



Psychiatric Nursing Education Program Review Policies

Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan (RPNAS)

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Introduction

Purpose of Policy

This policy sets out the RPNAS Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan (RPNAS) requirements for the approval of psychiatric nursing education programs in Saskatchewan (SK).

Authority

The *Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act, 1993* requires that RPNAS serve and protect the public at all times and carry out its responsibilities in the public interest.

RPNAS reviews psychiatric nursing education programs in accordance with its responsibilities under 15(2)(m) of the *Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act, 1993*, the powers and functions of the Council under RPNAS bylaws, and the authority delegated to the ERPAC under Council policy.

The Council has authority under sections 19 and 20 of the *Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act, 1993* to establish conditions or requirements for registration of a person as a member of the college. Section 15(2) empowers the Council to specify academic or technical programs that are recognized by RPNAS as meeting those standards. The ERPAC makes recommendations to the Council regarding its exercise of this authority, in accordance with RPNAS governance policy.

Council and the Education Review Program Approval Committee

RPNAS's Council has established through Council policy, an Education Review Program Approval Committee (ERPAC), who is responsible for establishing, implementing, enforcing and evaluating the standards of education and recognizing psychiatric nursing education programs.

Following a psychiatric nursing education program review, the RPNAS Council makes a decision about program approval based on a recommendation from the ERPAC.

Graduates of recognized Psychiatric Nursing programs will meet the conditions and requirements for registration established in Bylaw IX section 2.

Evaluators

RPNAS contracts a team of two evaluators that is comprised of Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs), Registered Nurses (RNs), or others with current and relevant expertise in psychiatric nursing education and practice. The evaluators establish a program review plan that is consistent with the timelines and activities found in these policies. The evaluators collect information regarding the *RPNAS Standards and Indicators for the Approval of Psychiatric Nursing Education in Saskatchewan* and report their findings to the ERPAC.

1.0 Policy Definitions/Descriptions

Annual Letter is created by a psychiatric nursing education program to provide evidence of progress in meeting specific indicators of the *RPNAS Standards and Indicators for the Approval of Psychiatric Nursing Education in Saskatchewan* that have been assessed as met, partially met or not met. If an annual letter is required, it will be noted in the approval letter from Council as a condition of approval.

Council means the RPNAS Council.

RPNAS Approval process for Psychiatric Nursing Education Programs outline the steps in the approval process including possible approval outcomes for the psychiatric nursing education program.

RPNAS Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice, 2019 are the requirements for Registered Psychiatric Nurses in all settings and domains of practice.

Chair mean a member of the committee designated by the Council from among the committee members to act to preside over and facilitate the work of the Committee.

Curriculum means the foundational values, beliefs and concepts; program/course outcomes/goals/objectives; and overall structure, including how learning is sequenced and built upon progressively to provide the learning experiences necessary for students to achieve the Registered Psychiatric Nurse Entry-Level Competencies.

Education Review Program Approval Committee or “Committee” is a Council-committee that oversees the evaluation and improvement of the psychiatric nursing education program approval process. ERPAC makes recommendations to the Council about psychiatric nursing education program approval.

Notice of intent (NOI) is a report submitted to ERPAC by an educational institution that is proposing to offer a new psychiatric nursing education program, or an existing recognized psychiatric nursing education program that is proposing to make a substantial change.

Psychiatric Nursing Education Programs includes entry-level psychiatric nursing education programs.

Psychiatric Nursing Education Indicators are measurable criteria that show how the psychiatric nursing education program demonstrates achievement of the standard.

Psychiatric Nursing Education Standards form the philosophical framework that ground the approval process. The Standards include six (6) standards for established program reviews: (1) Administration, (2) Curriculum (3) Students, (4) Faculty, (5) Program Effectiveness, and applicable to new programs only (6) Establishment of a New RPN Education Program. During a psychiatric nursing education program review, the evaluators review and evaluate these minimum requirements for approval.

Preliminary approval is the approval status granted by the Council to a new or substantially changed psychiatric nursing education program that shows evidence of ability to meet the RPNAS nursing education standards before students have been admitted to and/or graduated from the program/course.

Program review is the process of evaluating a psychiatric nursing education program against the *RPNAS Standards and Indicators for the Approval of Psychiatric Nursing Education in Saskatchewan*.

Approval is the status the Council may grant to a psychiatric nursing education program following a program review.

Approval Decisions are set utilizing the following guidelines:

Five-Year Approval: Programs deemed by the ERPAC and subsequently the Council to have met or exceeded all five standards (or six if establishing a new RPN education program) in all areas are awarded program approval for five years. Re-evaluation will take place within the fifth year.

Four-Year Approval: Programs deemed by the ERPAC and subsequently the Council to have met a minimum of four out of the five standards in full and each remaining standard in part, are awarded program approval for four years with terms and conditions. Re-evaluation will take place within the fourth year.

Three-Year Approval: Programs deemed by the ERPAC and subsequently the Council to have met a minimum of three out of the five standards in full and each remaining standard in part, are awarded program approval for three years with terms and conditions. Re-evaluation will take place within the third year.

Conditional Approval (One or Two-Year Approval): Programs deemed by the ERPAC and subsequently the Council to have met a minimum of two out of the five standards in full and each remaining standard in part, may be granted conditional program approval with terms and conditions. Specific goals and outcomes, with target dates will be set for the program. Achievement of the goals and outcomes will be evaluated at the end of the specified target date (year one or two). Re-evaluation will take place within the first or second year.

Non-Approval: A program deemed by the Council to be in non-compliance with the majority of standards will not be granted program approval.

Registered Psychiatric Nurse Entry-Level Competencies are the minimum acceptable level of performance for RPNs in Saskatchewan.

Self-assessment report is created by a psychiatric nursing education program applying for approval. The report is a document that presents evidence demonstrating the achievement of the *RPNAS Standards and Indicators for the Approval of Psychiatric Nursing Education in Saskatchewan*. The nursing education program completes the self-assessment report and delivers it to RPNAS and evaluators no later than 30 days prior to the site visit date.

Site visit is an on-site or virtual evaluation carried out by evaluator(s) and is a required part of all Psychiatric Nursing Education Program reviews. After reviewing the program's self-assessment report, evaluators collect and verify evidence by observing and speaking directly with those involved in the psychiatric nursing education program. The date/dates for the site visit is negotiated between the psychiatric nursing education program and RPNAS staff at least 6 months prior to the expiry of the program's approval date.

Evaluators are Registered Psychiatric Nurses, Registered Nurses or others who have current and relevant expertise in psychiatric nursing education and practice. Evaluators must have no perceived or actual conflict of interest with the psychiatric nursing education program being reviewed.

The final report is written by the Evaluators.

Substantial change is a major change to an approved psychiatric nursing program in one or more of the following:

- a) Campus location including moving the campus within or outside of the current municipality.
- b) An increase in the number of students beyond 10 percent of what RPNAS has currently recognized for a psychiatric nursing program at a specific campus.
- c) How the curriculum addresses the Registered Psychiatric Nurse Entry-Level Competencies and the RPNAS *Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice, 2019* including changes in the nature and extent of learning opportunities in the curriculum.
- d) Learning resources and infrastructure available to support student achievement of the Registered Psychiatric Nurse Entry-Level Competencies and RPNAS *Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice, 2019*, including simulation resources, faculty resources and psychiatric nursing education program learning experiences with clients.
- e) Discontinuation of a psychiatric nursing education program may require a review to ascertain what plans are in place to maintain the integrity of the existing curriculum and to support students to meet the Registered Psychiatric Nurse Entry-Level Competencies and RPNAS *Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice, 2019*.

Supplementary evidence is information requested by the site evaluators or by RPNAS staff when sufficient evidence is not provided by the psychiatric nursing education program.

Warning to withdraw program approval is a decision made by the Council that program approval may be withdrawn.

2.0 Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

At the beginning of every ERPAC meeting, each member discloses any conflict of interest related to the psychiatric nursing education programs under review.

- 2.1 Before being offered a site evaluator position, each site evaluator is required to disclose any conflict of interest related to the psychiatric nursing education program under review. If a conflict does exist then a contract would not be offered to a potential candidate.
- 2.2 Staff give the psychiatric nursing education programs under review the opportunity to identify any conflict of interest related to site evaluators or ERPAC members.

- 2.3 Staff, site evaluators and ERPAC members sign confidentiality agreements. They keep all information, documents and correspondence about program reviews and decisions confidential.
- 2.4 RPNAS maintains a list of recognized psychiatric nursing education programs on its website. All other details of the review and decision remain confidential, subject to the obligations of RPNAS under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.
- 2.5 RPNAS provides the outcome of the review and executive summary to other RPN regulators in Canada.
- 2.6 If the ERPAC determines it is necessary in the public interest, it may disclose information, documents or correspondence about a program to another body responsible for granting accreditation to the Psychiatric Nursing program consistent with RPNAS Bylaws.

3.0 Program Reviews

- 3.1 The ERPAC reviews every recognized psychiatric nursing education program at least once every five years.
- 3.2 An additional psychiatric nursing education program review may be initiated by the Committee or at the request of the psychiatric nursing education program.
- 3.3 The psychiatric nursing program approval process begins a minimum of six months in advance of the psychiatric nursing education program's approval expiry.
- 3.4 If a psychiatric nursing education program cannot meet its report submission timelines due to extenuating circumstances, it can apply to the Committee for an extension.
- 3.5 If a psychiatric nursing education program cannot complete the psychiatric nursing program approval process in time due to extenuating circumstances, the psychiatric nursing education program can apply to the Council for an extension of its approval status.

4.0 Psychiatric Nursing Education Standards

The following are the standards against which psychiatric nursing education programs/courses shall be reviewed and evaluated:

- a) Administration
- b) Curriculum
- c) Students
- d) Faculty
- e) Program Effectiveness
- f) Establishment of a new RPN Education Program (applicable only to new programs)

***Note:** For additional information please refer to the document: RPNAS Standards and Indicators for the Approval of Psychiatric Nursing Education in Saskatchewan.

5.0 Evaluator Assessment of Psychiatric Nursing Education Standards

- 5.1 The evaluators assess each standard as being met, partially met or not met and provide a report to the ERPAC.
- 5.2 A standard may be assessed as partially met or not met when deficiencies are identified in evidence regarding indicators of the standards.
- 5.3 When the evidence shows that deficiencies exist in a psychiatric nursing program or when the evidence available is uncertain, the ERPAC assesses the risk to the public.
- 5.4 Annual letters are requested to monitor progress and identify deficiencies when a standard is partially met or not met.
- 5.5 When the ERPAC assesses that the deficiencies identified present a risk to the public, a recommendation with a warning attached may be made to the nursing education program.

6.0 New Psychiatric Nursing Programs

- 6.1 An educational institution proposing to offer a new psychiatric nursing education program submits a notice of intent (NOI) to the ERPAC. Council approval is required before the educational institution implements the new psychiatric nursing education program.
- 6.2 Psychiatric nursing education programs are to provide clear evidence of adequate clinical placements for each level in their notice of intent.
- 6.3 The ERPAC reviews the NOI and if accepted, instructs the institution to submit a self-assessment report.
- 6.4 The ERPAC determines if the review should be conducted in steps over a period of years with reports and recommendations to the Council after each step.
- 6.5 If ERPAC recommends that the Council deny the psychiatric nursing education program's application for approval and the Council declines to approve the program, the educational institution may not submit another NOI until at least one year after the date of the ERPAC's recommendation.
- 6.6 If an educational institution implements a psychiatric nursing education program before the Council recognizes it, its graduates may not meet the education requirement for registration with RPNAS.

7.0 Substantially Changed Psychiatric Nursing Education Programs

- 7.1 An educational institution proposing to make a substantial change to a recognized psychiatric nursing education program, submits a NOI to the ERPAC.
- 7.2 Council approval is required before the psychiatric nursing education program implements the change.
- 7.3 If an educational institution implements a substantial change to their psychiatric nursing education program before the Council recognizes the program, its graduates may not meet the education requirements for registration with RPNAS.
- 7.4 Psychiatric nursing education programs must provide clear evidence of adequate clinical placements for each level in their notice of intent.
- 7.5 Upon receipt of a notice of intent about a substantial change, the ERPAC determines the following:
 - 7.5.1 The evidence it requires to assess the change, and
 - 7.5.2 Whether it requires another psychiatric nursing education program review before the next scheduled review.
- 7.6 The ERPAC may require the transitioning/discontinuing psychiatric nursing education program to:
 - 7.6.1 Submit a modified self-assessment report, and/or
 - 7.6.2 Undergo a psychiatric nursing education program review to extend the length of approval needed to enable students currently enrolled and/or for the last intake of students to graduate. The purpose of the transitioning/discontinuing psychiatric nursing education program review is to confirm that plans are in place to maintain the integrity of the existing curriculum and to support students to achieve Registered Psychiatric Nurse Entry-Level Competencies and to meet *RPNAS Standards of Psychiatric Nursing Practice, 2019*.

8.0 Psychiatric Nursing ERPAC Process

- 8.1 The review of a psychiatric nursing education program may be initiated at the request of the educational institution or by the committee.
- 8.2 Program reviews shall be timed to prevent expiration of current approval.
- 8.3 Following initiation of the review process, the educational institution shall comprehensively assess its psychiatric nursing education program against the *RPNAS Standards and Indicators for the Approval of Psychiatric Nursing Education in Saskatchewan* and submit its findings in a self-assessment report to the committee on or before the due date which is set as 30 days prior to the scheduled site visit.

9.0 Self-Assessment Reports & Site Visits

The review process includes submission of a self-assessment report and a site visit.

9A Self-assessment Reports

- 9A.1 Psychiatric nursing education program submits their self-assessment report at least 30 days prior to the scheduled site visit.
- 9A.2 If the self-assessment report does not provide sufficient evidence for the Evaluators to complete their assessment of the *RPNAS Standards and Indicators for the Approval of Psychiatric Nursing Education in Saskatchewan*, RPNAS staff may give the RPN program the opportunity to submit supplementary evidence or a revised self-assessment report.
- 9A.3 In cases such as the above, RPNAS staff may reschedule the site visit, and give the psychiatric nursing education program a due date for the supplementary evidence or a revised self-assessment report.
- 9A.4 If the evidence submitted in an approved psychiatric nursing education program's revised (second) self-assessment report is not satisfactory, the ERPAC:
- a) Rejects the report;
 - b) Assesses the current and future risks the psychiatric nursing education program poses to the public as outlined in section 11 of this policy; and requests a third self-assessment report; and
 - c) Recommends the Council warn the psychiatric nursing education program that its approval may be withdrawn if the revised (third) self- evaluation report does not indicate satisfactory improvement in accordance with sections 12-14 of this policy.
- 9A.5 If the third self-assessment report of a recognized psychiatric nursing education program does not indicate satisfactory improvement, ERPAC recommends the Council withdraw approval in accordance with sections 13 & 14 of this policy.
- 9A.6 If the evidence submitted in an unrecognized psychiatric nursing education program's second report is not satisfactory, ERPAC;
- a) Rejects the second report; and
 - b) Recommends the Council deny the psychiatric nursing education program's application for approval in accordance with section 13 & 14 of this policy.

9B Site Visit

- 9B.1 The purpose of a site visit is to collect evidence to augment the Self-Assessment Report and/or verify evidence submitted in the program's Self-Assessment Report. Evaluators assess whether the nursing education standards and indicators are met.

- 9B.2 RPNAS staff provides all relevant documents to the site evaluators.
- 9B.3 Site evaluators are formally introduced to the Psychiatric Nursing Education Program Lead by RPNAS staff.
- 9B.4 Site evaluators and the Program Lead plan the site visit (independent of RPNAS).
- 9B.5 Program delivers self-assessment to RPNAS and site evaluators at least 30 days prior to the scheduled site visit.
- 9B.6 Following the site visit, the evaluators prepare their written report and send a draft to the Psychiatric Nursing Education Program to review for any errors or omissions and then deliver their final report to RPNAS using the Evaluator Report Template, within 30 days following the site visit. RPNAS staff review the evaluators report for completeness and consistency with process and identify any issues that may need addressing prior to the ERPAC meeting.
- 9B.7 The ERPAC will meet to review the report and attend a presentation and QA session by the site evaluators. The ERPAC determines the length of program approval with any conditions and makes the recommendation to the Council regarding program approval.
- 9B.8 The RPNAS Council will review the recommendation and determine the approval status of the psychiatric nursing education program.
- 9B.9 The final report of RPNAS will then be sent to the psychiatric nursing education program noting the awarded program approval status, dates for annual reports (if required) and notice of the next review date.
- 9B.10 The outcome of the review and an executive summary will be provided to the other RPN regulators in Canada.

10.0 Annual Letter

- 10.1 Psychiatric nursing education programs submit an annual letter, if requested, on the date specified in the approval letter. The annual letter only addresses the specific indicators that the evaluators assessed as incomplete or partially met.
- 10.2 As a result of the assessment of an annual letter the ERPAC may:
 - 10.2.1 recommend to the Council acceptance of the annual letter as having met the terms and conditions of approval; or
- 10.3 Before rejecting an annual letter the committee may:
 - 10.3.1 Give the psychiatric nursing education program the opportunity to submit supplementary evidence of progress; or
 - 10.3.2 Negotiate a remedy and timelines for compliance that the committee recommends to the Council as sufficient for acceptance of the annual letter as having met the terms and conditions of approval; or

- 10.3.3 Reject the annual letter because it does not meet the terms and conditions of approval and warning the educational institution that approval of its psychiatric nursing education program may be withdrawn if the next review does not indicate satisfactory improvement.

11.0 Assessment of Risk to the Public

- 11.1 When assessing risk to the public, the ERPAC considers the nature and extent of the incomplete or ambiguous information submitted by the psychiatric nursing education program.
- 11.2 The ERPAC assesses both the imminent risk to the public and the future risk to the public.
- 11.3 The ERPAC considers the following factors when assessing the risk to the public:
 - 11.3.1 Specific, realistic plans presented by the program to resolve incomplete or ambiguous information;
 - 11.3.2 Psychiatric nursing education program/institution strengths that may mitigate risk to the public;
 - 11.3.3 Evidence that the educational institution understands the information required, and is planning for satisfactory improvements; and
 - 11.3.4 Evidence of a pattern that incomplete or ambiguous information identified during previous psychiatric nursing education program reviews is still not being addressed satisfactorily.

12.0 Warning to Withdraw Psychiatric Nursing Education Program Approval

- 12.1 When the ERPAC has assessed that there is a risk to the public, it may recommend the Council issue a warning to withdraw psychiatric nursing education program a. In such cases, the length of the warning period will be determined in accordance with the guidelines set out below.
- 12.2 When recommending a warning, ERPAC considers:
 - 12.2.1 Fairness to students enrolled in the psychiatric nursing education program.
 - 12.2.2 The impact on students' ability to complete the psychiatric nursing education program and become eligible for registration.
 - 12.2.3 The time needed for students enrolled in the psychiatric nursing education program to graduate.
 - 12.2.4 The time needed to allow the psychiatric nursing education program a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate satisfactory resolution of the incomplete or ambiguous information, without risking the students' success or ability to meet the RPN Entry Level Competencies.

12.2.5 The impact on public safety.

13.0 Action on ERPAC Recommendations

- 13.1 An ERPAC recommendation to warn of a withdrawal of approval places a psychiatric nursing education program's approval status in jeopardy and requires Council approval.
- 13.2 Staff communicate ERPAC recommendations and Council decisions to the senior administration responsible for the program.

14.0 Council Decisions

- 14.1 After considering the ERPAC recommendations about a new or substantially changed psychiatric nursing education program, the Council may:
 - 14.1.1 Give approval for up to five years subject to any conditions the Council may determine;
 - 14.1.2 Give approval on conditions designed to correct incomplete or ambiguous information and warn the educational institution that approval of its psychiatric nursing education program may be withdrawn if the next review does not indicate satisfactory improvement; or
 - 14.1.3 Decline to approve, or withdraw approval, if the approval requirements have not been met.
- 14.2 If a dispute arises as to whether a change to a psychiatric nursing education program is considered a substantial change or a new psychiatric nursing education program review, the question is referred to the Council whose decision is final.
- 14.3 After considering ERPAC recommendations about an approved psychiatric nursing education program, the Council may:
 - 14.3.1 Give approval of no longer than five years, subject to any conditions the Council may determine;
 - 14.3.2 Give approval to the psychiatric nursing education program on conditions designed to correct the incomplete or ambiguous information and warn the psychiatric nursing education program that approval may be withdrawn if the next review does not indicate satisfactory improvement; or
 - 14.3.3 Withdraw approval if the conditions of approval have not been met and a warning was given at the time of the last review or interim report.
- 14.4 Where both the ERPAC and the psychiatric nursing education program consent, the Council may vary a decision previously made.

References

- *The Registered Psychiatric Nurse Act, 1993*
- RPNAS Bylaws
- RPNAS Standards and Indicators for the Approval of Psychiatric Nursing Education in Saskatchewan
- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*



Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan
Suite 205 – 4401 Albert Street
Regina, SK S4S 6B6
P: 306.585.4617
F: 306.586.6000