

Faculty Degree Requirements in Schools of Nursing

Some ACNM members have been prevented from serving as clinical preceptors and/or members of the faculty of nurse-midwifery educational programs in schools of nursing because they lack a Master's degree in nursing (e.g. MSN, MA in Nursing or Nursing Education, or MS in Nursing or Nursing Education). This document provides background information and advice for members facing this situation.

National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN)

In the *2004 Third Revised Edition Model Nursing Act and Rules* (Chapter 8), the NCSBN provides recommendations for faculty in APRN educational programs. Qualifications for faculty include “a minimum of a master's degree in nursing or the specified advanced practice registered nurse category.” Qualifications for faculty in RN programs include “a minimum of a master's degree with a major in nursing or a nursing doctorate degree.” These recommendations affect the hiring of faculty in graduate nurse-midwifery educational programs in two ways.

First, even though the ACNM has a process for accreditation of educational programs, in many nurse-midwifery programs some course work is taught collaboratively with nurse practitioner programs in the same school. This collaboration, and the fact that CNMs are licensed as APRNs in many states, ties nurse-midwifery educational programs administratively to APRN programs, and they are affected by the credentialing standards for APRN faculty.

Additionally, nursing schools often want to hire faculty who have the ability to teach across specialties and program types. Nurse-midwifery program directors may be required to hire individuals who meet requirements for teaching in APRN (e.g. Women's Health Nurse Practitioner) and/or BSN programs.

State boards of nursing are not *required* to adopt the exact language of the Model Rules, and some states adopt variations of this language. For example, in Connecticut, regulations include provisions for both grandfathering of experienced faculty and approving waivers for the type of Master's degree.

Nursing School Accreditation: NLNAC & CCNE

Two agencies accredit schools of nursing: the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The language used in the criteria for accreditation speaks to faculty being “academically and professionally qualified” (NLNAC) and “academically and experientially qualified” (CCNE). While the CCNE does not speak to a required degree, the latest revision of the NLNAC guidelines specifies a minimum of a master's degree in nursing with a majority holding earned doctorates. *However, the guidelines also allow schools to provide a “rationale for acceptance of other than the minimum required graduate credential.”*

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)

The AACN report “*Faculty Shortages in Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs: Scope of the Problem and Strategies for Expanding the Supply*,” published in May, 2003, includes the following short term strategy for addressing the faculty shortage:

“7. Identify any existing regulatory requirements that limit nurses with non-nursing graduate degrees from teaching in nursing programs, so that efforts to remove these barriers can be planned. (p. 16).”

Regarding the master’s degree *in nursing* required by some state regulatory bodies as a prerequisite for nursing faculty positions, AACN states, “As long as these barriers exist, many expert clinicians – and potentially expert faculty - are prevented from teaching when they are needed most”(p. 13).

“Not only should we reconsider the experience prerequisite for nurses seeking graduate education, we also should reconsider whether a nursing undergraduate degree is an essential prerequisite to graduate study in nursing. One excellent source of future faculty includes individuals who earned degrees in fields other than nursing. Second-degree or accelerated programs transition these individuals into nursing careers in streamlined ways and often in an abbreviated time frame. Although these programs are not new, they have proliferated over the past several years....These individuals bring a wealth of academic ability, knowledge, and experience; plus they offer a different perspective to nursing, patient care, and the health care system (AACN, 2002a; Anderson, 2002). In short, these graduates may make excellent faculty members.” (pp. 14-15).

The AACN provides a thorough description of the problem and prevents cogent arguments for the strategies recommended. Nurse-midwifery program directors facing difficulties in hiring faculty with higher education in fields other than nursing are advised to consult their specific State Board of Nursing accreditation criteria and, using the strategies outlined by AACN, discuss potential changes to these regulations on the state level.

References

The complete text of the NCBSN Model Nursing Practice Act can be accessed at www.ncsbn.org/regulation/nursingpractice_nursing_practice_model_act_and_rules.asp.

The NLNAC 2004 Edition Accreditation Manual with Interpretive Guidelines by program Type for Post Secondary and Higher Degree Programs in Nursing can be accessed at www.nlnac.org.

The CCNE Standards for Accreditation of Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs Amended October 2003, Effective January 1, 2005 can be accessed at www.aacn.nche.edu/Accreditation/NEW_STANDARDS.htm.

The AACN document, Faculty Shortages in Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs: Scope of the Problem and Strategies for Expanding the Supply can be accessed at www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/WhitePapers/FacultyShortages.htm.

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