

GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED PSYCHIATRIC NURSES

Introduction:

This document has been created by the regulatory bodies for registered psychiatric nursing (RPN) in Canada. This guide is designed to help internationally educated applicants determine their eligibility to apply for recognition of their education in Canada.

We encourage internationally educated psychiatric nurses to use this guide to determine if your psychiatric nursing education program could meet the criteria for psychiatric nursing education equivalency in Canada.

The guiding principle in qualification assessment decisions is as follows: internationally educated applicants must have completed a formal psychiatric/mental health nursing education program that leads to eligibility to register as a psychiatric nurse in the same jurisdiction where the program was completed. For example, if you completed your education in England, then your education should qualify you to register as a psychiatric nurse in England.

Working together, Canadian RPN regulators have established the minimum accepted educational requirements for registered psychiatric nursing. The requirements are as follows:

A. Theoretical Instruction Requirements

We require a minimum of 1000 hours of theoretical instruction. These must be actual hours of teacher-student contact, including “guided study,” where your attendance at the location of teaching and learning was mandatory. These minimum hours do not include self-study, reading weeks or other forms of learning in an informal environment (though we acknowledge that these, too, are valuable forms of learning). The hours must be distributed as follows:

- i) A minimum of 500 hours directly related to the development of psychiatric nursing competencies - knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgment in content areas such as:
 - therapeutic relationships/communications
 - psychosocial interventions
 - mental health and mental illness
 - psychiatric medications
 - psychiatric nursing ethics
 - psychopharmacology

Regardless of the total number of program hours, all programs must cover this content at a minimum.

- ii) A minimum of 225 hours related to the development of general nursing competencies - knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgment in content areas such as:
 - foundational concepts for nursing
 - fundamentals of nursing theory
 - health assessment
 - pathophysiology
 - diagnostic methods
 - treatment approaches
 - medical/surgical nursing interventions
 - care planning

Regardless of the total number of program hours, all programs must cover this content at a minimum.

The 1000 hours theoretical instruction minimum may be met entirely by the content in areas listed in i) and ii) above. If not, we will also recognize up to 275 hours of theoretical content from applied equivalents and/or related courses. These may include courses such as:

- life sciences/anatomy and physiology
- psychology
- sociology
- women's studies
- statistics

B. Clinical Practice Requirements

We require a minimum of 1000 clinical practice hours. These hours do not include periods of leave. For example, we do not count vacation, public holidays or sick time in these minimum hours.

We define clinical practice as an organized, formal learning experience, where the student psychiatric nurse is under direct supervision of an instructor or is working with a preceptor. In the clinical practice components of the program, the student must be working towards achieving specifically identified competencies in psychiatric nursing.

Clinical practice hours must include:

- i) A minimum of 775 clinical hours in psychiatric nursing
- ii) A minimum of 225 clinical hours in general nursing. (The parameters of general nursing are described in A ii) above.)

Notes:

1. Laboratory (lab) hours: The descriptions of lab hours on program transcripts that RPN regulators receive vary widely. The main forms of lab recognized by the psychiatric nurse regulators in Canada are:
 - i) labs which are designed to provide progressive learning towards practice in the clinical area
 - ii) labs which are designed as a praxis experience, creating a learning experience in a lab which simulates, and reflects on, a clinical practice experience.
2. Credits: Your transcripts might indicate the number of credits you earned rather than the number of hours you completed in theory, lab, or practice. To assess your education, RPN regulators must be able to determine the number of hours you completed. Credit hours vary widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In Canada, a 3-credit course generally includes 3 contact teaching hours per week over a full semester (14 weeks). We will use this model as the guide for completing assessments. We recommend that you ask your school to indicate in your transcript the value of a credit hour in your program based on this formula.
3. Language proficiency: English is the main language of communication in psychiatric nursing practice in Canada. You must be able to demonstrate that you can provide safe, competent and ethical psychiatric nursing care to clients, communicating in English.