

NLNAC receives a number of questions by phone and email. The questions presented here are typical of those received.

Question While preparing the Self-Study Report for an upcoming visit, I am working with a colleague to write the narrative for Standard 3 Students. We are concerned that our program may not be in compliance with Criterion 3.7 on orientation to technology. In the past, all students at our university were required to enroll in a computer science course, but we have removed that requirement since the majority of students do not need an introductory course. Should we add a technology-based course back to the course of study?

Answer It is not a requirement for students to enroll in a course specific to technology or computer science to be fully oriented to the technology they will use during their classroom, lab, and clinical experiences. Programs engage in a variety of methods of orientation for students, depending on the type of technology and the methods used. Of course, you will have an orientation for your online or distance students, but this Criterion addresses *all* students and *all* types of technology. Often, orientation occurs during the early days of class and lab sessions. In clinical, the orientation may be conducted by the facility staff if a particular type of technology is used for patient records, medications, etc. Recently, I visited a nursing program that demonstrated a shared online orientation module that had been developed in cooperation with three other nursing programs and a large medical facility. If simulation is utilized within the program of study, there are typically orientation sessions to simulation equipment and labs conducted by lab personnel or faculty. It is important to note that *technology support to students* is also a part of this Criterion. Be sure to address the types of

support that are provided to all students, including those attending classes on campus as well as through other methods of delivery. You must answer the question of who provides the support and how it is available to the nursing students.

Question Our faculty recently revised our master plan of evaluation to reflect the 2008 Standards and Criteria. During our meeting, there was much discussion about the differences in student learning outcomes and program outcomes. Aren't they really the same? We have always used the terms *course* and *level* learning objectives. How can we be sure that we are demonstrating compliance in meeting Standard 6 if we are not certain about the learning outcomes?

Answer NLNAC defines *student learning outcomes* as the expectations faculty hold for students in terms of what they will know and/or be able to do or demonstrate at the end of the learning experience, written in measurable terms. Another common term might be *learning objectives*. Faculty should develop overall learning outcomes for the program of study and also construct outcomes/objectives for the end of each nursing course. When the courses are reviewed, one would expect to clearly see progression in terms of outcomes/student expectations through the program of study leading to the *final learning outcomes*. The choice of terminology here is really up to the program; final learning outcomes are known by various terms, including *terminal outcomes*, *final outcomes*, and *program competencies*. Another key factor is the evaluation of the students as to their demonstration of achievement of the outcomes. Your evaluation plan should clearly reflect the methods used by faculty to assess student learning. Examples include portfolios, clinical evaluation tools, standardized testing, course examinations, papers, and projects; methods of

evaluation are to be selected by faculty based on appropriateness to the course and method of instruction. As to the program outcomes, NLNAC requires at a minimum that you assess and provide evidence of attainment of expected levels of achievement on four outcomes: licensure and/or certification exams; program completion; program satisfaction (graduate and employer); and job placement. Certainly, you, as faculty, may select additional outcomes to include in your overall program evaluation, but these four are required for each accredited program.

Question As a nurse administrator of a master's program, I am interpreting Criterion 6.3 to mean that we must publish our program outcomes on the University and College of Nursing websites. Is this correct?

Answer NLNAC requires that you share evaluation findings from your overall plan of evaluation with the communities of interest. One method of sharing the findings would be to place them into a public format, such as a website, but this is not required. These findings could also be shared in program documents such as annual reports, handbooks, and/or other materials. Also, you would share outcomes with your Advisory Council or Committee on an ongoing basis, which would most likely include area employers, public members, graduates, students, faculty members, and others. Typically, evaluation findings are shared with students, an important community of interest for your program, through orientation or recruitment materials. In a master's program, I would also encourage you to engage students in the evaluation processes for the program, other than the typical course evaluations, so they can better understand the process of evaluation and be familiar with assessment of both program and learning outcomes. 