



Registered Nurses
Professional Development Centre

LEARNER HANDBOOK

Please retain this booklet for reference during your course

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Registration Considerations	5
1.1 Accommodation	5
1.2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).....	5
1.3 Forms: Generic and Preclinical Placement.....	6
1.4 Computer Requirements for Brightspace.....	6
1.5 Textbooks.....	6
2.0 RNPDC Progression Policies and Guidelines	7
2.1 Learner Progression Committee	7
2.2 Academic and Clinical Progression	7
2.3 Academic Code	7
2.4 Professional Code of Conduct	9
2.5 Review Process	10
2.6 Program/Course Extension	10
2.7 Learner Initiated Modification of Study	11
2.8 Non-communication of a Learner	11
2.9 Graduation Requirements.....	11
2.10 Requests for Transcript of Program Records	11
3.0 Program Delivery Information.....	12
3.1 Attendance	12
3.2 Dress Code	12
3.3 Electronic Communication	12
3.4 Cancellation of Scheduled Learning Experiences.....	13
3.5 Proctored Examination.....	13
3.6 APA Format for Assignments	13
3.7 Program Evaluation	13

Disclaimer:

RNPDC programs are designed to prepare health care professionals for real-world health care practice. Program content should never replace specific decisions for individual persons in care, and do not substitute for the shared decisions between any person and his or her health care professional which are unique to each circumstance.

The Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre and the program reviewers have exerted every effort to ensure that the information in programming is consistent with recommendations and practice at the time of publication. However, in view of ongoing research, changes in governmental regulations and the constant flow of information relating to the practice, the reader is urged to check additional practice reference sources.

While every attempt is made to update the learner handbook, any alterations to current policies and procedures will supersede what is in print in this handbook. Learners will be given prior notice of any changes to the policies or information provided in the handbook.

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Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre and Nova Scotia
Department of Health and Wellness

Nova Scotia Health Authority

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General Information

Welcome to Registered Nurses Professional Development Center (RNPDC)

RNPDC was established in April 2003 as the result of a strategic assessment and repositioning of the former Post RN Specialty Education Program unit. RNPDC is provincially funded by the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) and is broadly supported by healthcare professionals in the province. RNPDC is operated by the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) and is housed in the Bethune Building at the VG Site, Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Center in Halifax, NS. Current staffing includes a Director (Masters prepared), 9 Nurse Educators (Masters prepared), 1 Clinical Practice Educator (Masters prepared), 10 Nursing Instructors (Baccalaureate/Diploma prepared), 1 Unit Aid and 4 Administrative Support staff.

RNPDC offers a variety of programs/courses/workshops and services across the continuum of nursing and interprofessional education. RNPDC is committed to developing and maintaining competency in nursing and other health care providers through the delivery of post licensure specialty certification programs, a RN Bridging/Re-Entry program and through continuing professional development courses and workshops.

The Maritime Registered Nursing Assessment Center situated at the Centre provides the opportunity to accurately assess professional knowledge, skills and abilities of nurses educated as Registered Nurses via competence assessments. This service is provided to internationally educated nurses who wish to relocate and work in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI. This service is also available to employers who are interested in sending an employee for a competence assessment.

1.0 Registration Considerations

The following section details some of the considerations that learners may have when they initially register for one of RNPDC's educational programs. Related policies and forms can be found on the RNPDC website and the RNPDC's Learning Management System- Brightspace.

1.1 Accommodation

As per our obligations under human rights legislation, the Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre (RNPDC) affirms our moral duty to make reasonable efforts to provide academic accommodation for learners experiencing a barrier due to a disability. Learners who require academic accommodation for completion of course work make their request upon enrollment into a program to the Learner Progression Committee. To the point of undue hardship, the Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to learners with identified and duly assessed disabilities. Learners seeking accommodation should inform their respective faculty of same upon initial registration in the program/course.

1.2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Clinicians with prior learning/experience in a specialty setting may qualify for a reduction in skills lab time, clinical hours and/or portfolio requirements.

Prior learning is any learning that an individual has acquired through study, work and other life experiences that will result in building knowledge and skills. Evaluating these learning achievements against the program's learning outcomes determines if partial credit can be given for the prior learning. RPL is about recognizing and awarding credit for prior learning related to the credential/program to which the individual is applying.

Prior learning can be assessed by reviewing the learner's portfolio, which may contain descriptions of past experiences/accomplishments and supporting documentation verifying learning already achieved. Prior learning can also be assessed by having a learner complete a challenge mechanism, which may include: demonstration of skills/competencies before faculty, interviews and references/letters of validation from persons familiar with the learner's skills.

For additional information on eligibility criteria and application process please contact program faculty.

1.3 Forms: Generic and Preclinical Placement Requirements

There are a number of Generic and Pre-Clinical Forms that **must be completed** to confirm your seat in the program. These forms with instructions on how to download and complete can be found on the RNPDC page in Brightspace under Resources. Once filled out the forms must be uploaded to your course page in Brightspace. Please see instructions on your course page under Content regarding which forms must be completed for your program and the required submission dates.

These documents must be submitted by the due date set forth by the respective program, failure to do so will render the learner ineligible to participate in any clinical experience.

1.4 Computer Requirements for Brightspace

Brightspace by Desire 2 Learn (D2L) is the online learning environment that is used by the Nova Scotia Health Authority to support RNPDC educational programs. It is a web-based learning environment that can be accessed using a web browser. All learners will be given a username and password upon enrollment. Please record your password and ensure it is kept confidential.

The link below reviews the internet browser and other computer software that learners must have installed on their computers in order to use Brightspace. If you are in doubt about your computer/software, a system check is available within the learning environment. It is expected that you complete the system check at least 48 hours prior to the program start in order to resolve any issues prior to beginning your program.

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm?Highlight=browser

Mac users must use a Windows compatible file format when uploading to Brightspace, e.g., Word or Pdf.

1.5 Textbooks

Please refer to RNPDC website and the specific program/course syllabus for list of recommended and/or required textbooks. It is recommended that learners obtain their required textbooks prior to the program/course start date.

2.0 RNPDC Progression Policies and Guidelines

Related policies can be found on the RNPDC website. All related policies as well any required forms can be found on the RNPDC home page in Brightspace.

2.1 Learner Progression Committee

The Learner Progression Committee makes decisions in relation to assessment or re-assessment of learners' knowledge, skills and performance and adherence to the Academic Code and Professional Code of conduct for all RNPDC programs. These decisions may include remediation, continuation in the program, disqualification and/or recommendations for acceptance into future programs. A learner who disagrees with any decision by the Learner Progression Committee is provided an opportunity to seek review of that decision.

2.2 Academic and Clinical Progression

To attest that a learner has met a program's competencies or course outcomes the learner must meet all of the assessment criteria for knowledge, skills and performance at predetermined assessment points. Each program has multiple assessment points that are communicated to the learner in advance in the syllabus. Failure at an assessment point will result in remediation and reassessment as follows:

- A. Repeat knowledge assessment will be a supplemental exam or assignment. Only one knowledge re-assessment is permitted during the program/course. Please note that failure on a Knowledge exam will result in a review of the concepts covered in the exam but not individual exam questions.
- B. Repeat skill assessment will be a re-assessment of the skill. Only one reassessment per skill is permitted during the program/course.
- C. Repeat performance assessment will be a re-assessment of the competency. Only one reassessment per competency is permitted during the program/course. If the learner requires reassessment on more than 50% of the competencies, they will be ineligible for re-assessment.

The program reserves the right to disqualify a learner for failure to meet the requirements for either academic or clinical progression. The Learner Progression Committee makes this decision based on evidence presented by faculty.

2.3 Academic Code

An academic code describes expectations that promote a high standard of honesty and integrity while participating in an educational program. Learners in a Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre (RNPDC) certification program must have a commitment and obligation to adhere to the RNPDC Academic Code. Learners must be committed to:

- doing their own work
- citing others' ideas and words
- participating in all scheduled learning experiences (i.e., orientation, learning labs, clinical practicum)
- being responsible/accountable for her/his own actions

Adherence to the RNPDC Academic Code is assessed throughout the program and contributes to successful completion of the program. Clear educational expectations are provided so that learners understand what they must accomplish to fulfill program requirements. Violation of the Academic Code results in disciplinary action ranging from a warning to program disqualification.

The following list provides examples of actions that violate the Academic Code. This list is not inclusive and should be used only as a guide. Omission of a misconduct action from this list does not prevent the RNPDC from investigating any alleged incident and carrying out disciplinary actions as required.

- Falsification of data/misrepresentation: Impersonation of another candidate in an exam/assignment; forging an academic record; fabricating data
- Plagiarism: Presenting work done by someone else as if it were one's own; presenting direct quotes or large sections of materials without acknowledging the author and source (i.e.: internet site, journal, textbook). Follow this link for more information on copyright and plagiarism
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Copyright/Plagiarism>
- Misuse of test/assignment materials: Copying from another's work; allowing someone else to do assigned work (i.e.: assignments); submitting work done in part or in whole by someone else; taking or using test materials without faculty permission (e.g. accessing an online exam without the presence of proctor or invigilator)
- Receiving/giving unauthorized assistance: Copying from another learner; making information available to other learners; having unauthorized books, papers, and/or electronic computing, data storage or communication devices during an assessment (examination/assignment, skill testing, clinical performance).
- Theft of materials

Once an alleged academic violation is suspected, the incident is forwarded to the Learner Progression Committee. The case is investigated and the Learner Progression Committee will decide to either dismiss the case or recommend disciplinary action. Disciplinary actions may include:

- A written warning
- Temporary suspension of progression in the program, thus providing time to discuss the incident at the Learner Progression Committee

- A grade of 'Unsatisfactory' or 'Fail' or 'Zero' depending on the assessment point (checklist or exam/assignment)
- A probationary period with the term of probation being determined by the Learner Progression Committee
- Disqualification from the program

2.4 Professional Code of Conduct

The Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre (RNPDC) values and promotes a professional learning environment. RNPDC learners are health professionals whose accountability and responsibility includes adherence to their professional standards and codes of ethics.

While enrolled in a RNPDC certification program, a learner is expected to adhere to a professional code of conduct. This includes adherence to one's own professional standards and all program guidelines when participating in any learning experience in the program. Adherence to the Professional Code of Conduct is assessed throughout the program and contributes to successful completion of the program. Violation of the Professional Code of Conduct results in disciplinary action ranging from a warning to program disqualification.

The following list provides examples of some behaviours demonstrating adherence to the Professional Code of Conduct. This list is not inclusive and should be used only as a guide.

1. Precedence for client welfare over learner educational objectives.
 - The learner's primary responsibility is the welfare of the client
 - The learner consults with faculty, the preceptor, and/or the attending physician regarding client management
2. Maintenance of client privacy and confidentiality during educational experiences.
 - The learner respects the client's privacy and dignity
 - The learner maintains client confidentiality in discussions and assignments
3. Respectful of the contribution of other individuals to one's learning.
 - The learner demonstrates respect when interacting with other learners, faculty, staff, preceptors/peer reviewers and other health care professionals
4. Exhibits effective interpersonal skills in all interactions.
 - The learner demonstrates respectful verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors when interacting with other learners, faculty, staff, preceptors/peer reviewers and other health care providers

Once an alleged violation of the Professional Code of Conduct is suspected, program faculty forwards the incident to the Learner Progression Committee. The case is investigated and the Learner Progression Committee will decide to either dismiss the case or recommend disciplinary action. Disciplinary actions may include:

- A written warning
- Temporary suspension of progression in the program, thus providing time to discuss the incident at the Learner Progression Committee
- A probationary period with the term of probation being determined by the Learner Progression Committee
- Disqualification from the program

2.5 Review Process

Learners who disagree with an assessment or re-assessment decision for knowledge, skill and performance and/or a decision concerning violation of the Academic Code and/or Professional Code of Conduct are provided an opportunity to seek review of that decision. The learner's request for a review must be submitted in writing to the Director of RNPDC within five (5) working days of the receipt of the decision in question and must outline, in writing, the reason for requesting the review and any other submissions that the learner wishes the stage I Review Committee to consider.

2.6 Program/Course Extension

Program extension is typically defined as a delay in the regularly scheduled completion date for a program of study. This extension must be requested by the learner, approved by the program faculty, and supported by the sponsoring employer (if applicable). A Program extension is typically considered 4 to 8 weeks past a programs expected end date. Further extension beyond this date must be presented to Learner Progression

Reasons for a program extension may include:

- Illness/pregnancy of learner (medical documentation may be required)
- Illness or death of family member/significant other
- Job related reasons
- Difficulty balancing program requirements/work life
- Other

A program extension requires an amended timeline that includes a written work plan that has been agreed to by the learner, faculty, and workplace (if sponsored).

2.7 Learner Initiated Modification of Study

Learners in RNPDC educational programs are supported to initiate a modification of study due to individual circumstances related to personal choice, career path, health, family and other life events. The modification could involve withdrawal, transfer between study options, transfer between programs or a program interruption.

Learners who wish to discuss or initiate a modification of study should contact faculty, review the policy and submit the required form.

Learners on parental leave are not covered under Worker's Compensation, therefore cannot participate in face-to-face classes, labs/simulation or clinical. Learners are required to notify faculty of any leave and must take a program interruption for the duration of the leave if required to participate in face-to-face classes, labs/simulation or clinical.

2.8 Non-Communication of a Learner

When Faculty has not received any correspondence from a learner over a reasonable period of time (as determined by program faculty) faculty will make three documented attempts, either verbally and/or in writing, to contact the learner. A learner is defined as non-communicative who has not responded to three consecutive attempts by faculty to communicate with the learner during the program duration. Learners who are non-communicative will be disqualified from the program of study.

2.9 Graduation Requirements

At graduation, learners will receive either a certificate of completion and/or program record when the following requirements have been met:

- Successful completion of the theory, lab, and clinical components of a program/courses. This includes completion and submission of all required documents, such as assignments, skills check-lists, and clinical tools in Brightspace.
- All outstanding RNPDC fees have been paid.
- Submission of Intent to Graduate Form three weeks prior to graduation date in Brightspace.

2.10 Requests for Transcript of Program Records

Learners are provided one copy of the permanent program record (transcript) at no charge on graduation from a RNPDC program. Learners who wish to obtain additional transcripts of their permanent program record, for personal use or to be forwarded to another organization may submit a written request to administrative staff. An administration fee of \$10.00 is required for all subsequent requests.

3.0 Program Delivery Information

Related policies can be found on the RNPDC website. All related policies as well any required forms can be found on the RNPDC home page in Brightspace.

3.1 Attendance

It is the responsibility of the learner to attend all mandatory online or face-to-face orientation, classes and tutorials, learning labs (skills/Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)) and clinical experiences as scheduled. If a class or clinical shift is missed due to an exceptional circumstance (e.g., health or family crisis) the learner must inform faculty/preceptor in advance, and may be required to complete additional assignments or make-up the clinical experience.

3.2 Dress Code

Learners are required to present a professional image at all times. Faculty encourages learners to wear uniforms in lab settings but it is not mandatory. It is a requirement to wear uniforms as per agency policy during clinical.

3.3 Electronic Communication

Learners are not permitted to use wireless electronic communication devices (e.g., smart phones) for personal reasons while providing direct patient care. It is expected that during class/tutorial/learning lab time learners will refrain from using wireless communication devices for personal use and focus on the learning at hand. Learners are to ensure that the confidentiality and privacy of persons in care, patients, families and other health care providers are maintained at all times. No photographs or video recordings are permitted in the clinical setting. If a wireless electronic communication device is used in the clinical setting for access to course or work related resources or tools, learners are responsible to ensure that proper infection prevention and control strategies are implemented.

3.4 Cancellation of Scheduled Learning Experiences

Cancellation of scheduled learning experiences (including labs and clinical) may occur due to a severe inclement weather (e.g. a winter storm). A scheduled learning experience is facilitated by a faculty, instructor, proctor or preceptor; this does not apply to self-directed study. It includes online or face-to-face orientation, examinations, classes and tutorials, Learning labs (skills/OSCE) and clinical experiences. Faculty will notify learners as soon as

the decision to cancel is made, and within a minimum of 2 hours prior to the scheduled start time. How faculty communicates cancellation of scheduled learning experiences will be reviewed in program orientation.

3.5 Proctored Examination

Learners who live more than a one hour drive from an RNPDC exam invigilation site (e.g., Halifax, Sydney, and Moncton) will require a proctor to administer their online exam. The learner is responsible to obtain a proctor. The proctor must have access to a computer that meets Brightspace platform requirements. Many community organizations offer proctoring services, such as libraries, colleges and universities. Please refer to the policy and submit the required form by the deadline date in Brightspace.

3.6 APA Format for Assignments

Some educational programs at RNPDC require APA Style® format when submitting assignments. The link below provides a tutorial designed specifically for those who have no previous experience with basic APA Style®. It shows how to structure and format work, ways to reduce bias in language, how to avoid plagiarism, and how to appropriately cite references using APA Style®.

<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>

3.7 Program Evaluation

In keeping with RNPDC's initiative for continuous quality improvement, on-line program/course evaluations are integrated in course design on Brightspace. We request that you participate in this evaluation process. These Brightspace evaluations are anonymous. Thank you in advance for helping to improve the program. This ongoing evaluation enables faculty to make revisions to the program on a regular basis, thus making the learning experience valuable and enjoyable for you and future program participants. **Evaluation is critical throughout the program.**

Learners are also encouraged to provide informal feedback to faculty during the course of study.