

# Identifying Issues of Student Access and Student Success for Practical Nursing Diploma to Bachelor of Science Nursing



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# Background and Introduction

- **Two categories of nurses in Ontario – RPN, RN** – for which educational requirements have changed and evolved over time
  - In 1982, CNA stated that **by 2000, the minimum entrance to practice requirement would be a baccalaureate degree**
  - Prior to and **up until 2004 – 3 year college diploma or 4 year baccalaureate degree** – graduates write the registration exam to become an RN
  - **Universities adapted**, offered **post-RN degree programs** to meet entry to practice requirement
  - To meet workplace demand, Province of Ontario funded **collaborative partnership programs**, most in place **by 2001** (and compressed programs since evolved)

# Background and Introduction

- **Also significant changes in educational programming for RPNs over time**
  - RPN programs replaced Nursing Assistant programs in 1993
  - In 2001, MTCU published revised *Practical Nursing Program Standards*
  - Since 2002, Ontario Colleges have offered 4 or 5 semester PN diploma programs
  - The ***Regulated Health Professions Acts (1991)*** authorizes **both** RNs and RPNs to perform the same **three controlled acts**

# Initial Purpose

To develop a common pathway for graduates of the Practical Nursing diploma programs to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree programs.

- **Identify common elements of existing bridge programs offered by universities**
- **Identify learning content and outcomes required for students to enter a degree nursing program at a targeted entry point**
- **Compare proposed curriculum to the learning outcomes in the *new provincial Practical Nursing Program Standard* and develop curriculum required for the bridge program**

# Challenges Encountered

## The **lack of formal approval** for the new provincial *Practical Nursing Program Standard*

- Expected early 2012, not yet formally approved

## The **lack of existing differences in the stated learning outcomes** for PN diploma and BScN baccalaureate degree programs

- Differences are in depth not breadth of material
- Changes in scopes of practice over time

## The **lack of common sequencing of courses** between university degree programs

- CASN encourages programs to adopt and embrace differing philosophical perspectives

# The Project Re-Defined

- Examine ways to **enhance access to existing PN to BScN pathways** **while encouraging further development** of the same
- Find ways to **further enhance cooperation and understanding** between the province's colleges and universities in providing access to BScN education
- **Elevate the research agenda** to create an **evidence-based approach** for current and future program development and modification
- Find ways to **share resources** between institutions providing bridges/credit transfer pathways

# Current Status: PN to BScN Programming

- Currently **9 (soon to be 10)** bridge/credit transfer pathways involving **6 universities** and **10 colleges** in the province
- **One university** has currently partnered with **73 health care organizations** to offer RPN employees access to BScN degrees through a distance platform
- PN diploma to BScN degree bridge/credit transfer pathways are increasingly viewed as **“mainstream” educational opportunities** rather than “optional”, “back door”, “side door” or “alternate entry” programs

# Current Status: PN to BScN Programming

- The **demand** for PN to BScN bridge/credit transfer pathways has been **on the rise over the last decade** (COUPN, 2011)
- A **2012 survey of PN graduates from one college** revealed:
  - **67%** **consider bridge programming** after RPN
  - **72%** would **apply within 0-2 years** of graduation
  - **45%** prefer **full-time**, **55%** prefer **part-time** studies
  - **58%** prefer a combined **classroom/on-line** program
  - **50%** **prefer not to move** from current geographic area to go to school

# Current Status: PN to BScN Programming

- PN to BScN bridge/credit transfer pathway programming is **popular**
- Less well known is the fact that **attrition rates from such programs are very high**
  - only **anecdotal information** available to work with to try and understand why
- **The “go forward innovation imperative” is to provide access to programming that also seeks to support students to succeed and achieve**

# Recommendations

## *Enhanced Access*

1. Current **PN to BScN offerings (i.e., 9-10)** need to be added to the ONCAT website.
2. ONCAT should consider adding a **visual map** which depicts existing bridge/credit transfer pathways.



# Recommendations

## *Enhanced Access*

3. There are a **number of websites** which contain information related to PN to BScN degree offerings
  - Need to clarify these roles
  - Identify one as a central repository for bridge/credit transfer pathways
4. The **development of additional PN to BScN** bridge/credit transfer pathways is encouraged.
5. Within the province, there is a **need to create clarity** with respect to the various **college-to-university program linkages** that have evolved over time (**e.g., collaborative programming vs bridge/credit transfer pathways**).

# Recommendations

## *Enhanced Cooperation and Understanding Between Provincial Institutions*

6. Host a **province-wide symposium** on PN diploma to BScN degree programming in the near future.
  - Promote **inter-institutional cooperation** between the colleges and universities
  - **Raise the visibility** of bridge/credit transfer pathways
  - **Share the learning** of those that are leaders with others
  - Move all institutions toward **an evidence-based approach** for current and future program development and modification.

# Recommendations

## *Elevating the Research Agenda to Create an Evidence-Based Approach for Current and Future Program Development and Modification*

7. There is a need to ensure via **research** that the educational programming is of sufficient **quality** to ensure that its graduates are capable of providing **safe, competent, and ethical care**.

# Recommendations

## *Elevating the Research Agenda to Create an Evidence-Based Approach for Current and Future Program Development and Modification*

8. There is an ongoing need to ask **critical questions, collect data, analyze, reflect, and modify programs** with respect to:
  - **Minimum allowable credit transfer, entrance requirements, and student motivation**
  - Providing programming on a **part-time vs full-time** basis
  - Providing programming in **on-line, blended or distributed formats**

# Recommendations

## *Elevating the Research Agenda to Create an Evidence-Based Approach for Current and Future Program Development and Modification*

8. There is an ongoing need to **ask critical questions, collect data, analyze, reflect, and modify programs** with respect to:
  - Need **for clinical and/or simulation** programming
  - Need for additional **Francophone** programming
  - The extent to which existing bridges/credit transfer pathways allow for/provide **access for RPNs** trained in **other provinces or countries**

# Recommendations

## *Elevating the Research Agenda to Create an Evidence-Based Approach for Current and Future Program Development and Modification*

9. ONCAT should **invest funds to support research** aimed at understanding the questions outlined in #8 as well as:
  - Value of **traditional/existing access criteria (e.g., GPA)** vs **motivation or other factors** and how they relate to **student success (e.g., RN registration)**
  - Understanding the **demographic diversity (e.g., mature students, work and family demands, current employment status)** and **associated needs** of students **(e.g., limited geographic mobility)**

# Recommendations

## *Elevating the Research Agenda to Create an Evidence-Based Approach for Current and Future Program Development and Modification*

9. ONCAT should **invest funds in support research** aimed at understanding the questions outlined in Recommendation #8 as well as:
  - What role might **PLAR** play in accessing eligibility or suitability for entry into bridge/curriculum transfer pathways
  - The **future demand for BScN credentialing** and more broadly, **what will the nurse of the future look like?**

# Recommendations

## *Sharing Institutional Resources*

10. **Efficiencies** may be found in the **sharing of resources** between those offering bridge/credit transfer pathways (**e.g., offering simulation laboratories or a common on-line transition course**).
11. The **focus** of the **transition course** would be **procedural** (**e.g., writing, computer literacy, research, presentational skills**) rather than declarative in nature.

# Summary and Future Directions

- A **culture shift**, one which **supports collaboration between the colleges and universities** is required
- **The shift has begun** – the recommendations in this report reflect a spirit of cooperation and innovation – the value of which cannot be underestimated
- **Existing gap in PN to BScN** education is not one of too few bridge/credit transfer pathways but rather the **lack of understanding of the factors critical to student success**
- It is time to **shift the focus** from the **quantity** of learning experiences to the **quality** of learning experiences

