

NLNAC has received a number of questions related to the new 2008 Accreditation Standards and Criteria. These four questions were typical of those received.

QUESTION *Recently, I attended a national conference with several of my faculty. We were surprised when one of the primary speakers stated that our curriculum was “outdated,” since accreditation standards have changed. The speaker stated that programs need to immediately revise their curricular models, since current standards do not specifically mention previously used terms such as organizing framework. Is this true? We do not want to start over.*

ANSWER Please do not start making revisions based on this presentation. Unfortunately, not everyone who speaks about accreditation fully understands the purpose and/or intent of NLNAC Standards and Criteria. What is actually stated is that a school’s curriculum must be designed to enable students to achieve the outcomes identified by the faculty. Curricula must be based on established professional standards, with clearly articulated student learning and program outcomes, and they must be reviewed regularly by faculty for rigor and currency. Revisions should be based on areas identified as needing development based on data collected and analyzed from multiple types of evaluation.

What you are teaching must be designed to prepare your graduates to practice competently and safely in contemporary environments, an outcome that I am sure you have clearly identified. The new Standards do not say that your current curriculum is inappropriate or no longer relevant, so do not start over just because the language has changed slightly. In fact, the new language was developed by your colleagues in program-specific subcommittees to reflect increased flexibility and innovation within curricular models. It may be helpful to review the statements about curriculum integrity in the new Glossary available in

the *NLNAC Accreditation Manual* (online at www.nlnac.org/manuals/Manual2008.htm). You and your faculty can best determine whether or not your curriculum is appropriate and demonstrates soundness and integrity for the program you are delivering.

QUESTION *Why do the new Standards address full- and part-time faculty only? What about the individuals we use as clinical associates, adjuncts, or clinical partners? How do we classify them?*


ANSWER It is common for programs to use a variety of titles/classifications for faculty. NLNAC has simplified the reporting process. Our definition, included in the *NLNAC Accreditation Manual*, is straightforward. Think of faculty as those “persons who teach and evaluate students.” Many programs engage individuals to assist with technology and/or skills labs, but those persons do not teach or evaluate students and should not be classified as faculty. For those persons actively engaged with students, no matter their titles or the settings in which they work, and no matter whether their positions are full-time or part-time, the academic credentials listed in the Standards and Criteria apply. Nursing programs should assign faculty based on their experience and areas of expertise. It is important to note that there is a specific Criterion that speaks to the orientation, mentoring, and evaluation of both full-time and part-time faculty.

QUESTION *What happened to Standard VI Integrity? Why are these criteria no longer listed?*

ANSWER The Standards were revised in order to minimize duplication of Criteria with the goal of simplifying the development of the self-study report. However, the issues related to integrity are as essential to a program’s success as ever before; in fact, we continue to receive a number of complaints from students related to misleading

or incorrect information in program materials, particularly on websites. The key elements of integrity have been integrated into the appropriate Standards. As an example, program information is included in Standard 3 Students, and the Criterion related to complaints is now within Standard 1 Mission and Administrative Capacity.

QUESTION *My program is in the process of developing our self-study for a visit in fall 2009 using the new Standards. In the previous manual, there was a list of tables and charts for each Standard. Are these tables still required?*

ANSWER First, congratulations on your preplanning and organization well in advance of the visit! If you review the guidelines available online, you will see that tables and charts are recommended, but not required, in several areas. They are recommended to shorten narratives in certain areas and to illustrate presentations in a clear, concise manner. It is entirely up to you and your colleagues as authors to decide how best to present your program. The only required table is for the listing of faculty within Standard 2. With the typical software available on most faculty computers, tables and charts are easily constructed as clarifications for the narrative. As examples, we most often see tables within Standard 1 to demonstrate congruence between the governing organization and program philosophy/mission; in Standard 3 to show consistency and differences with policies; in Standard 6 to convey student learning and program outcomes, and so forth. 

NLNAC welcomes your questions about the Standards and Criteria and/or the accreditation process. Please visit our website at www.nlnac.org for information located within the “Resources” section. Information is accessible from the top and side menus on every page.