

Guidelines for Joint Prelicensure Nursing Program Visits

Introduction:

In order to provide a seamless prelicensure BON approval and national nursing accreditation process, it is recommended that nursing program site visits be made jointly by the BON and national nursing accreditation agency. The goal of joint visits is to use resources more prudently, decrease duplication of effort and increase the diversity of expertise. Advantages of joint visits include:

- Provides a learning opportunity for both parties as there is quite a variation of nurse practice acts, expands the expertise and allows for input from different perspectives;
- Offers an opportunity for additional input from both parties, which is valuable for clarity and accuracy;
- Addresses overlap of both entities in ensuring quality nursing programs that are preparing nursing graduates for employment;
- Facilitates communication and dialogue among educators, national nursing accreditors, and BONs; and
- Enhances mutual understanding between BONs and national nursing accreditors.

Background

The mission of the BON, a governmental agency, is to protect the public through the regulation of nursing licensees and nursing education programs. Nursing education programs are regulated because nurse licensure is a two-pronged process. First, nursing faculty has the responsibility of ensuring that students graduate from a BON-approved nursing program and are clinically competent to practice entry-level nursing at the level of licensure being sought. Second, the student must pass the NCLEX examination. Program approval is an integral part of the licensure process because it assures that the program is in compliance with the BON's rules/regulations. BONs in most states/jurisdictions have statutory authority and responsibility to set regulatory standards for nursing education.

The mission of national nursing accrediting agencies, which are private, nonprofit organizations, is to promote quality education practices. While BONs evaluate whether the nursing program conforms to regulatory standards, as required in the nurse practice act and the administrative rules in the jurisdiction, national nursing accrediting agencies evaluate the program's adherence to quality and effectiveness standards set by the nursing profession.

Roles During Joint Site Visits for Approval and Accreditation

The following are recommended roles in this collaborative process:

Role of the program dean/director:

- Initiates the request, and communicates to each for a joint visit between national nursing accreditors and BONs;
- Establishes one agenda, in collaboration with the accreditors and BON;
- Facilitates and promotes a collegial interaction;
- Prepares and distributes to both the BON and the national nursing accrediting agency the self-study report; and
- Coordinate collaborative visits with faculty, students, administration, clinical agencies and the public; observational clinical experiences; curricular activities; classroom activities; and review student records, faculty records, facilities and resources.

Role of the national nursing accreditation agency site visitors:

- Review self-study report before the visit and note areas requiring clarification, amplification, verification and validation;
- Attend meetings set up by the dean/director and collect data/observe;
- Facilitate and promote a collegial interaction;
- Review program for meeting national nursing accreditation standards; and
- Meet with dean/director and BON visitor to provide exit report.

Role of BON site visitors:

- Review self-study report before the visit and note areas requiring clarification, amplification, verification and validation;
- Attend meetings set up by the dean/director;
- Facilitate and promote a collegial interaction;
- Review program for compliance with education administrative rules;
- Meet with dean/director to provide exit report (accreditor site visitors will be included); and
- Identify additional information that is not available in self study, as needed.

It is also recommended that BONs use the same self-study provided to the accrediting agency as the basis for the visit.

Joint site visits can be valuable experiences for the national nursing accrediting agencies, BONs and nursing programs when they are collaboratively planned and executed.

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