



## Guidelines for Assessment of Student Achievement

This document provides guidance to evaluators and decision-makers regarding assessment of student achievement when evaluating a baccalaureate and/or graduate nursing program for accreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). It also provides information to institutional and program officials and faculty in understanding how key elements related to student achievement will be applied by CCNE in the accreditation review process.

Pertinent key elements and corresponding elaborations from the *CCNE Standards for Accreditation of Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs (2013)* are presented, followed by guidelines, which provide multiple examples of programs meeting, or not meeting, CCNE's expectations.

### Key Element IV-B

IV-B. Program completion rates demonstrate program effectiveness.

*Elaboration: The program demonstrates achievement of required program outcomes regarding completion. For each degree program (baccalaureate, master's, and DNP) and post-graduate APRN certificate program:*

- *The completion rate for each of the three most recent calendar years is provided.*
- *The program specifies the entry point and defines the time period to completion.*
- *The program describes the formula it uses to calculate the completion rate.*
- *The completion rate for the most recent calendar year is 70% or higher. However, if the completion rate for the most recent calendar year is less than 70%, (1) the completion rate is 70% or higher when the annual completion rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged or (2) the completion rate is 70% or higher when excluding students who have identified factors such as family obligations, relocation, financial barriers, and decisions to change major or to transfer to another institution of higher education.*

*A program with a completion rate less than 70% for the most recent calendar year provides a written explanation/analysis with documentation for the variance.*

*This key element is not applicable to a new degree or certificate program that does not yet have individuals who have completed the program. (CCNE Standards, 2013)*

## Guidelines for Assessment of Key Element IV-B: Completion Rates

### *Examples that meet CCNE's expectations*

- The completion rate for the program under review is 70% or higher for the most recent calendar year, even if the completion rate for an individual track (when multiple tracks exist) is less than 70%. The program provides documentation that the completion rate for the program meets the 70% rate.
- The completion rate for the program is less than 70% for the most recent calendar year, but is 70% or higher when excluding students who dropped out due to relocation or financial barriers. The program provides supporting documentation (e.g., responses to surveys).
- The completion rate for the program is less than 70% for the most recent calendar year, but is 70% or higher when excluding students who changed major within the institution. The program provides supporting documentation (e.g., institutional records or responses to surveys).

### *Examples that do not meet CCNE's expectations*

- The completion rate for the program is less than 70% for the most recent calendar year, and the program has not collected or analyzed data regarding the reasons for the low completion rate.
- The completion rate for the program is less than 70% for the most recent calendar year, and the average completion rate for the three most recent calendar years is less than 70%.
- In each of the past three calendar years, the program's completion rate has improved from 54% to 62% to 68%; however, the rate for the most recent calendar year continues to be less than 70%.
- The program has not collected data regarding the completion rate for the most recent calendar year, and the program is not new.

## Key Element IV-C

IV-C. Licensure and certification pass rates demonstrate program effectiveness.

*Elaboration: The pre-licensure program demonstrates achievement of required program outcomes regarding licensure.*

- *The NCLEX-RN® pass rate for each campus/site and track is provided for each of the three most recent calendar years.*
- *The NCLEX-RN® pass rate for each campus/site and track is 80% or higher for first-time takers for the most recent calendar year. However, if the NCLEX-RN® pass rate for any campus/site and track is less than 80% for first-time takers for the most recent calendar year, (1) the pass rate for that campus/site or track is 80% or higher for all takers (first-time and repeat) for the most recent calendar year, (2) the pass rate for that campus/site or track is 80% or higher for first-time takers when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged, or (3) the pass rate for that campus/site or track is 80% or higher for all takers (first-time and repeat) when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged.*

*A campus/site or track with an NCLEX-RN® pass rate of less than 80% for first-time takers for the most recent calendar year provides a written explanation/analysis with documentation for the variance and a plan to meet the 80% NCLEX-RN® pass rate for first-time takers. The explanation may include trend data, information about numbers of test takers, data relative to specific campuses/sites or tracks, and data on repeat takers.*

*The graduate program demonstrates achievement of required program outcomes regarding certification. Certification results are obtained and reported in the aggregate for those graduates taking each examination, even when national certification is not required to practice in a particular state.*

- *Data are provided regarding the number of graduates and the number of graduates taking each certification examination.*
- *The certification pass rate for each examination for which the program prepares graduates is provided for each of the three most recent calendar years.*
- *The certification pass rate for each examination is 80% or higher for first-time takers for the most recent calendar year. However, if the pass rate for any certification examination is less than 80% for first-time takers for the most recent calendar year, (1) the pass rate for that certification examination is 80% or higher for all takers (first-time and repeat) for the most recent calendar year, (2) the pass rate for that certification examination is 80% or higher for first-time takers when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged, or (3) the pass rate for that certification examination is 80% or higher for all takers (first-time and repeat) when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged.*

*A program with a pass rate of less than 80% for any certification examination for the most recent calendar year provides a written explanation/analysis with documentation for the variance and a plan to meet the 80% certification pass rate for first-time takers. The explanation may include trend data, information about numbers of test takers, and data on repeat takers.*

*This key element is not applicable to a new degree or certificate program that does not yet have individuals who have taken licensure or certification examinations. (CCNE Standards, 2013)*

## Guidelines for Assessment of Key Element IV-C: Licensure Pass Rates

### *Examples that meet CCNE's expectations*

- The NCLEX-RN<sup>®</sup> pass rate for a campus/site or track for first-time takers is less than 80% for the most recent calendar year, but the program provides evidence that the pass rate for all takers is 80% or higher for the most recent calendar year.
- The NCLEX-RN<sup>®</sup> pass rate for a campus/site or track for first-time takers is less than 80% for the most recent calendar year, but the program provides evidence that the pass rate is 80% or higher for first-time takers when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged.
- The NCLEX-RN<sup>®</sup> pass rate for a campus/site or track for first-time takers is less than 80% for the most recent calendar year, but the program provides evidence that the pass rate is 80% or higher for all takers when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged.

### *Examples that do not meet CCNE's expectations*

- The NCLEX-RN<sup>®</sup> pass rate for a campus/site or track for first-time takers is less than 80% for the most recent calendar year, and the program does not provide trend data or evidence that the pass rate is 80% or higher for all takers for the most recent calendar year.
- The NCLEX-RN<sup>®</sup> pass rate for a campus/site or track is less than 80% for the most recent calendar year, and the program provides no evidence that the pass rate is 80% or higher when annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged.
- The NCLEX-RN<sup>®</sup> pass rate for a campus/site or track for all takers is less than 80% for the most recent calendar year even though the program has demonstrated that it has met the state Board of Nursing (BON) requirements with regard to pass rates and is in good standing with the BON (i.e., the program has full approval/recognition/ accreditation by the BON and is not on warning, conditional, or probationary status). In addition, the program provides no trend data.
- The pre-licensure program is new and therefore reports less than one year (i.e., one, two, or three quarters) of NCLEX-RN<sup>®</sup> pass rate data, which show that the pass rate for first-time takers is less than 80%. No data are available regarding the success of repeat takers.
- The pre-licensure program presents no NCLEX-RN<sup>®</sup> pass rate data for a campus/site or track, and there are graduates who have taken the licensure examination.

## Guidelines for Assessment of Key Element IV-C: Certification Pass Rates

### *Examples that meet CCNE's expectations*

- The certification pass rate for first-time takers is less than 80% for the most recent calendar year, but the program provides evidence that the pass rate for all takers for the most recent calendar year is 80% or higher.
- The certification pass rate for first-time takers is 78% for the most recent calendar year, but the program provides evidence that the pass rate is 80% or higher for first-time takers when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged.
- The pass rate for a particular certification examination (e.g., to become a family nurse practitioner) is 75% for first-time takers. However, only four graduates took the examination (three passed and one failed). The program provides evidence that the student who failed the examination on the first attempt passed it on the second attempt. The certification pass rate for this examination for all takers is therefore 100%.
- The pass rate for first-time takers for the Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) certification examination is less than 80% for the most recent calendar year. However, the program provides data that the certification examination pass rate is 80% or higher for first-time takers when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged.

### *Examples that do not meet CCNE's expectations*

- The pass rate for first-time takers of a certification examination is less than 80% for the most recent calendar year. In addition, the program does not provide evidence that the pass rate for the examination is 80% or higher for the most recent calendar year when considering data for repeat takers.
- The pass rate for first-time takers of a certification examination is less than 80% for the most recent calendar year. In addition, the pass rate is less than 80% for first-time takers when the annual pass rates for the three most recent calendar years are averaged.
- The graduate program is new and therefore reports less than one year (i.e., one, two, or three quarters) of certification pass rate data, which show that the pass rate for first-time takers of an examination is less than 80%. In addition, no data are available regarding the success of repeat takers.
- The graduate program presents no certification pass rate data (and the program is not new), regardless of whether certification is required to practice in the state where the program is offered.

## Key Element IV-D

IV-D. Employment rates demonstrate program effectiveness.

*Elaboration: The program demonstrates achievement of required outcomes regarding employment rates.*

- *The employment rate is collected separately for each degree program (baccalaureate, master's, and DNP) and post-graduate APRN certificate program.*
- *Data are collected within 12 months of program completion. For example, employment data may be collected at the time of program completion or at any time within 12 months of program completion.*
- *The employment rate is 70% or higher. However, if the employment rate is less than 70%, the employment rate is 70% or higher when excluding graduates who have elected not to be employed.*

*Any program with an employment rate less than 70% provides a written explanation/analysis with documentation for the variance.*

*This key element is not applicable to a new degree or certificate program that does not yet have individuals who have completed the program. (CCNE Standards, 2013)*

## Guidelines for Assessment of Key Element IV-D: Employment Rates

### **Examples that meet CCNE's expectations**

- The employment rate in nursing is less than 70%, but the program provides evidence that it has collected data from graduates showing that 70% or more work in nursing or in a field other than nursing.
- The employment rate is less than 70%, but the program provides evidence that it has collected data from graduates showing that graduates are enrolled in educational programs, and, excluding these individuals, the employment rate is 70% or higher.

### **Examples that do not meet CCNE's expectations**

- The program indicates that the employment rate is 70% or higher, but does not demonstrate that it obtained such data from its students at the time of program completion or at any point within 12 months of program completion.
- The program indicates that the employment rate is 55%, and that this employment rate exceeds the employment rate of graduates of other academic units at the institution.
- The employment rate is less than 70%, and the program asserts that this is because many of its graduates are enrolled in graduate school or have otherwise elected not to be employed. However, the program does not provide evidence that it has collected data from graduates to ascertain whether they are enrolled in graduate school or have otherwise elected not to be employed.
- The program has not collected data regarding the employment rate of its graduates at the time of program completion or at any time within 12 months of program completion, and the program is not new.

*Approved by the CCNE Board: May 2013*