

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Academic Affairs

NO.: AAC 14-27

COMMITTEE DATE: January 21, 2014

BOARD DATE: January 28, 2014

NURSING EDUCATION TRANSFER COMPACT

MOVED:

The Board of Higher Education hereby accepts the recommendations of the Working Group on the Nursing Education Transfer Compact and endorses the Nursing Education Transfer Compact, as presented by the Department of Higher Education. The Board further calls upon the Commissioner and campus presidents to work together in the coming months to engage in campus-level implementation planning, including consultation with faculty governance as appropriate, with the expectation that implementation should occur by the Fall of 2014.

Authority: M.G.L. c. 15A, § 9 and 6; Section 2 of Chapter 38 of the Acts of 2013
(Line Item 7066-0020)

Contact: David Cedrone, Associate Commissioner Economic and Workforce
Development

Background

The Board of Higher Education has long played a role in facilitating student transfer within the Commonwealth's system of higher education, from the Commonwealth Transfer Compact adopted in 1974 to the passage of the *MassTransfer* Policy in June 2008. The BHE and the campuses also worked together to create a degree-specific transfer compact, the Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education Transfer Compact, in April 2008.

Today, the need to increase the numbers of students transferring successfully from the Associate's to the Bachelor's degree is particularly acute in the field of nursing, where research indicates that better educated nurses provide higher quality and safer care for patients. Industry standards now call for 80% of RNs to hold a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BS/N) or above by 2020. Currently, 55% of Massachusetts nursing workforce hold a BS/N or above.

In 2012, Massachusetts received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to advance the work of increasing the percentage of the RN workforce who hold a BS/N or above to 66% by 2020 and 80% by 2025. As part of this initiative, the Department of Higher Education established the Nursing Education Transfer Compact (NETC) Working Group. The Working Group includes administrators, faculty, and graduate students from nursing programs at Massachusetts community colleges, state universities, and UMass and from nursing programs at private higher education institutions, as well as DHE staff. The group met numerous times in-person and via conference calls between October of 2012 through May of 2013, producing nine revised drafts of the proposed Nursing Education Transfer Compact. The team continues to meet to address campus feedback and implementation. In late November 2013 its draft recommendations and the draft NETC were circulated to community college and state university presidents and to UMass President Robert Caret to obtain commentary and feedback.

The goals of the Nursing Education Transfer Compact are to:

- Create a seamless, cost effective, timely, and transparent pathway from the community college AD/N to the BS/N degree at a state university or the University of Massachusetts;
- Make the process of transferring credits from the Associate Degree in Nursing to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing transparent for students and administrators.
- Reduce the overall time for transfer students to complete the BS/N;
- Eliminate any unnecessary duplication of coursework, thereby reducing costs for students; and
- Clarify curriculum pathways among the community colleges and state universities and UMass to simplify the selection of courses and eliminate the need for inter-campus articulation agreements.

The NETC is modeled on the Early Childhood Education Compact, and incorporates elements of the *MassTransfer* policy.

Key elements of the NETC include:

- Full transfer and applicability of credits, without time restriction* earned in the ADN program, along with transfer of additional credits from the *MassTransfer* Block to meet RN to BS/N degree program requirements;
- Preferential admission to State University and UMass BS/N nursing programs, based on availability, to students with a GPA of 2.75 or higher;

- Satisfaction of general education requirements in a BS/N program at a public 4-year institution for students who earned a prior bachelor's degree in another field.

* Credits earned in a BORN-approved public ADN program will be transferred as a block, without a time restriction except for the 4-year public institution's policy on time limits for specific courses, i.e. sciences.

To be eligible for the NETC, students must have completed an AD/N at a Massachusetts community college, passed the NCLEX-RN exam, and completed the general education requirements of the MassTransfer policy.

The Board of Higher Education received an overview of the draft NETC and Working Group recommendations at their December 10, 2013 meeting. Since that time, these documents have been revised to reflect campus feedback. At its January 28 meeting, the Board is being asked to accept the Working Group recommendations, endorse the Nursing Education Transfer Compact, and call upon the Commissioner and campus presidents to work together in the coming months to engage in campus-level implementation planning, with the expectation that implementation should occur by the Fall of 2014.

This implementation period will provide an extended period of further refinement at the campus level, with the expectation that the final Compact would return the Board of Higher Education to be voted on as a policy during the 2014-15 academic year.



MASSACHUSETTS
Department of
Higher Education

**Nursing Education Transfer Compact
RN-to-BS/N**

January 2014

Working Group Membership

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Nursing Education Transfer Compact

Summary

I. Goal

The Nursing Education Transfer Compact (NETC) proposes to address existing barriers to credit transfer for Registered Nurses seeking to progress from the Associate Degree in Nursing to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BS/N). The goal is to make the process of transferring credits between these program levels transparent for students and program administrators - reducing the overall time for students to complete the BS/N, eliminating any unnecessary duplication of coursework and therefore reducing total costs for students, and clarifying curriculum pathways among the community colleges and state universities and the University of Massachusetts to simplify the selection of courses and eliminate the need for inter-campus articulation agreements.

II. Background Information

Massachusetts, like the nation, is facing a shortage of highly educated Registered Nurses (RN's) to meet the demands of an expanding and aging patient population at a time when many nurses are approaching the age of retirement. Currently, some 45% of practicing RN's hold an associate degree or diploma when the new industry standard is for 80% of RN's to hold a BS/N. To transform the nursing workforce, newly licensed nurses as well as practicing nurses and others are being encouraged to return to the classroom and advance their education. To support this transition, Massachusetts' public higher education system must provide seamless pathways for nurses to simply, quickly and cost effectively attain their BS/N degree (or higher).

The current draft of the NETC was developed by a working group of nurse educators, convened through the Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN) grant awarded jointly to the Department of Higher Education and the Organization of Nurse Leaders, from nursing programs representing Massachusetts Schools of Nursing. The NETC is based on the National League for Nursing (NLN) Outcomes and Competencies, American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing, the Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies[®], and data gathered from a survey of nursing programs throughout the Commonwealth initiated in 2011 by the Nurse of the Future Working Group (NOFWG). The NETC is modeled on the Early Childhood Education Compact and incorporates elements of the MassTransfer general education block.

III. Benefits of the NETC

The NETC provides graduates of Massachusetts community college associate degree nursing programs (ADN) with a seamless, cost effective, timely, and transparent pathway toward completion of RN-to-BS/N programs at Massachusetts State Universities and the University of Massachusetts. The NETC further mitigates the need for separate articulation agreements between public two- and four-year nursing programs.

Without time restriction¹ following graduation, the NETC ensures full transfer and applicability of credits earned through an ADN program along with the transfer of additional credits based on

¹ except for the 4-year public institution's policy on time limits for specific courses, i.e. sciences

the general education/distribution courses from the MassTransfer Block, to address RN-to-BS/N degree program requirements. Further, based upon the applicant's community college cumulative GPA, the NETC will provide preferred admission (based upon the availability of program slots – campuses may maintain wait-lists based upon enrollment demand).

Students seeking to enroll in an ADN program who have earned a previous bachelors degree in another field will be deemed as having met the general education requirements of the BS/N program. Such students must complete the requirements of the ADN program and pass the NCLEX exam prior to applying to a BS/N program at a state university or the University of Massachusetts.

Credits earned at a community college through the ADN program and additional credits to fulfill the general education block requirements of MassTransfer, will transfer, upon admission into the BS/N program at a state university or the University of Massachusetts.

IV. Major Components

1. Credit requirements for completion of a generic baccalaureate degree in nursing are a maximum of 128 credits.
 - A. Credits earned in a BORN-approved public ADN program will be transferred as a block, without a time restriction except for the 4-year public institution's policy on time limits for specific courses, i.e. sciences (maximum of 72 credits as determined by the DHE/BORN).
 - B. Credits earned through a previous bachelor degree in another field will be deemed as having met the general education requirements of the BS/N program.
2. General education/distribution core courses (MassTransfer Block) will be accepted without time restriction to fulfill the general education component of the baccalaureate degree requirements in RN-to-BS/N programs (total of 11 courses/34 credits). These courses/credits may be earned as part of the ADN program requirements or through additional coursework at the community college. They must be completed prior to applying to the 4-year public RN-to-BS/N program.
3. Remaining credits will include upper division nursing courses, related courses, and any electives needed for degree and residency requirements of the public 4-year institution.

Nursing Education Transfer Compact

Agreement for Public 2- and 4-year Institutions of Higher Learning in Massachusetts

BACKGROUND

According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) (2011) legislation recently passed will provide health insurance coverage for 32 million more Americans, creating an increased demand for care provided by nurses and the need for a larger workforce of better prepared nurses to care for patients. As a result of this legislation and the demand for reform of the current health care system, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) partnered with the IOM to create the RWJF Initiative on the Future of Nursing. Massachusetts was awarded a grant from this initiative to advance Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN) and as a result formed committees to address several issues including (a) the role of nurses in the current workforce, (b) attracting and maintaining a better and more diverse nursing workforce and (c) several issues related to the nursing shortage - specifically, the need to recruit and prepare more nurses and to encourage current nurses to pursue lifelong learning and advanced degrees in nursing.

Research supports the need for an increase in the number of baccalaureate-prepared registered nurses, indicating that better educated nurses provide higher quality and safer care for patients and strengthen the profession in general. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) (2012) supports the recommendation from the Future of Nursing report stating “to respond to the demands of an evolving health care system and meet the challenging needs of patients, nurses must achieve higher levels of education”. Currently there are several educational pathways or entry points into nursing. According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Health Professions Licensure website, as of February 2012 there were 75 pre-licensure nursing programs in Massachusetts, one diploma program, 26 practical nursing programs, 21 associate degree programs, 20 baccalaureate programs and seven graduate entry programs. For a multitude of reasons it is important to support entry into nursing at varied economic and educational levels.

According to statistics available on Mass.gov, in 2012 there were 118,330 licensed RN's in the state and according to statistics from the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses (USDHHS- HRSA, 2010, Sept.) the most common route of entry for nursing education continues to be at the Associate Degree (ADN) level. The survey also showed that, 45.4% of nurses surveyed began their nursing education at the ADN level and, of those ADN RNs who then returned to college, took an average of 7.5 years between attainment of their ADN and BS/N degree. Currently, the Massachusetts Action Coalition for the Future of Nursing has set a benchmark of having 66% of the Massachusetts nursing workforce BS/N prepared by 2020 to support the recommendations of the RWJF and the IOM. One solution to increasing the percentage of BS/N educated nurses is to develop an education transfer compact for nursing in Massachusetts. A nursing education transfer compact (NETC) would facilitate seamless education pathways for nurses initially prepared in ADN programs to progress to a BS/N program and it would help to make the transfer process more efficient, decreasing the time necessary to complete the BS/N program and potentially decreasing the cost to the student. The development of this NETC takes into consideration the demands of nursing education in Massachusetts as well as national accreditation requirements, existing transfer policies and requirements and recommendations from the Massachusetts Department of Education and the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing (BORN).

PURPOSE

The NETC will support Massachusetts nursing programs as they strive to achieve the benchmark of 66% BS/N prepared by 2020.

The NETC provides graduates of Massachusetts community college associate degree nursing programs (ADN) with a seamless, cost effective, timely, and transparent pathway toward completion of RN-to-BS/N programs at Massachusetts State Universities and the University of Massachusetts. The NETC further mitigates the need for separate articulation agreements between public two- and four-year nursing programs.

Without time restriction following graduation, the NETC ensures full transfer and applicability of credits earned² through an ADN program along with the transfer of additional credits based on the general education/distribution courses from the MassTransfer Block, to address RN-to-BS/N degree program requirements. Further, based upon the applicant's community college cumulative GPA, the NETC will provide preferred admission (based upon the availability of program slots – campuses may maintain wait-lists based upon enrollment demand), and a tuition discount.

Students seeking to enroll in an ADN program who have earned a previous bachelors degree in another field will be deemed as having met the general education requirements of the BS/N program. Such students must complete the requirements of the ADN program and pass the NCLEX exam prior to applying to a BS/N program at a state university or the University of Massachusetts.

Credits earned at a community college through the ADN program and additional credits to fulfill the general education block requirements of MassTransfer, will transfer, upon admission into the BS/N program at a state university or the University of Massachusetts.

SECTION I. ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE NURSING EDUCATION TRANSFER COMPACT

1. ELIGIBILITY

A student shall be eligible for the benefits provided by the Nursing Education Transfer Compact if he or she has met the following requirements:

- A. The student has completed an Associate Degree in Nursing at a Massachusetts community college with a maximum of 72 credit hours and has passed the NCLEX Registered Nurse licensure examination.
- B. The student has completed the general education requirements, meeting the requirements of the *MassTransfer policy*
<http://www.mass.edu/masstransfer/Advisors/documents/MassTransferImplementationGuidelines.doc>

² Except for the 4-year public institution's policy on time limits for specific courses, i.e. sciences

2. CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

Credit requirements for completion of a generic BS/N degree in nursing are a maximum of 128 credits and are broken down into the following three categories.

- A. **Courses covering nursing education from a Board of Registration in Nursing (BORN)-approved Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) Program. Maximum 72 credits as determined by the DHE.**

72 credits	Nursing Courses and courses required to complete an Associate Degree Nursing Program.
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- B. **General education/distribution/core courses**, earned as part of the ADN program or through additional coursework, from *Mass Transfer* policy (Total of 11 courses/34 credits). These credits would be transferable following completion of the general education courses/credits at a 2-year public community college in Massachusetts, depending on the 4-year public institution’s policy on time limits for specific courses, i.e. sciences.

2 courses/6 credits	English Composition/Writing
3 courses/9 credits	Behavioral and Social Sciences
3 courses/9 credits	Humanities and Fine Arts
2 courses/7 credits	Natural or Physical Science
1 course/3 credits	Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning

- C. **Upper Division Nursing courses, related courses, and electives courses necessary to meet nursing degree requirements, and residency requirement for the institution.** The Nursing knowledge incorporated into the 4-year BS/N programs is based on the competencies outlined in Appendix A.

SECTION II. BENEFITS

In alignment with the statewide *MassTransfer* policy adopted in June 2008, the NETC provides graduates of Massachusetts community college associate degree nursing programs (ADN) with a seamless, cost effective, timely, and transparent pathway toward completion of RN-to-BS/N programs at Massachusetts State Universities and the University of Massachusetts. The NETC further mitigates the need for separate articulation agreements between public two- and four-year nursing programs.

Without time restriction following graduation, the NETC ensures full transfer and applicability of credits earned³ through an ADN program along with the transfer of additional credits based on the general education/distribution courses from the MassTransfer Block, to address RN-to-BS/N degree program requirements. Further, based upon the applicant’s community college cumulative GPA, the NETC will provide preferred admission based upon the availability of program slots – campuses may maintain wait-lists based upon enrollment demand.

³ Except for the 4-year public institution’s policy on time limits for specific courses, i.e. sciences

Students seeking to enroll in an ADN program who have earned a previous bachelors degree in another field will be deemed as having met the general education requirements of the BS/N program. Such students must complete the requirements of the ADN program and pass the NCLEX exam prior to applying to a BS/N program at a state university or the University of Massachusetts.

Credits earned at a community college through the ADN program and additional credits to fulfill the general education block requirements of MassTransfer, will transfer, upon admission into the BS/N program at a state university or the University of Massachusetts.

The minimum GPA for admission to the BS/N program is determined by each public higher education institution. Students who meet the institution's minimum GPA and have a GPA of 2.75 or higher receive the following NETC benefits:

- No admission fee
- No essay
- Preferential admission to the RN/BSN program based on availability

SECTION III. INFORMATION SHARING

In alignment with the *MassTransfer* policy, the Massachusetts public higher education institutions agree to share information about participating students as set forth in this Section, to the extent permissible under appropriate statutes, regulations and institutional policies regarding confidentiality of student records. This exchange of information allows institutions to provide students with the broadest range of academic choices and support services, thereby creating an environment conducive to academic success.

1. To the extent permissible under applicable law, the Massachusetts community colleges, upon request, agree to provide the state universities and the University of Massachusetts campuses with directory information, as defined by the respective community college, such as names, addresses, and majors for participating students enrolled on their campuses.
2. To the extent permissible under applicable law, the state universities and the University of Massachusetts campuses agree to provide non-identifying student information on NETC students such as graduation and retention rates, grade point averages, and academic majors and degree programs upon request from the community colleges. Any release of such information shall not, directly or indirectly, transmit personally identifying information about any student who has not granted permission for participating institutions to share such information.
3. Each state university and University of Massachusetts campus agrees to provide freshman applicants not offered admission with information on the NETC if the applicant is potentially suitable for participation. The state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses will provide the appropriate community college(s) with names and addresses of all such applicants who grant permission for the release of this information.

In order to encourage students who are academically suspended, or who otherwise leave the state university or University of Massachusetts campus while not in good academic standing, to

consider educational opportunities at the community colleges, the state universities and University of Massachusetts campuses agree to undertake reasonable efforts to provide community colleges with the names, addresses and other pertinent academic records of such students who grant permission for the release of this information.

Section IV: IMPLEMENTATION AND OVERSIGHT OF THE NURSE EDUCATION TRANSFER COMPACT

A Nursing Education Transfer Compact Coordinating Committee, convened by the Department of Higher Education, will provide implementation and oversight of the Nursing Education Transfer Compact

The Coordinating Committee will monitor, evaluate and, when necessary, modify the administration of the Nursing Education Transfer Compact. The Nursing Education Transfer Compact Coordinating Committee will work to create a system for evaluating the effectiveness of this Compact, and will assist the campuses with developing courses that meet the NLN/AACN Education's core content knowledge requirements and the MA Board of Registration of Nursing Education professional requirements for licensure.

Section V: FURTHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Notwithstanding any provision of this policy, the Nursing Education Transfer Compact does not:

1. Preclude community colleges or the state universities or University of Massachusetts campuses from entering into similar agreements with other institutions of higher education.
2. Prevent the state universities or University of Massachusetts from admitting community college students through existing admission processes.
3. Limit a state university or University of Massachusetts campus from eliminating a school, department or degree program.
4. Ensure eligibility for federal, state, or institutional financial assistance.
5. Provide any guarantees or representations regarding tuition rates or fees at the community colleges, state universities, or University of Massachusetts.

Appendix A: Nursing Competencies for BS/N programs

Learning Outcomes for a Baccalaureate Program according to AACN Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice (2008):

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing *Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice* defines the concepts, stakeholders and framework for developing a 21st Century baccalaureate nursing curriculum. Among the concepts are patient-centered care, evidence-based practice and cultural sensitivity. In addition, they define the expected outcomes and generalist practice of the baccalaureate prepared nurse.

Essential I: Liberal Education for Baccalaureate Generalist Nursing Practice

- A solid base in liberal education provides a cornerstone for the practice and education of nurses.

Essential II: Basic Organizational & Systems Leadership for Quality Care & Patient Safety

- Knowledge and skills in leadership, quality improvement, and patient safety are necessary to provide high quality health care

Essential III: Scholarship for Evidence Based Practice

- Professional nursing practice is grounded in the translation of current evidence into one's practice.

Essential IV: Information Management and Application of Patient Care Technology

- Knowledge and skills in information management and patient care technology are critical to the delivery of quality care.

Essential V: Healthcare Policy, Finance, and Regulatory Environments

- Healthcare policies, including financial and regulatory, directly and indirectly influence the nature and functioning of the healthcare system and thereby are important considerations in professional nursing practice.

Essential VI: Inter-professional Communication and Collaboration for Improving Patient Health Outcomes

- Communication and collaboration among healthcare professionals are critical to delivering high quality and safe patient care.

Essential VII: Clinical Prevention and Population Health

- Health promotion and disease prevention at the individual and population level are necessary to improve population health and are important components of baccalaureate generalist nursing practice.

Essential VIII: Professionalism and Professional Values

- Professionalism and the inherent values of altruism, autonomy, human dignity, integrity, and social justice are fundamental to the discipline of nursing.

Essential IX: Baccalaureate Generalist Nursing Practice

- The baccalaureate-graduate nurse is prepared to practice with patients, including individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations across the lifespan and across the continuum of healthcare environments. The baccalaureate graduate

understands and respects the variations of care, the increased complexity, and the increased use of healthcare resources inherent in caring for patients.

The complete narrative of ***The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice*** may be retrieved at:

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/BaccEssentials08.pdf>

1. **NLN Outcomes and Competencies for graduates of Practical/Vocational, Diploma, Associate Degree, Baccalaureate, Master's, Practice Doctorate and Research Doctorate Programs in Nursing (2010):**
 - A. Be prepared to promote and enhance *human flourishing* for patients, families, communities and themselves;
 - B. Show sound *nursing judgment*;
 - C. Continually develop their *professional identity*;
 - D. Maintain a *spirit of inquiry* as they move into the world of nursing practice and beyond.

2. **Nurse of the Future Core Competencies (2010)**
 - A. Patient Centered Care
 - B. Professionalism
 - C. Leadership
 - D. Systems-Based Practice
 - E. Informatics and Technology
 - F. Communication
 - G. Teamwork and Collaboration
 - H. Safety
 - I. Quality Improvement
 - J. Evidence Based Practice