

Date: April 2, 2026

To: U.S. Department of Education
State Boards of Nursing
Institutional and Specialized Accrediting Agencies
NLN CNEA Accredited Programs and Administrators
NLN CNEA Onsite Evaluators and Volunteers
National Nursing Organizations

From: Teresa Shellenbarger, NLN CNEA Executive Director on behalf of the NLN CNEA Standards Committee

Re: Call for Comment Proposed NLN CNEA Accreditation Standards for Nursing Education Programs

As part of our ongoing commitment to continuous quality improvement and desire to meet the needs of our communities of interest, the National League for Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (CNEA) Standards Committee invites your review and feedback on the proposed NLN CNEA Standards for Accreditation. This call for comments is part of the systematic review of the Accreditation Standards and will help inform our work as we finalize updated Standards.

The NLN CNEA promotes excellence and integrity in nursing education globally through a values-driven accreditation process that respects the diversity of program mission, curricula, students, and faculty; emphasizes a culture of continuous quality improvement; and influences the preparation of a caring and skilled nursing workforce. The NLN CNEA accredits nursing programs across the academic spectrum, including LPN/LVN, diploma, associate, bachelor's, master's, post-graduate, and doctoral programs, as a U.S. Department of Education, non-Title IV purpose, accrediting body.

The proposed NLN CNEA Standards for Accreditation retain the original intent of the five Standards, with modifications based on feedback from various constituents (see Appendix A for a summary of changes made). The standard descriptions, along with the accompanying quality indicators and interpretive guidelines, have been streamlined for clarity and ease of use.

- Standard I: Culture of Excellence – Program Outcomes
- Standard II: Culture of Integrity and Accountability – Mission, Governance and Resources
- Standard III: Culture of Excellence and Caring – Faculty
- Standard IV: Culture of Excellence and Caring – Students
- Standard V: Culture of Learning – Curriculum and Evaluation Processes

These five Standards are applied to all types of nursing programs.

The NLN CNEA Standards Committee looks forward to receiving your comments and suggestions about the proposed Standards of Accreditation will review all feedback during this final review of the Standards.

Review each standard as a whole and consider the individual quality indicators, interpretive guidelines, and evidence exemplars. Consider if the Standards are consistent with current educational practice and responsive to evolving nursing education practices, are clearly communicated in a logical and sufficiently detailed manner.

To be fully considered, comments must be received by **May 3, 2026 at 1159 pm ET**. Comments received after this date and time will not be considered.

Please submit your comments or feedback via:

online survey available at <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/8722446/Call-for-Comments-Proposed-NLN-CNEA-Standards-2026-Version>

OR

email cneaaccreditation@nlm.org

This is the final step in this process, the NLN CNEA Standards Committee will review and consider all comments and finalize the updated Standards which will then be forwarded to the NLN Board of Commissioners for their review and approval. After the Board's approval, there will be a transition period for programs to comply with the new Standards. Information about this transition will be forthcoming.

If you have any questions about the Standards revision process please contact Dr. Teresa Shellenbarger, Executive Director, at 202-909-2487 or via email at tshellenbarger@nlm.org.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Teresa Shellenbarger, PhD, RN, CNE, CNEcl, ANEF, FAAN
Executive Director, NLN CNEA

Appendix A
Summary of Changes to the NLN CNEA Standards of Accreditation

Overall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edits for consistency and succinctness • Updated information in the introduction • Removed the terminology diversity throughout the standards to align with current state and federal expectations • Combined or eliminated several quality indicators to avoid duplication and redundancy
Standard I
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added that data is an element of the systematic evaluation plan and emphasized action plans for outcomes needing improvement • Added option of presenting three-year average OR most recent one-year when reporting licensure or certification pass rates • Added that programs can exclude students who continue formal education for employment rates • Condensed information to avoid overlap
Standard II
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasized opportunities for engagement being provided • Outlined that programs must discuss how publications, documents, and policies are accessible to communities of interest • Removed graduate degree requirement for chief academic nurse administrator in favor of practice, leadership, and academic expertise which can be demonstrated in a variety of ways • Condensed information to avoid overlap
Standard III
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed expectations of faculty expertise in social determinants of health, population health, health equity, and technological competency • Removal of graduate degree requirement for all faculty in favor of pedagogical and content expertise, which can be demonstrated in a variety of ways • Clarified that program must outline how preceptor roles and responsibilities differ from faculty • Provided examples of individual and collective faculty outcomes and clarified that programs can define different expectations for full- and part-time faculty • Condensed information to avoid overlap
Standard IV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condensed information to avoid overlap
Standard V
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of requirement for students to articulate information contained within Standard V • Removal of healthcare quality, social determinants of health, health equity, population health, and ethical practice to be less prescriptive • Removal of well-being, resilience, and self-care to be less prescriptive • Changed to focus on preparation for the specific role for which students are being prepared • Condensed information to avoid overlap
Appendix A – Glossary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added and removed definitions to reflect updated Standards and current references
Appendix B – Professional Nursing Standards, Competencies, and Guidelines (Examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated examples to reflect current Standards, Competencies, and Guidelines