



## Quality Nursing Education National Insights

### Introduction

As the national voice for nursing education, research, and scholarship in Canada, the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) speaks for our [member schools of nursing](#) who offer baccalaureate and/or graduate programs in nursing.

Following a two-year battle with a global pandemic that seriously challenged Canada's already complex health care system, schools of nursing are fighting to sustain high quality of nursing education in the face of threats on multiple fronts.

Through the [Quality Nursing Education National Insights Portal](#), CASN shares insights from our member schools about the challenges and strategies to address them. Centralizing insights and key messages from schools of nursing across Canada offers national support to local initiatives. Users are encouraged to reference what they find helpful and/or download the content in English or French for advocacy purposes in their local context.



### Increased Provincial/Territorial Funding for Seats, Sites, Bridging Programs for Practical Nurses

COVID-19 has been filling hospital beds, the numbers of older adults requiring care are increasing, and experienced nurses are leaving the profession in large numbers. Schools of nursing in all provincial/territorial jurisdictions are responding to government demands to increase the number of students admitted to a program, open new sites, and/or offer additional programs. Schools of nursing, however, are already graduating more registered nurses than ever before. The challenge is inadequate funding for faculty, resources, facilities, and support to be able to effectively prepare a record number of new nurses with the knowledge, skills, and resilience needed in today's workforce. There is an urgent need for investment in high-quality nursing education to support additional seats.

#### More nurse grads than ever before

##### Did you know?

CASN conducts an annual [nursing student and faculty survey](#). The number of new registered nurses (RNs) entering the health care workforce climbed steadily from a low of 4,816 in 2000. In the last six years, schools of nursing have been graduating more than 12,000 RNs annually, a higher number than has ever been the case (CASN, 2021).<sup>3</sup>

Educating more students requires additional qualified faculty, experienced clinical instructors, well-equipped simulation labs, good library resources, and adequate and appropriate clinical placement sites. Nursing faculty have been stretched to the limit, and clinical placement sites, which are essential to nursing education, are over saturated. However, despite increasingly complex health care conditions, applications for admissions to baccalaureate programs of nursing are very high – a testament to the potential tenacity of our future nurses.

#### Invest in quality nursing education

There needs to be an investment in the quality of nursing education – not just in the number of seats. Provinces need to work with schools of nursing to invest more strategically in quality education through funding, resources, and support that will empower schools to fully prepare nursing graduates who are competent, emotionally resilient, and retainable.

**There needs to be an investment in quality nursing education – not just increases in seats to graduate more nurses.**

<sup>3</sup> Reference: CASN Registered Nurses Education in Canada Statistics, 2019–2020.  
<https://www.casn.ca/2021/12/registered-nurses-education-in-canada-statistics-2019-2020/>

## Use of nursing students as unregulated health care workers to relieve nursing shortages

Some provinces are allowing nursing students to serve as unregulated workers in hospitals, either for pay or academic credit, to help alleviate stress on the system.

### Did you know?

While they are valuable members of the health care team who may provide health or other care to clients and patients, an Unregulated Care Provider (“UCP”) is not regulated under the Regulated Health Professions Act (RWBH, 2013).<sup>4</sup>

**Unregulated care providers do not have mandatory education or practice standards.**

UCPs are compensated providers who have no legally defined scope of practice or practice standards and there is no regulatory mechanism to monitor quality of service. The responsibility of determining the appropriateness in each UCP client situation rests with supervising nurses and/or employer.

### UCP programs done right, helps everyone

Nursing students working as UCPs obtain practical hands-on and observational clinical experience in a health care setting, it is paramount, however, that their clinical practical experiences are not limited to the provision of personal care support.

When done wrong, a UCP program experience provides an extra personal care laborer but results in a nursing graduate who is underprepared for the job. When done right, hospitals gain much-needed nursing support, patients gain the care of better prepared nursing students, and the students gain foundational caring skills and a better understanding of the health service environment.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: RWBH Working with Unregulated Care Providers [https://rnao.ca/sites/rnao-ca/files/Working\\_with\\_Unregulated\\_Care\\_Providers.pdf](https://rnao.ca/sites/rnao-ca/files/Working_with_Unregulated_Care_Providers.pdf)

## Conclusion

Maintaining Canada's high quality of nursing education is critical to the health and well-being of Canadians. Nursing is a complex and emotionally demanding profession. It requires an in-depth theoretical and scientific foundation, strong clinical reasoning skills, solid clinical judgement, honed technical skills, compassion, caring, and emotional resilience. Nursing incompetence or nursing error can put patients' lives in jeopardy. Maintaining the high-quality of Canadian health care must remain paramount.

CASN and our member schools of nursing are working tirelessly to maintain high-quality nursing education in Canada, and we look forward to strengthening alliances through communication, cooperation, and collaboration on strategies to resolve the current health human resource issues and rejuvenate the health care workforce.

For more information on this resource and how you can support Canadian schools of nursing, please [contact us](#).