

## Learning Objectives

Describe the types and characteristics of distance education.  
Identify advantages and limitations of distance education.  
Discuss the NCSBN Regulatory Guidelines for Nursing Education Prelicensure Distance Education Programs.

Nursing organizations also have taken the position that nurses should advance their education (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2012; Tri-Council for Nursing, 2010). These national recommendations and the evolutions in the health care delivery system have challenged the nursing profession to develop and implement innovative educational strategies to en-

**N**urses have been called to advance their education by national and professional nursing researchers. In 2010, the Carnegie study of nursing education (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010), which compared and evaluated nine nursing programs with excellent reputations for teaching and learning, studied the state of nursing education. Of the 26 resulting transformative recommendations, four of them support nurses advancing their education. The researchers also made a strong case for increasing the rigor of nursing education and integrating clinical cases and practical experiences through educational processes.

In addition to basic nursing education, distance education is allowing many to achieve higher levels of education. As recommended by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), “Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression” (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2010, p. 163). Specifically, it recommends that by 2020, 80% of nurses should have baccalaureate degrees (IOM, 2010); however, in 2013 only 42% of those taking the NCLEX for the first time were U.S.-educated baccalaureate graduates (National Council of State Boards of Nursing [NCSBN], 2014).

guidelines for nursing education prelicensure distance education programs.

### Distance Education in Nursing Education and Regulation

Distance education has been defined several ways in the literature and by national committees (Allen & Seaman, 2013). For the purposes of this article, distance education in nursing is defined as instruction offered by any means where the student and faculty member are in separate physical locations. Teaching methods may be synchronous or asynchronous and facilitate and evaluate learning in compliance with BON-approval status and regulations (adapted from Commission on Regulation and Postsecondary Distance Education, 2013). Other pertinent definitions for this discussion are the host and home states. Home state is defined as the state/jurisdiction where the program has legal domicile, and the host state is that state/jurisdiction outside of the home state where the students participate in didactic course work and/or supervised clinical experiences (adapted from National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements, 2014).

Use of distance education is becoming the mainstay of many nursing education programs. Almost 600,000 new students in the United States reported enrolling in at least one distance education course last year

create deep reflection and foster meaningful exchanges. However, in the creation and management of online courses, and Frith (2013) cautions that online learning is not for all students. The learner must be motivated and a self-starter with the discipline to learn independently.

In nursing, a major limitation of online education is that because nursing is a practice profession, the student requires supervised clinical experiences with qualified educators. Some programs address this by employing clinical educators near students in distant jurisdictions. As Frith (2013) noted, learning clinical reasoning, a hallmark of nursing education, requires the presence of a teacher in the learning process. Other limitations include students' access to and knowledge of computers or mobile devices, faculty members' need for training in the online format, authentication of the student's work, and an adequate infrastructure to support students and educators (Frith, 2013).

Zerwekh (2011) also points out that online teaching is not a human relationship, but a virtual exchange. She cites concerns related to the commercialization of education with administrators, vendors of software and hardware, and investors as a profit maker. Zerwekh (2011) notes that students and bodily expressions, to pick up nonverbal skills, to interact socially and therapeutically, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to build [a] caring collegial community" (p. 180). She advocates some face-to-face work in blended courses. Studies supporting best practices (Quality Matters, 2014) in distance education illustrate that there are ways to minimize the lack of a human relationship. They stress the importance of social presence and instructor involvement, and prior knowledge and experience. Joyce and Brown (2009) assert that social presence emphasizes the human characteristics in distance education by creating awareness of the importance of critical connections and cultivating relationships in virtual learning communities, which may increase student engagement learning outcomes.

Mancuso-Murphy (2007), Zerwekh (2011), and Hoffmann and Dudjak (2012) report issues with faculty workload in both the creation and implementation of online courses. Anderson and Avery (2008) studied faculty workload in graduate nursing courses, finding that a comparatively higher number of hours is required to prepare online courses, a higher percentage of time is needed to evaluate student work, and more time is spent in student contact. Zerwekh (2011) reports that although faculty members teaching online courses have more flexibility in their schedules, often the isolation from colleagues and students is difficult. Johnson and Meehan (2013) report many faculty issues related to preparation for teaching online courses. Sometimes, faculty members feel uncomfortable as they transition from face-to-face teaching to Web-based teaching. Many have little



ing programs are evaluated according to national accreditation standards. CCNE does not have different standards for distance education programs. ACEN has an additional criterion for distance education programs under three of its six standards (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, 2013).

An important part of maintaining the quality of a distance education program is to have a rigorous process for identifying and measuring outcomes. One framework (Billings, 2000) used to assess the outcomes and practices in online nursing courses incorporates Chickering and Gamson's (1987) seven principles for good practices. Concepts of the model include outcomes, educational practices, faculty support, learner support, and use of technology. Variables are identified for each of the concepts.

### Regulatory Guidelines and Recommendations for Prelicensure Programs

The NCSBN Distance Learning Education Committee developed the following Regulatory Guidelines for Prelicensure Programs. The guidelines are presented to promote consistency among BONs for the regulation of prelicensure nursing distance education programs. The committee recommends the guidelines be fully met by 2020. This is in line with the IOM Future of Nursing recommendations for 80% of nurses to be educated with a baccalaureate degree by 2020, as well as the NCSBN recommendations that BONs require accreditation by 2020.

A visual model of the Regulatory Guidelines for Nursing Education Prelicensure Distance Education Programs can be found in Figure 1. The model depicts the differences between the home state's and the host state's responsibilities, illustrating that it was designed to encourage collaboration among the BONs for the purpose of public protection.

TABLE 1

NCSBN Model Rules and Act: Legislative Requirements and Language

The NCSBN Model Rules and Act ([www.ncsbn.org/12\\_Model\\_Rules\\_090512.pdf](http://www.ncsbn.org/12_Model_Rules_090512.pdf)) sets forth language and requirements for prelicensure nursing education program approvals. The following are examples of requirements and language relative to Distance Education from the model rules and act.

NCSBN MODEL RULES

The curriculum of the nursing education program includes knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for the scope and guidelines of competent nursing practice expected at the level of licensure. Curriculum components, as defined by nursing education, professional and practice guidelines, shall include:

- a. Experiences that promote clinical judgment, clinical management, and commitment to improving quality and safety of the health care system.
- b. Evidence-based learning experiences and methods of instruction, including distance education methods, which are consistent with the curriculum.
- c. Course work in:
  - i. Biological, physical, social, and behavioral sciences to promote safe and effective nursing practice.
  - ii. Professional responsibilities, legal and ethical issues, history and trends in nursing.
  - iii. Didactic content and supervised clinical experiences in the prevention of illness; and the promotion, restoration, and maintenance of health in patients across the lifespan and from diverse backgrounds.

education nursing clinical courses in other states/jurisdictions. Rationales:  
(See Table 1.)

- 4. Faculty, preceptors, or others who teach clinical experiences for a prelicensure nursing education program by means of distance education shall hold a current and active nursing license or privilege to practice, which is not encumbered, and meet licensure requirements in the state/jurisdiction where the patient is located. Faculty who only teach didactic content for a prelicensure nursing education program by means of distance education shall hold a current and active nursing license or privilege to practice, which is not encumbered, and meet licensure requirements in the home state where the program is approved.
  - a. The nurse shall be licensed where the patient is located and where patient care is regulated for protection of the patient. If a practice complaint were to occur, this allows the host state/jurisdiction the ability to investigate that complaint. Exemption language was adopted to the NCSBN Model Act at the NCSBN 2014 annual meeting to allow for faculty who only teach didactic courses for distance education programs to be exempted from licensure in host states.
  - b. If there are student complaints, the host state will send them to the home state, which approves the prelicensure program and therefore is responsible for investigating and possibly sanctioning the program or the individual.
- 5. BONs will communicate information through their annual reports about prelicensure nursing programs that

have students enrolled in clinical experiences in host states.

BONs have requested data on which prelicensure programs have nursing students in clinical experiences in their states/jurisdictions. Therefore, it is recommended that BONs add a question to their annual reports, which are sent to prelicensure programs requesting information on whether students are enrolled in clinical experiences in host states/jurisdictions. If the programs do have students in host states/jurisdictions, they are asked to list where their students are located. NCSBN will collect that data from the home states and distribute this information to the host states that want it. The following is the question to add to the annual nursing education report: Do you use another-state/jurisdiction for prelicensure clinical experiences? If yes, please list in which states/jurisdictions they are located.

Rationale: Some BONs are interested in knowing which out-of-state/jurisdiction programs have students taking clinical experiences in their states/jurisdictions. These are excellent national data on prelicensure education that could inform future projects or research.

## Conclusion

Evolutions in health care and in the methodology of prelicensure nursing education stimulate innovation, requiring best practices in regulation and national policy to ensure public protection. Regardless of the pedagogic methodology, the approval and regulatory standards must remain consistent to meet the same public protection standard.

Distance education allows increased access to education and more flexibility for the learner, thus advancing the education of the nursing workforce. BONs and educators must work together to promote excellent learning outcomes with distance education, which will improve the quality and safety of patients. Authentic conversations will be essential as we move forward together.

## References

- Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. (2013). ACEN 2013 standards and criteria. Retrieved from <http://acenursing.org/>
- Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2013). Changing course: Ten years of tracking online education in the United States. ( No. 2013). Babson Survey Research Group and Quahog Research Group, LLC.
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2012). Joint statement on academic progression for nursing students and graduates. Retrieved from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/aacn-publications/position/joint-statement-academic-progression>
- Anderson, K. M., & Avery, M. D. (2008). Faculty teaching time: A comparison of Web-based and face-to-face graduate nursing courses. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, 5, 1–12.

Avery, M. D., Cohen, B. A., & Walker, J. D. (2008). Evaluation of an online graduate nursing curriculum: Examining standards of quality. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, 5(1), 1–17. doi:10.2202/1548-923X.1538

Bransford, P., Sutphen, M., Leonard, V., & Day, L. (2010). Educating nurses: A call for radical transformation. Retrieved from [www.carnegiefoundation.org/newsroom/press-releases/educating-nurses-call-radical-transformation](http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/newsroom/press-releases/educating-nurses-call-radical-transformation)

Billings, D. (2000). A framework for assessing outcomes and practices in web-based courses in nursing. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 39(2), 60–67.

Billings, D., Connors, H., & Skiba, D. (2001). Benchmarking best practices in web-based nursing courses. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 21(2), 126–133.

Billings, D. M., Dickerson, S. S., Greenberg, M. J., Wu, Y. B., & Tallent, B. S. (2013). Quality monitoring and accreditation in nursing distance education programs. In K. H. Frith & D. J. Clark (Eds.), *Distance education in nursing* (pp. 163–189). New York, NY: Springer.

Broome, M., Halstead, J., Pesut, D., Rawl, S., & Boland, D. (2011). Evaluating the outcomes of a distance accessible PhD program. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 27(2), 69–77.

Chappell, S. L., Stewart, S. M., & Hansen, T. S. (2010). Eliminate border wars. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 31(6), 392–394.

Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED282491.pdf>

Code of Federal Regulations. (2014). Retrieved [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title34-vol3/pdf/CFR-2011-title34-vol3-sec600-9.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title34-vol3/pdf/CFR-2011-title34-vol3-sec600-9.pdf)

Commission on Regulation and Postsecondary Distance Education. (2013). Advancing access through regulatory reform: Findings, principles, and recommendations for the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). Retrieved from [www.sacscoc.org/pdf/crpse/CommissiononRegulationofPostsecondaryDistanceEducationDraftRecommendationsFI-NALApril.pdf](http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/crpse/CommissiononRegulationofPostsecondaryDistanceEducationDraftRecommendationsFI-NALApril.pdf)

Cronenwett L., & Dzau, V. (2010). Co-Chairs' summary of the conference. In B. Culliton & S. Russell (Eds.). *Who will provide primary care and how will they be trained?* Durham, NC: Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation.

Doris, Liu, Z., Liu, S., Yin, H., Xu, G., Zhang, H., & Wang, A. (2013). Web-based distance learning for nurse education: A systematic review. *International Nursing Review*, 60(2), 167–177. doi:10.1111/inr.12015

Frith, K. H. (2013). An overview of distance education and online learning. In K. H. Frith & D. H. Clark (Eds.), *Distance education in nursing* (pp. 17–31). New York, NY: Springer.

Gormley, D. K., & Glazer, G. (2012). Legislative: Nursing distance learning programs and state board authorization. Retrieved from [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title34-vol3/pdf/CFR-2011-title34-vol3-sec600-9.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title34-vol3/pdf/CFR-2011-title34-vol3-sec600-9.pdf)

- Jones, D., & Wolf, D. (2010). Shaping the future of nursing education today using distant education and technology. *The ABNF Journal*, 21(2), 44–47. doi:50504341
- Joyce, K., & Brown, A. (2009). Enhancing social presence in online learning: Mediation strategies applied to social networking tools. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 12(4), 1. Retrieved from [www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdl/winter124/joyce124.html](http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdl/winter124/joyce124.html)
- Lu, D., Lin, Z., & Li, Y. (2009). Effects of a web-based course on nursing skills and knowledge learning. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 48(2), 70-77. doi:10.3928/01484834-20090201-10
- Mancuso-Murphy, J. (2007). Distance education in nursing: An integrated review of online nursing students' experiences with technology-delivered instruction. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 46(6), 252–260.
- Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M., & Jones, K. (2010). Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: A meta-analysis and review of online learning studies. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://eprints.cpknc.ca/7/1/final-report.pdf>
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education. (2011). Distance education programs: Interregional guidelines for the evaluation of distance education (online learning). Retrieved from [www.msche.org/publications/Guidelines-for-the-Evaluation-of-Distance-Education-Programs.pdf](http://www.msche.org/publications/Guidelines-for-the-Evaluation-of-Distance-Education-Programs.pdf)
- Murray, T. (2013). Innovations in nursing education: The state of the art. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 3(4), 25–31. Retrieved from <http://jnr.metapress.com/content/qlh225k6p6864464/?p=7633c3eb9e3b4b799ef06133df70a586&pi=1>
- National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements. (2014). Retrieved from: <http://nc-sara.org/>.
- National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2014). NCLEX statistics from NCSBN. Retrieved from [www.ncsbn.org/Table\\_of\\_Pass\\_Rates\\_2013.pdf](http://www.ncsbn.org/Table_of_Pass_Rates_2013.pdf)
- Powell, H., Darbyshire, C., MacPherson, C., Pollock, C., & Bradley, P. (2012). Increasing the work-force in remote and rural areas. *Learning Disability Practice*, 15(7), 28–31.
- Quality Matters: A national benchmark for online course design. (2014). Retrieved from [www.qualitymatters.org/](http://www.qualitymatters.org/)
- Sanford, J., Townsend-Rocchiccioli, J., Trimm, D., & Jacobs, M. (2010). The WebQuest: Constructing creative learning. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 41(10), 473–479. doi:10.3928/00220124-20100503-04
- Skiba, D. J., Connors, H. R., & Jeffries, P. R. (2008). Information technologies and the transformation of nursing education. *Nursing Outlook*, 56(5), 225–230. doi:10.1016/j.outlook.2008.06.012
- Sloan Consortium. (2013). Sloan-C quality framework. Retrieved from <http://sloanconsortium.org/5pillars>
- Spector, N., & Woods, S. (2013). A collaborative model for approval of prelicensure nursing programs. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 3(4), 47–52.
- Tri-Council for Nursing. (2010). Educational advancement of registered nurses: A consensus position. Retrieved from [www.nln.org/newsreleases/tri-council.pdf](http://www.nln.org/newsreleases/tri-council.pdf)
- U.S. Department of Education. (2010). Department of education establishes new student aid rules to protect borrowers and taxpayers. Retrieved from [www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/departement-education-establishes-new-student-aid-rules-protect-borrowers-and-tax](http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/departement-education-establishes-new-student-aid-rules-protect-borrowers-and-tax)
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. (2011). Principles of good practice. Retrieved from [www.wcet.wiche.edu/wcet/docs/tbd/TbD\\_PrinciplesofGoodPractice.pdf](http://www.wcet.wiche.edu/wcet/docs/tbd/TbD_PrinciplesofGoodPractice.pdf)
- Zerwekh, J. (2011). Web-based teaching: Caution and suggestion. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 50(4), 179–180.

Bobby Lowery, PhD, FNP-BC, FAANP, is Assistant Professor, Director, Doctor of Nursing Practice Program, College of Nursing, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. Nancy Spector, PhD, RN, FAAN, is Director, Regulatory Innovations, National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Chicago, Illinois.



## Regulatory Implications and Recommendations for Distance Education in Prelicensure Nursing Programs

### Learning Objectives

- Describe the types and characteristics of distance education.
- Identify advantages and limitations of distance education.
- Discuss the NCSBN Regulatory Guidelines for Nursing Education Prelicensure Distance Education Programs.

Ce

### CE Posttest

If you reside in the United States and wish to obtain 1.2 contact hours of continuing education (CE) credit, please review these instructions.

#### Instructions

Go online to take the posttest and earn CE credit:

Members – [www.ncsbninteractive.org](http://www.ncsbninteractive.org) (no charge)

Nonmembers – [www.learningext.com](http://www.learningext.com) (\$15 processing fee)

If you cannot take the posttest online, complete the print form and mail it to the address (nonmembers must include a check for \$15, payable to NCSBN) included at bottom of form.

#### Provider accreditation

The NCSBN is accredited as a provider of CE by the Alabama State Board of Nursing.

The information in this CE does not imply endorsement of any product, service, or company referred to in this activity.

Contact hours: 1.2

Posttest passing score is 75%.

Expiration: October 2017

### Posttest

Please circle the correct answer.

- How many students were enrolled in distance education in 2013?
  - 200,000
  - 320,000
  - 6.7 million
  - 10.2 million
- Which statement about distance education is correct?
  - It is only asynchronous.
  - It may be synchronous or asynchronous.
  - Evaluation is independent of board of

11. What agency is responsible for following up on a complaint from a host state?

- a. Host state BON
- b. Home state BON
- c. NCSBN
- d. Federal government

12. Which statement from the NCSBN Model Act related to prelicensure nursing students who are practicing nursing in clinical experiences without licenses but are enrolled in a nursing program in another jurisdiction is correct?

- a. The student acts under the supervision of a registered nurse.
- b. The student acts under the supervision of, at a minimum, a licensed practical nurse.
- c. The program does not have to be approved by a BON that is a member of NCSBN.
- d. The program has to be approved by the BONs of both the host and home states.

13. According to the NCSBN Regulatory