Several of you have contacted the Board asking for direction related to emergency planning and Board guidelines regarding acceptable methods of distance education and guidance on how to complete the clinical components of nursing courses. We recognize the unique situation the education programs are experiencing related to temporary program closures, institutional transitions to distance education methods, and changes in availability of sites for clinical learning experiences.

I wanted to respond quickly in light of recent announcements and assist you as best as we can. Therefore, I have consulted with Board staff and met with ACCS Director of Health Programs Kenneth Kirkland, who was able to assist us. We have developed the following suggested methods for your consideration to assist you with your emergency plan development.

As you are all aware, ABN rules are broad and do not require a set number of theory and clinical hours. When considering how best to proceed, due consideration should be given to the possible impact that issuance of any incomplete grades may have on academic progression policies, financial aid eligibility, program completion, etc. To assist your program in maintaining its ability to complete the semester, we have developed the following methods as acceptable examples for your consideration.

**Preceptorship and Clinical Considerations**

As with all aspects of education the student assessment and competency validation are key to any decisions you make as an educational nursing program. The examples below are what the Board would find acceptable given the current circumstances. The responsibility of checking with your accreditation bodies remains with the program. If further clinical validation is required, the assumption is that would occur once classes resume.

**Completion of Preceptorship:**

1. More than 50% of the required clinical/preceptorship hours complete – Consider the course clinical/preceptorship requirements complete.

2. Less than 50% of the required clinical/preceptorship hours complete – Identify needs and determine competencies needed, then adjust simulation and/or standardized patients to complete the course clinical/preceptorship requirements.

**Acceptable Clinical Learning Experiences to Complete a Course:**

1. For uncompleted courses or less than 50% of the clinical experience has been completed, consider utilization of high-fidelity simulation based on the assigned course or standardized patient scripts involving but not limited to the following tasks or as appropriate to the course:
   - Physical Assessment
   - Medication Administration
   - Delegation
   - Reassessment
• Infection Prevention Strategies

2. If more than 50% of the clinical experience for the course has been completed and the objectives met, consider the requirements complete.

Instructional Guidance and Options

If your institution is suspending face-to-face modalities, consider minimizing instructional disruptions by shifting the delivery to non-face-to-face modalities to minimize interruption to student learning. While it is understood that not all institutions are equipped with the resources to move completely online, nor do all students have access to computers/internet connections, the information below only serves as guidance and options that may be used as you develop your program's plan of action for instructional and clinical interruption.

Acceptable Instructional Options and Guidance
(adapted from ACCS information provided):

1. Move Face-to-Face Classes to Distance Education if possible:
   • If applicable, faculty may post the remaining portion of their courses on the institution's Learning Management System (LMS) to include assignments, reading videos, quizzes, research, etc.
   • Provide faculty/staff with appropriate distance learning trainings (Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle, Zoom, etc.) to teach online. Ensure faculty closely monitor email to respond to students' communications.
   • Consider decreasing the number of weeks to reduce instruction in courses.

2. Ensure that online platforms are accessible for students with disabilities and that proper adjustments are made for approved accommodations.

3. Accreditation Concerns Institutions accredited by SACSCOC
   • SACSCOC has provided the following guidelines if institutions choose to extend distance education offerings or seek approval to offer distance education. If your institution is already approved to offer Distance Education, you will need to notify the Commission by sending an email to Dr. Kevin Sightler, Director of Substantive Change, at k­sightler@sacscoc.org indicating that the institution will shift some courses to on-line instruction pursuit to our Guideline for Emergency Temporary Relocation of Instruction
     • https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/Emergency_Temporary_Relocation_of_Instruction.pdf. Institutions do not have to identify the specific courses. This guideline has been endorsed by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.
   • If your institution is not approved to offer distance education, you may need to send an email or letter to Dr. Belle Wheelan (bwheelan@sascoc.org) requesting a waiver in accordance with the above-referenced guideline and policy on distance education. (https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/07/LemCEducation.pdf).

4. Mobile Phone Accessibility:
   • For students who do not have Wi-Fi laptops, or computers, consideration may be given to utilizing mobile phones for accessibility in various distance learning formats through the LMS's mobile app.
• Consider utilizing group texting (Cadence, Remind 101, etc.) as an option for instructional delivery.
• Establish a mobile group chat.

5. Synchronous Classes/Video Conferencing:
   • Synchronous classes and remote teaching may be used so that students can listen to one lecture in real time.
   • Utilize the video conferencing tools found in your school’s LMS or institutional video conferencing tools such as Zoom or live chats to interact with students.

6. Discussion Boards and Chat Threads:
   • Utilize discussion boards and chat threads to provide instructional dialogue with students.
   • Utilize video discussion boards and chat threads to provide instructional dialogue with students.
   • Create a “water-cooler” discussion thread for students to allow students to interact with each other.

7. Independent Study Offerings
   • Work with students on an independent study basis in order to establish an individual instructional delivery for each student.

8. Grading: Completing courses early
   • Provide opportunity for students to access grades through the college’s LMS. Please ensure all grades are up to date in the LMS.
   • Provide students with remaining course assignments in an effort to encourage early completion.
   • Give immediate consideration to courses being brought to a closure if a certain percentage of a course has been met by giving a (Final Grade).

9. Online Proctoring
   • Provide online proctoring tools for students to complete tests.
   • Institutions should contact their contracted online proctoring services as many are reducing costs for a period of time due to COVID-19.

10. Other Items to Consider:
    Consider repurposing laptops from your college’s computer labs for students to check out.
    • Direct students to refer to online library, tutoring, and counseling services.
    • Institutions should consider contacting their contracted online tutoring service as many are reducing costs for a period of time due to COVID-19.
    • Faculty should consider creating a Google phone number (Google Voice) that students may use to communicate without providing faculty’s personal phone number. [https://voice.google.com/about](https://voice.google.com/about)

Sincerely,

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Executive Officer