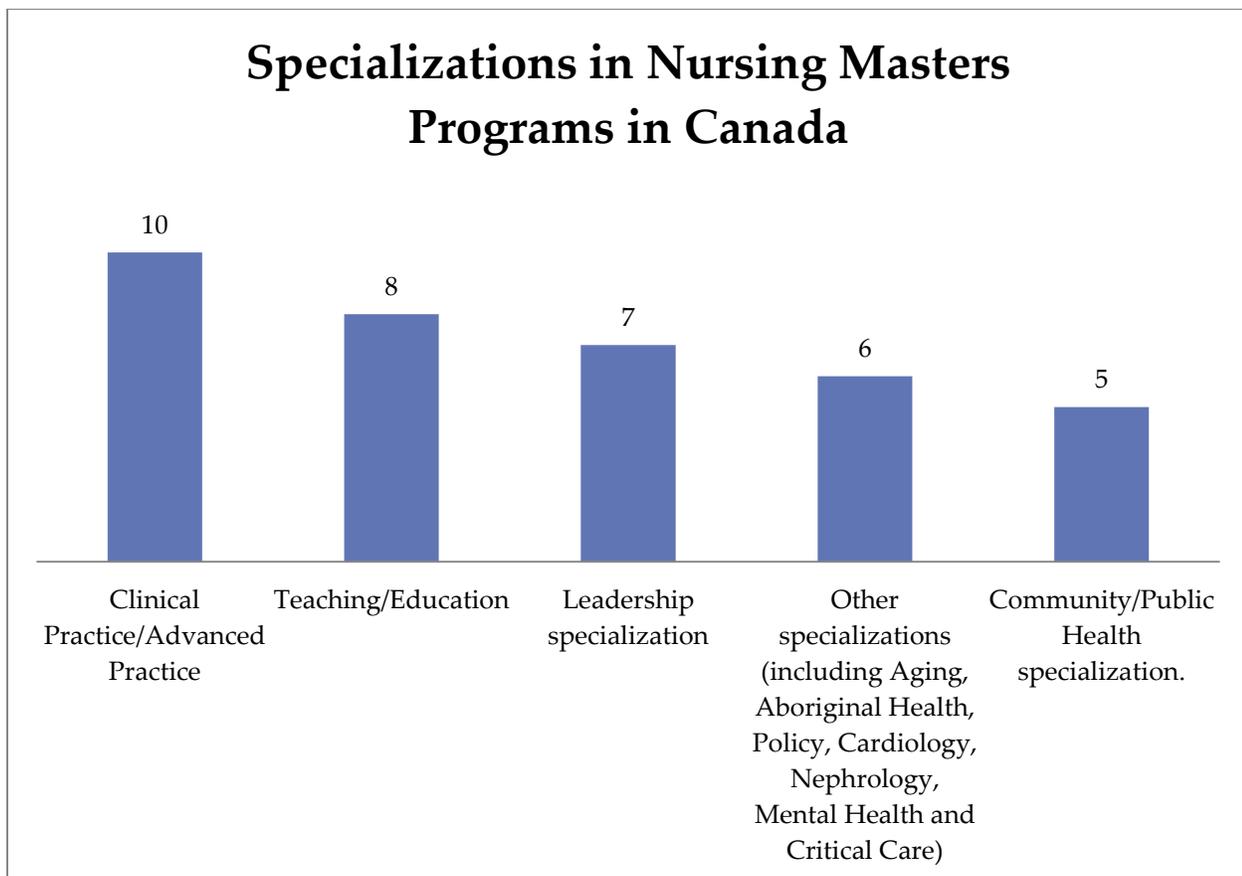
Program Streams Offered

Participants were asked to report the streams offered at their university. Below are the results from the survey:

- 64.5% (20 of 31) of schools offer one or more Research/Thesis-based stream
- 64.5% (20 of 31) of schools offer one or more Specialization stream.
- 12.9% (4 of 31) of schools offer a Course-based Stream.

There are 44 individual streams offered within the 20 schools with one or more Specialization stream.

- 50% (10 of 20) of schools offer a Clinical Practice/Advanced Practice Specialization.
- 40% (8 of 20) of schools offer a Teaching/Education Specialization.
- 35% (7 of 20) of schools offer a Leadership Specialization.
- 30% (6 of 20) of schools offer other Specializations (including Aging, Aboriginal Health, Informatics, Policy, Cardiology, Nephrology, Mental Health and Critical Care)
- 25% (5 of 20) of schools offered a Community/Public Health Specialization.



NOTE : Many schools identified multiple streams.

Graduate Preparation – Roles and Responsibilities

Participants were asked what their program streams were preparing graduates for. They identified the following: research, evidence-based practice, advanced practice roles, leadership, management roles, nursing administration, to be educators, to be clinical nurse specialists or leaders. Preparation goals for each stream are identified below. Participants often reported more than one goal for each stream

Research/Thesis Stream

- 65% (13 of 20) schools offering this stream identified Research Roles or entry into a PhD program.
- 25% (5 of 20) schools offering this stream identified Leadership roles.
- 60% (12 of 20) schools offering this stream identified Education roles.
- 75% (15 of 20) schools offering this stream identified Clinical Practice roles.
- 20% (4 of 20) schools offering this stream identified Administrative Roles.

Specialization Streams

Leadership:

- 100% (6 of 6) of schools offering this specialization identified Administration and Management of Health Services.
- 50% (3 of 6) of schools offering this specialisation identified Education/Faculty positions.
- 33.3% (2 of 6) of schools identified Policy Advisor/Analyst roles

Community/Public Health:

- 100% (6 of 6) of schools offering this specialization stream are preparing graduates for Advance Practice roles in the community, home care, public health, or policy development.

Teaching/Education:

- 100% (7 of 7) of schools offering this specialization stream are preparing graduates for the Nurse Educator role (in schools or in a clinical setting).

Clinical/Advanced Practice:

- 100% (9 of 9) of schools offering this specialization stream identified practice roles.
- 33% (3 of 9) of schools offering this specialization stream identified the Clinical Nurse Specialist role.
- 33% (3 of 9) who offer this specialization stream identified Advanced Nursing Practice roles (including clinical, education, policy and administration).

Other:

- 10 schools identified specializations that included Aging, Aboriginal Health, Informatics, Policy, Cardiology, Nephrology, Mental Health and Critical Care.
- 100% of these schools indicated that they are preparing graduates of these programs for leadership roles in a specific specialty area.

Average Length of Time to Complete a Master of Nursing Program

Participants were asked to identify the average length of time their students take to complete the Master of Nursing program. Estimates ranged from 1 to 3.75 for full-time students and 3 to 5 years for part-time students. The mean estimate is 2.4 years for full-time students to complete the Master of Nursing program, and 4.1 years for part-time students.

| Full time | Part time |
|------------|------------|
| 2 | 4 |
| 1.5 | 3.4 |
| 2 | 3.7 |
| 3.75 | |
| 2 | N/A |
| 2 | 3 |
| 2 | N/A |
| 3 | 4.5 |
| 3 | N/A |
| 2 | N/A |
| 2 | 3 |
| 2 | 3 |
| 4.7 | 4.7 |
| 1.5 | 4 |
| 3 | 5 |
| 2.75 | 4 |
| N/A | N/A |
| N/A | 5 |
| 2 | 3.5 |
| 3 | 5 |
| 2 | 4 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 2 | 4 |
| 2 | N/A |
| 2 | 3.5 |
| 2.5 | 4 |
| 2.5 | 4 |
| N/A | 5 |
| 3 | 5 |
| 2 | 5 |
| 2 | 3 |
| 2.4 | 4.1 |

Source: MN/MScN Environmental Scan.

Pressing Issues Facing Master's Education in Nursing

Participants were asked to identify pressing issues facing Master's Education in Nursing. The most common challenge identified was a lack of funding for students. Recruiting and retaining faculty was another challenge that was identified.

Pressing Issues Identified:

- 45.2% (14 of 31) of schools identified a lack of student funding for school related expenses.
- 41.9% (13 of 31) schools were concerned that many students have to work part-time/full-time jobs while pursuing their studies.
- 25.8% (8 of 31) of schools reported that recruiting/retaining/supporting faculty is an important challenge.
- 19.2% (5 of 31) of schools reported a need for greater flexibility and accessibility of programs.
- 11.5% (3 of 31) of schools identified a need to develop research capacity.
- 35.5% (11 of 31) of schools identified ambiguity in the roles generic programs are preparing students for.

| No. of Schools | Pressing Issues |
|----------------|---|
| 14 | Lack of student funding |
| 8 | Recruiting/retaining/supporting faculty |
| 5 | Greater flexibility and accessibility of Programs |
| 13 | Students work Part-Time or Full-Time during studies |
| 3 | A need to develop research capacity |
| 11 | Ambiguity in the goals of generic Programs |
| 10 | Other (capacity, autonomy, insufficient students interested in academic careers, need for administrative support) |

Note: many schools identified multiple themes.

Source: MN/MScN Environmental Scan 2012

Important Components of Master's Education in Nursing

Participants were asked to identify important components of a Master's Education in Nursing. The most common components identified were research/nursing knowledge. The need to develop leadership was another common component identified. (30/31 responded to this question).

Participants responded as follows:

- 70.0% (21 of 30) schools reported that research is an important component of Master's Education in Nursing.
- 40.0% (12 of 30) of schools reported that developing leadership is an important component of Master's Education in Nursing.
- 36.7% (11 of 30) schools reported that advanced practice preparation is an important component of Master's Education in Nursing.
- 36.7% (11 of 30) of schools reported that promoting knowledge translation/transfer among students is an important component of Master's Education in Nursing.
- 33.3% (10 of 30) schools reported that the development of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of nursing is an important component of Master's Education in Nursing.
- 30.0% (9 of 30) of schools reported that promoting critical thinking among students is an important component of Master's Education in Nursing.
- The remaining schools identified other important components of Master's Education in Nursing including; quality faculty, accessibility of programs, enhancing patient outcomes, coursework, a final project or thesis, and interprofessional communication.

Important Component of Master's Education in Nursing Identified by Canadian Schools of Nursing

| No. of Schools | Important Components of Master's Education in Nursing |
|----------------|--|
| 21 | Research |
| 12 | Developing leadership |
| 9 | Promoting Critical Thinking |
| 11 | Advanced Practice |
| 11 | Knowledge Translation/Transfer |
| 10 | Development of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings |
| 30 | Other (quality faculty, accessibility of programs, enhancing patient outcomes, coursework, a final project or thesis, interprofessional communication etc.). |

Important Components of Clinical Courses in Master's Education in Nursing

Participants were asked to identify important components of a clinical course in Master's Education in Nursing. (26/31 responded to this question). Participants responded as follows:

- 80.8% (21 of 26) schools identified the quality of practicum placement and preceptors in those placements.
- 53.8% (14 out of 26) of schools identified knowledge development.
- 38.5% (10 out of 26) schools identified evidence-based practice.
- 26.9% (7 out of 26) of schools identified leadership.
- 15.3% (4 out of 26) of schools identified flexibility for students.
- 17 identified other components including enhancing patient outcomes, ethics, developing expertise in competencies, adequate number of clinical placement hours, policy and linkages with certification.

Important Component of Clinical Courses in Master's Education in Nursing

| No. | Important Components of Clinical Courses |
|-----|---|
| 21 | Quality of practicum placement and preceptors |
| 14 | Knowledge development |
| 10 | Evidence-based practice |
| 7 | Leadership |
| 4 | Flexibility for students |
| 17 | Other (enhancing patient outcomes, ethics, developing expertise in competencies, adequate number of clinical placement hours, policy and linkages with certification) |

Mandatory Clinical Hours

The number of mandatory minimum clinical hours varies immensely ranging from 0 to 600. Seven programs do not require any minimum number of clinical hours. The average mandatory number of minimum clinical hours among the remaining twenty-four schools is 171.2.

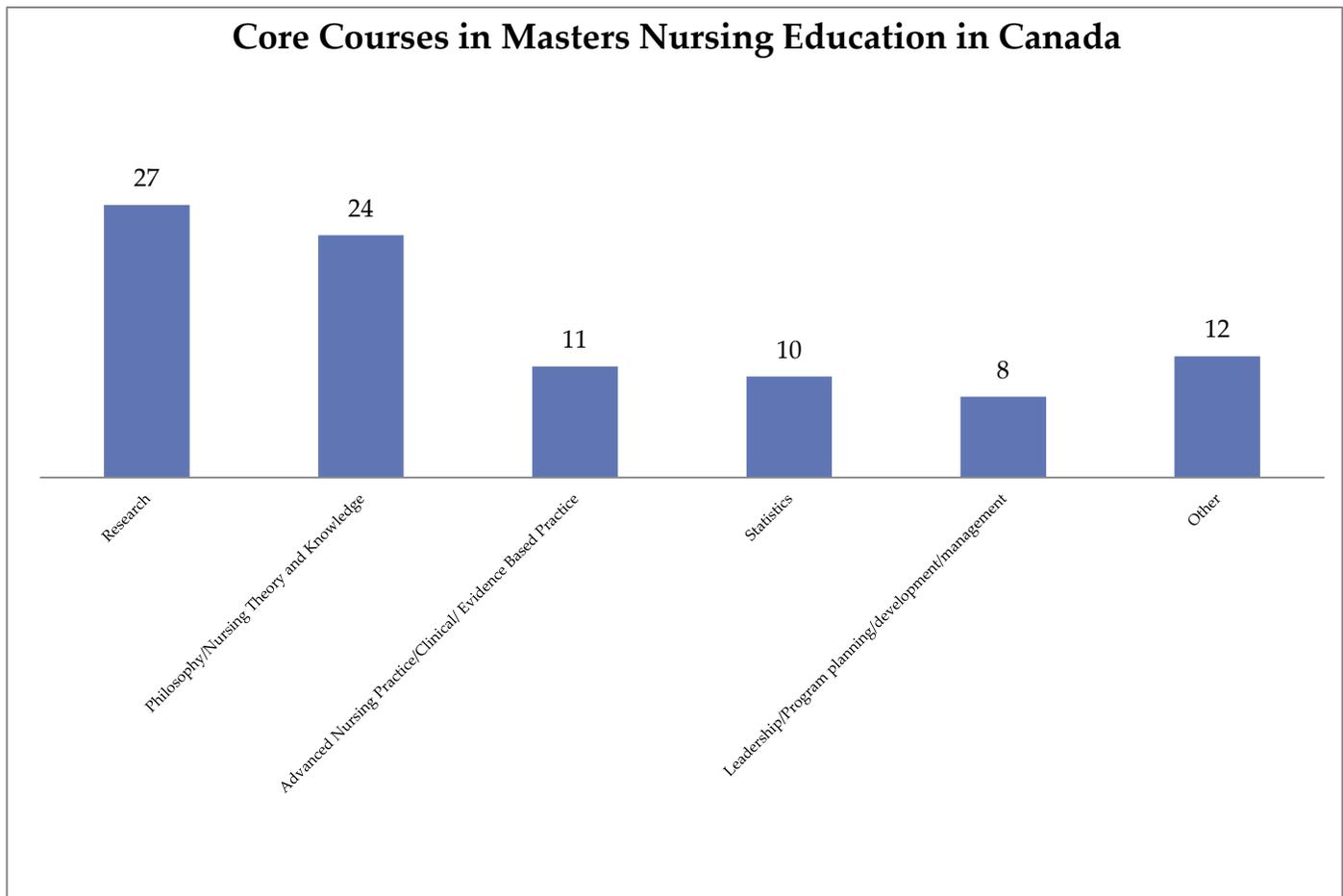
| Mandatory Clinical Hours in Masters programs |
|--|
| 0 |
| 0 |
| 468 |
| 156 |
| 40 |
| 208 |
| 0 |
| 0 |
| 150 |
| 170 |
| 192 |
| 144 |
| 156 |
| 250 |
| 70 |
| 156 |
| 312 |
| 288 |
| 192 |
| 117 |
| 234 |
| 100 |
| 624 |
| 0 |
| 0 |
| 600 |
| 50 |
| 360 |
| 0 |
| 0 |
| 270 |
| Average: 171.2 |

Core Courses

Participants were asked if there are any core courses Masters' Programs' in Nursing should offer, and if so, to identify them (29 of 31 schools responded).

Participants reported the following:

- 93.1% (24 of 29 schools) identified a Research course.
- 82.8% (24 of 29 schools) identified a Philosophy/Nursing Theory and Knowledge course.
- 37.9% (11 of 29 schools) identified an Advanced Nursing Practice/Clinical/ Evidence-based Practice course.
- 34.5% (10 of 29 schools) identified a Statistics course.
- 27.6% (8 of 29 schools) identified a Leadership/Program Planning/Development/Management course.
- The schools also identified a variety of other core courses including, Policy, Ethics, Thesis, Social and Health Context, Trends and Issues, Professional concepts, and Health Promotion.



Viewpoints on the future of Nursing Master's Programs in Canada

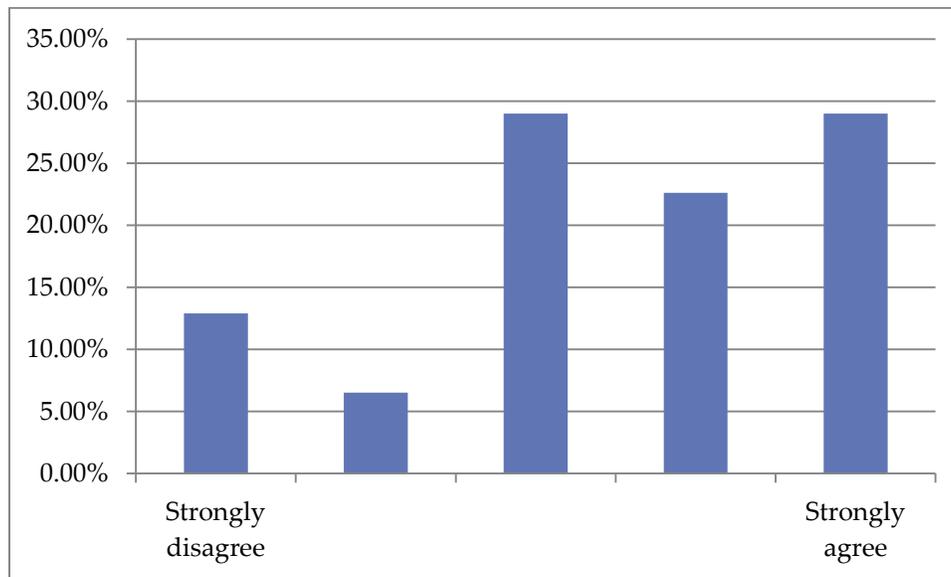
Participants were asked to rate how much they agree with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree):

1. Nursing Masters' Programs in Canada should maintain a thesis component;
2. Nursing Masters' Programs in Canada should prepare a generalist;
3. The move towards specialization stream such as clinical, administrative or educational focuses within Nursing Masters' Programs is one that will strengthen nursing as a profession;
4. Nursing Masters' Programs in Canada should prepare graduates for specialized roles in clinical practice, administration, policy, research, or education.

Participants responded to the statements as follows:

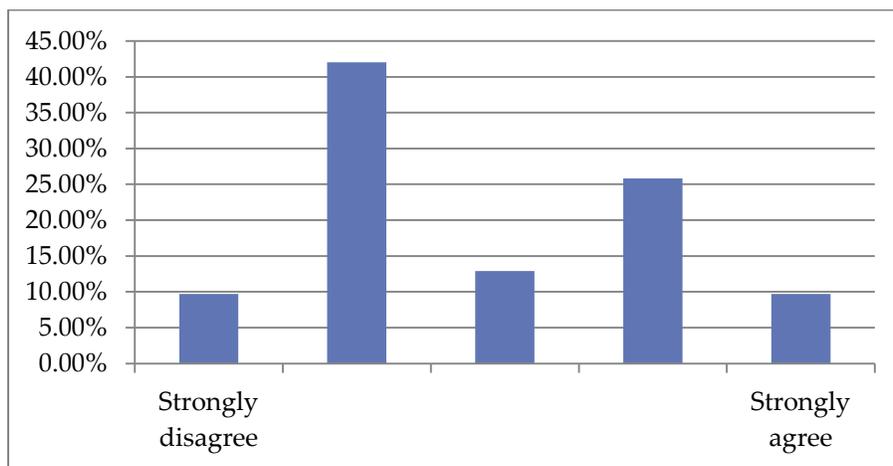
1. Nursing Masters' programs in Canada should maintain a thesis component.

- 29% (9 of 31 schools) reported that they *strongly agreed* with the statement;
- 29% (9 of 31 schools) reported that they were *neutral* to the statement; and,
- 12.9% (4 of 31 schools) reported that they *strongly disagreed* with the statement.



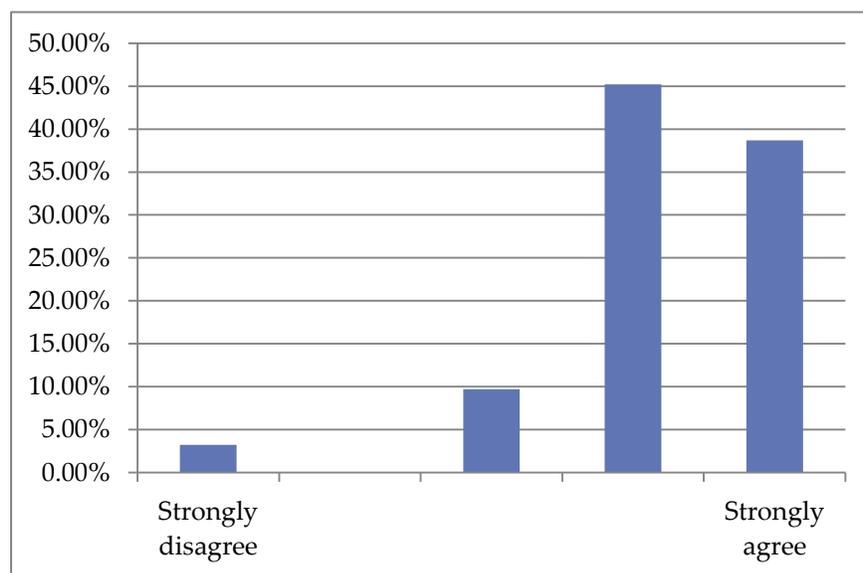
2. **Nursing Masters' programs in Canada should prepare a generalist.**

- 41.9% (13 of 31 schools) reported that they *disagree* with the statement; and,
- 25.8% (8 of 31 schools) reported that they *agree* with the statement.



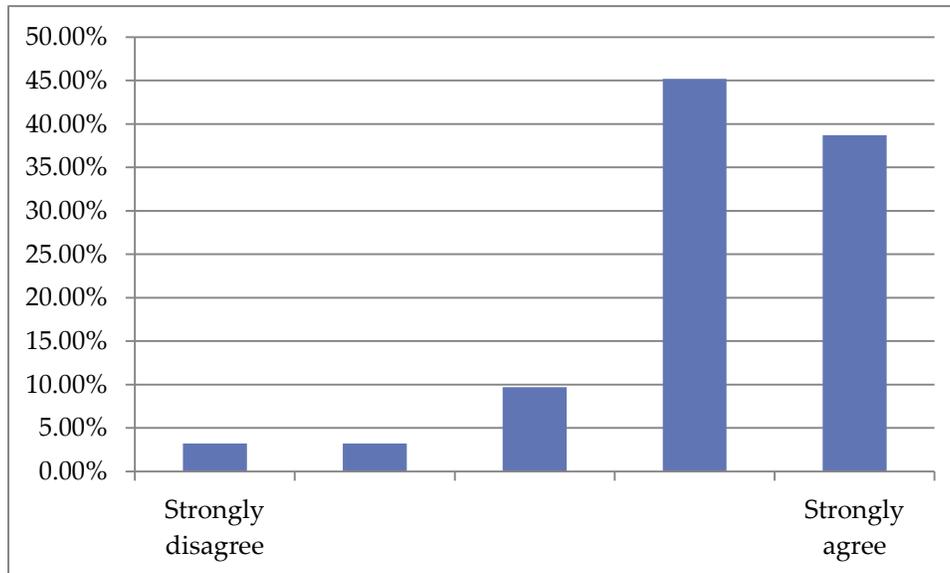
3. **The move towards specialization streams, such as clinical, administrative or educational focuses within Nursing Masters' Programs, is one that will strengthen Nursing as a profession.**

- 45.2% (14 of 31 schools) reported that they *agree* with the statement; and,
- 3.2% (1 of 31 schools) reported that they *strongly disagree* with the statement.



4. **Nursing Masters' Programs in Canada should prepare graduates for specialized roles in clinical practice, administration, policy, research, or education.**

- 45.2% (14 of 31 schools) reported that they *agree* with the statement; and,
- 3.2% (1 of 31 schools) reported that they *strongly disagree*, and 3.2% (1 of 31 schools) reported that they *disagree* with the statement.



Summary of Key Findings and Interpretation

The findings of the 2012 CASN Master of Nursing/Master of Science in Nursing Environmental Scan indicate the following:

- Three quarters of the schools currently prepare students for research at some level and 93% identify a research course as a core element of Masters of Nursing/Master of Science in Nursing programs; 83% consider a course on the philosophy of nursing/nursing theory and knowledge to be a core course.
- Following research, the most important component of Masters of Nursing programs schools identified is developing leadership.
- Despite this convergence, current streams vary considerably in their degree of specialization, in the nature of the specialization being offered, and in clinical/ practice requirements.
- The majority of participants agree, however, that programs should maintain a thesis component
- The majority of participants also agree that a move towards specialization streams, such as clinical, administrative or educational focuses within nursing masters' programs will strengthen nursing as a profession.
- The majority of participants agree as well that Nursing Masters' programs in Canada should prepare graduates for specialized roles in clinical practice, administration, policy, research, or education.
- The two issues facing Masters of Nursing programs of most concern to schools appear to be a lack of funding for students, many of whom must work during their studies, and the need for more faculty.

The survey suggests that Masters of Nursing education may be at a crossroad at this moment in time. Despite considerable diversity there appears to be some agreement that programs need to conserve a focus on the development of scholarship and leadership through research, philosophy of nursing courses and a thesis component while also providing preparation for more delineated roles in education, administration, policy, or practice.

References

Canadian Nurses Association and Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing.(2012). *Registered Nurses Education in Canada Statistics 2010-2011 - Registered Nurse Workforce, Canadian Production: Potential New Supply*. Ottawa: authors.

Appendix A

CASN Nursing Master's Education Environmental Scan

***For this Environmental Scan, CASN is focused on all Nursing Masters Programs other than Nurse Practitioner Programs (e.g. MSc, MSN, MScN, etc.).

***Please complete the attached survey, and send the completed form to Siobhan Bond (CASN Manager of Communications) at sbond@casn.ca by Friday, July 13th, 2012.

School Name: _____

- 1) In the table below, please list all program streams offered within your Nursing Master's Program, and identify what role(s) each stream is preparing your graduates for.

| | Master's Option Title of Program Stream | Graduates are being prepared for the following roles: |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |
| 5. | | |
| 6. | | |
| 7. | | |
| 8. | | |
| | | |
| | | |

- 2) What is the average length of time (within the last 5 years) required to complete the Nursing Master's Program (number of years)?

Average – Full-Time Students: _____

Average – Part-Time Students: _____

- 3) In your view, what are the two most pressing issues facing Master's Education in Nursing today?

1)

2)

- 4) In your view, what are the three most important components of Master's Education in Nursing?

1)

2)

3)

5) *In your view, what are the three most important components of a clinical course in Master's Education in Nursing?*

1)

2)

3)

6) *What are the mandatory minimum clinical hours in your Master's in Nursing Programs?*

7) *Are there core courses that all Masters Programs should contain and what are they?*

8) *To what extent do you agree with the following statements?*

a. *Nursing Masters' Programs in Canada should maintain a thesis component (please check only one box).*

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | | | | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |

b. *Nursing Masters' Programs in Canada should prepare a generalist (please check only one box).*

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | | | | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |

c. *The move towards including specialization streams, such as clinical, administrative or educational focuses within Nursing Masters' Programs, is one that will strengthen Nursing as a profession (please check only one box).*

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | | | | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |

d. *Nursing Masters' Programs in Canada should prepare graduates for specialized roles in clinical practice, administration, policy, research, or education (please check only one box).*

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | | | | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |

e. *It is important that among Masters' Programs offered in Canada that some provide a research focus while others provide a specialization (please check only one box).*

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | | | | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |

