



EDITORIAL

International Nursing Accreditation - Curriculum

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The Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) is a programmatic nursing accrediting agency. The ACEN accredits six levels of nursing that include practical, diploma, associate, baccalaureate, master's, and clinical doctorate. The ACEN is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) as well as the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Through the CHEA accreditation, the ACEN accredits nursing programs internationally, including several in the country of Jordan.

The first baccalaureate nursing program in Jordan was accredited with the ACEN in 2017. Currently, there are three baccalaureate nursing programs accredited, two programs in the candidacy process who have hosted initial accreditation visits, and other programs beginning the candidacy process. Currently, all of the ACEN-accredited Jordanian programs are at the baccalaureate level. To date, none of the graduate level programs in Jordan have sought accreditation with the ACEN; the ACEN does have several graduate-level programs in the Middle East that are either accredited with the ACEN or in Candidacy.

Accreditation is a peer-reviewed, self-regulatory process by which non-governmental associations recognize education institutions or programs that have been found to meet or exceed standards and criteria for education quality. The ACEN has identified five Standards which include Administrative Capacity and Resources, Faculty, Students, Curriculum, and Outcomes.

I wanted to take a moment to specifically address Standard 4 Curriculum. The curriculum for a nursing program is the core component that determines a

program's quality. A nursing curriculum should be based upon end-of-program student learning outcomes which correlate to entry-level role responsibilities of a nurse prepared at the level of the program (e.g., baccalaureate, master's). The primary responsibility of nurse educators is to prepare students to be effective, safe entry-level nurses at that level when they graduate.

In order for a nursing program to effectively prepare its graduates, the nursing faculty must review and revise the curriculum on a regular ongoing basis. Healthcare is every changing and the recent pandemic is a prime example of this. Nurse educators must ensure that the nursing curriculum is kept current to meet the needs of the healthcare system in a country or even globally.

The ACEN requires that its accredited programs, or programs desiring to pursue ACEN accreditation, review the currency and make changes as the healthcare needs change. Faculty should have knowledge of the current nursing needs as well healthcare challenges, and then modify the curriculum to address them. New graduates must be prepared for the workforce that they are entering so that they can be safe practitioners. This will also ultimately assist in retaining nurses in the profession which has significant shortages globally.

In addition to having a current curriculum, the faculty should also ensure that the curriculum is developed around the end-of-program student learning outcomes and builds the students' knowledge throughout the program of study. The course objectives/outcomes should be related to the end-of-program student learning outcomes and teaching/instructional strategies as well as learning activities should then be focused on assisting the

student to meet those course objectives/outcomes and ultimately the end-of-program student learning outcomes. The faculty should also ensure that the evaluation methods used to assess a student as they progress through a nursing curriculum are based on the course outcomes/objectives. Finally, the faculty should verify prior to graduation that students have successfully attained the identified end-of-program student learning outcomes.

It has been my privilege to work with the nursing programs in Jordan since 2015 with pursuing accreditation with the ACEN. Jordanian nursing programs, like most programs seeking initial accreditation, need to develop their assessment process related to the end-of-program student learning outcomes. Programs not only in Jordan but in other countries, including the United States, then have to ensure that the evaluation methods selected clearly reflect the end-of-program student learning outcomes and its imbedded concepts/competencies. Ongoing systematic evaluation is critical and provides the faculty data to use in the program

decision-making. During the time that I have worked with the Jordanian programs, the Jordanian Nursing Council has developed and implemented the licensure examination in the country. This examination also provides programs with data regarding how well the curriculum is preparing their graduates for the examination.

If faculty do not maintain and ensure the curriculum's currency, then graduates will not be prepared for the workforce or the licensure examination which is required in many countries. The nursing profession has a shortage of nurses. Nurse educators must do everything that they can do to ensure that nurses for today and moving into the future are prepared for the role and profession that they are entering. The ACEN is committed to ensuring that its accredited programs are maintaining quality nursing educational processes. The future of the nursing profession is based upon decisions that nursing programs make today. All nursing programs should ensure that maintaining the currency of its curriculum is a priority.