



WINTER 2014

Reinforcing the NCSBN Core Values through NCLEX[®] Item Maintenance Processes

This is the fourth and final part of this series. Access previous issues of the NCLEX[®] Communiqué to obtain parts one through three.

Throughout each part of this series, we have illustrated support of the NCSBN core values of collaboration, excellence, integrity, innovation and transparency through NCLEX[®] standard setting, administration and the NCLEX development processes. As expected, the reinforcement of these core values does not end with the above processes; the ongoing maintenance of NCLEX items is also key to this endeavor. Following the extensive item development process and once NCLEX items have been approved for use in operational item pools, the NCSBN core values continue to guide the validity and technical quality of examination items through the activities of the **NCLEX[®] DIF Review Panel, Member Board/Regulatory Body Reviews, and Master Pool Review Panel**. As the final part of this series, we will explore these three activities.

 **NCSBN**
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The NCSBN Core Values

Collaboration	Excellence	Innovation	Integrity	Transparency
Forging solutions through respect, diversity, and the collective strength of all stakeholders.	Striving to be and do the best.	Embracing change as an opportunity to better all organizational endeavors and turning new ideas into action.	Doing the right thing for the right reason through honest, informed, open and ethical dialogue.	Demonstrating and expecting openness, clear communication, and accountability of processes and outcomes.

Differential Item Functioning (DIF)¹

Once an NCLEX operational pool is deployed and sufficient candidate responses are obtained, all items are statistically assessed for DIF. DIF refers to the potential of examination items to behave differently with respect to item parameters (i.e., item difficulty in the case of the NCLEX) when administered to different subgroups of candidates who have been matched on the ability purported to be measured by the examination. The ability of interest for the NCLEX is entry-level nursing competence. Bias, an undesirable characteristic of an examination, implies that the item is measuring the construct for which the examination was developed, as well as another characteristic that is solely dependent on the demographic membership (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) of the target population. All items exhibiting statistical DIF undergo additional review by an expert panel to ascertain whether bias exists.

The principles of test fairness, as well as the core values of excellence and integrity, require that NCLEX operational items undergo scrutiny

to detect and remove items that behave in significantly different ways for different groups solely based on these types of demographic characteristics. The terms “reference group” and “focal group” are used in DIF for group comparisons and refer generally to the majority (reference group) and the minority (focal group) for the examination population. Of particular importance in understanding the concepts of DIF is the requirement that reference and focal groups be matched on ability before evaluating for differences in item characteristics. Any significant differences in item characteristics after the subgroup population has been matched on ability level of the reference group should be flagged for DIF and evaluated for item bias. For example, if a male and a female NCLEX candidate of the same ability level perform differently on an item, the item may be measuring something other than the ability of the candidates. In this example, it is reasonable to consider the possibility that the item is actually measuring some aspect of the candidate’s ability related specifically to gender.

Supporting the core values of integrity, excellence and transparency, NCSBN requires that each experimental and operational pool be examined for potential DIF. Every item occurring in an experimental or operational pool with at

¹ DIF analysis for the Canadian subgroup will be conducted throughout 2015–16 once sufficient Canadian candidate responses have been obtained.

least 50 focal group candidate responses and at least 400 reference group candidate responses is included in the DIF analysis. This minimum sample size requirement ensures that results of the DIF analysis are statistically stable and meaningful. Items found to contain DIF are forwarded to the NCLEX® DIF Review Panel for content review. This expert panel is charged with ascertaining if bias exists in items identified as exhibiting statistical DIF. The NCLEX® DIF Review Panel consists of a minimum of five members, including at least one male and at least three of the six ethnic focal groups included in the DIF analysis. No less than one individual must have prior experience on a DIF review panel and at least one individual must have a linguistic background. In addition, one member of the panel must be a registered nurse (RN) with a current license. The NCLEX® DIF Review Panel is charged with reviewing all items to determine if the item possesses true bias toward any ethnicity or gender. Items determined to possess true bias are referred to the NCLEX® Examination Committee (NEC) for final disposition.

Member Board/Regulatory Body Reviews²

Member Board/Regulatory Body Reviews represent a collaborative effort between NCSBN, U.S. boards of nursing (BONs) and Canadian regulatory bodies (RBs) to ensure that only items meeting the nurse practice act of all regulatory bodies remain in the NCLEX operational item pool. Twice a year, each BON/RB is permitted to review items in the current operational pool for the purpose of identifying any items that would not be supported by their specific nurse practice act. Items identified as problematic by the BON/RB are forwarded to the NEC for final disposition.

2 The Canadian subject matter experts will have an opportunity to review the January 2015 operational item pool in November 2014. The regulatory bodies will be inserted into the standard Member Board/Regulatory Body Review process in April 2015.

Master Pool Review³

Major evidence for validity and technical quality of the NCLEX are established by the examination development process because nursing practice evolves over time based on nursing research, client complexity and workforce issues. The validity and the technical quality of the items measuring nurse competence must be maintained over time; therefore, in support of the integrity and excellence of the examination, every item in the NCLEX item bank is required to be reviewed every four years. This review is completed by a panel of nurses representing all NCLEX test user areas with demonstrated expertise as a nurse and prior experience as an item reviewer. During this review all items are reviewed for currency to practice, item construction flaws and currency of evidentiary validation.

The NCLEX item maintenance processes are a key part of the reinforcement of the NCSBN core values. The DIF process supports core values of integrity and excellence by ensuring that NCLEX items do not contain any bias, and supports the core value of transparency through the inclusion of DIF panelists with various backgrounds to review items. Collaboration is reflected in the Member Board/Regulatory Body Review process by giving BONs/RBs the opportunity to review NCLEX items for adherence to nurse practice acts. Finally, the master pool review process supports the core values of integrity and excellence of the NCLEX by ensuring that NCLEX items are current and reflective of entry-level practice. These processes, in conjunction with item development, administration and standard setting ensure that the NCLEX upholds the core values of NCSBN, and provides BONs/RBs and the public with an examination that is fair, comprehensive, current and represents entry-level practice.

3 Canadian nurses began participating in NCLEX-RN® Master Pool Review panels in February 2013.

Spotlight on NCLEX® Responsibilities

A number of different groups are involved in the NCLEX; each group has unique responsibilities related to the examination:



Candidate

- Read the NCLEX® Candidate Bulletin and follow the processes outlined within it
- Apply for licensure/registration with the regulatory body
- Register for the NCLEX with Pearson VUE
- Schedule an NCLEX appointment with Pearson VUE
- Maintain candidate profile with Pearson VUE
- Follow the rules at the test center



Regulatory Body

- Communicate with candidates and educators
- Process applications for licensure/registration
- Determine candidate eligibility to take the NCLEX
- Process accommodation requests
- Distribute NCLEX results to candidates



- Support candidates with NCLEX registration, scheduling and exam day processes
- Provide testing center network and staff



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- Investigate candidate issues/incidents
- Oversee NCLEX development, psychometrics and administration

Know Your NCLEX® Timeframes



For each NCLEX attempt, a candidate is required to create a registration with Pearson VUE. All registrations will remain open for a 365-day time period, during which the regulatory body can make a candidate eligible. Once eligibility is granted, the candidate will be provided an Authorization to Test (ATT) email by Pearson VUE. The ATT is valid for a period of time specified by the regulatory body (it varies from 60 days to 365

days; however, the average length of an ATT is 90 days). The candidate is required to test within the validity dates provided.

If the candidate does not test within the validity period, or is not made eligible within 365 days of registering, the candidate's registration with Pearson VUE will expire. In both cases, the candidate will need to create a new registration profile and pay another exam fee.

The Exam Day Experience

Biometrics

As part of the check-in process at the test center, candidates will be asked to provide their digital signature, [a palm vein scan](#) and will have their photograph taken. Candidates will not be permitted to test without providing all biometric measures.

Rules

Candidates will be provided a copy of the candidate rules upon arrival at the test center. Each candidate is required to review the rules and agree to them by providing a digital signature. These rules are developed to ensure that all candidates' NCLEX results are earned under comparable conditions, and represent fair and accurate measurement in a standardized testing environment. If a candidate violates any of the rules, he/she may have their exam results withheld or cancelled. Candidates can access these rules prior to arriving at the test center by downloading the [NCLEX® Candidate Bulletin](#).

Examples of prohibited behavior include accessing educational, test preparation or study materials, as well as electronic devices. Candidates are not permitted to access cell phones and will be provided a sealable bag in which to store their devices upon arrival at the test center. If a candidate accesses study materials or electronic devices while at the test center, he/she may have their exam results withheld or cancelled.



Breaks

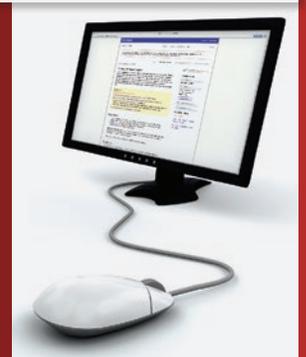
Candidates will have up to six hours to complete the RN exam, which includes a short tutorial, two preprogrammed optional breaks and any unscheduled breaks taken. A candidate can choose to take an unscheduled break at any time, and will be offered an optional break at the two and three and a half-hour marks. Any breaks taken will count against the total exam time.

Note board

Candidates will be provided with a marker and an erasable note board, which can be used as a scratch pad, before entering the testing room. The note board can be used once the candidate has completed the tutorial and is the only material that can be written on while in the testing room. A candidate can ask for a second note board, but may only have one note board at a time.

NCLEX® Tutorial

The NCLEX tutorial that NCLEX candidates take at the beginning of their exam is available on the [Pearson VUE website](#). The tutorial provides an overview of the different item formats that might be seen on the exam. The English version of the NCLEX-RN® Tutorial is now available. The French version of the tutorial will be available in spring 2014.



Frequently Asked Questions

What are the components of the NCLEX®?

There are three sections to the NCLEX: a tutorial at the beginning in order to familiarize candidates with how to proceed through the exam, the exam itself and a customer service survey that concludes the exam session. Each of these steps is clearly indicated on the computer screen, informing a candidate that they are entering a different section of the exam session.

No prior computer experience is required in order to take the exam since the tutorial provides step-by-step instructions. Candidates can review the tutorial online at the [Pearson VUE website](#). A “virtual tour” of a test center can also be conducted from this same Web page.

After the tutorial, the exam is presented to the candidate. The candidate will continue to answer questions until a result is reached or the total time for the exam is exceeded (six hours for the NCLEX-RN exam).

The survey at the end of the exam is optional, but candidates are encouraged to complete this for feedback on their exam experience.



Can a candidate reschedule/unschedule their scheduled exam appointment?

Candidates can call or go online to reschedule/unschedule their exam appointment up to 24 business hours before their scheduled exam appointment as described below:

For examinations scheduled on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, call at least 24 hours prior to the day and time of your appointment, local standard time.

For example, if your exam appointment is on Thursday at 8am, you must call or go online to reschedule before 8am on Wednesday.

For examinations scheduled on Saturday, Sunday or Monday, call no later than Friday, at least 24 hours in advance of your appointment, local standard time.

For example, if your exam appointment is on Monday at 8am, you must call or go online to schedule before 8am on Friday.

When scheduling a new appointment, candidates must keep in mind the validity dates listed on their Authorization to Test (ATT) email. Candidates who do not take their examination within the validity dates will be required to reregister with Pearson VUE and pay another exam fee.

Timeline

2013

Winter (January – March)

Began quarterly communication on the status of the transition processes

Scheduled future meetings/trainings with Canadian nurse educators and nurse regulation staff

Canadian item writers included in item writing workshops

Canadian item reviewers included in item review workshops

Fall (October – December)

Canadian RN experts added to the NCLEX-RN subject matter experts (SMEs)

NCLEX workshops

2014

Winter (January – March)

French version of 2013 NCLEX-RN® Test Plan available

Summer (July – September)

NCLEX® Administration Website activated for Canadian nurse regulators

New Pearson Professional Centers (PPCs) and Temporary Testing Center (TTCs) locations available on NCLEX Candidate Website

Spring (April – June)

Transitional NCLEX Candidate Bulletin available in English and French

French version of the NCLEX® Tutorial available

2014 NCLEX® Conference for Canadian Educators

Fall (October – December)

Initial translation of NCLEX-RN item pool into French

Perform alpha test and privacy impact analysis of delivery of NCLEX-RN in Canadian test centres

NCLEX® Candidate Website activated for Canadian candidate registrations

NCLEX® Candidate Call Centre activated for Canadian candidates
SMEs review operational NCLEX-RN pool

2015 NCLEX® Candidate Bulletin available in French and English

2015

Winter (January – March)

Canadian test centres activated

Canadian students begin taking the NCLEX for Canadian licensure/registration

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