Nursing Framework and Program Outcomes

The program's conceptual framework is based on the National League for Nursing (NLN) Educational Competencies Model and the components within it. The model consists of the following components (National League for Nursing, 2010):

1. Core Values: Seven core values, implicit in nursing's historic paradigm, are foundational for all nursing practice. These values are caring, diversity, ethics, excellence, holism, integrity, and patient-centeredness. They are shown at the root of the model, to indicate that each type of nursing program and each type of competency must be grounded in these fundamental values. (p. 8)

2. Integrating Concepts: Emerging from the seven core values are six integrating concepts, context and environment; knowledge and science; personal and professional development; quality and safety; relationship-centered care; and teamwork. These concepts are shown as bands around the program types, illustrating their progressive and multidimensional development in students during their learning experiences. The critical feature of the bands is an enveloping feedback mechanism that acknowledges the ongoing advancement of nursing education, as new graduates return new learning, gleaned from multiple sources, to nursing practice through nursing education. In this way, nursing practice and nursing education remain perpetually relevant and accountable to the public and all those in need of nursing. (p. 8)

3. Program Student Learner Outcomes: The goals of nursing education for each type of nursing program can be summarized in four broad program outcomes. Nurses must use their skills and knowledge to enhance human flourishing for their patients, their communities, and themselves. They should show sound nursing judgment, and should continually develop their professional identity. Finally, nurses must approach all issues and problems in a spirit of inquiry. All essential program-specific core nursing practice competencies and course outcomes are assumed within these four general aims. (p. 9)

The ultimate goal of this nursing program is to graduate mature, expert learners who can

1. Human Flourishing: Advocate for patients and families in ways that promote their self-determination, integrity, and ongoing growth as human beings.
2. Nursing Judgment: Make judgments in practice, substantiated with evidence, that integrate nursing science in the provision of safe, quality care and promote the health of patients within a family and community context.
3. Professional Identity: Implement one’s role as a nurse in ways that reflect integrity, responsibility, ethical practices, and an evolving identity as a nurse committed to
evidence-based practice, caring, advocacy, and safe, quality care for diverse patients within a family and community context.

4. Spirit of Inquiry: Examine the evidence that underlies clinical nursing practice to challenge the status quo, question underlying assumptions, and offer new insights to improve the quality of care for patients, families, and communities.

For clarity the RCCADNP has added the following Student Learning Outcomes:

5. Safe Care: Provide care that is safe, culturally and developmentally appropriate, centered on building and sustaining positive, healthful relationships with individuals and families.

6. Scope of Practice: Practice within the legal and ethical scope of professional nurse, guided by accepted standards of practice NLN, 2010.

The program has condensed the 19 concepts listed above (core values, integrating concepts, and program outcomes into behaviors sets which for ease of use can be traced across the curriculum in course organization, content, and evaluation strategies. They are as follows:

1. **Student Learning Outcome**: Safe care that is culturally and developmentally appropriate centered on building and sustaining positive, healthful, relationships with families and individuals.
   - Integrating Concept: Quality and Safety
   - Core value: Integrity

2. **Student Learning Outcome**: Practicing within the legal, ethical and professional scope of the practical nurse
   - Integrating Concept: Teamwork
3. Student Learning Outcome: Fostering human flourishing in their clients, team members and themselves
   Integrating Concept: Relationships Centered Care
   Core Value: Caring
   Core Value: Patient Centeredness

4. Student Learning Outcome: Showing increasing ability to make clinical nursing judgments
   Integrating Concept: Context and Environment
   Core Value: Diversity
   Core Value: Holism

5. Student Learning Outcome: Developing a professional identity as a practical nurse
   Integrating Concept: Personal and Professional Development
   Core values: Ethics

6. Student Learning Outcome: Developing and fostering a spirit of inquiry
   Integrating Concept: Knowledge and science
   Core Value: Excellence
### Glossary
(NLN, 2010 taken from Appendix D p.65-69)

Caring means "promoting health, healing, and hope in response to the human condition."

"A culture of caring, as a fundamental part of the nursing profession, characterizes our concern and consideration for the whole person, our commitment to the common good, and our outreach to those who are vulnerable. All organizational activities are managed in a participative and person-centered way, demonstrating an ability to understand the needs of others and a commitment to act always in the best interests of all stakeholders” (NLN, 2007).

**Context and Environment**, in relation to organizations, refer to the conditions or social system within which the organization’s members act to achieve specific goals. Context and environment are a product of the organization’s human resources, and also the policies, procedures, rewards, leadership, supervision, and other attributes that influence interpersonal interactions. In health care, context and environment encompass organizational structure, leadership styles, patient characteristics, safety climate, ethical climate, teamwork, continuous quality improvement, and effectiveness.

**Core Competencies** are the discrete and measurable skills, essential for the practice of nursing, that are developed by faculty in schools of nursing to meet established program outcomes. These competencies increase in complexity both in content and practice during the program of study. The core competencies are applicable in varying degrees across all didactic and clinical courses and within all programs of study, role performance, and practice settings. They structure and clarify course expectations, content, and strategies, and guide the development of course outcomes. They are the foundation for clinical performance examinations and the validation of practice competence essential for patient safety and quality care.

**Course Outcomes** are expected culmination of all learning experiences for a particular course within the nursing program, including the mastery of essential core competencies relevant to that course. Courses should be designed to promote synergy and consistency across the curriculum and lead to the attainment of program outcomes.

**Diversity** means recognizing differences among “persons, ideas, values and ethnicities,” while affirming the uniqueness of each.

“A culture of diversity embraces acceptance and respect. We understand that each individual is unique and recognize individual differences, which can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. A culture of diversity is about understanding
ourselves and each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the richness of each individual. While diversity can be about individual differences, it also encompasses institutional and systemwide behavior patterns” (NLN, 2007).

**Excellence means** “creating and implementing transformative strategies with daring ingenuity.”

“A culture of excellence reflects a commitment to continuous growth, improvement, and understanding. It is a culture where transformation is embraced, and the status quo and mediocrity are not tolerated” (NLN, 2007).

**Ethics** involves reflective consideration of personal, societal, and professional values, principles and codes that shape nursing practice. Ethical decision making requires applying an inclusive, holistic, systematic process for identifying and synthesizing moral issues in health care and nursing practice, and for acting as moral agents in caring for patients, families, communities, societies, populations, and organizations. Ethics in nursing integrates knowledge with human caring and compassion, while respecting the dignity, self-determination, and worth of all persons.

**Holism** is the culture of human caring in nursing and health care that affirms the human person as the synergy of unique and complex attributes, values, and behaviors, influenced by that individual's environment, social norms, cultural values, physical characteristics, experiences, religious beliefs and practices, and moral and ethical constructs within the context of a wellness-illness continuum.

**Human Flourishing** can be loosely expressed as an effort to achieve self-actualization and fulfillment within the context of a larger community of individuals, each with the right to pursue his or her own such efforts. The process of achieving human flourishing is a lifelong existential journey of hope, regret, loss, illness, suffering, and achievement. Human flourishing encompasses the uniqueness, dignity, diversity, freedom, happiness, and holistic well-being of the individual within the larger family, community, and population. The nurse helps the individual in efforts to reclaim or develop new pathways toward human flourishing.

**Integrity** means "respecting the dignity and moral wholeness of every person without conditions or limitation."

"A culture of integrity is evident when organizational principles of open communication, ethical decision making, and humility are encouraged, expected, and demonstrated consistently. Not only is doing the right thing simply how we do business, but our actions reveal our commitment to truth telling and to how we always were ourselves from the perspective of others in a larger community" (NLN, 2007).
**Knowledge and Science** refer to the foundations that serve as a basis for nursing practice, which, in turn, deepen, extend, and help generate new knowledge and new theories that continue to build the science and further the practice. Those foundations include (a) understanding and integrating knowledge from a variety of disciplines outside nursing that provide insight into the physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and cultural functioning of human beings; (b) understanding and integrating knowledge from nursing science to design and implement plans of patient-centered care for individuals, families, and communities; (c) understanding how knowledge and science develop; (d) understanding how all members of a discipline have responsibility for contributing to the development of that disciplines' evolving science; and (e) understanding the nature of evidence-based practice.

**Nursing Judgment** encompasses three processes; namely, critical thinking, clinical judgment, and integration of best evidence into practice. Nurses must employ these processes as they make decisions about clinical care, the development and application of research and the broader dissemination of insights and research findings to the community, and management and resource allocation.

*Critical thinking* means identifying, evaluating, and using evidence to guide decision making by means of logic and reasoning. Clinical judgment refers to a process of observing, interpreting, responding, and reflecting situated within and emerging from the nurse's knowledge and perspective (Tanner, 2006). Integration of best evidence ensures that clinical decisions are informed to the extent possible by current research (Craig & Smith, 2007).

**Patient-Centeredness** is an orientation to care that incorporates and reflects the uniqueness of an individual patient’s background, personal preferences, culture, values, traditions, and family. A patient centered approach supports optimal health outcomes by involving patients and those close to them in decisions about their clinical care. Patient centeredness supports the respectful, efficient, safe, and well coordinated transition of the patient through all levels of care.

**Personal and Professional Development** is a lifelong process of learning, refining, and integrating values and behaviors that (a) are consistent with the profession’s history, goals, and codes of ethics; (b) serve to distinguish the practice of nurses from that of other health care providers; and (c) give nurses the courage needed to continually improve the care of patients, families, and communities and to ensure the profession’s ongoing viability.

**Professional Identity** involves the internalization of core values and perspectives recognized as integral to the art and science of nursing. These core values become self-evident as the nurse learns, gains experience, and grows in the profession. The nurse embraces these fundamental values in every aspect of practice while working to improve patient outcomes and promote the
ideals of the nursing profession. Professional identity is evident in the lived experience of the nurse, in his or her ways of “being”, “knowing,” and “doing.”

**Program Outcomes** are the expected culmination of all learning experiences occurring during the program, including the mastery of essential core nursing practice competencies, built upon the seven core values and six integrating concepts.

**Quality and Safety** is the degree to which health care services 1) are provided in a way consistent with current professional knowledge; 2) minimize the risk of harm to individuals, populations and providers; 3) increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes; and 4) are operationalized from an individual, unit, and systems perspective.

**Relationship Centered Care** positions (a) caring; (b) therapeutic relationships with patients, families, and communities; and (c) professional relationships with members of the health care team as the core of nursing practice. It integrates and reflects respect for the dignity and uniqueness of others, valuing diversity, integrity, humility, mutual trust, self-determination, empathy, civility, the capacity for grace, and empowerment.

**Spirit of Inquiry** is a persistent sense of curiosity that informs both learning and practice. A nurse infused by a spirit of inquiry will raise questions, challenge traditional and existing practices, and seek creative approaches to problems. The spirit of inquiry suggests, to some degree, a childlike sense of wonder. A spirit of inquiry in nursing engenders innovative thinking and extends possibilities for discovering novel solutions in ambiguous, uncertain, and unpredictable situations.

**Teamwork** means to function effectively within nursing and interprofessional teams, fostering open communication, mutual respect, and shared decision making to achieve quality patient care.
References


