

**Consideration of Summary of Self-Study Reports for  
Professional Nursing Education Programs  
Based Upon 2015 NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rates**

**Background:**

Rule 215.4(c)(2)(B) requires nursing programs to submit a Self-Study Report (SSR) when their NCLEX® examination pass rate is below the benchmark of 80%. During the past three (3) years, sixty-one (61) professional nursing education programs have submitted SSRs, each one presenting a thorough analysis of factors that may have contributed to the pass rates, and the projected quality-improvement measures as corrective measures. The implementation of their corrective strategies has resulted in programs adjusting their curricula for more rigor; revising their admission, readmission, and progression criteria; and providing more effective faculty development and faculty mentoring programs.

The NCLEX® examination pass rate is not the only indicator of the quality of the educational preparation in the nursing program but usually provides a “red flag” that the program needs to make adjustment in the curriculum and in program policies. The passing rate of first-time candidates is used in the programs’ annual pass rate since this is the best measure of the effectiveness of the program of study in preparing graduates for entry-level practice. Many graduates succeed on second or third attempts on the NCLEX® and become licensed nurses, but other factors (such as further study and review courses) contribute to the pass rate of repeaters, not just the education provided in the program.

The majority of programs improve their pass rates through successful implementation of corrective measures. The SSR is a focused self-evaluation by the director and nursing faculty, and most programs testify that it is a valuable insight into their total program.

The sixteen (16) programs that developed SSRs for the 2015 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates included:

- 8 ADN programs in public community colleges,
- 3 ADN programs in career schools,
- 1 BSN program in a public university, and
- 4 BSN programs in private universities.

The following table lists a compilation of the programs' self-identified factors that may have contributed to the pass rates and the planned corrective measures for improvement:

<b>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX® Examination Pass Rates - Students</b>	<b>Corrective Measures to Improve Success - Students</b>
<p>High-risk students admitted due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inconsistent use of admission policies</li> <li>• inadequate student policies for admission, readmission, and progression</li> </ul> <p>Need to identify at-risk students earlier Need for remediation of at-risk students due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inconsistency in policies for remediation</li> <li>• lack of monitoring of at-risk students</li> </ul> <p>Challenges in meeting student needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• managing enrollment growth</li> <li>• need for improved resources/student services</li> <li>• need for student participation in governance</li> <li>• diversity in students: non-traditional; millennial, unmotivated</li> </ul>	<p>Review, revise, and consistently follow policies for admission, readmission, and progression, usually by raising the standards.</p> <p>Include a mechanism for early identification of at-risk students and provide early intervention. Establish a formal remediation plan following an outcome measure such as results on a standardized examination or a unit test. Develop a plan for tracking students.</p> <p>Provide continual student support such as group tutoring, counseling, advising, offering test taking skills and test reviews. Utilize a boot camp approach. Provide orientation to new courses, and supplemental instruction as needed. Provide flexible lab hours to enable student practice. Include team-building activities.</p>
<b>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX® Examination Pass Rates - Policies</b>	<b>Corrective Measures to Improve Success - Policies</b>
<p>Inadequate student policies (see above) Inconsistency in enforcing student policies (see above)</p> <p>Ineffective grading policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grade inflation</li> <li>• disparity between clinical and didactic grades</li> </ul>	<p>Re-evaluate student policies, including transfer policies.</p> <p>Raise the passing standard. Develop faculty policies for grading students on didactic and clinical evaluation tools. Establish interrater reliability policies.</p>

<b>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX® Examination Pass Rates - Faculty</b>	<b>Corrective Measures to Improve Success - Faculty</b>
<p>Inadequate number of qualified faculty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high faculty turnover</li> <li>• inexperienced faculty</li> <li>• increased use of part-time faculty</li> <li>• lack of staff to support faculty (e.g. lab assistant)</li> <li>• need for better orientation of preceptors</li> </ul> <p>Lack of faculty resources/support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ineffective faculty evaluations</li> <li>• need for faculty development</li> <li>• ineffective or no faculty orientation/mentoring program</li> <li>• need for faculty to attain skills in test-writing and item analysis</li> <li>• faculty resistance to using technology</li> <li>• low faculty salaries</li> </ul> <p>Appropriateness of faculty workload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more faculty overloads to manage teaching</li> </ul> <p>Low faculty morale and commitment due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• change in program director</li> <li>• lack of collaboration among faculty</li> </ul>	<p>Determine the need for additional faculty. Request adequate faculty positions for the number of students. Conduct exit interviews of faculty who resign to gain insight into faculty issues. Ensure effective faculty assignments. Strengthen the use of preceptors. Hire a remediation specialist.</p> <p>Establish fair and effective faculty evaluation policies. Plan for opportunities for ongoing faculty development. Plan consistent formalized orientation and mentoring programs for new faculty. Schedule test-writing and item-analysis workshop. Encourage utilization of educational resources. Encourage innovative teaching strategies.</p> <p>Review faculty workload policies, ensuring consistency with job descriptions. Schedule regular faculty meetings. Promote collaboration and consensus-gaining among faculty. Engage faculty in decision-making.</p>

<b>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX® Examination Pass Rates - Curriculum</b>	<b>Corrective Measures to Improve Success - Curriculum</b>
<p>Need to review and revise curriculum to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• better alignment of clinical and simulation to didactic content</li> <li>• consistencies in inclusion of DEC's in courses and clinical evaluation tools</li> <li>• instruction in critical thinking</li> <li>• consistency with NCLEX Test Plan</li> <li>• appropriate text books</li> <li>• effective student learning outcomes</li> <li>• better clinical experiences</li> </ul> <p>Inadequacy of NCLEX Preparation for Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of test-taking strategies</li> <li>• lack of NCLEX review</li> </ul> <p>Reliance on standardized examinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• substituting credit by exam for nursing courses</li> <li>• ineffective use of standardized exams</li> <li>• ineffective use of data from standardized exams</li> <li>• students not held to benchmark on standardized exams</li> <li>• lack of remediation following results for standardized exams</li> </ul> <p>Learning environment not conducive to student success</p>	<p>Review curriculum for alignment of content in didactic and clinical activities.  Use curriculum mapping.  Establish a formalized simulation program.  Ensure that the DEC's are used in the program.  Ensure that NCLEX test plan is integrated into the curriculum.  Review texts for agreement among faculty.  Review student learning outcomes and revise as needed.  Search for additional clinical sites.</p> <p>Use NCLEX-type questions in the classroom.  Establish an end-of-program review course.  Seek new resources for NCLEX preparation.</p> <p>Consider whether credit by exam should be used.  Consider changing the testing vendor.  Enforce policies for use of standardized exams.</p> <p>Seek feedback from students and faculty related to the learning environment.</p>

<b>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX® Examination Pass Rates – Testing and Evaluation</b>	<b>Corrective Measures to Improve Success – Testing and Evaluation</b>
<p>Concerns about use of standardized examinations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need to re-evaluate use of standardized examinations</li> <li>• ineffective use of student performance data from standardized examinations</li> </ul> <p>Ineffective Clinical Evaluation Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inadequate grading criteria for clinical evaluation tools</li> <li>• inconsistencies in evaluating student performance on clinical evaluation tools</li> <li>• need to revise clinical evaluation tools</li> <li>• incongruence of clinical objectives and course objectives</li> </ul> <p>Testing issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need to move away from paper/pencil exams</li> <li>• poor faculty-written test items</li> <li>• need for test security</li> <li>• need to review test bank for adequacy</li> </ul>	<p>Use standardized examinations throughout the program rather than at the end.</p> <p>Ensure students are evaluated for DEC's competencies. Promote agreement on consistent policies for evaluating student performance in clinicals. Develop new clinical evaluation tools. Institute clinical portfolios. Teach clinical reasoning.</p> <p>Review testing policies. Provide faculty training in test-writing and using alternate type questions. Increase difficulty level in test items. Establish policies for test security.</p>

<b>Factors That May Have Contributed to NCLEX® Examination Pass Rates – Total Program Evaluation</b>	<b>Corrective Measures to Improve Success – Total Program Evaluation</b>
<p>Need to review and revise Total Program Evaluation Plan for more effective use, specifically on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the curriculum plan</li> <li>• student outcomes</li> <li>• student satisfaction with courses/faculty</li> </ul>	<p>Review, revise, and consistently use the Total Program Evaluation Plan. Make decisions based upon evaluation data.</p> <p>Develop criteria to determine student success. Reflect on student feedback.</p>

Other items mentioned that are worthy of mention:

- inadequate classroom and lab space
- inappropriate budget/resources

This report is for information only. No Board action is necessary.