What You Need to Know About the Next Generation NCLEX®

The National Council of the State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) is changing the NCLEX in an effort to assess graduate nurses' clinical judgment. The NCSBN refers to this project as the Next Generation NCLEX.

NCSBN: LEADING THE WAY WITH A MEASURED FOCUS ON EVIDENCE-BASED RESULTS

Worried about this potential change? Don't be. In an interview with ATI, Philip Dickison, PhD, RN, NCSBN Chief Officer of Examinations, said he's heard stories that are incorrect.[2] What is true? We've got the details from Dr. Dickison and NCSBN.

Specifically, NCSBN's team of psychometricians and researchers are following eight evidence-based steps:

1) DEVELOP A CLINICAL JUDGMENT MODEL

NCSBN developed a model of 5 interacting layers that illustrate the complex process of clinical judgment, including the context in which decisions are made.

2) CREATE ITEM PROTOTYPES

Measuring clinical judgment requires more unique item types than simple multiple-response questions with different scoring methodologies, including penalties for answers indicating a lack of clinical judgment.

3) TEST ITEM USABILITY

Students, nurses, and educators have reviewed item prototypes to ensure they represent real-life clinical judgment scenarios.

4) COLLECT ITEM DATA

NCSBN added a "Special Research Section" with new item types for select students to voluntarily answer after completion of the current NCLEX. Their responses don't impact scores but do provide valuable insight on question fidelity.

NEW ITEM TYPES

The Next Generation NCLEX is testing a complex mix of item types that require nursing graduates to demonstrate their clinical judgment skills.

Item types being tested include:

- Extended multiple response
- Extended drag-and-drop
- Cloze (fill-in-the-blank)
- Enhanced hot spot
- Matrix/grid
- Bowtie

5) RESEARCH MEASUREMENT

Psychometricians have received thousands of results from the NCLEX "Special Research Section." Ongoing analysis is determining which item types accurately measure clinical judgment and nursing competence.

6) BUILD TECHNOLOGY

NCSBN is now developing the complex technology needed to support the new item types.

7) PERFORM ALPHA/BETA TESTS

Multiple evaluations will be necessary to assess test questions. NCSBN is scrutinizing every item type for those providing the highest accuracy.

8) LAUNCH NEW NCLEX

An operational phase of testing and building item types will likely take three to four years. The NCLEX will launch in 2023.

What Does Next Generation NCLEX Mean for You and Your Students?

NCSBN's initiative is both exciting and anxiety-inducing. A new NCLEX means better evaluation of each graduate's readiness for the challenges of real-life nursing practice — and more difficult, in-depth questions that put pass rates at risk.

So, what can you do today to prepare for this potential new future? Look for products that help students sharpen clinical judgment and develop this critical skill. ATI offers a variety of tools to support these crucial objectives:
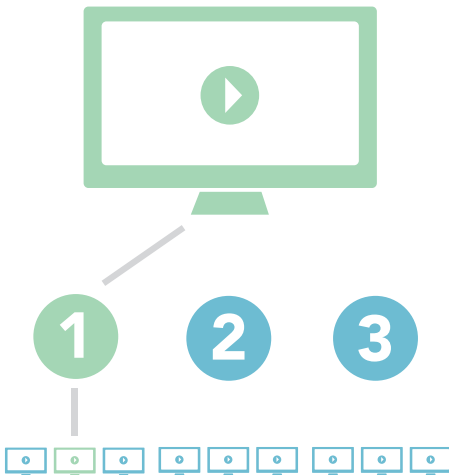
THE NCLEX EXPERIENCE

The new item types likely to appear on The Next Generation NCLEX will be unlike any that nursing students have previously encountered. ATI's NCLEX Experience helps familiarize students with the new types of questions. How? Comprised of several online resources, The NCLEX Experience offers an engaging tutorial and mini quiz. ATI has specifically designed these modules to give students practice with and build their confidence in answering the most-anticipated item types, which ultimately are expected to assess students' clinical judgment skill.

NURSE'S TOUCH, THE COMMUNICATOR 2.0

Developing effective communication skills goes hand-in-hand with developing sound clinical judgment. One research study reported that, "Collaborative dialogue between students, educators, and clinical mentors as role models during nurse-patient interaction is a powerful learning tool in facilitating clinical judgment."[2]

ATI's module to Nurse's Touch, The Communicator 2.0, helps in this regard, supporting students' development of this essential skill through the use of a computer-simulation learning tool. The program allows students to repeatedly interact with virtual humans to build their clinical judgment proficiencies. Educators can encourage real-life skills-building, too, by "flipping the classroom" and discussing the simulations' different response options.

REAL LIFE CLINICAL REASONING SCENARIOS

Nurses who lack clinical reasoning skills make poorer nursing judgments. For example, they have difficulty differentiating between less acute problems and those needing immediate attention. They also often fail to detect impending patient deterioration. ATI's Real Life Clinical Reasoning Scenarios is specifically aimed at addressing these deficiencies.

The product's computer-based simulations develop clinical reasoning, while its live-action videos create "emotional fidelity." A "Rationale Mode" provides immediate feedback after decisions are made, giving students exposure to key clinical situations; allowing them to learn from their errors and the consequences to improve future interactions; and advancing their knowledge. Best of all, students can repeat scenarios until achieving mastery.

To learn more about these products, contact your account representative.

[1] Interview of Philip Dickison, PhD, RN, NCSBN Chief Officer of Examinations, by Sheryl Sommer, PhD, RN, CNE, ATI Nursing Education VIce President, Chief Nursing Officer, on April 23, 2018, at the National Nurse Educator Summit, The Grand America Hotel, Salt Lake City, Utah

[2] Anna C. van Graan, Martha J.S. Williams, Magdalena P. Koen
Professional Nurses' Understanding of Clinical Judgment: A Contextual Inquiry
Health SA Gesondheid, Volume 21, December 2016, PP. 280-293

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