



## USE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINATIONS IN NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

POSITION STATEMENT  
for RN and LPN Practice

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*A Position Statement does not carry the force and effect of law and rules but is adopted by the Board as a means of providing direction to licensees who seek to engage in safe nursing practice. Board Position Statements address issues of concern to the Board relevant to protection of the public and are reviewed regularly for relevance and accuracy to current practice, the Nursing Practice Act, and Board Administrative Code Rules.*

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**Issue:** The NCBON does not permit the use of any academic external standardized examinations as a determinant or “gatekeeper” for student course progression nor for program completion or graduation from a nursing education program.

External standardized examinations are defined as commercially available standardized predictive tests that provide individual student scores that are linked to a probability of passing the NCLEX examination.

External standardized examinations are primarily intended for remediation purposes. Although external standardized examinations can be used to assist students in the development of skills by identifying areas of knowledge deficits, assessing student critical thinking skills, and predicting individual student potential for academic success through testing, the primary purpose is for remediation. Research has shown that while predictive tests often work well in identifying high-performing students who are likely to pass the NCELX examination, they are much less precise in identifying the likelihood of failure.

Nursing education programs may include performance on an external exam as part of a final course grade; but it may count no more than 10% of the grade and the assignment of points must be on a numerical scale based on performance on the examination. The external standardized examination score may never be used as a “pass/fail” for meeting or failing to meet a specific predetermined criterion.

**References:**

21 NCAC 36.0321(p)

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