



***First-Time Pass Rate Improvement Plan***

**School of Nursing  
Nursing BSN Program**

**Submitted to the  
State University System of Florida  
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**Pending Approval by the  
FAMU Board of Trustees**

# **Professional Licensure & Certification Exam First-time Pass Rate Improvement Plan FAMU Nursing (BSN) Program**

## **Executive Summary**

The FAMU School of Nursing (SON) offers the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Nursing Education (ACEN). While the SON experienced declining pass rates on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) in the past year, successive strategic actions recently implemented have begun to show success in reversing this trend. These strategies include both short-term and long-term actions that impact our curriculum, faculty development, and student success. These ongoing improvement efforts have been bolstered by the recent appointment of Dr. Shelley Johnson as the new SON dean, effective July 1, 2020.

Curriculum reviews were conducted by expert consultants during the 2019-2020 academic year to strengthen curriculum quality, content, and delivery. Faculty utilized the consultant recommendations to improve their instructional skills and the curriculum. A major component of the enhanced curriculum is the strategic integration of NCLEX review boot camps.

Faculty development workshops were provided using expert consultants to target the areas of most need for the program. These workshops focused on item-writing, test development, and assessment and evaluation. Faculty has been supported to complete curriculum integration and mapping of major NCLEX competency domains to facilitate content delivery and mastery for students. Overall, the FAMU SON faculty and staff are invested in the program's success and are actively working to make impactful short-term and long-term improvements to sustain the positive trends that we have achieved to increase first-time pass rates. During the 2020 testing year, the NCLEX scores have risen from 60% to 84%, from quarter one to quarter two.

In 2018, the SON recognized the need to strengthen the academic rigor of the nursing curriculum and increase the academic profile of students admitted into the program. For example, the admission GPA was increased from 2.9 to 3.1. To ensure compatibility between matriculating students and the newly enhanced curriculum, the SON recently implemented a revised admission requirement to include administration of the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) for incoming junior students and additional changes in GPA requirements for science, math, and other pre-requisite courses. These changes are congruent with standards of successful nursing programs within our jurisdiction that we surveyed during this period.

This plan provides an overview of the key activities and initiatives that are underway to improve the first-time pass rates for graduates of the School on Nursing. This summary specifically focuses on short-term strategies implemented to produce immediate positive results, and long-term strategies to promote: 1) Selection of students appropriate for the FAMU nursing program; 2) Creation and maintenance of sound pedagogical practices; 3) Early risk identification; and 4) Opportunities for just-in-time remediation and deep learning.

## Exam Pass Rates

### **1. Describe the short-term strategies to improve the passage rates for recently graduated and currently enrolled students expected to take the exam in the short-term.**

Several improvement measures were implemented in the 2019-2020 academic year to address declining NCLEX pass rates. Interventions were focused on curriculum revision, faculty development, and student success. In fall 2019, external consultants were engaged to review the curriculum and recommend enhancements. Based on the feedback, the curriculum was evaluated and better aligned to the NCLEX test plan.

Faculty development workshops on test construction were conducted during the fall 2019 and spring 2020 semesters. The aim of the training activities was to improve the ability of program faculty to develop NCLEX style questions. It was also determined that a majority of nursing faculty, although skilled and educated clinicians, needed focused training to enhance their use of pedagogical best practices. The SON leadership responded by initiating training for faculty on teaching and learning in nursing education. The first nursing educator training program occurred in June 2020. Additional trainings are planned for the current academic year.

NCLEX preparation workshops and boot camps were provided for graduates in the fall and spring semesters. Consultant Dr. Loretta Manning provided a boot camp in March 2020 for December 2019 graduates, and *NurseTim* held workshops for graduates in May 2020. These interventions were provided free of charge for all student participants. Dr. Manning conducted follow-up student NCLEX preparation sessions in July 2020 for recent graduates and students who were not successful on their first NCLEX attempt. Additional study and review resources were provided for recent graduates. The SON provided access to UWorld NCLEX prep and the Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) capstone review for recently graduated students.

Currently enrolled students in their final semester, have an ATI three-day NCLEX predictor review, ATI Tutor reviews, simulations and videos, and remediation throughout the semester. They also receive UWorld prep access and an enhanced seminar course with intensive remediation by nursing faculty.

Experiential learning is an important factor in preparing students for the NCLEX examination. The SON also works to create relationships with local and statewide healthcare organizations to provide students and recent graduates hands-on opportunities to apply nursing knowledge and practice using clinical judgement. Beyond routine clinical rotations, the SON works to collaboratively collect and share opportunities for internships, externships and residencies for students and graduates. These supplementary activities have been shown in the literature to be beneficial to both students and employers; however, they cannot be mandated as part of the nursing curriculum.

### **2. Describe the short-term strategies to assist students who recently failed the exam. Does the institution provide additional tutoring or financial assistance to students who fail the exam?**

In the spring of 2020, the SON faculty began conducting Faculty/Graduated-Student Check-ins. In this initiative, program faculty (with assistance from staff) check-in with graduated students to mentor and provide guidance in their NCLEX exam preparation and studying.

The SON also provides three-day NCLEX prep boot camps through *ICAN* to benefit all students, including those who have failed the NCLEX exam. These students also are permitted to have continued access to *UWorld* NCLEX prep materials. If the SON is informed of graduates who are not successful in passing the NCLEX exam, they are contacted and invited, free of charge, to participate in NCLEX review sessions.

3. Provide the overall pass rate for the last three cohorts of graduates, including information on students who retake the exam. How many students pass the exam on the 2nd attempt, 3rd attempt, etc.? How many students fail the exam twice?

**Table 1. NCLEX First-Time Pass Rates**

Year	Pass Rates	Number of Examinees
2020*	69.7%	33
2019	63.4%	93
2018	82%	89
2017	64%	74

\*The 2020 results are for the first and second quarter only.

As shown in Table 1, NCLEX first-time pass rates decreased from 82% in 2018 to 63.4% in 2019. Results are also shown for the first two quarters of 2020, which is currently at 69.7%. Of note with respect to the 2020 preliminary score, is that the second quarter score is 84.62%, which is an increase of 24 percentage points from the 60% pass rate obtained in the first quarter.

Currently, the second, third, and fourth time NCLEX attempts are not tracked by the Florida Board of Nursing and students do not have to report to the SON subsequent attempts or failures. From new data reporting provided by the Florida Board of Nursing, the following information has been gleaned:

- May/Summer 2020 Cohort: 44 students graduated (testing is in progress)
- Dec 2019 Cohort: 35 students graduated
  - (30 students tested - 20 passed 1<sup>st</sup> attempt; 5 passed 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt; 1 failed after 2 attempts).
- May/Summer 2018: No data
- Dec 2017: No data

4. How long after graduation do students typically wait to take the exam? How many students delay taking the exam beyond a normal or typical period and why? What assistance is available who students who delay?

Students are encouraged to take the NCLEX examination within 6 months of graduation, but this is not mandated. Based on the information received from the Florida Board of Nursing, FAMU nursing graduates tend to take the NCLEX between 3 to 6 months post-graduation.

5. Are students required to pay for any services or other support strategies provided?

A portion of the costs associated with the NCLEX preparation testing and resources are covered by student tuition and fees. The SON covers costs for some of the services provided by ATI that are not covered by student fees.

6. Provide any available information on the employment outcomes of students who do not pass the exam. Do those students find employment, and if yes, what types of jobs?

The SON does not collect information on graduates who are not employed as RNs. In response to the BOG request, the program has recently engaged with the FAMU Division of Strategic Planning to solicit assistance in obtaining employment data on these graduates (results of this effort will be available at a later date). The SON of nursing collects and reports data at 12 months post-graduation to track graduates who are employed as RNs. The most recent job placement data obtained in May 2020 for the 2019-2020 graduates indicate that 12 (91.67%) of 13 survey respondents are employed as RNs. Table 2 below shows

the program’s three-year data. The SON focuses collection on RN employment for the program outcome evaluation and ACEN accreditation requirements. The SON survey response rates have historically been low for retrieving data from graduating students, alumni, and employers. This year, the SON has contracted with *Skyfactor Benchworks* to create surveys that align with accreditation standards and utilize proven strategies to increase survey response rates.

**Table 2. Three-Year Job Placement Rates**

Academic Year	Number of Surveys Deployed	Number of Surveys Returned	Response Rate	Job Placement Rate
2019-2020 (data as of May 2020)	34	12	35.29%	91.67%
2018-2019	93	25	26.88%	92.00%
2017-2018	89	31	34.83%	93.55%
2016-2017	65	18	27.70%	94.44%

## Admissions

**This section should address the admissions criteria and the extent to which they may or may not be sufficient for admitting qualified students to the program.**

The SON has modified the nursing admissions policy to increase admission GPA requirements and to add a qualifying admissions test. The higher GPA requirement (from 2.9 to 3.1) was effective fall 2018. Program faculty have determined that specific changes to the admissions’ policy as it relates to the science and math GPA for applicants has a strong link to performance in the nursing program and on the NCLEX. Currently, the program requires an overall GPA of “C” or better in science and math courses for students seeking entry into the BSN pre-licensure program at FAMU. Based on the recommendation of the faculty and a review of other nursing programs within the State of Florida, the recommendation was made to change from an overall “C” grade in science and math to a 3.0 science GPA, with preference for students scoring 3.3 and above (effective fall 2020).

In fall 2020, the program implemented the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) admission requirement for incoming juniors. Students must attain a score at the level of proficiency or above to be considered for the nursing program. The student results will also be used to develop individualized remediation plans for incoming nursing students.

To date, 40 of the admitted 44 students for fall 2020 have taken the TEAS assessment. At least 80% of these new Level 1 nursing students achieved scores at the expected level of proficiency or advanced on their first attempt on the TEAS, with 20% at the basic level. The overall performance of new admits signifies a high probability of success in the nursing program.

Through the data collected from the TEAS test, collaboration between the nursing program and other FAMU colleges and schools will be strengthened. The schools and colleges who have primary responsibility for teaching lower division foundational courses for the pre-nursing curriculum will gain valuable insight on student learning outcomes and the retention of knowledge critical for success in the BSN pre-licensure program.

## Curriculum

**This section should describe any recent or planned curriculum reviews relative to its alignment with the content on the exam. Please note the date of the review and key changes to be made in the short-term and in the long-term.**

SON program faculty continue to work on curricular enhancements and implementing recommendations from external consultants (and the School's new administration) for appropriate sequencing of courses and progressive higher-order thinking. Our focus has been to increase experiential learning with emphasis on simulation and direct patient and interprofessional care.

There are foundation guidance documents for all nursing programs in the United States. The key guidance documents for undergraduate nursing programs are The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice (BSN Essentials) and the Quality and the Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) Pre-licensure Competencies. Since July 2020, the curriculum has been mapped to the BSN Essentials and QSEN. There has been increased integration of clinical judgment and critical thinking, evaluation of data on high-failure rate courses, course GPAs, and ATI standardized test performance. The systematic evaluation plan (SEP) plan has been strengthened by the addition of level metrics. These metrics allow for continuous program monitoring and evaluation at the end of each semester and annually.

The program has integrated additional ATI resources and assessments to increase the focus on NCLEX content, testing practice and skills, and QSEN practice competencies into the curriculum. Examples of curricular enhancements progressively implemented starting summer 2020 to fall 2020 are included below:

- a. The curriculum now front loads nursing skills and med-calculation to increase students' ability to function in clinical settings and to improve scaffolding with frequent reinforcement
- b. Experiential learning has been enhanced to include early semester skills and end-of-semester content review boot camps
- c. NCLEX practice has been increased by end-of-semester NCLEX boot camps and NCLEX practice questions (formative assessments)
- d. Simulation experiences and evaluations were integrated into select courses at all levels
- e. ATI has been strategically integrated into the curriculum to avoid cognitive overload and to ensure relevant and realistic workloads

## Student Progression

**This section should describe how student progression and performance is monitored throughout the program and what strategies are in place to support students who may need additional assistance. Also include the extent to which predictive analytics is part of monitoring efforts.**

The SON has implemented actions to improve monitoring of students' performance throughout the nursing program. The goal is to achieve early and timely recognition of students with learning gaps who would benefit from timely interventions to remedy deficiencies and improve success. The main actions focused on academic policy and procedure updates, enhancing content repetition, scaffolding and remediation efforts, and improvement of the systematic placement of support resources and assessments. Some of these actions are discussed below.

### Academic Policies and Procedures

The SON has established new and revised matriculation and progression policies, with a focus on improving student outcomes. The matriculation changes included the increased GPA requirements and the addition of the TEAS test as previously discussed above. Related to progression, the SON grading scale

has been updated to reflect practices in use at Florida State University. Specifically, a “C” average in a nursing course is now weighted as a 75 – 79.9%, instead of 70 – 80%. This change was implemented for the new cohort of students admitted fall of 2020.

We have benchmarked content mastery exams and developed policies that mandate individualized remediation plans with systems to monitor completion of the student remediation plans prior to completion of final retakes. We now closely track experiential learning time and mandatory make-ups for missed experiential learning hours for clinical and laboratory sessions to ensure that students get the minimum required hours of skills practice and patient care needed to reinforce theory and develop skill competencies. Failure to meet experiential learning requirements can lead to course failure and mandatory course repeats. Students are still permitted to repeat only two nursing courses in the program.

#### Repetition, Scaffolding & Remediation

Greater emphasis is now placed on content repetition and scaffolding. The curriculum revision in the 2019-2020 academic year and the recent alignment mapping to the BSN essentials and QSEN focused on determining the places in the curriculum where key concepts were introduced, reinforced, and mastered. Furthermore, remediation efforts have increased to empower students and to promote early risk identification for faculty. The SON has established a Remediation Specialist/Academic Success position within the nursing program.

While students are progressing through the nursing program, content mastery exams will be given each semester. These mastery examinations highlight NCLEX content and provide information on students’ preparedness for the summative examination, the Comprehensive Predictor. The Comprehensive Predictor exam assesses readiness for NCLEX success. Students who do not reach level 2 proficiency on the content mastery examinations will be provided intrusive advisement and individualized remediation plans. The intensive remediation curriculum covers multiple courses and is created for high-risk students.

To further build skill competency and confidence, the SON has instituted beginning-of-semester clinical skills boot camps. These skills refreshers help students to synthesize content, practice essential skills and improve competencies prior to entering the clinical setting to work with live patients. End-of-semester course content review sessions have also been instituted for enrolled students.

Finally, at level 5, graduating senior students will take the Comprehensive Predictor. Prior to taking the Comprehensive Predictor, a culminating end of program review that includes course content and NCLEX preparation is provided to students. The Predictor identifies areas of strength and weakness, then remediation is developed, students are provided a learning coach and their progress is tracked weekly through Capstone Assessments. Students are strongly encouraged to reach proficiency before they graduate from the nursing program.

#### Systematic Resource and Assessment Placement

The SON has moved from a system that focused heavily on the final semester for NCLEX preparation to integrating content mastery exams at each level. These exams provide continuous monitoring of levels of mastery and prepare the students for Comprehensive predictor readiness. Level mastery exams provide opportunities to intervene early with additional remediation and experiential strategies to produce long-term content retention instead of surface memorization.

We have integrated NCLEX success strategies and preparation activities/tools into the curricular and co-curricular experiences early and consistently. Examples include resources from the Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI), UWorld, and ExamSoft as supplemental methods of instruction and assessment. As mentioned previously, valuation of learning is completed through use of the Comprehensive Predictor. The minimum predictor score for probability of passing the NCLEX on the first

attempt has been increased to the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile probability by ATI, up from a score of 69.3, which is equivalent to a pass rate probability of 88%.

## Faculty Support & Development

**This section should describe what support and development are available to the faculty to ensure they are able to adequately support students in preparing for the exam.**

Faculty receive regular support from the University Center for Teaching and Learning. This Center offers regular trainings on teaching and learning strategies. The faculty have been provided nursing-specific training by consultants on NCLEX mapping, NCLEX style item writing and nursing education in preparation to become certified nurse educators.

All SON faculty recently completed training during the summer term to enhance online instruction. In addition, the SON's contractual partnership with ATI provides a wide range of services and support for faculty development on curriculum improvement, instruction, and NCLEX success.

## Accreditation

**This section should address any recent decisions, findings, actions from the program's accreditor and/or licensing board and how the institution is addressing those issues.**

Due to low NCLEX pass rates (Criterion 6.2), our accreditor, Accreditation Commission for Nursing Education (ACEN), has granted the program continuing accreditation with conditions until September 2020. The SON recently submitted a request to ACEN to extend the "accreditation with conditions" status until 2022 for Good Cause. The ACEN Board of Commissioners is expected to render a decision on the request during its upcoming September 9-10, 2020 meeting.

As described above, the program has made significant progress towards addressing and remedying the low NCLEX pass rates, which resulted in the ACEN finding of non-compliance. The program's recent NCLEX data, along with additional internal data and evidence were provided in the Good Cause request to demonstrate that the program satisfies the criteria for the requested extension.

## External Assistance

**This section should describe any efforts to reach out to other institutions (SUS and non-SUS) with strong pass rates to identify best practices and obtain additional guidance and support.**

Historically, the SON has had a good working relationship with the neighboring Florida State University (FSU) nursing program. The new dean of nursing has joined FSU and other state nursing programs as a member of the Florida Association of Colleges of Nursing (FACN). FACN has been helpful in providing guidance and support to the SON within the last two months of membership. In addition, as described throughout this plan, the SON has surveyed programs across the state and nation in the past several months to identify best practices for implementation to improve admissions, instruction, remediation and NCLEX preparation.

The SON has revitalized the defunct FAMU SON advisory board. The new board is comprised of nurses, program graduates, local health systems' chief nursing officers, owners of Florida healthcare organizations and representation from other successful nursing programs in the United States (e.g. Case Western Reserve University). The board will be helpful in providing guidance on current issues and assisting the SON as it prepares its graduates for future educational and workforce needs.

Several faculty development activities were conducted within the past year to strengthen faculty capacity to deliver effective instruction. Major actions include: 1) Two workshops on test construction were



conducted by Sylvia Rayfield & Associates and Dr. Loretta Manning in November 2019, and January 2020, respectively; and 2) A workshop for implementation of critical thinking and clinical judgement curriculum development was completed for faculty in spring 2020. Additionally, ATI has been contracted to deliver additional faculty development trainings on best practices in nursing education for NCLEX success in the 2020-2021 academic year.

### **Additional Information (optional)**

**This section is optional and may be used to describe any other initiatives designed to improve exam pass rates that do not align with any of the previous section.**

N/A