

**Operational Rules**  
That Assist with the Implementation  
Of the PN/ASN Model Curriculum

An Introduction

Several operational rules have been agreed upon to assist with the implementation of the model nursing curriculum. That model curriculum is intended for all practical nursing (PN) programs in the Montana University System, and for schools that offer both PN and two-year registered nursing (RN) programs. Schools that offer just the registered nursing program are not expected to follow the model curriculum, but they are obligated to develop articulation agreements for students who may want to transfer into their programs.

The operational rules are as follows:

- 1) Most of the courses listed in Semester One and Semester Two are considered pre-nursing courses. The **recommended** sequence for those courses is set out in the PN/ASN model curriculum table. Nursing programs that follow this model have the right to deliver the pre-nursing courses in a different sequence, however, to accommodate the needs of other programs at their institution that also utilize these courses and to respond to the availability of faculty who teach these courses for the institution. In developing an alternative delivery schedule, the institution cannot create hidden prerequisites that make it more difficult for students to complete the coursework in as timely a fashion as possible. Remedial courses are not considered hidden prerequisites. Because of this flexibility in scheduling, the assessment model should attempt to determine its impact on students, particularly students who transfer between programs.
- 2) The nursing courses set out in Semester Three, Four, Five and Six **must be delivered** in the order and sequence set out in the LPN/ASN model curriculum table. Nursing students must also be able to complete the nursing courses in two academic years.
- 3) Students must earn a "C" or better in all of the pre-nursing courses. Those courses are: anatomy and physiology, Freshman English, inorganic chemistry, college algebra, nutrition, and general psychology. Students must also earn a "C" or better in the microbiology and sociology courses listed in Semesters Five and Six.
- 4) Students must earn a "C" or better in all of the nursing courses. In addition to the obvious nursing courses, the list includes the Introduction to Nursing course, the Leadership Issues course and the Transition to Registered Nursing course.

- 5) Students from Practical Nursing (PN) programs, who complete the first four (4) semesters of the model curriculum, can earn an Associate of Applied Science degree in PN nursing and are eligible to sit for the national licensure examination (NCLEX-PN).

Those students:

- a) must complete the two-credit Leadership Issues course set out in Semester 4 to earn that A.A.S. degree, and sit for the examination.

PN programs are currently offered by Montana State University-Great Falls College of Technology, Montana State University-Billings College of Technology, and Flathead Valley Community College.

- 6) The Practical Nursing students, described in part 5) above, may decide to go on to a Registered Nursing program **that follows the model curriculum.** To make that transition, the students:

- a) must complete the didactic portion of the Transition to Registered Nursing course before they apply for admission to the RN program.
- b) must complete the skills portion of the Transition to Registered Nursing course, before they apply for admission to the RN program, if more than three years have elapsed since they completed their PN coursework.
- c) will transfer their coursework from the first four (4) semesters into the RN program, and begin with the courses that are set out in Semester 5.
- d) do not have to take the two-credit Leadership Issues course set out in Semester 4; but in doing so, they will not earn an A.A.S. degree in PN nursing and they will not be eligible to sit for NCLEX-PN. (Please see Footnote.)

The Registered Nursing programs that follow the model curriculum are located at Montana Tech of The University of Montana, The University of Montana-Helena College of Technology, and The University of Montana-Missoula College of Technology.

- 7) Practical Nursing students, described in part 5) above, who decide to go on to a Registered Nursing program that **does not follow the model curriculum:**

- a) must complete the didactic portion of the Transition to Registered Nursing course, before they apply for admission to the RN programs at Miles Community College and Montana State University-Northern.
- b) must complete the skills portion of the Transition to Registered Nursing course, before they apply for admission to the RN programs at Miles Community College and Montana State University-Northern, if more than three years have elapsed since they completed the PN program.
- c) will follow the articulation plan developed by the RN program. That articulation plan may include an escrow of credits until PN students successfully complete the RN program.
- d) do not have to take the two-credit Leadership Issues course set out in Semester 4; but in doing so, they will not earn an A.A.S. degree in PN nursing and they will not be eligible to sit for NCLEX-PN.

The Registered Nursing programs that do not follow the model curriculum are located at Miles Community College, Montana State University-Northern and Montana State University-Bozeman. The articulation plans for those programs can be found at the

- 8) Practical Nursing students **who did not complete the first four (4) semesters of the model curriculum**, and decide to go on to a registered nursing program, must satisfy the following requirements before they apply for admission to an RN program:
- complete all of the pre-nursing courses described in part 3) above before they apply for admission to the RN program.
  - complete the didactic portion of the Transition to Registered Nursing course before they apply for admission to the RN program.
  - complete the skills portion of the Transition to Registered Nursing course before they apply for admission to the RN program. The only exception to this skills requirement is licensed practical nurses who completed their PN education from a Montana University System program under a different curriculum model, **and** that program was completed less than three years before they applied for admission to an RN program.
  - be a licensed practical nurse.
  - satisfy the minimum grade requirements set out in parts 3) and 4) above.

If these licensed practical nurses are admitted to an RN program, their PN nursing credits will be placed in “escrow” until they successfully complete the RN coursework. Those escrowed credits will be accepted, as a block, when the students successfully complete the RN curriculum. In order to comply with the “notice requirements” of Board of Regents’ Policy 301.5.1, students must be told, in writing, how the escrow process will work.

The coursework that the students must complete will depend on the RN program that accepts them. It will be either a) Semesters Five and Six of the model curriculum; or b) the coursework identified in the articulation plans described in part 7) above.

- 9) Students in the two-year RN programs **that follow the model curriculum** have the right to “opt out” of the program at the end of Semester 4 and take the LPN licensure examination. To prepare for NCLEX-PN, students must take the two-credit Leadership Issues course set out in Semester 4. (Please see Footnote.)
- 10) The Transition to Registered Nursing course, referenced above, is currently offered by three (3) nursing programs. Those programs are: Montana Tech of The University of Montana (didactic portion offered on-line); Montana State University-Northern (didactic portion offered on-line); and Miles Community College (didactic portion offered by interactive television). The following details also serve as guides for the Transition course:
- the transition course will be offered every semester. At this point, Montana Tech will offer the course during Fall Semester; MSU-Northern will offer the course during Spring Semester; and Miles Community College will offer the course during Summer Semester.
  - one of the requirements of the class will be a demonstration of skills appropriate for admission to an RN nursing program. The students who are required to satisfy the skills demonstration requirement are listed in rules 6), 7) and 8)

above. Students will have to travel to the campus where they enrolled for the course to complete the skills portion. That will typically be done at a pre-scheduled "skills day."

- c) students will be assessed a course fee for the skills portion of the course. The amount of the course fee will be \$88, to cover the cost of materials used by the students to demonstrate their nursing skills.
- d) additional nursing programs may also decide to offer the Transition course. If they do, the availability of the program will be included in these operational rules.

11) To determine if previous coursework is still current and timely, nursing programs will rely on the Montana Board of Regents' policy entitled "Outdated Coursework." The relevant sections of that policy guarantee that

- any nursing coursework taken within the last five (5) years will be evaluated for possible use in the nursing program; and
- any pre-nursing, general education or elective coursework taken within the last fifteen (15) years will be evaluated for possible use in the nursing program.

The policy does not require nursing programs to accept coursework that falls within the guarantee periods. The policy also does not mandate that nursing programs must reject coursework that falls outside the guarantee periods. Nursing programs have agreed to be as generous as possible, however, in applying the provisions of the policy without sacrificing the quality of their programs.

(Footnote.) The RN program at The University of Montana-Missoula College of Technology follows the model curriculum. At least for the immediate future, that program will require all students to be licensed practical nurses before they can continue with the coursework set out in Semesters 5 and 6. The Missoula program is an exception because it promised the communities in its service area that it would continue to do all it could to prepare LPNs, and to assist practicing LPNs to become RNs.