Accreditation of Healthcare Institutions as Clinical Education Providers

Frequently Asked Questions

Accreditation of a clinical practice placement by the Singapore Nursing Board (SNB) is a collaborative process between the Institute of Higher Learning (IHL) and the Healthcare Institution (HCI) to ensure the clinical area meets the requirements for student clinical education (Refer Standard 1, SNB Standards for Clinical Nursing Education, 2022).

1. Must the Institute of Higher Learning (IHL) assess the Healthcare Institution (HCI) before applying for SNB accreditation?

Yes. The IHL should conduct a site visit to assess the HCI's clinical placement suitability before submitting the completed checklist to SNB. The checklist can be downloaded at:

2. Do clinical areas need to be accredited by SNB before student placement?

Yes. HCIs that wish to accept nursing students for clinical placements must have the relevant clinical areas accredited by SNB. IHLs should verify an HCI's accreditation status with SNB before arranging placements and should not proceed until accreditation is granted. An HCI may apply for several clinical areas at the same time, but each clinical area is assessed individually.

3. Is a written agreement required between the IHL and the HCI for clinical placements?

Yes. A valid, formal agreement signed by the IHL and the HCI should be submitted to SNB at least 2 weeks before the scheduled SNB clinical placement site visit.

4. Who coordinates matters relating to students' clinical education?

The IHL should appoint Clinical Facilitators to liaise with the HCI and students. The HCI should appoint a named RN Clinical Liaison with a nursing education qualification.

5. How are student numbers and shifts determined?

The IHL and HCI should agree on student numbers and shifts for each clinical setting, considering the HCI's workload, staffing and supervision capacity. No minimum number of student placements is prescribed, but the agreed numbers should be reflected on the PSEI and indicated upfront in the application.

6. What facilities and resources should students have access to?

Students should have access to appropriate clinical settings, relevant client/patient care records, learning resources, manuals, meeting/debriefing rooms, rest areas and an orientation programme.

7. What clinical education and experience should students receive?

Students should have opportunities to meet their learning objectives and perform nursing care and skills under supervision. Each student should be assigned to at least 2 clients in the care setting.

8. What are the requirements for Clinical Instructors (CIs) and Clinical Preceptors (CPs)?

CIs/CPs should complete the applicable NNA-accredited CI/CP course and Entrustable Professional Activities (EPA) training/workshops and should be appropriately assigned and rostered on the same shift as the students they supervise. From 2024, this applies to all RNs, including those in nursing homes. CIs/CPs who completed the earlier ITE "Train the Trainer" or "Coaching Skills" courses must ensure their courses complete the top-up modules. For course schedules and enrolment, please contact the National Nursing Academy (NNA).

9. What are the required supervision ratios for CIs and CPs?
Clinical Instructors (CIs): 1 CI to 12 students. Clinical Preceptors (CPs): 1 CP to 1 Year 1 student, and 1 CP to 2 Year 2/3 students.

10. Are there additional requirements for supervising Continuing Education and Training (CET) students?
Yes. CIs/CPs supervising and assessing CET students should possess an advanced/specialist diploma and have at least 2 years of post-registration specialty experience.

11. What should a clinical area do before applying for accreditation?
Before applying, the clinical area should: (1) review the SNB Standards for Clinical Nursing Education (2022); (2) approach the relevant IHLs to express intent to collaborate; (3) appoint a Nurse Educator as the named RN Clinical Liaison; and (4) complete the application checklist. An HCI that is not yet ready to accept students is encouraged to inform SNB of its intention to apply and its expected readiness timeline.

12. What does SNB site visit involve?
SNB's evaluative team visits the site to assess compliance with the SNB Standards for Clinical Nursing Education (2022). The assessment covers the learning environment, adequate numbers of trained CIs/CPs, student support, policies, student feedback, achievement of learning objectives and provision of Clinical Facilitators by the IHLs. SNB may decide whether an on-site visit is needed, and re-accreditation may be granted through a documentary review.

13. What should be done if there are outstanding requirements?
Document each gap, action required, person responsible and target completion date. The IHL should declare all outstanding matters and corrective actions.

14. When will the accreditation outcome be known?
SNB aims to arrange the site visit within about 3 months of receiving the application. The accreditation assessment usually takes two months, and the applicant will be notified of the outcome once SNB has conducted its site visit and completed the assessment.

15. How long is accreditation valid, and what happens if it lapses?
Accreditation is valid for 3 years, and a new application is required for re-accreditation. There is currently no application fee. If accreditation lapses, the HCI may not accept nursing students until re-accreditation is granted and should notify SNB and the relevant IHLs.

16. What are the ongoing responsibilities of accredited clinical areas?
The IHL and HCI remain responsible for ensuring the clinical area continues to provide appropriate learning opportunities, with suitable arrangements for supervision, support and assessment. Accredited clinical areas submit an annual report to SNB by the end of February.

17. How can I contact SNB for further assistance?
Please visit www.snb.gov.sg or contact SNB to arrange a meeting for clarification and support.

Abbreviations:

SNB – Singapore Nursing Board; IHL – Institute of Higher Learning; HCI – Healthcare Institution; CI – Clinical Instructor; CP – Clinical Preceptor; CET – Continuing Education and Training; RN – Registered Nurse; NNA – National Nursing Academy; EPA – Entrustable Professional Activities; PSEI – Post Secondary Education Index