

NEPAB

Nursing Education Program Approval Board

Entry-Level Nursing Education Programs

NEPAB's Authority

As part of the mandate of a self-regulated profession, the Nursing Education Program Approval Board (NEPAB) reviews and approves Alberta nursing education programs leading to initial entry to practice as a registered nurse.

The authority to approve entry-level nursing education programs is granted in Section 3(1)(f) of the *Health Professions Act* (2000), which states:

A college may approve programs of study and education courses for the purposes of registration requirements.

Section 3(1) of the *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation* (2005), pursuant to the *Health Professions Act* (HPA), outlines the registered nurse registration requirements:

An applicant for registration as a regulated member on the registered nurse register must

- (a) *have successfully completed as an education requirement either*
 - (i) *on and before December 31, 2009, a diploma or baccalaureate degree in nursing from an approved nursing program undertaken in Alberta, or*
 - (ii) *on and after January 1, 2010, a baccalaureate degree in nursing from an approved nursing program undertaken in Alberta,*
- and*
- (b) *pass the registration exam.*

The *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation* defines an approved nursing education program as follows:

“approved nursing program” means a nursing education program approved by the Nursing Education Program Approval Board in accordance with nursing education standards and criteria approved by the Council.

Further, the Nursing Education Program Approval Board is defined as follows:

“Nursing Education Program Approval Board” means the Nursing Education Program Approval Board continued pursuant to bylaws under section 132 of the Act.

NEPAB's Functions

Article 30 of the College and Association of Registered Nurses (CARNA) Bylaws outline the duties and powers of NEPAB including the following:

30.2 NEPAB may:

- (a) *Establish policies and processes respecting any matters that are required to secure an effective nursing education program leading to initial entry to practice as a Registered Nurse;*
- (b) *Establish the minimum nursing education standards and criteria required to obtain and maintain the designation of “approved nursing education program”, which must be ratified by Provincial Council before*

they become effective;

- (c) *Grant to and withdraw from a nursing education program the designation “approved nursing education program”, based on the nursing education standards and criteria ratified under subsection (b), with or without conditions, terms, limitations and restrictions...*

**NEPAB’s
Membership**

NEPAB members are appointed by CARNA Provincial Council and include:

- One public representative,
- Three persons representing NEPAB approved entry-level programs,
- Two persons representing employers, and
- Three CARNA registered nurses.

**Financial
Support**

NEPAB’s work is financially supported by CARNA as part of the annual budget approved by Provincial Council. Currently there is no fee charged for nursing education program approval or re-approval.

**Nursing
Education
Standards**

To meet the legislated requirements of HPA and the Regulation for Registered Nurses, NEPAB reviews nursing education programs leading to initial entry to practice as a registered nurse for evidence that they address the NEPAB *Standards for Nursing Education Programs Leading to Initial Entry to Practice as a Registered Nurse (2005)*.

The *Standards for Alberta Nursing Education Programs Leading to Initial Entry to Practice as a Registered Nurse* contain the nursing education standards and criteria that represent the requirements for nursing education program approval. The standards and criteria are the basis by which nursing education programs are reviewed by NEPAB for approval, re-approval and assessment. The five (5) nursing education standards must be met for a nursing education program to obtain the designation of an “approved nursing education program” in Alberta.

The CARNA entry-to-practice competencies are a fundamental component of NEPAB’s nursing education standards. Applicants are expected to provide detailed information regarding the integration of these competencies into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of entry-level nursing education programs.

**NEPAB’s
Processes
and Policies**

The *Standards for Alberta Nursing Education Programs Leading to Initial Entry to Practice as a Registered Nurse: Approval Mechanism (2008)* outlines the policies and processes by which a nursing education program becomes and continues to be recognized as a NEPAB approved nursing education program. Applicants are also provided with specific guidelines to aid in the preparation of the submission for the review of a nursing education program for approval, re-approval, or assessment.

The *Complaint Resolution Mechanism (2008)* outlines the processes by which a complaint about NEPAB members or staff, NEPAB’s work or a nursing education program can be submitted for review. In addition, Section 6: *Review by an Independent Nursing Education Expert* of this document describes the

steps an educational institution must take to refer a concern regarding any NEPAB process or decision regarding nursing education program approval, re-approval, or assessment.

Copies of the following NEPAB documents can be obtained by contacting the NEPAB office:

- *Standards for Alberta Nursing Education Programs Leading to Initial Entry to Practice as a Registered Nurse* (2005),
- *Standards for Alberta Nursing Education Programs Leading to Initial Entry to Practice as a Registered Nurse: Approval Mechanism* (2008), and
- *Complaint Resolution Mechanism* (2008).

New Program Approval Process:

The review of an application for a new nursing education program involves three stages – the preliminary review, annual updates and the application for ongoing approval.

Preliminary Review

The proposed nursing education program submits a self-report as application for approval. Approval with terms is standard procedure for a new nursing education program leading to initial entry-to-practice as a registered nurse. The approval is reviewed by NEPAB each year that the nursing education program runs until such time as they are able to report to NEPAB on the evaluation of one cohort of graduates. This is generally for the duration of the program plus one (1) year. This allows the educational institution to gather and report on follow-up evaluations from their first graduates.

Review of Annual Updates

Yearly reports are the mechanism by which NEPAB reviews the newly approved programs, once the nursing education program has commenced, to ensure that the nursing education standards continue to be met. The purpose of the annual updated self-report is to provide updated, new, or changed information since the previous submission. This includes information based on the *Standards for Alberta Nursing Education Programs Leading to Initial Entry to Practice as a Registered Nurse*, regarding:

- Any changes, revisions, or other updates from the most recent submission,
- Progress and ongoing development in the nursing education program,
- Challenges and opportunities for improvement, and
- Information pertaining to evaluation plans and results.

Ongoing Approval

Following the submission of satisfactory self-reports and the satisfactory completion of the terms or conditions stipulated in the approval, the nursing education program submits a final self-report as application for ongoing approval. Ongoing approval is for a period of not more than five (5) years, at which time the program would be reviewed by NEPAB for re-approval.

List of Approved Programs

When a nursing education program is approved by NEPAB the name of the program is added to the NEPAB list of Approved Nursing Education Programs Leading to Initial Entry to Practice as a Registered Nurse. This list is circulated to stakeholders including the CARNA Registrar, Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, and Alberta Health and Wellness to provide notice that:

- Graduates of the approved nursing education program are eligible to write the Canadian Registered Nurse Examination, and
- Successful candidates may then apply for initial registration with CARNA to commence practice as a registered nurse.

Refer to the “List of Approved Entry-Level Nursing Education Programs” for further information.

Nurse Practitioner Education Programs

NEPAB’s Authority

Section 4(1) of the *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation (2005)*, pursuant to the *Health Professions Act (HPA)*, outlines the nurse practitioner registration requirements:

An applicant for registration as a regulated member on the nurse practitioner register must

- have successfully completed a baccalaureate degree in nursing satisfactory to the Registration Committee,*
- have completed 4500 hours of registered nursing practice satisfactory to the Registration Committee,*
- have successfully completed a nurse practitioner education program approved by the Council,*
- be registered on the registered nurse register, and*
- have passed any examination respecting nurse practitioner practice approved by the Council.*

In September 2008 CARNA Provincial Council delegated the authority to approve nurse practitioner nursing education programs to NEPAB. Work to formalize the nurse practitioner program approval requirements and processes is currently under way. Please contact NEPAB staff for further information.