

NLNAC receives a number of questions by phone and email. The questions presented here are typical of those received. If you are preparing a Self-Study Report for initial or continuing accreditation, consider attending an NLNAC Self-Study Forum. The next one takes place October 14-15 at the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada (www.nlnac.org/Meetings%20&%20Forums/ssForum_eflyer.htm). There is limited space, so register early. Register online or call the NLNAC office at 866/747-9965.

QUESTION As a member of the full-time faculty at a baccalaureate program, I am concerned about the number of part-time faculty, including adjuncts, that we have added over the past two to three years. Not all of the adjuncts have master's degrees, and some are teaching more than one clinical group. Is this an issue for NLNAC?

ANSWER Your question is one that is frequently asked by faculty members and nurse administrators. NLNAC includes information about the required academic and experiential qualifications of faculty in the Standards and Criteria. Specific qualifications are outlined in Standard 2 Faculty and Staff. Please note that there is a separate criterion for part-time faculty, which NLNAC defines as anyone teaching less than full-time. Accreditation Standards specifically state that part-time faculty must be qualified and that they must be oriented, mentored, and evaluated in their faculty role. Even those hired on a temporary basis must be oriented to their role, to the curriculum design and structure, and to the student learning and program outcomes. While it is common for part-time faculty to be employed as clinicians elsewhere, they are part of the faculty complement and an integral part of the program.

As part of the minimum requirements for accreditation, NLNAC reviews the

overall mix of faculty in terms of full-time and part-time, academic qualifications, experience, orientation to the role, and evaluation of teaching responsibilities. Although we do not have a specific (numerical) ratio for full-time to part-time faculty or for faculty to students, we require that the needs of students be met in all areas, including advising, instruction, and evaluation. When securing part-time faculty, it is essential that qualifications be specifically addressed in the job description and hiring process and that the program have in place an orientation and mentoring process.

QUESTION As the nurse administrator of a practical nursing program, I have questions about the role and utilization of practice laboratory personnel. How do I know what credentials these individuals must hold in order to be qualified for the position?

ANSWER First, you need to carefully consider the duties/responsibilities of the role as you develop the position description. The NLNAC definition for faculty is "persons who teach and evaluate students." So, determining minimal academic credentials will depend on whether the lab staff member will be performing any of the responsibilities of a faculty member. This means that if lab personnel conduct skill evaluations, they will be considered faculty members. Many programs secure additional assistance in the skills lab by adding persons to take on a variety of responsibilities, such as ordering supplies, setting up labs, and assisting with technology. If these individuals are not in a teaching role, they would not be required to hold the same academic and/or experiential credentials of a faculty member. Another example would be the addition of a technology-based staff position to assist faculty and students with simulation or technology-based instruction. This type

of staff member may have a background in computer science or a related field and would not be considered a faculty member. The program administrator and faculty should decide what type of staff best meets the needs of the students and the program.

QUESTION At a recent faculty meeting, concern was expressed regarding an unsuccessful student's complaint to NLNAC about our program. How are student complaints handled? Do they affect our accreditation?

ANSWER As an accrediting agency adhering to US Department of Education Regulations, NLNAC reviews all complaints received against accredited programs. Policy 20 addresses complaints and specifically outlines the procedure to be followed when any individual files a complaint or grievance. While the majority of complaints received are from students, complaints have also been received from faculty and members of the general public, including recipients of care by students.

Complaints must adhere to the guidelines in terms of submission. In the case of student complaints, NLNAC requires that the College/University Complaint Process be followed prior to NLNAC review. Please know that most complaints are addressed and resolved at NLNAC when information or clarification is provided to the complainant. Often, students misunderstand the process they should follow in dealing with issues that arise during their educational experience, and we direct them to the appropriate channels to resolve their concerns. However, if complaints about Accreditation Standards are raised, the program will be notified in writing and told to respond to the areas identified within a specified number of days. Failure to respond to the inquiry may jeopardize the accreditation status of the program. 