

6/2/2008

Question:

At the University of Florida, we use the NLN challenge exams for our RN-BSN students to validate knowledge in content areas covered in their associate programs. Our faculty has had several discussions about this approach to knowledge validation, and wants to find out what other colleges are doing. For instance, are there other challenge exams that you believe are good/better than the NLN exams? Do you prefer giving an advanced course in various content areas as a means of validating knowledge at baccalaureate level, or do you accept the course work from associate degree w/o validation? Other?

Summary of Responses:

A total of 13 members responded. Eight of the 13 responding (~62%) indicated that their colleges accepted the Associate degree coursework. Only three respondents said that challenge exams were required (~8%), and only four (~31%) respondents said that special coursework was required.

Response Matrix

Institution	Accept Associate Degree Coursework	Require Challenge Exams	Require Advanced Courses	Description
Delta State	N	N	Y	Once students successfully complete [with a “C” or better] our “Special Courses” [NUR 311 Comprehensive Health Assessment, NUR 312 Basic Pathophysiology, and NUR 358 Transition to Professional Nursing] (all of these are equal to 8 credit hours), students receive 33 hours of DSU credit for courses completed in an accredited associate degree nursing program. Vicky Bingham
Grand Valley State University.	N	N	Y	Vicki describes a similar process to what we use Andrea Bostrom
St. Francis College Brooklyn Heights, NY	N	Y	N	We continue to use the NLN ACE II test to validate prior knowledge from associate degree programs We also accept CGFNS exam & certification in the same way. From our experience with the NLN exam there are many experienced nurses who score very high on the ACE II test and others who score poorly. Those who score poorly are able to achieve a satisfactory score on retest. We plan to continue using the NLN ACE II test in the future. Susan Saladino
University of Rochester School of Nursing	Y	N	N	We also do not require any testing (challenge exams) prior to entering our RN to BS program. Kathy Rideout

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Institution	Accept Associate Degree Coursework	Require Challenge Exams	Require Advanced Courses	Description
Minnesota State University School of Nursing Mankato Mankato, MN	Y	N	N	We do not require any testing as suggested and I agree with the comments that have been coming forth from other programs. Mary Bliesmer
University of Alabama	Y	N	N	Several years ago, our faculty supported the notion that RNs who graduated from ADN programs had successfully completed the same licensure exam as graduates of BSN programs. Therefore, no challenge exams were necessary to validate their knowledge. Our faculty also believed that graduates of BSN programs that had practiced in one clinical area for sometime might not have the same level of knowledge in all clinical areas as they did upon BSN program graduation. Thus, expecting ADN-RN graduates to possess this broad generalist knowledge long after graduation was no more appropriate for the ADN-RN than it was to expect this from BSN graduates. Our faculty continues to be satisfied that the ADN-RNs perform well in our RN tracks. Donna R. Packa, RN, DSN
University of Massachusetts - Boston				Our Online RN to BS program does not require any nursing challenge exams and I echo Donna Packa's response. Marion E. Winfrey
Viterbo University La Crosse, WI	Y	N	N	We believe the same and dropped the exams over ten years ago. Pat Zander
University of Pittsburgh	Y	Y	Y	We accept lower division transfer credits for students from the community college programs without testing, unless they do not have a C or better in the course. We have a couple of upper division courses for which we have a testing out option. In PA we still have a sizeable number of diploma programs. For those folks we have minimal if any college credits to transfer. So for them, we use a testing option to test out of courses with credit given for passing the examination. We have the CLEP exams, but I don't know whether they are better than the NLN exams or not. This is new for us so we don't have experience to determine success. But our University does not permit credit for work experience or noncredit education. Jackie Dunbar-Jacob

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Institution	Accept Associate Degree Coursework	Require Challenge Exams	Require Advanced Courses	Description
Florida Atlantic University	Y	N	N	We do not require any challenge exams, either for our RN/BSN or our Dual degree students. Susan K. Chase, EdD, FNP-BC
California State San Bernardino	Y	N	N	Same for us. Lynne Leach
Florida Southern College	Y	N	N	<p>We dropped the exam 8 or 10 years ago with the rationale that passing the NCLEX-RN and maintaining a current license were sufficient documentation of basic nursing knowledge. At that time we were only requiring the exam for diploma nurses, not for Assoc degree graduates. I don't recall that we had anyone fail to meet the minimum required score when we required the exam; therefore, it was not a particularly sensitive tool.</p> <p>We award 30 credits to all students enrolling in the RN to BSN program in recognition of their prior education. We have not seen any decline in students' academic abilities or rigor of our curriculum having dropped this exam. The benefits are getting rid of one more barrier to education and the hassle of tracking one more admission requirement. Mavra Kear, PhD, ARNP</p>
Clarkson College Omaha, NE	N	N	Y	We do not use challenge exams for the RN to BSN students. Students may validate 41 nursing credit hours by successfully completing the 6 credit hours of RN to BSN transition courses. Marla Erbin-Roesemann
University of North Carolina Greensboro	N	Y	N	We use the NLN challenge exams because our university will only allow credit to be awarded two ways: completion of the course, or completion of an exam in lieu of completion of a course. We have an exception to allow 30 hours to be awarded by exam; the rest of the university can have a maximum of 24 hours awarded by exam. The NLNs are not perfect, but in view of our restraints, they have worked for us.

Summary by: Andrea C. Gregg, DSN, RN