

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE NCLEX-RN® FOR NURSE EDUCATORS IN CANADA

- The NCLEX-RN® and the CRNE are both concerned with entry-level knowledge and skills needed for nursing practice. The CRNE is based on competencies of new graduates, while the NCLEX- RN® is based on an analysis of practice of new graduates. This means the NCLEX- RN® focuses more on what will be experienced in acute care settings, where new graduates are most likely to work.
- Currently, the CRNE can only be written in Canada. The NCLEX-RN® can be accessed in countries outside of the United States. Pass rates are significantly lower on the NCLEX- RN® than on the CRNE for IEN-writers. This will affect the credential and assessment process for IENs entering Canada, and raises concerns for IENs wishing to become licensed in Canada, and IEN educators.
- The NCLEX- RN® is a computer adaptive test, while the CRNE is a paper and pencil examination. Students writing the CRNE may return to questions to review and change their answers or to answer a question later. They do not have this option when writing the computer adaptive NCLEX-RN® exam. Students in the United States are given information and have opportunities to practice using computer adaptive tests. We need to ensure Canadian students practice taking computer adaptive tests.
- The methodology of a computer adaptive exam means that the NCLEX- RN® is of variable length. The level of difficulty of each item is based on the candidate's ability to answer the previous item correctly. All candidates will write a minimum of 75 questions and none will write more than 265 questions. Candidates with high ability pass the exam with fewer questions and candidates with low ability fail the exam with fewer questions. Those who are close to the passing standard will need to answer more questions to either pass or fail the exam. Students need to understand that the length of the exam they write does not mean they have either passed or failed the exam.
- Pearson VUE provides the testing locations for the NCLEX-RN® exam and administers the test. All locations reflect a standard layout and design and follow standard procedures. For example test takers need photo identification with a name that matches their authorization form exactly. Students may write on erasable whiteboards, but may not "brain dump". Faculty and students should be aware of the NCLEX- RN® test-taking procedures, available on Pearson VUE's website.
- CRNE uses only multiple choice questions with four answer choices. The NCLEX- RN® includes alternative question formats as well as multiple choice questions with four responses. The alternative question formats include hot spots, fill in the blank questions, drag and drop ordered responses, and both audio and visual questions. Canadian students should be prepared to encounter these types of questions on the NCLEX- RN®. Students in the US practice using these question formats, using the NCLEX- RN® practice tests.
- Contents related to alterations of health are more heavily focused on pathophysiology, medical diagnoses, physical assessment (using audio and visual question formats), and memorized knowledge of specific lab values. The NCLEX- RN® focuses more on the technical aspects of care than the CRNE.
- One of the four categories of the CRNE questions is Health and Wellness and one of the four in the NCLEX-RN® is Health Promotion and Maintenance. However, this category represents approximately 25% of the questions in the CRNE but only about 10% of the NCLEX-RN®. The CRNE includes questions on population health, community as client, primary health care, and determinants of health. The NCLEX-RN® does not currently include the community as client.
- The NCLEX-RN® prioritization in clinical practice questions are based on a structured hierarchy for nursing actions (e.g. Maslow's hierarchy of needs) that Canadian students would need to learn to be successful on the exam. Multiple books on the NCLEX-RN® provide information on this prioritization system.
- The NCLEX-RN® is updated on a three year cycle. The first cohort of Canadian students to write the NCLEX-RN® in 2015 will be taking the exam to be launched in April 2013. The detailed test plan will be available on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) website in December 2012. NCSBN and the Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators will also be offering 2 webinars for Canadian educators in December 2012 about the NCLEX- RN®, one in English and one in French.

