

# A SURVEY OF BACCALAUREATE NURSING PROGRAMS FOR REGISTERED NURSES IN CANADA

JANET L. MOORE

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Nursing  
The University of Calgary

On a distribué un questionnaire aux écoles de nursing de niveau universitaire du Canada, principalement dans le but de déterminer les tendances actuelles qui se manifestent dans la composition des programmes destinés aux infirmiers ou infirmières candidat(e)s au grade de baccalauréat en nursing. On a ainsi pu dégager de nombreux points communs dans ces divers programmes, notamment quant à la progression, aux problèmes et aux possibilités de modification et de perfectionnement qui y sont prévus.

*A questionnaire was sent to university schools of nursing in Canada primarily for the purpose of ascertaining trends in program development for the registered nurse who seeks a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Many similarities were expressed related to progress, problems, and plans for change and development within the presently existing programs.*

What are the trends in nursing education in Canada for the registered nurse who seeks continued study at the university level to obtain a bachelor's degree in nursing? Are programs for registered nurses integrated with basic baccalaureate programs, sharing such commonalities as faculty, classes, and courses? Is there an interest in the development and use of challenge examinations as a tool for providing credit to the registered nurse for the education and experience she brings to the university program?

Annual surveys done by the National League for Nursing indicate the trend in baccalaureate nursing education for the registered nurse in the United States is towards an integrated program, and with the use of challenge examinations. Of 3,003 registered nurses who graduated from baccalaureate programs in 1974, 2,551 graduated from 268 basic programs in nursing and 452 were graduates of 41 special nursing programs restricted to registered nurses (Johnson 1975: 580). Eighty-five percent of the baccalaureate programs give some form of examination for admission with advanced placement to the registered nurse, providing credit for previous education and experience (Lenburg and Johnson 1974:267).

Rationale cited for the above are as follows. It is indicated that the exchange of information between the registered nurse students and

the basic nursing students is beneficial for both groups (House 1973: 278 and Dudas 1968). The socialization process with accompanying role change in which the diploma nurse is involved while obtaining a baccalaureate degree in nursing is facilitated through an integrated approach to learning (Sheahan 1974). A study done at Arizona State University to identify similarities and differences between registered nurse senior students and basic senior nursing students with respect to the components of professional nursing showed wide variability in both student groups' ideas (Corona 1973). The differences within the groups were greater than the differences between groups. It indicated that individual differences among the total sample were greater than differences related to method of entry into the nursing program.

Baccalaureate nursing faculties continue to struggle with the problem of granting credit for previous education and experience in nursing. The development of tools to assess the knowledge and skill of the registered nurse is not an easy assignment (Dineen 1972). Most schools choose a point somewhere between the two extremes of blanket credit for previous education, and credit based almost entirely on testing (Katzell 1973). Using challenge examinations serves to give credit for previously gained knowledge and skills, at the same time conserving the strength of the program and the quality of the graduates (Palmer and Brown 1974). Also indicated is the advantage of lessening the students' expenditure of time, energy and money and avoiding the duplication of content (Dineen 1972:770).

There is some documentation in Canada regarding trends in program development for the registered nurse. One article published in 1969, suggests that an alteration in post basic baccalaureate curriculum design is necessary and desirable (Good 1969). Post-basic study should be equated with offerings in the basic baccalaureate program. To attain this equality, studies should be integrated. The unique and difficult challenge of changes in philosophy and values that a diploma graduate encounters entering a baccalaureate program is identified (Munro 1974). A summary of information collected by C.A.U.S.N. and presented at the National Meeting in Ottawa, November 1971, indicated that three university schools were using challenge examinations, two additional schools had established a policy for them, and eleven schools expressed interest in the development of the examinations (Field 1971).

An interest in the current trend in program development in Canada for registered nurses seeking continuing education at the university level to obtain a bachelor's degree in nursing, led to a survey of university nursing programs in Canada.

A questionnaire was directed to Deans and Directors of each of the twenty-two university schools of nursing in Canada in the spring of 1976. The one-hundred percent return reflected a willingness to share information regarding such programs and as well indicated a real interest in documentation of program trends in Canada. The results are tabulated to facilitate comparison and reference.

#### *PROGRAMS FOR REGISTERED NURSES*

There is action at all university schools of nursing across Canada for the development of educational opportunities for the registered nurse seeking a bachelor's degree in nursing. Of the twenty-two university schools of nursing in Canada, twenty indicated an acceptance of the registered nurse into a program leading to a bachelor's degree in nursing. Of the two other programs, one indicates an admission of the occasional student into their basic degree program, while the other suggests possibilities for future program development for the registered nurse.

#### *LENGTH OF PROGRAM*

The length of programs for the registered nurse varies from two to four years. Seven of the programs are two years in length, twelve of the programs are three years, and one program is a four year program. It is indicated that challenge examinations and individual management can reduce the length of three of the programs. The occasional student that is accepted at Queen's University essentially completes the requirements of the basic four year degree program.

#### *SEPARATE OR INTEGRATED PROGRAM*

Is the emphasis at present on providing a completely separate program for the registered nurse or on sharing faculty, courses, and classes with the basic nursing students in an integrated approach to learning? Data suggest that nine of the programs are separate programs, while twelve of the programs are integrated.

A detailed review of the data, however, indicates that few programs are completely separate or completely integrated. The majority of programs have a combination of separate and integrated components. Five of the programs essentially contain no integrative aspects and are purely separate programs. Sixteen of the programs, however, have some integrative aspects ranging from a sharing of a few of the nursing or non-nursing courses, a sharing of one to two years of the basic program, to a complete sharing by both basic nursing students and registered nurses in a single identifiable nursing program.

Rationale for the establishment of a separate program or separate components of a program is primarily identified as necessary to

specifically meet the learning needs of this group, taking into account their background of life experiences as well as different bases in nursing knowledge. Integration appears to be favored as an enriching experience for the two groups. It is indicated that there is difficulty in doing justice to more than one program with the availability of clinical facilities and number of qualified teachers.

#### *CREDIT OR ADVANCED STANDING GIVEN*

What credit is given to the registered nurse for her education and experience? Credit offered to the registered nurse varies from no credit to a maximum of two years' credit. Seven responses indicate that no credit is given. Five responses favor one year credit, either admitting the student as a second year student or by a comparison of the program for the registered nurse to the lengthier basic nursing program. Credit is given in four programs specifically for nursing courses in the first two to three years of the basic program. Nonspecified credits are offered in four other programs.

#### *CHALLENGE EXAMINATIONS USED*

Challenge examinations, a method of giving advanced credit or standing to the registered nurse for her education and experience, are used in a variety of ways by the various programs. Seven responses indicate that the opportunity is available to receive credit for nursing courses. The University of Manitoba uses the term 'challenge for credit' as opposed to 'challenge examinations' since there are many modes of testing the competency of students at all levels of the program. These are not necessarily examinations but may be orals, seminar discussions and/or practical demonstrations of performance. In the nursing courses, which have a practice component, challenge for credit consists of theoretical and practical evaluation in each course.

At the time this survey was made, Laurentian University was constructing challenge examinations for use the first time in the summer of 1976; it was anticipated these would include a written component and assessment of skill in a simulated situation.

The University of Ottawa uses challenge examinations to give credit to the registered nurse for knowledge and skill acquired through previous study and nursing practice, and to ensure that their time at university is spent in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. The school offers the registered nurse the opportunity to demonstrate baccalaureate competency in any or all of the cited nursing courses at the end of the second year of the program. Failure to obtain standing in two or three of these extends the student's course of study.



# BACCALAUREATE NURSING PROGRAMS FOR REGISTERED NURSES IN CANADA — 1976

Program for Registered Nurses	Length of Program	Separate or Integrated Program	Credit or Advanced Standing Given	Challenge Examinations Used	Trend in Program Development
University of Victoria, School of Nursing program begins September 1976	2 years	separate no plans for a basic program at this time	—	—	use of challenge exams possible correspond- ence courses
University of British Columbia, School of Nursing	2 academic years plus 3 months summer course	integrated one nursing course required prior to entry into third year of B.S.N. program	years I and II of B.S.N. program	for admission to program — NLN achievement tests used, for placement in nursing and non- nursing courses	increased use of challenge exams; hope to develop their own for admission to program
University of Calgary, Faculty of Nursing admits visiting students for U. of A. program hope to begin own program September 1976	2 academic years	integrated (new program) two separate nursing courses in lieu of nursing courses in first three years of B.S.N. program fourth year nursing courses shared humanities, natural and social sciences shared	nursing courses in years I, II and III of B.S.N. program Introductory Psychology, Sociology, Biology	may receive "credit by special assessment" per university policy for courses within program no formalized exams developed	some interest in development and use of challenge exams
University of Alberta, School of Nursing	2 academic years plus summer school	separate	—	may challenge courses required within program as per university policy, no formalized exams developed	some integration Principle of challenge exams accepted by faculty

University of Saskatchewan, College of Nursing	3 academic years	separate one fourth year course that is optional for basic students is required two fourth year courses required for basic students are optional some humanities, natural and social sciences may be shared	students admitted as second year students	not in nursing graduates from one institute can challenge for admission to a 200-level class in Psychology & Sociology collecting data with NLN Graduate Nurse Qualifying examination	more integration in senior year increased use of challenge exams
University of Manitoba, School of Nursing	4 years can be reduced to two years with individual management	integrated	up to 10 courses can be credited	challenge for credit - a total of 32 credits can be challenged; this includes nursing and required and elective general education courses	more integration increased use of challenge for credit
Lakehead University, School of Nursing	3 Academic years with advanced standing could be reduced to 2½ years	separate	5 credits in nursing of total required 20 credits	Anatomy	more integration increased use of challenge exams
Laurentian University, School of Nursing	2 calendar years is shortest possible time, given success on all courses open to challenge	integrated omits Anatomy & Physiology course in first year special nursing course in lieu of nursing courses in years I & II	—	“credit by challenge” all third year courses to begin summer 1976	opportunity to challenge non-nursing courses possible division of one second year course into modules which could be challenged
University of Windsor, School of Nursing	3 years	separate	credit for all basic nursing courses i.e. - Obstetrics, Pediatrics, Medical-Surgical Nursing, Psychiatric Nursing	Introductory Psychology, Sociology, Microbiology, Anatomy, Physiology	integration - courses in last year

Program for Registered Nurses	Length of Program	Separate or Integrated Program	Credit or Advanced Standing Given	Challenge Examinations Used	Trend in Program Development
University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Nursing	3 years	separate Research & Statistics shared for first time this year	—	—	some integration, e.g. health care delivery system, professional development
McMaster University, School of Nursing no program offered at this time may be able to do so in the future after revisions in the basic science courses have been finalized and approved	—	—	—	—	—
University of Toronto, Faculty of Nursing,	3 years	separate sharing of some natural and social science requirements	one year "blanket credit" since program three years in contrast to four year basic program	—	more integration project begun to develop credit examinations - objective is to offer one undergraduate program with multiple points of entry
Queen's University, School of Nursing no longer offers a program occasionally takes students if they are unable to attend another institution	4 years	integrated omits second course in nursing which concentrates on basic technical skills	—	—	use of challenge exams
University of Ottawa, School of Nursing	3 years	separate	one year - three year program rather than four year basic program	opportunity to demonstrate baccalaureate competency in Obstetrics, Pediatrics and/or Psychiatric Nursing	increased use of challenge exams

McGill University, School of Nursing	3 years both B.N. and B.Sc.N. programs	separate B.N. program for graduates of hospital schools of nursing phased out this year (1976) B.Sc.N. program developed for graduates of Quebec CEGEP or other community colleges and institutes - parallels existing program with altered science and nursing content	some science courses plus one nursing course	—	more integration maintenance of early separation of nursing courses
Université de Montréal, Faculté de Nursing	3 years with challenge exams can be reduced to two years	integrated - is an accelerated program	..... nursing course in third year may be shared with basic students all other science courses shared	—	all nursing courses may be challenged except the first and last one
Université Laval, Ecole des Sciences Infirmières	3 academic years	integrated	Credit for four pre-requisite courses	nursing courses may be challenged to obtain equivalence	more integration hope to reduce the number of courses for admission to basic program
University of New Brunswick, Faculty of Nursing	3 academic years plus clinical practice	integrated for two year diploma graduates plan to begin for three year hospital diploma graduates separate program for latter group to be offered for last time September 1976 one separate nursing course to be offered in 1977-78 to graduates of all diploma programs	one year credit for first year of basic program	content of second year nursing courses	more integration increased use of challenge exams



Program for Registered Nurses	Length of Program	Separate or Integrated Program	Credit or Advanced Standing Given	Challenge Examinations Used	Trend in Program Development
Université de Moncton, Ecole des Sciences Infirmières	2 years	integrated for three year hospital diploma graduates eventually for two year diploma graduates separate program for three year hospital diploma graduates phased out December 1975	76 credits	—	possible program through Extension Department (a different program for adults)
St. Francis Xavier University, Department of Nursing	3 years	integrated share required nursing courses and most general education courses	—	Nursing of Mothers and Infants, Nursing of Children, first section of Nursing of Adults	more integration increased use of challenge exams
Dalhousie University, School of Nursing	3 academic years	integrated nursing courses in second and third years separate nursing courses in fourth year shared one fourth year course separated for clinical in 1975-76 two science courses shared	one year three academic years rather than four academic years plus an eight week clinical component	—	—
Memorial University of Newfoundland, School of Nursing	2 years plus one semester	integrated first nursing semester nursing course is separate two other semesters nursing courses are shared	15 non-specified credits toward a 50 credit B.N. degree	—	use of challenge exams for nursing courses

The University of New Brunswick offers a challenge examination at the conclusion of the first academic year. The examination has both written and clinical components. Students passing both proceed to the third year of the basic degree program. Students who fail proceed to a six week inter-session of theory and practice. Upon demonstration of competency they then proceed to the third year.

At St. Francis Xavier University the registered nurse is not required to take the third year nursing courses. They have a clinical inter-session which tests their knowledge and skill in these areas.

Three responses indicate the use of challenge examinations to give credit for non-nursing courses. Registered nurse applicants at the University of British Columbia are required to complete a battery of placement tests in nursing and non-nursing subjects. At the University of Saskatchewan challenge exams are used for admission to a higher level class. At the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary, university policy allows the registered nurse to request the opportunity to obtain equivalence for the learning experience.

#### *TREND IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT*

For the registered nurse seeking a baccalaureate degree in nursing the trend in program development appears to be towards more integration with basic baccalaureate programs and towards the development and use of challenge examinations. Seven responses identified their programs as separate, indicating the trend for their program development is towards some integration with their basic baccalaureate programs. This is seen primarily in the senior year. Five of the responses that described their programs as currently integrated are planning for even more integration. Responses indicate that six programs currently not utilizing challenge examinations are interested in their use and/or development. Responses also suggest that nine programs currently using challenge examinations are planning to increase their use of these exams.

#### *IMPLICATIONS OF SURVEY*

What are some possible implications of this survey? The trend in baccalaureate nursing programs for registered nurses in Canada appears to be towards providing some degree of integration with a concurrent basic baccalaureate program and with an expressed interest in the development and use of challenge examinations as a method of providing advanced standing or credit. Factors favoring integration include: (1) economic and efficient utilization of faculty, (2) improved utilization of clinical facilities, (3) facilitation of the socialization process for the diploma graduate in process of a role change and (4) the value of sharing between the two student groups.

Factors primarily favoring the use of challenge examinations are: (1) this is a tool which can give the registered nurse accurate credit for her education and experience and (2) this is a method of assessing the learning needs of the registered nurse to ensure facilitation of new learning.

There is no doubt that the development of challenge examinations is indeed a challenge for nursing faculty! The development of tools to assess the knowledge and expertise of the registered nurse is a task which involves a large investment of faculty time and energy. There is interest in this task across the country. Perhaps more sharing of information and ideas could facilitate each individual faculty's approach to the assignment. At the very least some moral support could be generated for this most difficult task.

#### REFERENCES

- Boyle, R. E. "Articulation: from Associate Degree through Masters." *Nursing Outlook* 20 (October 1972): 670-672.
- Corona, D.F. "College Education Tailor-Made for Registered Nurses." *American Journal of Nursing* 73 (February 1973): 294-297.
- Dineen, M. A. "The Open Curriculum: Implications for Further Education." *Nursing Outlook* 20 (December 1972): 771.
- Dudas, S. "The RN in the Baccalaureate Program." *Nursing Outlook* 16 (July 1968): 51-53.
- Field, P. A. "Western Region C.A.U.S.N. Challenge Examinations." Report to C.A.U.S.N., Ottawa, November 1971.
- Gebhardt, S. A. "A New Model for Nursing Education." *Nursing Outlook* 21 (April 1973): 252-255.
- Good, S. "Post-Basic Baccalaureate Education for Nurses in Canada." *International Nursing Review* 16 (1969): 147-151.
- Hohman, I. "Degree-Seeking RNs Gain Academic Options." *Hospitals* 49 (June 1975): 89-91.
- House, C. "College Education Tailor-Made for Me." *American Journal of Nursing* 73 (February 1973): 298.
- Johnson, W. "Status of the Open Curriculum in Nursing." *Nursing Outlook* 19 (December 1971): 779-782.
- Johnson, W. L. "Educational Preparation for Nursing — 1974." *Nursing Outlook* 23 (September 1975): 580.
- Lenburg, C. and Johnson, W. "Career Mobility Through Nursing Education." *Nursing Outlook* 22 (April 1974): 267.
- Katzell, M. E. "Evaluation for Educational Mobility." *Nursing Outlook* 21 (July 1973): 453-456.
- Kelly, L. Y. "Open Curriculum — What and Why." *American Journal of Nursing* 77 (December 1974): 2232-2238.
- La Verdier, R. "An Accelerated Nursing Curriculum." *Nursing Outlook* 21 (August 1973): 524-526.
- Mason, E. J. and Parascandola, J. "Preparing Tomorrow's Health Care Team." *Nursing Outlook* 20 (November 1972): 728-731.
- McCluhan, J. D.; Ardrey, F.; and True, C. "A Four-Part Examination." *Nursing Outlook* 22 (September 1974): 585-586.
- Munro, M. F. "Needed: A Common Denominator." *Nursing Papers* 6 (Spring 1974): 7.
- Nyquist, E. B. "The External Degree Program and Nursing." *Nursing Outlook* 21 (June 1973): 372-377.

- Palmer, P. E. and Brown, S. K. "Ad Challenge Exams: Two Approaches." *Nursing Outlook* 22 (September 1974) : 583-585.
- Peterson, C. J. "Nature of a Sound Challenge System." *Journal of Obstetrical, Gynecologic and Neonatal Nursing* 2 (January-February 1973) : 58-62.
- Raderman, R. and Allen, D. V. "Registered Nurse Students in a Baccalaureate Program: Factors Associated with Completion." *Nursing Research* 23 January-February 1974) : 71-73.
- Rumba, M. A. and Blood, O. M. "Come on in, the Water's Fine!" *Nursing Outlook* 16 (December 1968) : 58-59.
- Sheahan, S. D. "Degree, Yes — Education, No." *Nursing Outlook* 22 (January 1974) : 22-25.
- Woolley, A. S. "Reaching and Teaching the Older Student." *Nursing Outlook* 21 (January 1973) : 37-39.

## FACULTY POSITIONS

New positions (4) in 2-year post-basic baccalaureate program in Victoria, B.C., Canada. Generalist in focus, clinical emphasis on gerontology in community and supportive extended care units. Public Health nursing and Independent study provide opportunity to work closely with highly-qualified and motivated R.N. students. Teaching creativity and research are strongly endorsed. Master's degree, teaching and recent clinical experience in gerontology/med.-surg./psychology,/rehabilitation preferred. Salaries and fringe benefits competitive; an equal opportunity employer for qualified persons. Positions available NOW.

Contact: Dr. Isabel MacRae, Director, School of Nursing, University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C., Canada, V8W 2Y2.

## UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA SCHOOL OF NURSING

Positions available for the 1977-78 academic year in:

Medical-Surgical Nursing  
Maternal and Child Nursing  
Psychiatric Nursing  
Community Nursing.

Master's degree in clinical specialty and teaching experience required. Preference will be given to bilingual candidates. (French and English). Salary commensurate with preparation.

Send curriculum vitae and references to the Dean, School of Nursing, University of Ottawa, 770 King Edward Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5.