



**Nurses Association**  
OF NEW BRUNSWICK

# Preparing to write the NCLEX: A Student Guide



## Mission

The Nurses Association of New Brunswick is a professional regulatory organization that exists to protect the public and to support nurses by promoting and maintaining standards for nursing education and practice, and by promoting healthy public policy.

The Nurses Association of New Brunswick endorses the principles of self-regulation that is, promoting good practice preventing poor practice and intervening when practice is unacceptable.

© NURSES ASSOCIATION OF NEW BRUNSWICK 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from the publisher.

## Acknowledgement

The Nurses Association of New Brunswick gratefully acknowledges permission granted by the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia to quote and adapt, in whole, or in part, their document: *NCLEX-RN Preparation Guide* (2015).

ISBN 1 895613-60-4

# Preparing to Write the NCLEX

## NCLEX Registration Examination

In order to become a registered nurse (RN) in New Brunswick, you must pass the entry-to-practice registration examination called the NCLEX. The NCLEX is developed by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) in collaboration with Canadian RN regulatory bodies. The NCLEX uses computer adaptive testing to test your knowledge of the entry-level competencies that are needed to provide safe nursing care at the beginning of your career.

The purpose of this guide is to identify some key resources to help you to get ready to write the NCLEX.

### Key Resources

- Nursing Education Program Course Notes
- NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin
- NCLEX Detailed Test Plan - Candidate Version
- CAT Video
- Pearson VUE – NCLEX Online Tutorial and Palm Vein FAQ
- The Registered Nurse Professional Development Centre (RN-PDC) Exam Preparation Support

### Nursing Education Program Course Notes

Review and study your nursing education program course notes and other materials that you used to prepare for exams throughout your nursing program. These resources should provide a thorough review of the foundational knowledge that you need to be successful on the NCLEX.

Study by yourself, with other candidates or with a tutor.

Contact your nursing education program for guidance and advice.

### NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin

The [NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin](#) provides all the information you require to take the exam including how to register and schedule your exam and the test site rules and regulations. It also provides information on NCLEX content, test development and test plans, as well as information on NCLEX psychometrics, including computer adaptive testing, pass or fail decision rules, the passing standard, and the effect of guessing on the exam.

## NCLEX Detailed Test Plan - Candidate Version

The NCLEX Test Plan provides a concise summary of the content and scope of the examination, including sample NCLEX test items. It serves as a guide for examination development as well as candidate preparation. The NCLEX examination assesses the knowledge, skills and abilities that are essential for the entry-level nurse to use in order to meet the needs of clients.

### CAT Video

Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) is a method for administering exams that merges computer technology with modern measurement theory to increase the efficiency of the exam process.

The [Computer Adaptive Testing \(CAT\) Video](#) explains how and why CAT is used for the NCLEX.

### Pearson VUE

Pearson VUE administers the NCLEX at a temporary test site in Fredericton three times a year (February, June/July and October) and at permanent test sites in other provinces and states throughout the year.

Visit [www.pearsonvue.com/nclex](http://www.pearsonvue.com/nclex) to complete the NCLEX Online Tutorial and read the [Palm Vein FAQ for NCLEX Candidates](#) before the day of the exam.

### Registered Nurse Professional Development Centre (RN-PDC) Exam Preparation Support

The RN-PDC, located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, offers an on-line exam writing preparation workshop and other NCLEX support. For information on how to access their resources contact: [rnpdc@nshealth.ca](mailto:rnpdc@nshealth.ca).

### Commercial NCLEX Prep Materials

NANB does not endorse any commercial preparatory courses or materials. Although there are many commercial products available in English the quality and accuracy of commercial materials cannot be verified by NANB and may not accurately reflect exam content.

You may wish to consult your nursing education program for recommendations regarding additional preparatory materials.

## Notification of Exam Results

You will receive your exam results by e-mail the following business day. You will receive your results which will indicate a “pass” or “fail”. Should you have failed the exam, you will receive a Candidate Performance Report with your result. This report will provide you with information on whether you performed above, near or below the passing standard on each area of the exam and can be used to assist you when developing a study plan prior to rewriting the exam.

## Number of Exam Rewrites

A New Brunswick graduate or an international applicant who has received approval from NANB to write the NCLEX, may write the NCLEX an unlimited number of times within a three year period but must wait a minimum of 45 days between writings. You must apply to NANB each time in order to be granted eligibility to rewrite the exam.

## Preparing to Rewrite the Exam

Before you begin preparing to rewrite the NCLEX, you should take the time to consider what factors may have contributed to failing the NCLEX. Identifying these factors can help you to develop a focused study plan.

Consider whether any of the following factors may have played a role in your performance on the NCLEX:

### Exam Format

The NCLEX consists of multiple-choice and alternate format questions presented through a Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) model. Answers are either correct or incorrect, there are no marks for partially correct answers. To become more familiar with this type of testing:

- Review the NCSBN [Computer Adaptive Testing \(CAT\) Video](#)
- Review the NCLEX Psychometrics section in the [NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin](#)
- Review the NCLEX Detailed Test Plan-Candidate Version

### Exam Content

Understanding how the exam content is organized and broken down into categories is essential in developing a study plan to prepare to write or rewrite and the exam:

- Review the *Content, Test Development and Test Plan* sections in the [2016 NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin](#)
- Review the [Candidate and Educator Test Plans and Detailed Test Plans](#)

### Candidate’s Performance Report (CPR)

This report is sent to candidates who failed the exam. It identifies the number of items administered on your exam and a summary of your relative strengths and weaknesses based on the test plan. The CPR is intended for failing candidates to use to help guide their study before retaking the examination.

Failure of the exam may indicate that you are weak in one or more areas of nursing content or that you have not sufficiently integrated your knowledge of nursing to respond to situations typically encountered by entry-level registered nurses.

- Use your Candidate's Performance Report to identify any areas of nursing content in which you need to spend more time in your exam preparations.
- Review the [Candidate and Educator Test Plans and Detailed Test Plans](#) to ensure that you have prepared for each area of exam content.

### **Exam Stress**

Examinations are stressful events. While stress is an appropriate response to certain events in life, it can become problematic if your level of stress is too high and you cannot cope effectively. Fatigue and undue stress can affect your performance on the exam. Major life events can also impact your ability to deal with the stress of writing the NCLEX and you should take this into consideration before scheduling your exam.

Planning in advance for the examination, scheduling your study time effectively, utilizing stress management methods that were effective during your nursing education program and resting, can help reduce your level of stress.

### **Readiness to Rewrite the NCLEX**

A positive attitude can be a strong ally. Have confidence in yourself. Use the experience you have gained from your previous attempt to pass the examination. An advantage you have is that you are now familiar with the exam format, how it is administered and what happens on the day of the exam.

Keep in mind that you have successfully completed your nursing education and taken remedial steps to correct your weaknesses. If you have prepared for the exam, rested well the day before, you will have taken the best steps towards success.

## Exam Preparation Checklist

Use this checklist to help develop your own exam preparation plan. As you develop your plan, ask yourself the following:

### **Do I understand what Computer Adaptive Testing is and how it works?**

- Review the NCSBN [Computer Adaptive Testing \(CAT\) Video](#)
- Review the NCLEX Psychometrics section in the [NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin](#)

### **Do I understand what content will be tested in the NCLEX?**

- Review the NCLEX Content section in the [NCLEX Examination Candidate Bulletin](#)
- Review the [Candidate and Educator Test Plans and Detailed Test Plans](#)

### **Do I understand which nursing content areas I need to focus on?**

- Use the Candidate's Performance Report to identify any areas for improvement
- Review the [Candidate and Educator Test Plans and Detailed Test Plans](#)

### **Do I need to better manage my stress level?**

- Develop a study plan that balances work, social life and exam preparation
- If available contact Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) for stress management resources
- Reach out to colleagues, nurse manager and/or union representative for support and guidance on how to manage work commitments while preparing for the NCLEX

### **Do I need to use other exam preparation resources?**

- Contact RN-PDC or your employer for information on the exam preparation resources they recommend
- Review the exam preparation resources used by your school of nursing

### **Do I have a plan for the day of the exam?**

- Plan for meals, clothing to wear, information to bring and travel to the exam test site
- Plan relaxation techniques that can be used while taking the exam to keep calm and focused



165 Regent Street  
Fredericton, NB, E3B 7B4  
Canada

Tel.: 506-458-8731  
Toll-free: 1-800-442-4417  
[www.nanb.nb.ca](http://www.nanb.nb.ca)