

## Introduction

The College of Nurses of Ontario (the College) bases its Quality Assurance (QA) Program on the principle that lifelong learning is essential to continuing competence. Nurses demonstrate their commitment to continually improving their nursing practice, in every setting, by:

- engaging in practice reflection
- setting and achieving learning goals.

It is mandatory for nurses in the General, Transitional and Extended classes to participate in the College's QA Program. The *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* states that each health regulatory college must develop, establish and maintain a program to promote continuing competence for its members, and that members must meet the requirements of their college's QA Program.

The College consulted with nurses across the province to develop its QA Program. The program is designed to do the following:

- support nurses in practising according to the College's standards of practice
- facilitate practice development in areas in which the nurse needs to improve
- increase the public's confidence in the nursing profession.

The QA Program measures a nurse's knowledge and application of the College's practice documents.<sup>1</sup> Each year, the College will select two practice documents as the focus of the year's QA Program.<sup>2</sup> You must review these documents and apply them in your Learning Plan.

In addition, Nurse Practitioners (NPs) must review the College's *Nurse Practitioners* practice document.

## QA Program Components

The QA Program includes the following components:

1. Self-Assessment
  - a) Practice Reflection
  - b) Developing and maintaining a Learning Plan
2. Practice Assessment
3. Peer Assessment

## Component 1: Self-Assessment

Self-Assessment is a self-directed, two-part process that results in a Learning Plan. You must participate in this component.

Through the Self-Assessment process, you identify your learning needs and develop learning goals in relation to the selected practice documents. When developing your learning goals, you should reflect on the following elements and their impact on your practice:

- advances in technology<sup>3</sup>
- changes in the practice environment<sup>4</sup>
- entry-to-practice competencies<sup>5</sup>
- interprofessional care.<sup>6</sup>

**There are two parts to the Self-Assessment component.**

### Part A: Practice Reflection

Determining your strengths and areas you need to improve by reflecting on your practice and obtaining peer<sup>7</sup> input will help you to continually improve your competence as a nurse. Practice Reflection can include participating in the College's online learning modules.

Peer input builds on practice reflection by providing greater awareness of your strengths and opportunities for learning. Use the results of Practice Reflection to create your learning goals.

### Part B: Developing and maintaining a Learning Plan to meet your learning goals.

The results of Practice Reflection will form the basis of your Learning Plan.

A Learning Plan is a record of your ongoing participation in activities that help you maintain your competence as a nurse. The plan outlines how you apply practice documents to your nursing practice. It articulates learning goals based on your Practice Reflection and the activities you will undertake to achieve those goals. The College expects nurses to update their learning goals regularly and to keep their Learning Plan for two years.

## Component 2: Practice Assessment

Each year, the College randomly selects nurses to participate in Practice Assessment.<sup>8</sup> If you are selected for Practice Assessment, the College will review your Learning Plan, and you must write an objective multiple-choice test based on the selected practice documents. Nurse Practitioners may be required to participate in additional assessments, such as a chart review and interview.

## Component 3: Peer Assessment

All nurses selected for Practice Assessment will have their Learning Plan and assessment results reviewed by a peer assessor.<sup>9</sup> The College's QA Committee then reviews the peer assessor's report and can recommend or direct that the nurse complete follow-up activities.

Nurses who have successfully completed the process must continue to maintain and update their Learning Plan on an ongoing basis.

## For More Information

Contact the College at:

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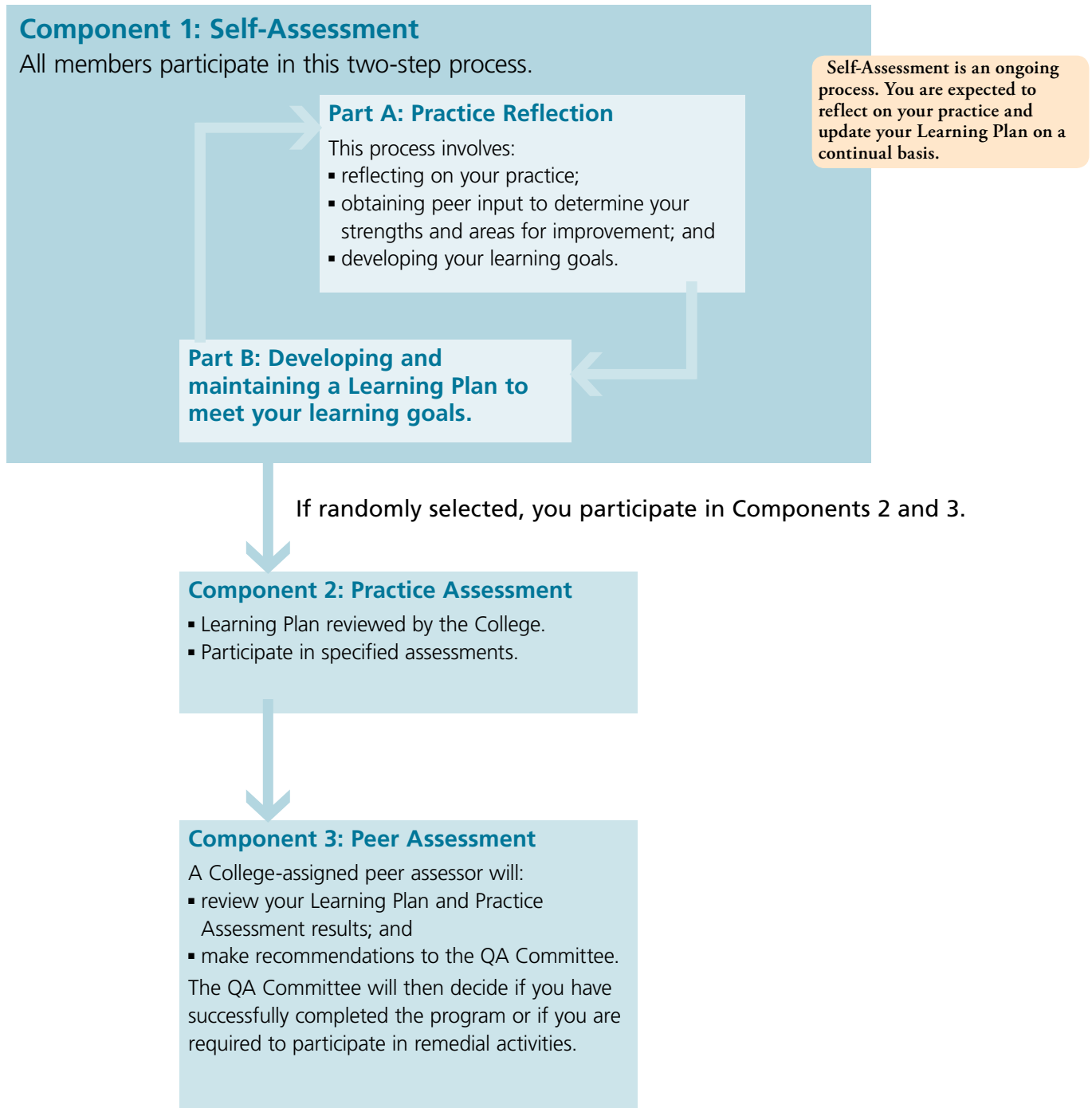
Toll-free in Ontario: 1 800 387-5526

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Website: [www.cno.org](http://www.cno.org)

# Flow Chart

This diagram illustrates the three components of the QA Program.



## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the QA Program, practice document refers to a College practice standard or practice guideline. Practice documents are listed at [www.cno.org/publications](http://www.cno.org/publications).
- <sup>2</sup> Each year, the practice documents selected for the QA Program will be available at [www.cno.org/qa](http://www.cno.org/qa). You can use other College practice documents in your Practice Reflection or Learning Plan, but only in addition to the selected documents.
- <sup>3</sup> Advances in technology are defined as the introduction of new, innovative or different skills, processes or knowledge into a nurse's practice setting; for example, learning how to use a new electronic documentation system
- <sup>4</sup> The term *changes in the practice environment* refer to changes that require additional knowledge, skill and judgment for a nurse to deliver safe, effective and ethical nursing care; for example, changes in the client population, nursing care delivery systems or legislation.
- <sup>5</sup> Entry-to-practice competencies refers to the expectations for all nurses throughout their career. The Registered Nurse, Registered Practical Nurse and NP competency statements are at [www.cno.org/qa](http://www.cno.org/qa).
- <sup>6</sup> Interprofessional care is defined as the provision of comprehensive health services to patients by multiple health care providers who work collaboratively to deliver quality care within and across settings.
- <sup>7</sup> A peer is defined as any member of the interprofessional care team who understands your role as a nurse. A peer does not have to be in the same role as you.
- <sup>8</sup> Nurses are eligible for selection after their second year of registration. Registration class determines the cycle for being randomly selected for Practice Assessment: once a member of the General Class has completed Practice Assessment, she or he is removed from the selection pool for 10 years. Nurse Practitioners who have participated in Practice Assessment are exempt from selection for five years.
- <sup>9</sup> A College-assigned peer assessor is a nurse with an in-depth understanding of College practice documents.



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