



NCLEX-RN 2015 Saskatchewan graduates' results from the exam's first year

March 31, 2016



Contents

Introduction	1
Background on the NCLEX-RN	2
Saskatchewan results	3
Exam duration statistics	4
Exam Test Plan performance	7

Introduction

This summary provides an overview on the history of the NCLEX-RN exam in Canada and the 2015 results for Saskatchewan graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN exam in 2015.

The NCLEX-RN, introduced last year, uses a different approach to exam writing that is new to most Saskatchewan graduates.

Of the 549 Saskatchewan graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN during 2015, 79.4% ultimately were successful in passing the exam. As writers gain confidence and become familiar with the exam's new format, the SRNA expects to see more writers passing on their first attempt. Of those who had not yet been successful by the end of the year, many were planning to write the exam again in 2016.

The role of the regulator is to protect the public by ensuring applicants are ready to become licensed and practise safely. One aspect of this process is the requirement for applicants to successfully pass the entry to practice exam. As the regulator, the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association (SRNA) is accountable for selecting and overseeing the delivery of the exam for those graduates seeking licensure in the province. We are confident that the NCLEX-RN is a fair and reliable tool for assessing Saskatchewan nursing graduate skills.

The SRNA has strong nursing education programs in Saskatchewan and we continue to collaborate with nursing faculty as they support and provide resources to help students understand and succeed in writing the exam.

Carolyn Hoffman, RN, Executive Director
Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association

March 31, 2016

Background on the NCLEX-RN

On January 1, 2015, the Canadian Council of Nurse Regulators (CCRNR), including the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association (SRNA) implemented the national licensure exam, the NCLEX-RN. Development of this exam occurred over a three-year period. The NCLEX is administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) and is delivered by computer based testing provider Pearson VUE.

This report provides statistics on the performance of graduates of Saskatchewan nursing educational programs who wrote the NCLEX-RN in 2015 as a part of their registration/licensure application process with a provincial or territorial nurse regulator in Canada. The report includes only attempts made on the NCLEX-RN. Any attempts at the nursing regulator's exam in years prior to 2015 are not included here.

The "ultimate" pass rate displayed in this report measures the number/percentage of graduates who wrote the exam during 2015 and had passed it by their latest attempt in 2015. It indicates how many people passed the NCLEX-RN during 2015 after one or more attempts, and are therefore available to the health care workforce (pending completion of all other registration/licensure requirements). See "How the 2015 'ultimate' pass rate is calculated" in the report titled *NCLEX-RN 2015: Canadian Results* for more information on pass rates and how they are determined.

The ultimate pass rate does not take into consideration how often a writer had to attempt the exam before passing or if they have attempts remaining on the exam. Only graduates from a Canadian RN education program who have applied for licensure in Canada are included in the calculation of this rate.

The ultimate pass rate is helpful when looking at health human resource planning. It indicates how many Canadian graduates who wrote the exam in a given year will be available to work in Canada once they receive their licenses/registration with the licensing body.

Saskatchewan results

The 549 Saskatchewan graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN in 2015 represented 6.1% of graduates nationally. Of this total, 79.4% succeeded at passing the exam by the end of 2015.

Table 1. NCLEX-RN “ultimate” pass rate of Saskatchewan graduates

	Passed	Failed	Total Writers	“ULTIMATE” PASS RATE
<i>Total number of graduates taking the NCLEX exam in 2015 & Ultimate Pass Rate</i>	436	113*	549	79.4%

Table 2. NCLEX-RN number of attempts taken by Saskatchewan graduates in 2015

	Passed	Failed	Total Writers	PASS RATE ON THIS ATTEMPT
<i>First attempt</i>	332	217	549	60.5%
<i>Second attempt</i>	102	66	168	60.7%
<i>Third attempt</i>	2	3	5	40.0%

1st attempt: Of the 549 Saskatchewan graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN in 2015, 332 (60.5%) passed the exam on their first attempt and 217 were unsuccessful.

2nd attempt: Of those 217 who were unsuccessful on their first attempt, 168 attempted the exam for the second time, with 102 (60.7%) passing.

3rd attempt: Of the 66 graduates who did not pass on their second attempt, 5 attempted the exam for the third time, with 2 (40%) succeeding, and the remaining 3 (60%) failing.

Ultimate Result: of the 549 Saskatchewan graduates who wrote NCLEX-RN in 2015, 79.4% passed the exam by the end of 2015.

* Some of the Saskatchewan graduates have yet to re-write the NCLEX-RN.

Exam duration statistics

Writers of the NCLEX-RN exam answer a minimum of 75 questions and a maximum of 265 questions. For most writers, the computer program will stop asking questions once the program has calculated with 95% certainty that the writer is clearly above or below the passing standard (see “The format of the NCLEX-RN” section in the report titled *NCLEX-RN 2015: Canadian Results* for more information).

With computer-adaptive tests (CATs), the number of questions an exam writer answers shows how quickly the writer demonstrates whether they meet the required level of competence (the passing standard).

On average, successful graduates were able to demonstrate their competence quickly, within 2 hours and 18 minutes (see Table 3.a.). The average number of questions taken by Saskatchewan graduates who were successful on their first exam attempt was 128 which is closer to the minimum number of questions a writer could receive (75) than it is to the maximum number (265).

In 2015, almost half (or 40.4%) of writers who were successful on their first attempt answered the minimum number of questions (75 questions). This means they were able to demonstrate their required level of competence with just the minimum required number of questions. Almost a third (30.9%) of those graduates, who were not successful on their first attempt, needed only a minimum number of questions to demonstrate that they did not meet the required level of competence on the exam.

The proportion answering the maximum number of questions reflects how many of the writers were close to the passing standard at the end of their exam. Only 17.2% of the 332 Saskatchewan graduates, who passed on their first attempt, did so only by a small margin, since they had to answer the maximum number of questions in order to demonstrate their competency.

Of the 217 Saskatchewan graduates who were not successful on their first attempt, 28.6% answered the maximum number of questions — in other words, almost a third of those who failed were close to meeting the passing standard by the end of the test.

Table 3.a. Exam Duration Statistics: first NCLEX-RN attempt in 2015

	BY WRITERS WHO PASSED	BY WRITERS WHO FAILED	BY ALL WRITERS
<i>First attempt</i>			
Average number of questions answered ...	128	159	140
% of writers answering minimum number of questions ...	40.4%	30.9%	36.6%
% of writers answering maximum number of questions ...	17.2%	28.6%	21.7%
Average exam duration	2h18 min	2h47min	2h29min
TOTAL NUMBER OF GRADUATES TAKING FIRST ATTEMPT (FOR REFERENCE)	332	217	549
<i>Number of questions: minimum of 75 and maximum of 265</i>			
<i>Maximum test time: 6 hours</i>			

With the second attempt, 168 graduates answered more questions on average (148 questions vs. 140 questions as per Table 3.b.) and took longer time to write the exam (average of 3 hours compared to 2.5 taken on the first attempt).

Of the 102 graduates who were successful on their second attempt, 32.4% answered the minimum number of questions, which is a decrease compared to the first-attempt's 40.4% rate. There was also an increased rate of answering the maximum number of questions for successful graduates. This means that a higher proportion of successful graduates passed by just a small margin, and a smaller proportion demonstrated their required level of competence with the minimum required number of questions on their second attempt.

Of the 66 graduates who were not successful, a smaller proportion failed after taking the minimum number of questions. This means that on their second attempt, graduates answered more questions to demonstrate their candidate ability.

Table 3.b. Exam Duration Statistics: second NCLEX-RN attempt in 2015

	BY WRITERS WHO PASSED	BY WRITERS WHO FAILED	BY ALL WRITERS
<i>Second attempt</i>			
Average number of questions answered	150	147	148
% of writers answering minimum number of questions	32.4%	28.8%	31.0%
% of writers answering maximum number of questions	26.5%	18.2%	23.2%
Average exam duration	2h58min	2h53min	2h56min
TOTAL NUMBER OF GRADUATES TAKING SECOND ATTEMPT (FOR REFERENCE)	102	66	168
<i>Number of questions: minimum of 75 and maximum of 265</i>			
<i>Maximum test time: 6 hours</i>			

With the third attempt, 5 graduates, on average, answered even more questions (194 vs. 148 as per Table 3.c.) but took only ten minutes more compared to second attempt writers.

Of the 2 graduates who were successful on their third attempt, none answered the minimum number of questions. The 2 graduates passed by a small margin, answering the maximum number of questions.

Of the 3 graduates who were not successful, none answered the minimum number of questions, and 1 graduate (33.3%) answered the maximum number of questions, being close to the passing standard.

Table 3.c. Exam Duration Statistics: third NCLEX-RN attempt in 2015

<i>Third attempt</i>	BY WRITERS WHO PASSED	BY WRITERS WHO FAILED	BY ALL WRITERS
Average number of questions answered	265	147	194
% of writers answering minimum number of questions			
% of writers answering maximum number of questions	100%	33.3%	60.0%
Average exam duration	5h4 min	1h46 min	3h5 min
<i>TOTAL NUMBER OF GRADUATES TAKING THIRD ATTEMPT (FOR REFERENCE)</i>	2	3	5
<i>Number of questions: minimum of 75 and maximum of 265</i>			
<i>Maximum test time: 6 hours</i>			

Exam Test Plan performance

Each writer of the NCLEX-RN must answer questions across four* major categories of question topics, all of which are based on client needs. The content for these question topics is referred to as the test plan (for more information, see “Topics covered on the exam” in the report *NCLEX-RN 2015: Canadian Results*).

*Four Major Categories

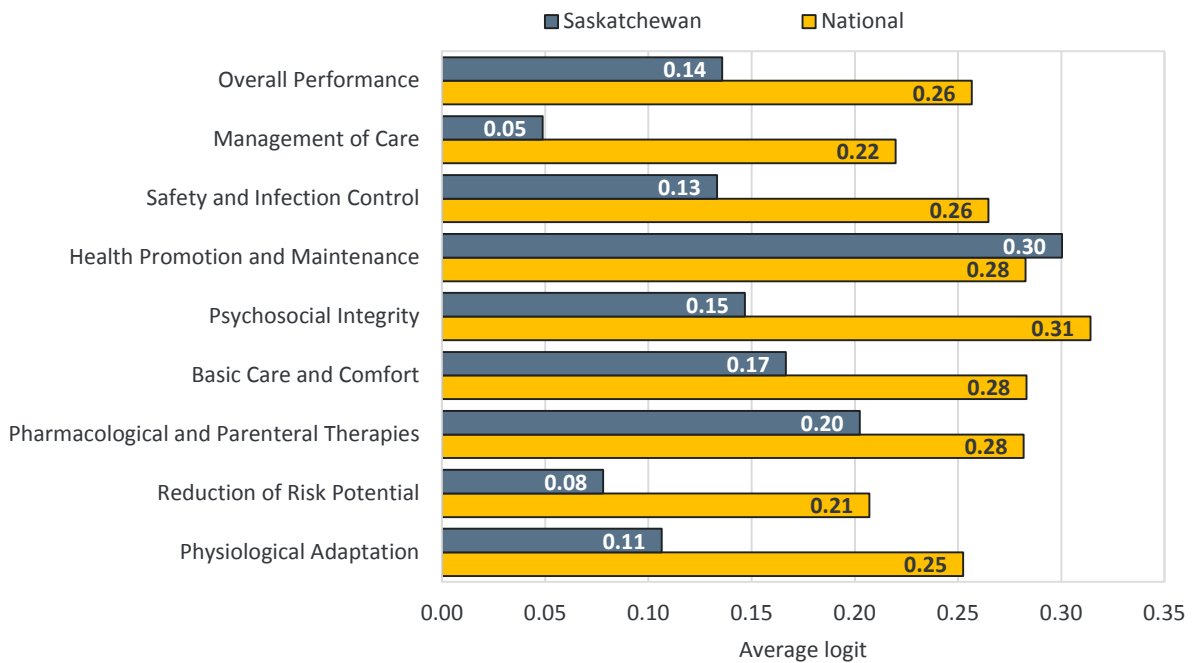
1. Safe and Effective Care Environment
2. Health Promotion and Environment
3. Psychosocial Integrity
4. Physiological Integrity

To pass the NCLEX-RN, the exam writer must perform above the passing standard, which is set at 0.00 logits (for more information, see “Passing Standard” and “What is a logit?” in the report *NCLEX-RN 2015: Canadian Results*).

The longer the bar, the better the performance. The average performance of Saskatchewan graduates can be compared against the passing standard itself and each test plan category.

Figure 1 shows how well an average Saskatchewan graduate taking the NCLEX-RN examination for the first time in 2015 performed overall and on each Test Plan category.

Figure 1. Average Test Plan performance of Saskatchewan graduates on their first NCLEX-RN attempt in 2015 compared to average national performance in 2015



Passing Standard: 0.00 logit

In 2015, Saskatchewan graduates, on average, were 0.14 logits above the passing standard on their overall test plan performance. They were also 0.12 logits below the national average, which was at 0.26 logits in 2015.

Compared to the national average and the passing standard, Saskatchewan-educated graduates were doing best at the *Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies* and the *Health Promotion and Maintenance* test plan categories.

Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies tests the competency of nursing care that provides care related to the administration of medications and parenteral therapies.

Health Promotion and Maintenance tests the competency of nursing care of the client that incorporates the knowledge of expected growth and development principles, prevention and/or early detection of health problems, and strategies to achieve optimal health.

The lowest average logit of 0.05 was with *Management of Care* test plan category, which was 0.17 logits lower than the average national performance on this category.

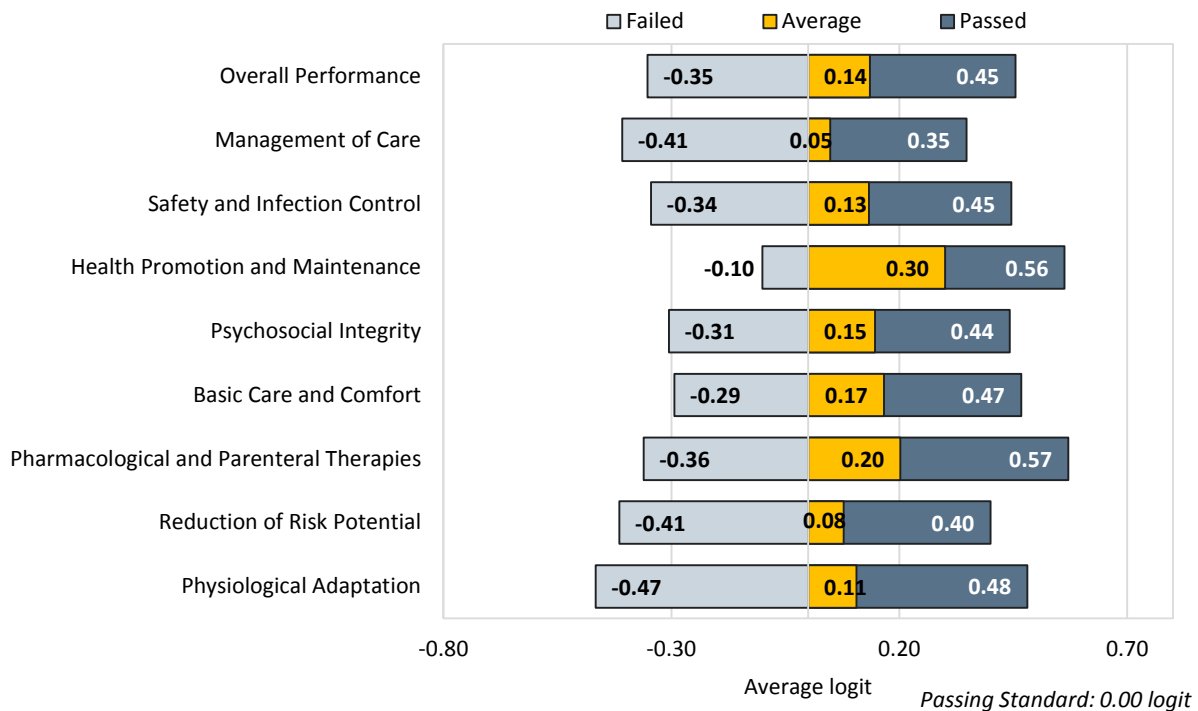
Management of Care tests the competency of providing and directing nursing care that enhances the care delivery setting to protect clients and health care personnel.

For more information on each test plan category, see “Topics covered on the exam” in the report *NCLEX-RN 2015: Canadian Results*.

Figure 2 presents the same information as in Figure 1, but the average performance of graduates is broken down by the exam result: average performance of those graduates who passed the exam, who failed the exam, and overall writers (for reference).

The further the bar in the graph is away to the right from the passing standard of 0.00 logits, the better the average performance is. For those writers who were not successful, the further the bar is away from the passing standard to the left, the worse the average performance is.

Figure 2. Average test plan performance of Saskatchewan graduates on their first NCLEX-RN attempt in 2015 (presented separately for those who passed and failed).



There is a positive skew in one test plan category: *Health Promotion and Maintenance*. The positive skew (where data tends to cluster on the right side) represents a high average passing performance, and in particular, higher performance for those who fail (e.g., -0.10 logit is closer to a passing standard of 0.00 logit, than for example, -0.47). Both passed and failed first-attempt writers, on average, were performing well on this test plan category.

The lowest-performing category for those who failed on their first attempt was *Physiological Adaptation* (-0.47 logits below the passing standard). However, for those who were successful on their first write, this category was the third-best performing (0.48 logits above the passing standard).

2015 Performance of SK Graduates

1ST ATTEMPT				2ND ATTEMPT				3RD ATTEMPT				ULTIMATE PASS RATE			
Fail	Pass	Total	Pass Rate	Fail	Pass	Total	Pass Rate	Fail	Pass	Total	Pass Rate	Fail	Pass	Total	Pass Rate
217	332	549	60.5%	66	102	168	60.7%	3	2	5	40.0%	113	436	549	79.4%

Overall, the 549 Saskatchewan graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN in 2015 represented 6.1% of graduates nationally. The ultimate pass rate for Saskatchewan graduates for 2015 is 79.4% and the national average is 84.1%. The SRNA will continue to collaborate with our nursing education programs as they develop tools and resources to help students prepare for the exam. We remain confident that the NCLEX-RN examination is a fair and reliable tool for assessing Canadian graduates' competence at the beginning of their career.