



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING
OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS
NURSING EDUCATION**

MEMORANDUM

To: Nursing Deans and Directors

From: Melissa Temple, PhD, MSN, RN
Director of Nursing Education
Office of Academic and Student Affairs

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Mt

Date: February 9, 2022

Subject: Preceptor degree requirement in response to COVID-19

Note: Amended to extend the preceptor criteria exception to the 2022/2023 Academic Year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and severe nursing shortage in the state of Mississippi

CURRENT STATE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENT

The state specific requirement Standard II Faculty and Staff 2.g. states: “Preceptors (e.g. mentors, guides, coaches) shall be academically/experientially prepared at or beyond the level for which the preceptor service is rendered and shall have a minimum of one year experience.”

PROPOSED EXCEPTION

During the 2022/2023 Academic Year, allow for BSN prelicensure programs to utilize preceptors prepared at or above the level of education of the student **or** prepared at or above the same level of licensure appropriate for the student's learning experience recognizing the preceptor's experience and practice expertise. Preceptors shall have a minimum of one year experience.

RATIONALE

There is a shortage of nurses across the state of Mississippi with the highest vacancy rates being reported by hospitals as bedside nurses. Nurse Administrators overseeing Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs have reported difficulty securing BSN prepared bedside nurses to serve as preceptors. Utilizing preceptors at or above the level of licensure is accepted practice in other states. The two (2) national accrediting bodies accrediting Mississippi BSN programs, Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), do not specify degree requirements for preceptors, but allow schools of nursing to select preceptors based on the expertise of the preceptor to support student achievement of expected outcomes.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Active RN licenses in Mississippi:

- As of 08/30/2021- 49,944
- As of 12/31/2020- 51,628
- As of 12/31/2019- 50,103
- As of 12/31/2018- 51,420

There are less nurses (1,684) than one year ago creating a critical shortage of nurses in the hospital setting (National Council State Boards of Nursing, <https://www.ncsbn.org/national-nursing-database.htm>, 08/31/2021).

Preceptor Guidelines in Comparison to Other States

Responses received via a survey sent to each state's regulatory authority for nursing education facilitated by the National Council of States Boards of Nursing (NCSBN):

- Sixteen (16) states allow students to precept "at or above the level of licensure" with emphasis being placed on a preceptor's experiential preparation
- Ten (10) states, including Mississippi, require the preceptor to be "at or above the level of education"

Input from Mississippi Schools of Nursing

(Alcorn State University; Belhaven University; Delta State University; Mississippi College; Mississippi University for Women; University of Mississippi Medical Center; University of Southern Mississippi; William Carey University)

- All indicate difficulty securing BSN prepared nurses for preceptor experiences
- All indicate this will be more difficult to impossible with nursing shortage that is coinciding with COVID leading to students not completing required clinical hours or having to do alternate experiences

IHL Nursing Education and National Accrediting Guidelines related to Preceptors

IHL Nursing Education:

The IHL Nursing Procedure Manual does not have a definition of preceptor in the glossary.

State specific requirement: p. 5- Preceptors (e.g. mentors, guides, coaches) shall be **academically/experientially prepared at or beyond the level** for which the preceptor service is rendered and shall have a minimum of one year experience.

ACEN:

Preceptor – Defined as **An academically and experientially qualified person** who has received formal training to function as a resource and role model for nursing students. When specified, preceptors must meet the stated requirements for the level of nursing education offered. Examples include, but are not limited to, requirements set by a state regulatory agency for nursing or requirements set by the governing organization/nursing education unit.

2.4 Preceptors, when utilized, are academically and experientially qualified, oriented, mentored, and monitored, and have clearly documented roles and responsibilities.

While a student can have input into identifying preceptors, it is the responsibility of the nursing program faculty/leaders to identify and arrange for preceptors and to ensure all students have preceptors.

Response from ACEN Chief Executive Officer:

“You are correct in noting that the ACEN DOES NOT specify qualifications for preceptors. The reality is that each jurisdiction (e.g., board of nursing) has rules for nursing programs within that jurisdiction so the expectation is that programs within that jurisdiction follow the rules set forth by the jurisdiction, including any rules for preceptors. Additionally, if the institutions/nursing program has rules then the ACEN expects those rules to be followed too.”

CCNE:

Preceptor: Defined as an experienced practitioner who facilitates and guides students’ clinical learning experiences in the preceptor’s area of practice expertise
Preceptors (e.g., mentors, guides, coaches), if used by the program as an extension of faculty, are **academically and experientially qualified for their role.**

Elaboration: The roles and performance expectations for preceptors with respect to teaching, supervision, and student evaluation are: • clearly defined and communicated to preceptors; • congruent with the mission, goals, and expected student outcomes; • congruent with relevant professional nursing standards and guidelines; and • reviewed periodically and revised as appropriate. **Preceptors have the expertise to support student achievement of expected outcomes.** The program ensures that preceptor performance meets expectations

Response from CCNE Director of Accreditation Services:

“Key Element II-F of the CCNE [*Standards for Accreditation of Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs*](#) requires program to demonstrate that preceptors (e.g., mentors, guides, coaches), if used by the program as an extension of faculty, are academically and experientially qualified for their role. Because the key element language and associated elaboration statement are silent on a specific degree requirement for a preceptor, the onus is on the program to demonstrate and provide its rationale and/or evidence that preceptors have the expertise to support student achievement of expected outcomes.”

NLN-CNEA:

Preceptor – A health care professional who **holds the requisite academic credentials and has the professional expertise** to facilitate, in collaboration with faculty, student achievement of learning outcomes in the clinical setting

The nursing program provides rationale for the use of preceptors and other alternative clinical supervisory models appropriate for the program type in which they are utilized.