



Q&A- Entry-to-practice Exam

How does a nursing entry-to-practice exam determine if a graduate is safe to provide patient care?

Health professions maintain a list of required competencies that members must demonstrate through testing. Nursing students are tested during their university program in clinical practice and through other forms of testing. Tests during university studies focus on a large range of required nursing competencies to determine if the nursing student has understood and can apply knowledge for multiple required competencies.

An entry-to-practice exam is focused on only those competencies that are required in the first six to eight months of practice. Exam developers regularly survey new registered nurses, nurse managers, and practising nurses who work with new nursing graduates. The survey asks about the most frequently used and most important competencies that new nursing graduates must have to provide safe, competent nursing care. This information is used to determine how many exam questions will be targeted on any specific area. For example, a nursing entry-to-practice exam may have 40% of questions on pharmacology; 20% on infection prevention; 20% on basic care; and 10% on interpreting test results; etc. The percentage is based directly on what nurses advise the exam developer is most important for safe practice.