

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Office of the Professions – Division of Professional Education

Professional Education Program Review Unit

To: Deans, Directors and Chairs of Nursing Education Programs **Date:** June, 2015
From: Director of the Division of Professional Education
Associates in Nursing Education
Subject: Policy Guidance on the Use of Standardized Testing in
Nursing Education

It has been about ten years since the original memos (attached) were issued to nursing programs regarding the use of standardized testing in the evaluation of students for progression in the curriculum and graduation. Since that time, the discussion has ensued regarding the efficacy of high stakes testing in nursing education. Standardized testing is used in many pre-licensure registered nurse and practical nursing programs. There has been a proliferation of products designed to predict student success on the National Council Licensing Examinations (NCLEX). Additionally, there have been instances where such testing was instituted as a requirement for completing or passing nursing courses and for graduation. Institutions, thereby denying eligibility of graduates to take the licensing exam, have withheld verifications of education.

This office remains firm in its opinion that no single determinate should be used in a gatekeeper fashion. Programs cannot use external standardized examinations, as a single criterion to determine a student's final course grade, eligibility for graduation or the licensing exam. It is the province of a program's faculty to use multiple evaluation measures in determining the extent that any student has met course objectives and program outcomes. Performance on an external standardized examination can contribute to any student's final course grade if the external examination contributes no more than ten percent (10%). The office continues to support the use of standardized instruments as a means of assessing both student and course strengths and deficits in specific content areas. This use has been demonstrated to be a benefit to students as they prepare for the licensure examination and to faculty as they evaluate their courses for quality and comprehensiveness. Commissioner's Regulations in Part 52.1(b)(3) requires that each registered curriculum show evidence of careful planning and devise a reviewing system to estimate the success of students and faculty in achieving such goals, objectives, and outcomes. The educational efficacy of standardized testing should be measured by outcomes as part of the overall program evaluation process. The office does not endorse any commercial products for standardized testing.

Guidance documents from the National League for Nursing (2012) can inform the discussion on the use of high stakes testing and can be found at:

<http://www.nln.org/advocacy-public-policy/issues/high-stakes-testing>. Programs may contact the office at OPPROGS@nysed.gov or by calling 518.474.3827 ext.360 with questions.

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To: Deans and Directors
From: John Jozwiak, Ph.D., R.N.
Subject: Use of Standardized Tests

Date: June 14, 2006

Recently, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) conducted a survey regarding the use of external exit examinations to determine eligibility to take the licensure examination. Specifically, NCSBN asked whether states had rules or policies about nursing programs requiring a designated score on an external exit examination before programs would give their permission for individuals to take the licensure examination.

The Professional Education Program Review Office within the Office of the Professions supports the use of a variety of external standardized examinations as a means of assessing both student and course strengths and deficits in specific content areas. This use is of benefit to students as they prepare for the licensure examination and to faculty as they assess the quality and comprehensiveness of their courses. However, external standardized examinations are not to be used by programs in a gatekeeper fashion to determine which students are eligible to take the licensure examination. This is the province of a program's faculty using multiple indicators to determine the extent to which course objectives have been met. Performance on an external standardized examination can be included in determination of a final course grade, but if this is done the external examination is to count for no more than 10 percent of the final course grade. Additionally, points earned for performance on the external examination are to be assigned according to a sliding scale where the maximum number of points possible is earned for achieving a predetermined criterion score, and lower amounts are earned for various scores below the criterion. External standardized examinations can also be used at other points in the curriculum to assess student achievement and curriculum organization and presentation, but they too can count for no more than 10 percent of the final course grade, and points are to be awarded using the sliding scale mentioned previously.

Performance on an external standardized examination is not to be used as the sole criterion in determining whether a student passes a course, is awarded a diploma or is certified as eligible to take the licensure examination. If you have any questions please contact either or Dr. John Jozwiak at 518.474.3817, extension 360, or at OPPROGS@mail.nysed.gov.

To: Deans and Directors of Registered Nursing Programs **Date:** August 16, 2005
From: Gail A. Rosettie, Ph.D.
Subject: Use of Standardized Examinations

The Professional Education Program Review office supports the use of a variety of standardized instruments as a means of assessing both student and course strengths and deficits in specific content areas. This use is of benefit to students as they prepare for the licensure examination and to faculty as they assess the quality and comprehensiveness of their courses. However, standardized instruments are not to be used in a gatekeeper fashion to determine whether students are eligible to progress and complete a program. This is the province of a program's faculty using multiple indicators to determine the extent to which course objectives have been met.

The instrument most frequently mentioned as being used to determine students' eligibility to graduate is the Exit Examination marketed by Health Education Systems, Incorporated (HESI). Any school using the HESI Exit Examination or any other examination as the sole determinant of whether a student passes or fails a course, or as a qualifier for eligibility to take the licensure examination is advised to end the practice immediately.

If you have any questions please contact the Professional Education Program Review office at (518) 474-3817, extension 360, or at OPPROGS@mail.nysed.gov.