

Requisite Skills and Abilities

for nursing practice in Ontario

Introduction

This document is intended to provide information for prospective nursing students, guidance councilors, educational institutions, nursing program admission officers, disability service providers and the public about the general demands and performance expectations of nurses in Ontario. These necessary capabilities are called Requisite Skills and Abilities (RSAs). Information about RSAs in relation to entry to nursing practice may be used to gauge personal fit with the requirements for nursing practice as a career choice.

The College of Nurses of Ontario (the College) is the regulatory body for the province's approximately 150,000 nurses. It works to protect the public interest by setting entry-to-practice requirements, developing and enforcing standards of practice and providing programs to help nurses maintain competence throughout their careers. Despite its name, the College is not a school and is not involved in students' admittance to nursing education programs. Upon completion of their nursing program, students apply to the College for membership, which is required of anyone who wants to practise nursing in Ontario.

At the completion of their nursing educational program all student nurses must demonstrate the capacity to meet the College of Nurses of Ontario's (CNO) *Entry-to-Practice Competencies for Ontario Registered Practical Nurses* or *National Competencies in the context of entry-level Registered Nurse practice* and be able to practise within the context of CNO's nursing practice standards.

¹ The seven categories are based on the original work of the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (CRNBC), with minor adaptations. Other registered nurse regulatory bodies across Canada have also used CRNBC's framework to develop their own jurisdictional-specific RSAs [i.e. The College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA), the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba (CRNM), the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia (CRNNS) and the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association (SRNA)].

CNO recognizes that meeting the entry-to-practice competencies requires certain skills and abilities. Seven categories have been identified by CNO as capturing the components necessary for nursing practice¹. They are:

1. Cognitive
2. Communication
3. Interpersonal
4. Behavioral
5. Psycho-motor
6. Sensory
7. Environmental

These categories represent reasonable and justifiable skill and ability requirements for entry-level nursing practice in Ontario. They are reflected in the competencies required for registered nurse (RN) and registered practical nurse (RPN) practice as a generalist.

Each requisite skill and ability is listed with examples of entry-level nursing activities that illustrate the skill and ability. The examples provide a snapshot of the nature and kinds of activities expected of a student once they become an RN or RPN and enter into typical entry-level nursing practice.

1. Cognitive requirements

Ability to perform skills that demonstrate thinking capacity:

- Remember information from past experiences
- Demonstrate problem-solving skills
- Demonstrate concentration skills
- Use reasoning to develop professional judgment
- Exercise critical thinking skills to develop professional judgment
- Apply arithmetic skills and abilities to:
 - Add, subtract, multiply and divide
 - Calculate ratios, percentages and apply formulas

Examples:

The student: uses past experiences to inform current decision-making; perceives when situations require further inquiry; performs arithmetic skills to safely administer medication; can make sense of complex information.

2. Communication requirements

Ability to express and receive written, verbal and/or non-verbal language and the ability to interact with others in a respectful and professional manner:

- Speak, read, listen and write in the English and/or French language at a level that provides for safe and accurate understanding of words and meanings
- Recognize own non-verbal signals and interpret those received from others while considering individual differences in expression and associated meaning
- Elicit and respond to information from clients, colleagues and others

Examples:

The student: accurately obtains and records client information in the chart; communicates clearly with other health care providers; listens appropriately to clients and demonstrates awareness that each individual's behavior may have different meanings.

3. Interpersonal requirements

Ability to create good relationships between oneself and other people:

- Develop professional relationships and rapport with individuals and groups
- Recognize the importance of maintaining interpersonal boundaries
- Recognize the needs of clients and colleagues

Examples:

The student: identifies that others have needs and perspectives that might be different from his/her own; recognizes the importance of client perspectives and feelings.

4. Behavioral requirements

Ability to conduct oneself in a professional manner:

- Manage own behavior well enough to provide safe, competent and ethical nursing care
- Engage with self and others to create a safe environment
- Respond appropriately in situations that are stressful or involve conflict
- React appropriately to giving and receiving physical touch and working in close proximity with a full range of clients

- Fulfill responsibility as part of a team
- Manage time appropriately

Examples:

The student: responds appropriately in conflict situations; remains calm in stressful situations; recognizes priorities in the face of multiple demands.

5. Psycho-motor requirements

Ability to perform each of the following requisites well enough to provide client care and participate in educational activities:

- Stand and maintain balance
- Manual dexterity
- Move within limited spaces
- Push/pull
- Perform repetitive movements
- Perform hand-eye coordination
- Bend
- Reach
- Lift
- Walk
- Climb
- Carry objects

Examples:

The student can: help lift, turn and/or transfer clients; climb stairs for a home care visit; enter information into a computer while taking client health history; remove sutures and staples; give injections.

6. Sensory requirements

Ability to utilize each of the following senses well enough to provide care and participate in educational activities:

- Sight
- Hearing
- Touch
- Smell

Examples:

The student: can see and read lines of demarcation and numbers on a syringe; can hear verbal communication or sounds of a client in distress; can feel a client's pulse; can detect an odor.

7. Environment requirements

Ability to function in the presence of each of the following commonly encountered and unavoidable environmental factors:

- Noxious smells
- Disease agents
- Distractions
- Noise
- Chemicals
- Unpredictable behavior of others

Examples:

The student: can tolerate unpleasant odors; can deal with the distraction of a crying baby while providing care to a sibling; can recognize dangers in the client environment.

Conclusion

Individuals considering a career as a nurse in Ontario should review this document and assess their ability to meet the criteria. The RSAs serve as a benchmark, outlining the requirements to meet the minimum standard necessary to ensure public safety.

Anyone who has questions about whether or not they have the RSAs for admission or progression through a nursing educational program should contact the educational institution to which they intend to apply to explore the kinds of supports they may require. This may necessitate disclosure and provision of evidence, which must be treated in a confidential and nondiscriminatory manner. Educational institutions are expected to work with prospective students.

Applicants who have questions about whether or not they have the RSAs to be registered as an RN or RPN should contact CNO to explore the kinds of supports they might require. CNO is expected to work with prospective members to determine reasonable accommodation provided that accommodation does not compromise client safety and well-being.



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