NCLEX-RN 2015:
Canadian Results

Canadian Council of

CCRNr

Registered Nurse Regulators

Contents

Message from the President

The year 2015 saw a major improvement to how graduates of Canada's nursing programs are assessed by the country's nursing regulators. The new NCLEX-RN exam is more secure, is available in more places and more often, and is a more effective and efficient measure. As regulators, our legislated role is to ensure that a nurse is safe to work with the public. The NCLEX-RN is helping us to do that.

The exam was implemented in January 2015 after Canadian nurses and nurse educators extensively reviewed the content of all questions that could be presented to an exam writer. This review was vital: not only did Canada's regulators want an exam that tested for basic skills, knowledge and judgment needed by nurses starting in the profession, but we wanted an exam that was without bias to Canadians. We're confident the NCLEX-RN provides both.

When six-months' worth of exam result data were made available last year, many were quick to compare the results to previous years, despite our caution that the data was preliminary and writers had not been given the chance to complete all their available attempts at the exam.

We now have a full year of data available. The overall national results are good: 84.1% of graduates of a Canadian program who wrote the exam in 2015 passed it. Graduates have at least three attempts at the exam, so some of those who had not yet been successful on the exam, still had attempts left. For some regulatory jurisdictions, the numbers in the data are still small, and in those areas it will take more time before a thorough analysis can be done.

The exam has raised a lot of discussion, and this in turn has caused the various stakeholders in the nursing profession to work more closely together. That's a good result. We all have the same goal: we want a safe health care system.

As regulators, we must maintain the integrity of the exam. So, while regulators cannot be directly involved in preparing students to write, we will continue to work with educators and other stakeholders to help ensure that graduates have what is needed so they are ready to write the NCLEX-RN.

Anne Coghlan, President
Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators
March 31, 2016

Background on the NCLEX-RN

The role of Canada's provincial nursing regulators

Registered nursing is a self-regulated profession in Canada. Each province and territory (12) has its own regulatory body to oversee nursing in its jurisdiction, all of which are members of the Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators (CCRNR).

Through provincial and territorial legislation, Canada's RN regulators are accountable to the public for ensuring RNs are safe, competent and ethical practitioners.

Regulators achieve their mandate by taking responsibility for such activities as registering and licensing RNs, overseeing reviews of professional conduct, setting standards that govern RN nursing education and how RNs perform their work, and identifying the competencies needed by RNs entering the profession. These entry-level competencies are skills, knowledge and judgment the regulators have determined are needed in order to provide safe, competent, and ethical nursing care in a variety of work settings.

It is the role and authority of Canada's RN regulators to decide on and implement an entry exam that tests for specific skills Canadian RNs need in order to practice safely from their first day at work. The regulators monitor the exam results to identify trends and areas for improvement or adjustment based on evidence and the impact on public safety.

The purpose of the regulators' nursing exam

When an RN starts their first day of nursing practice, the public needs to feel confident the RN has basic skills, knowledge and judgment to provide safe care. For example, can the RN assess a person's vital signs and respond to any changes they see? Can they evaluate a person's need for pain management? Can they safely administer medications? Do they understand how to maintain a client's confidentiality and respect their privacy? These are some of the basic skills we all expect of any new RN in Canada.

Legislation gives to Canada's regulators the responsibility to ensure RN applicants have these abilities before they start practising nursing.

Before an applicant (educated in Canada) can be licensed/registered to practice as an RN in Canada, they must first graduate from an approved RN baccalaureate education program. As part of a robust set of requirements, an applicant must also pass a regulator-selected registration exam.

Applicants for licensure/registration as an RN in 10 of Canada's 12 RN jurisdictions are required to successfully complete the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN)[1]. This exam is a computer-adaptive test administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). NCLEX-RN has been administered by NCSBN as a registration exam for licensure in the United States since 1982. NCSBN is an independent, not-for-profit organization whose members include boards of nursing in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories, and 24 associate members (including all members of CCRNR).[2]

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[1] Applicants for RN licensure in Quebec complete the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec professional examination. Applicants to Yukon are processed via endorsement from another Canadian jurisdiction.

[2] For more information on National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), visit: ncsbn.org/about

Changes that led to this new nursing registration exam

Throughout the early 2000s, Canada's RN regulators discussed and reviewed best practices for an entry-to-practice exam. The goal of this review was to find areas for improvement and ways to incorporate state-of-the-art best practices into the RN entry-to-practice exam. This review laid the foundation for a thorough business case and Request for Proposal (RFP) process for selecting a new entry-to-practice exam.

The process resulted in 10 of Canada's RN regulators (excluding Quebec and the Yukon) choosing the NCLEX-RN as the exam that can best test applicants' readiness to enter the practice of nursing. A comprehensive process keeps the exam's content up to date with changing nursing practice. The new exam has allowed regulators to establish more rigour and security in its testing to help ensure that the content of the exam is not compromised. As the exam is available year round, exam writers have greater access to it.

In late 2011, regulators informed Canada's RN educators and other stakeholders that they would be launching the NCLEX-RN on January 1, 2015. Educators were given access to a number of resources with information they could use to help prepare students for the exam. These resources included: webinars, teleconferences, regularly updated FAQs, a quarterly NCLEX-RN newsletter, conferences organized by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, and links to resources, such as test plans and information about computer-adaptive testing (CAT).

How the NCLEX-RN was developed and is implemented in Canada

Developing and reviewing the test questions[3]

Canada's RN regulators are responsible for ensuring that the entry exam tests an applicant for basic entry-level competencies — competencies that are taught in Canada's nursing programs. A national analysis of nursing practice identified the knowledge, skills and abilities required of Canadian RNs in their first year of practice, and confirmed that the NCLEX-RN is a valid test of these competencies. This practice analysis continues to be conducted every three years to ensure the exam keeps pace with changes in entry-level nursing practice.

Canadian RNs in the 10 provinces and territories using the NCLEX-RN participated in developing and reviewing the test questions currently in use. All questions in use were modified to include both imperial and metric measurements and generic drug names that would be familiar to Canadian exam writers. Canadian RNs continue to participate in the exam's development and review to ensure it meets the needs of Canadian exam writers and is free of bias. Any questions the Canadian reviewers deem unsuitable for Canadian writers are removed from the question bank and are not used in the exam.

French translation process

A rigorous translation process is used to develop the French version of the exam. Translation of NCLEX-RN items from English to French is conducted by Canadians using federal translation standards. Translated items are reviewed by a translation panel consisting of three to six Canadian bilingual RNs. These RNs are required to be fluent in French and English, and to be practising in a bilingual facility or setting. Their participation is approved by their nursing regulatory body. Any exam items not approved by the translation panels are removed from both the French and English versions of the NCLEX-RN exam.[4]

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[3] For more information on NCLEX exam development, visit ncsbn.org/9011.htm

[4] For more information on NCLEX translation process, visit: ncsbn.org/Translating_the_NCLEX-Web_v4.pdf and NCLEX translation lexicon: ncsbn.org/NCLEX_Translation_Lexicon_v2_(00000002).pdf

Topics covered on the exam

The content of the NCLEX-RN exam (referred to as the test plan) is divided into four categories, with two of the categories having sub-categories. All categories are based on client need.[5] Exam writers are asked questions from each topic area. The breakdown of each category and subcategory questions presented during the exam is below:

Category based on client need	% of questions from each category and subcategory
Safe and effective care environment **The nurse promotes achievement of client outcomes by providing and directing nursing care that enhances the care delivery setting in order to protect clients and health care personnel.**	
Management of care • Providing and directing nursing care that enhances the care delivery setting to protect clients and health care personnel	17–23%
Safety and infection control • Protecting clients and health care personnel from health and environmental hazards.	9–15%
Health promotion and maintenance **The nurse provides and directs nursing care of the client that incorporates the knowledge of expected growth and development principles, prevention and/or early detection of health problems, and strategies to achieve optimal health.**	6–12%
Psychosocial integrity **The nurse provides and directs nursing care that promotes and supports the emotional, mental and social wellbeing of the client experiencing stressful events, as well as clients with acute or chronic mental illness.**	6–12%
Physiological integrity **The nurse promotes physical health and wellness by providing care and comfort, reducing client risk potential and managing health alterations.**	
Basic care and comfort • Providing comfort and assistance in the performance of activities of daily living.	6–12%
Pharmacological and parenteral therapies • Providing care related to the administration of medications and parenteral therapies.	12–18%
Reduction of risk potential • Reducing the likelihood that clients will develop complications or health problems related to existing conditions, treatments or procedures.	9–15%
Physiological adaptation • Managing and providing care for clients with acute, chronic or life-threatening physical health conditions.	11–17%

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[5] For more information about the test plan, visit: ncsbn.org/testplans

The format of the NCLEX-RN

Computer-adaptive testing (CAT)

The format of the NCLEX-RN is known as computer-adaptive testing (CAT). It is much different from a traditional pen-and-paper exam in the way in which the questions are presented, how the exam writer can respond to questions and how a pass is determined.[6]

Typically, with a pen-and-paper exam, all writers receive the same questions and the same number of questions. Some questions are easy and others are more difficult. In the end, a percentage correct indicates the candidate's ability on the test and whether they passed or failed. An exam writer with a high level of ability will have to answer all the questions, even the easy ones. Having to do this is an inefficient way to test someone's level of ability. Multiple-choice questions on a pen-and-paper exam can also make the results of a lower-ability writer seem higher than they should. For example, if the writer can choose from one of four answers to a question, they can guess at an answer. This gives them a 25% chance of getting the answer right, even if they did not actually know the answer. Therefore, the question is not really measuring their ability.

A computer-adaptive test uses computer technology and measurement theory to provide a more efficient and effective means of assessing an exam writer's ability. Questions can be targeted to a writer's level of ability.

With the NCLEX-RN, writers must answer questions covering several categories or topic areas. As the exam proceeds, a question from one of the topic areas is selected from the exam's large bank of questions. Each of these questions has been classified by its level of difficulty.

After the writer answers the question, the computer calculates an ability estimate based on all of the previous answers the writer selected. The computer program selects the next question for the writer based on this ability estimate. It selects a question the writer should have a 50% chance of answering correctly. That way, the next question will not be too difficult or too easy for the writer.

If the writer answered the question correctly, the next question they see will be more difficult than the previous one. If they got the answer wrong, the next question will be slightly easier. This process is repeated for each question and across each topic area, with the writer's ability estimate being recalculated each time. This process creates an exam that is tailored to the writer's knowledge and skills. Two writers in the same examination room will not get the same exam.[7]

The exam continues in this way until the computer program determines if the writer has passed or failed.

How a pass or fail is determined

The computer program decides whether a writer has passed or failed the NCLEX-RN using one of three rules:

1. **95% confidence interval rule:** The exam will stop once the computer program has calculated with 95% certainty that the writer's ability is clearly above or below the passing standard. This is the most commonly applied rule.[8]

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[6] For more information on computer-adaptive testing (CAT), visit: ncsbn.org/356.htm.

[7] For more information on the question selection process, visit: ncsbn.org/5906.htm.

[8] For more information on the 95% confidence rule, visit: ncsbn.org/5908.htm.

2. **Maximum-length exam rule:** When an exam writer's ability is very close to the passing standard, the computer continues to give questions until the maximum number of questions is reached (265). At this point, the computer disregards the 95% confidence rule and decides whether the writer has passed or failed based on their final ability estimate.[9]

3. **Run-out-of-time rule:** If an exam writer runs out of time before reaching the maximum amount of items, the computer program has not been able to determine whether they passed or failed with 95% certainty and has to use an alternate rule. If the writer hasn't answered the minimum number of questions (75), then they will fail that attempt at the NCLEX-RN. However, if the writer has answered at least the minimum amount of questions (75), the computer program will review the last 60 ability estimates. If the writer's last 60 ability estimates were above the passing standard, then they will pass. However, if their ability dropped below the passing standard, even once, during their last 60 questions, they will fail. This does not mean the writer must answer the last 60 questions correctly; each ability estimate is based on all the previous items they have answered.[10]

Each time the computer re-estimates the writer's ability, the estimate becomes more precise. This ability is measured against a passing standard that accurately reflects the amount of nursing ability a RN needs when they start in their profession.

Passing standard
The passing standard is a cut point along an ability range that marks the minimum ability level requirement. For the NCLEX-RN, it is the minimum ability required to safely and effectively practice nursing at the entry-level.

Because the skills and knowledge needed by RNs changes over time, the passing standard must reflect these changes. To ensure the passing standard remains accurate, it is reviewed at least once every three years.[11] The exam reviewers look at an array of information, such as the results of a survey in which employers and educators are asked for their opinions on the competency of the current cohort of nurses entering the profession and on a historical record of candidate performance on the NCLEX-RN since it was started. The passing standard is not altered in order to attempt to set a maximum number of writers who are successful on the exam. The current passing standard is set at 0.00 logits.

What is a logit?
A logit is a unit of measurement used to report relative differences between a writer's ability estimates and the difficulty of the items.

Because the exam questions vary in their level of difficulty, there is no linear way to measure the writer's performance on the exam. The level of difficulty of the questions each writer receives has to be factored in, along with an estimate of writer's ability. The logit measure puts ability estimates and question difficulty on the same measurement scale. If the writer keeps answering questions correctly, their ability estimate will be increasing as the average difficulty of the questions increases.

The logit scale ranges from negative infinity to positive infinity, with the bulk of the ability distribution within the range of -3.0 to 3.0 logits.[12]

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[9] For more information on maximum-length exam rule, visit: ncsbn.org/5910.htm.

[10] For more information on run-out-of-time rule, visit: ncsbn.org/5912.htm.

[11] To learn more about the current passing standard, visit: ncsbn.org/2630.htm.

[12] For more information on logit, visit: ncsbn.org/What_is_a_Logit.pdf

Who's included in this report

This report provides statistics on the performance of graduates of Canadian nursing education programs who wrote the NCLEX-RN in 2015 as a part of their registration/licensure application process with a provincial or territorial RN regulator in Canada. These writers are referred to as "Canadian-educated graduates" throughout the report.

The report includes only attempts made on the NCLEX-RN. Any attempts at the nursing regulators' exam in years prior to 2015 are not included here.

This report does not include graduates who applied for licensure/registration outside of Canada. Such graduates represent a small percentage (approx. 4%) of the overall graduates from Canadian RN programs.

How the 2015 first-attempt and ultimate pass rates are calculated

The 2015 first-attempt pass rate measures the percentage of writers who successfully passed the exam on their first try.

The "ultimate" pass rate measures the percentage of writers who wrote the exam during 2015 and had passed the exam by their latest attempt in 2015 (in Canada, writers have at least three attempts at the regulators' exam). It indicates how many people passed the NCLEX-RN during 2015, and are therefore available to the health care workforce (pending completion of all other registration/licensure requirements).

The table below provides an illustration of how the first-attempt and "ultimate" pass rates for 2015 are calculated.

	NCLEX-RN attempts taken in 2015				
	Attempt 1	Attempt 2	Attempt 3	First-attempt result	Ultimate result
Graduate 1	Pass			Pass	Pass
Graduate 2	Fail	Fail		Fail	Fail
Graduate 3	Fail	Pass		Fail	Pass
Graduate 4	Fail			Fail	Fail
Graduate 5	Fail	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass

	First-attempt result	Ultimate result
2015 pass rates	1 out of 5	3 out of 5
	20%	60%

In the example, five graduates attempted the NCLEX-RN one or more times during 2015:

- **Graduate 1** attempted the exam only once during 2015, and was successful:
  - their first-attempt result in 2015 was a pass
  - their ultimate result for 2015 was a pass

- **Graduate 2** attempted the exam twice during 2015. While this writer still has one attempt left:
  - their first-attempt result in 2015 was a fail
  - their ultimate result by the end of 2015 was a fail

- Similarly, **graduate 3** attempted the exam twice and passed on their second attempt:
  ‣ their first-attempt result in 2015 was a fail
  ‣ their ultimate result by the end of 2015 was a pass

- **Graduate 4** attempted the exam once during 2015, and was unsuccessful. They still have two attempts remaining:
  ‣ their first-attempt result in 2015 was a fail
  ‣ their ultimate result by the end of 2015 was a fail

- **Graduate 5** attempted the exam three times, and passed on their third attempt:
  ‣ their first-attempt result in 2015 was a fail
  ‣ their ultimate result in 2015 was a pass

Of the five graduates in this example, by the end of 2015, only one passed the exam on their first attempt (Graduate 1). Therefore, the first-attempt pass rate for 2015 writers was 1 out of 5, or 20%.

If we evaluate the latest attempts that happened before the end of 2015, three had passed the exam, and two had failed, resulting in an ultimate pass rate of 3 out of 5, or 60%. While both writers who failed still have attempts remaining, the ultimate pass rate is calculated solely on the exam attempts that happened in 2015.

Canada-wide results

This report provides statistics on the performance of graduates of Canadian nursing education programs who wrote the NCLEX-RN in 2015 as a part of their registration/licensure application process with a provincial or territorial RN regulator in Canada.[13] These writers are referred to as "Canadian-educated graduates" throughout the report. The report includes only attempts made on the NCLEX-RN. Any attempts at the nursing regulator's exam in years prior to 2015 are not included here.

During 2015, 9,048 graduates of a Canadian RN baccalaureate program wrote the NCLEX-RN as a part of their application process for RN licensure/registration in a Canadian provincial or territorial regulatory jurisdiction.

Table 1 breaks this number down by the number of graduates per province or territory of education. For example, Ontario had 4,021 graduates (44.4% of the national total) attempt the NCLEX-RN exam at least once during 2015.

Table 1. Number of Canadian-educated graduates writing NCLEX-RN in 2015

Province or territory of education	Number of graduates who wrote NCLEX-RN in 2015	% of total graduates
Alberta	1,637	18.1%
British Columbia	1,305	14.4%
Manitoba	490	5.4%
New Brunswick	322	3.6%
Newfoundland and Labrador	250	2.8%
Nova Scotia	393	4.3%
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	19	0.2%
Ontario	4,021	44.4%
Prince Edward Island	62	0.7%
Saskatchewan	549	6.1%
Total number of graduates	**9,048**	**100%**

National ultimate 2015 pass rate

During 2015, of the 9,048 Canadian-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN exam, 84.1% had passed it by the end of 2015 after one or more attempts (see **Table 2**). This is referred to as the ultimate pass rate for those who wrote during 2015.

Table 2. NCLEX-RN 2015 ultimate pass rate of Canadian-educated graduates

	Passed	Failed	Total writers	Ultimate pass rate
Number of graduates and ultimate pass rate	7,605	1,443	9,048	**84.1%**

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[13] This report does not include graduates who applied for licensure/registration outside of Canada. Such graduates represent a small percentage (approx. 4%) of the overall graduates from Canadian RN programs who wrote the exam.

This data can be further reviewed to see how successful people were on each attempt of the exam (see **Table 3**).

Table 3. NCLEX-RN number of attempts taken in 2015 by Canadian-educated graduates

	Passed	Failed	Total writers	Pass rate on this attempt
First attempt	6,306	2,742	9,048	**69.7%**
Second attempt	1,238	598	1,836	**67.4%**
Third (or more) attempt[14]	61	41	102	**59.8%**

As Table 3 shows, not all exam writers pass the exam on their first attempt. Of the 9,048 graduates attempting the exam for the first time in 2015, 69.7% passed on their first attempt.

Of the 2,742 graduates who were unsuccessful on their first attempt, 1,836 made a second attempt at the exam, with 67.4% passing.

Of the 598 graduates who were unsuccessful on their second attempt in 2015, 102 made a third or a fourth attempt, with 59.8% passing.

It should be noted that some of the writers who had not yet passed an attempt of the NCLEX-RN by the end of 2015 still would have had exam attempts remaining in 2016.

Nationally, the pass rate on second attempts at the exam was higher than expected, and higher than that of U.S.-educated graduates. We believe this phenomenon is due to writers becoming familiar with the exam's format and being more prepared on their second attempt. We expect that, over time, as the familiarity with the exam's format increases, we will see higher pass rates on the first attempt, and that pass rates on second and third attempts will decrease.

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[14] In all jurisdictions, with the exception of New Brunswick, writers can only attempt the exam three times. As of December 2015, New Brunswick allows 24 writes. Some other jurisdictions will allow additional writes under specific circumstances. Fourth attempts happened in Alberta and New Brunswick.

Pass rates by province and territory of education

The ultimate pass rate and writers' first-attempt pass rates at the NCLEX-RN have been further broken down by province or territory of education in **Table 4**.

Table 4. NCLEX-RN 2015 ultimate and first-attempt pass rates of Canadian-educated graduates

Province or territory of education	Number of graduates who wrote NCLEX-RN in 2015	First-attempt pass rate	Ultimate 2015 pass rate
Alberta	1,637	69.1%	83.9%
British Columbia	1,305	79.8%	87.3%
Manitoba	490	74.1%	83.1%
New Brunswick	322	50.3%	71.4%
Newfoundland and Labrador	250	79.2%	92.8%
Nova Scotia	393	75.8%	89.1%
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	19	84.2%	94.7%
Ontario	4,021	67.7%	83.7%
Prince Edward Island	62	66.1%	87.1%
Saskatchewan	549	60.5%	79.4%
National	**9,048**	**69.7%**	**84.1%**

For more information on the performance of Canadian-educated graduates by province or territory of education, please refer to "Appendix A: Detailed exam statistics by province or territory of education."

National pass rates for NCLEX-RN written in French

Exam writers in Canada can choose to write the NCLEX-RN in either English or French. Nationally, 1.6% or 142 graduates chose to write the NCLEX-RN in French for one or more of their attempts. In 2015, two provinces had writers who chose to write the exam in French at least once: Ontario (54 writers) and New Brunswick (88 writers).

Of 142 graduates who attempted the exam in French at least once in 2015, half (71) were successful and the other half were not yet successful by the end of the year.

There were 140 graduates who made a first attempt in French and two graduates who wrote the exam in English first and made their second attempt in French.

Table 5. Ultimate pass rate of Canadian-educated graduates who attempted the NCLEX-RN in French at least once in 2015

	Passed	Failed	Total writers	Ultimate pass rate
Number of graduates and ultimate pass rate	71	71	142	**50.0%**

Table 6. First-attempt pass rate of Canadian-educated graduates who attempted the NCLEX-RN in French at least once in 2015

	Passed	Failed	Total writers	First-attempt pass rate
First attempt	38	102	140	**27.1%**

National exam duration statistics

Writers of the NCLEX-RN exam answer from a minimum of 75 questions to a maximum of 265 questions. For most writers, the computer program will stop asking questions once the program has calculated with 95% certainty that the writer is clearly above or below the passing standard (see "How a pass or fail is determined" in this report for more information).

With computer-adaptive tests (CATs), the number of questions an exam writer answers and how long it took them to complete the exam shows how quickly the writer demonstrates whether they meet the required level of competence (the passing standard). On average, successful first-attempt writers were able to demonstrate their competence quickly, within 2 hours and 13 minutes (see **Table 7**). The average number of questions taken by Canadian-educated graduates who were successful on their first exam attempt was 120, which is closer to the minimum number of questions a writer could receive (75) than it is to the maximum number (265).

Table 7. Canadian-educated graduates: Average number of questions answered and average exam duration on their first NCLEX-RN attempts in 2015

	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
Average exam duration	2 hr 13 min	3 hr 00 min	**2 hr 27 min**
Average number of questions answered	120	165	**133**
Total number of writers (for reference)	6,306	2,742	9,048

Number of questions: minimum of 75 and maximum of 265
Maximum test time: 6 hours

In 2015, almost half (49.5%) of writers who were successful on their first attempt at the NCLEX-RN answered the minimum number of questions (75 questions). This means they were able to demonstrate the required level of competence after answering the minimum number of questions. A quarter (24.9%) of writers who were not successful on their first attempt, needed only a minimum number of questions to demonstrate that they did not meet the required level of competence (See **Table 8**).

Table 8. Canadian-educated graduates: % of writers taking minimum number of questions on their first NCLEX-RN attempt in 2015

	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
% of writers answering minimum number of questions	49.5%	24.9%	**42.1%**
Total number of writers (for reference)	6,306	2,742	9,048

Number of questions: minimum of 75 and maximum of 265

The proportion answering the maximum number of questions reflects how many of the writers were close to the passing standard at the end of their exam. Of the 6,306 Canadian-educated graduates who passed on their first attempt, 13.8% passed by a small margin, as they had to answer the maximum number of questions in order to demonstrate their competency.

Of the 2,742 Canadian-educated graduates who were not successful on their first attempt, 30.5% answered the maximum number of questions — in other words, almost a third of those who failed were close to meeting the passing standard by the end of the test (see **Table 9**).

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Table 9. Canadian-educated graduates: % of writers taking maximum number of questions on their first NCLEX-RN attempt in 2015

	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
% of writers answering maximum number of questions	13.8%	30.5%	**18.8%**
Total number of graduates (for reference)	6,306	2,742	9,048

Number of questions: minimum of 75 and maximum of 265

For similar tables showing exam duration statistics on second and third attempts, see "Appendix B: National exam duration statistics for repeat attempts."

National NCLEX-RN test-plan performance

Each writer of the NCLEX-RN must answer questions across four major categories (with two of the categories having sub-categories, for a total of eight topic areas) all of which are based on client needs. The content for these question topics is referred to as the test plan (see "Topics covered on the exam" for more information).

To pass the NCLEX-RN, the exam writer must perform above the passing standard, which is set at 0.00 logits (see "How a pass or fail is determined" and "What is a logit?" for more information).

Figure 1 shows how well an average Canadian-educated graduate taking the NCLEX-RN examination for the first time in 2015 performed overall and on each test plan category. The longer bars indicate better performance.

Figure 1. Average NCLEX-RN test-plan category performance of Canadian-educated graduates in 2015 on their first NCLEX-RN attempt.

Category	Average logit
Overall Performance	0.26
Management of Care	0.22
Safety and Infection Control	0.26
Health Promotion and Maintenance	0.28
Psychosocial Integrity	0.31
Basic Care and Comfort	0.28
Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies	0.28
Reduction of Risk Potential	0.21
Physiological Adaptation	0.25
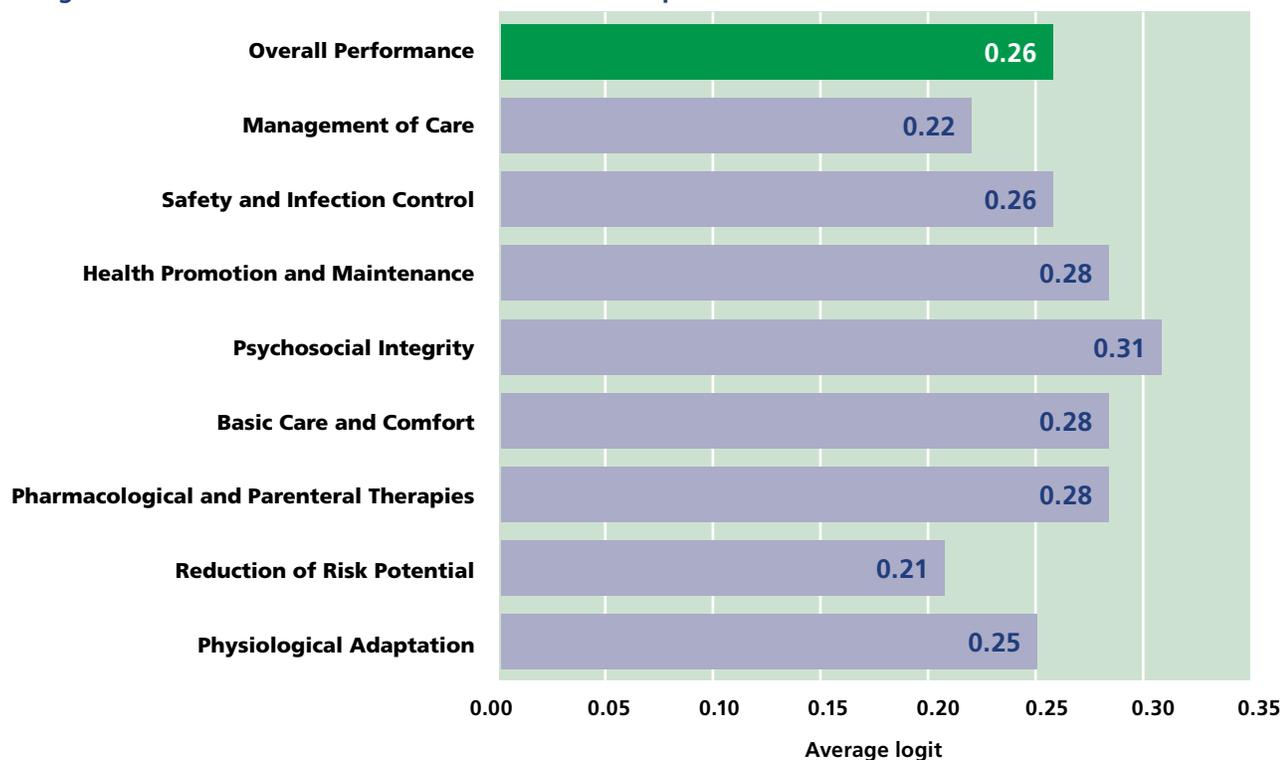
Passing standard: 0.00 logit

The average performance of Canadian-educated graduates can be compared against the passing standard itself and each test plan category. Across all questions categories, Canadian-educated graduates on average were 0.26 logits above the passing standard of 0.00 logits.

On average, writers performed best on questions dealing with psychosocial integrity (0.31 logits). Questions in this category test for the competency of nursing care that promotes and supports the emotional, mental and social wellbeing of the client experiencing stressful events and clients with acute or chronic mental illness.

The lowest average logit of 0.21 was with questions dealing in reduction of risk potential. Questions in this category are testing for competency in reducing the likelihood that clients will develop complications or health problems related to existing conditions, treatments or procedures.

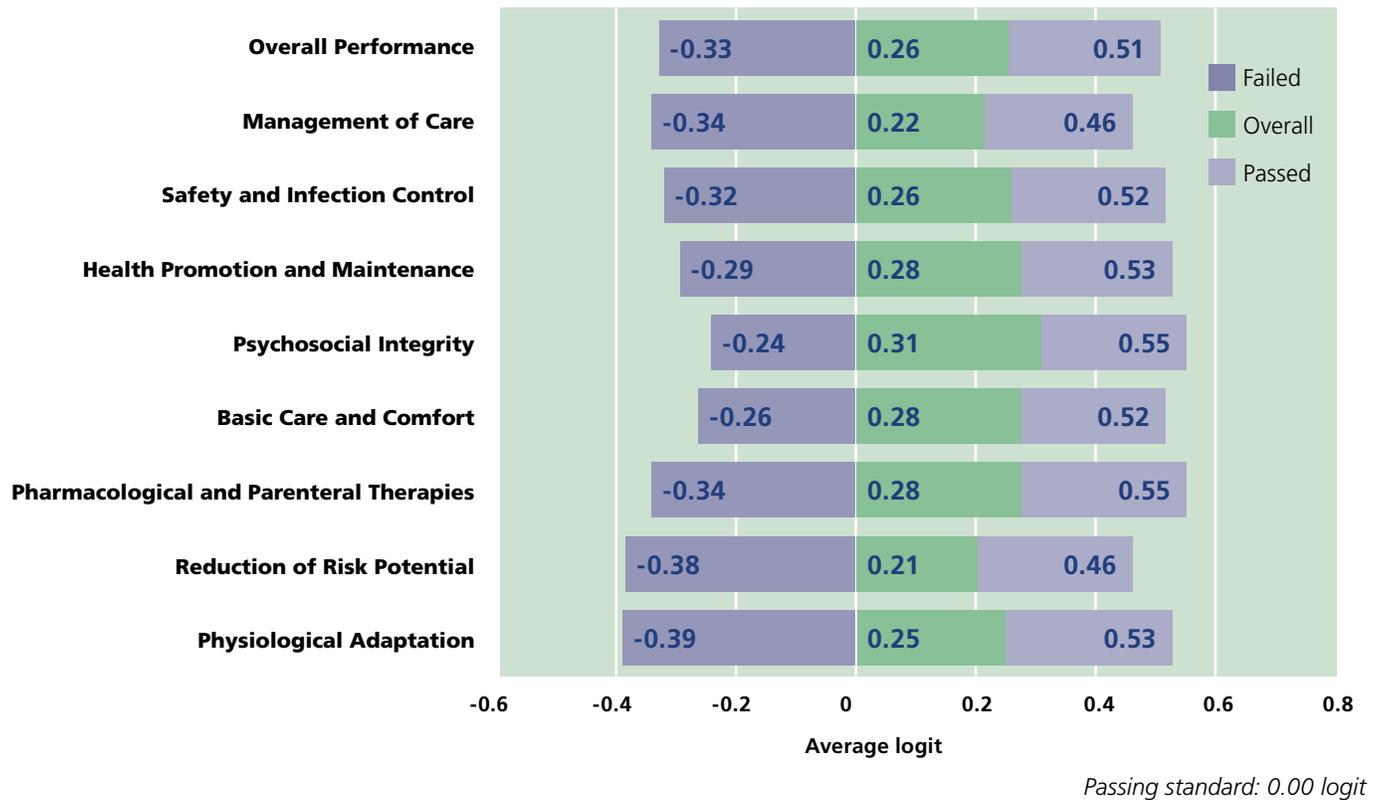**Figure 2** presents the same information as in Figure 1, but the average performance of graduates is broken down by the exam result: average performance of those graduates who passed the exam, who failed the exam, and overall writers (for reference).

The further the bar is to the right of the passing standard of 0.00 logits, the better the average performance. For those writers who were not successful, the further the bar is from the left of the passing standard, the worse the average performance.

Figure 2. Average NCLEX-RN test plan category performance of Canadian-educated graduates in 2015 (presented separately for those who passed and failed)

Category	Failed	Overall	Passed
Overall Performance	-0.33	0.26	0.51
Management of Care	-0.34	0.22	0.46
Safety and Infection Control	-0.32	0.26	0.52
Health Promotion and Maintenance	-0.29	0.28	0.53
Psychosocial Integrity	-0.24	0.31	0.55
Basic Care and Comfort	-0.26	0.28	0.52
Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies	-0.34	0.28	0.55
Reduction of Risk Potential	-0.38	0.21	0.46
Physiological Adaptation	-0.39	0.25	0.53

Average logit

Passing standard: 0.00 logit

For more information on the average performance of Canadian-educated graduates on each test plan category by province or territory of education, see "Appendix C: National test plan performance by province or territory of education."

Appendix A: Detailed exam statistics by province or territory of education

Table A1. Number of NCLEX-RN attempts taken by Canadian-educated graduates in 2015

Province or territory of education	First attempt		Second attempt		Third (or more) attempt[15]	
	Graduates	Pass rate	Graduates	Pass rate	Graduates	Pass rate
Alberta	1,637	69.1%	343	66.8%	28	50.0%
British Columbia	1,305	79.8%	123	74.0%	12	58.3%
Manitoba	490	74.1%	70	62.9%	0	-
New Brunswick	322	50.3%	132	47.7%	8	62.5%
Newfoundland and Labrador	250	79.2%	48	70.8%	0	-
Nova Scotia	393	75.8%	82	61.0%	*	50.0%
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	19	84.2%	*	66.7%	*	0.0%
Ontario	4,021	67.7%	848	72.1%	43	69.8%
Prince Edward Island	62	66.1%	**	63.2%	*	100.0%
Saskatchewan	549	60.5%	168	60.7%	5	40.0%
National total	**9,048**	**69.7%**	**1,836**	**67.4%**	**102**	**59.8%**

* To protect the privacy and confidentiality of Canadian graduates, values between one and four have been suppressed in this report and replaced by an asterisk (*). In cases where this is done, the next smallest cell count is also suppressed to ensure that the values cannot be derived. This value is replaced with two asterisks (**) to allow readers to know the value was not suppressed due to a low value.

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[15] Fourth attempts happened in Alberta and New Brunswick.

Appendix B: National exam duration statistics for repeat attempts

Table B1. Canadian-educated graduates: Exam duration statistics on their second NCLEX-RN attempt in 2015

Second attempt	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	All graduates
Average number of questions answered	136	174	149
% of writers answering minimum number of questions	36.5%	17.7%	30.4%
% of writers answering maximum number of questions	18.7%	31.6%	22.9%
Average exam duration	2 hr 47 min	3 hr 30 min	3 hr 01 min
Total number of graduates (for reference)	1,238	598	1,836

Number of questions: minimum of 75 and maximum of 265
Maximum test time: 6 hours

Table B2. Canadian-educated graduates: Exam duration statistics on their third and fourth NCLEX-RN attempts in 2015

Third and fourth attempts	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	All graduates
Average number of questions answered	147	202	169
% of writers answering minimum number of questions	36.1%	4.9%	23.5%
% of writers answering maximum number of questions	23.0%	46.3%	32.4%
Average exam duration	3 hr 00 min	3 hr 47 min	3 hr 19 min
Total number of graduates (for reference)	61	41	102

Number of questions: minimum of 75 and maximum of 265
Maximum test time: 6 hours

Appendix C: National test-plan performance by province or territory of education

The following figures show the national test-plan performance by province or territory of education. The statistics are based on average performance of Canadian-educated graduates' first attempts only, presented as average logit.

Figure C1. 2015 average NCLEX-RN test-plan performance of Canadian-educated graduates by province or territory of education — overall performance

Province/Territory	Average logit
National Average	0.26
Alberta	0.22
British Columbia	0.38
Manitoba	0.30
New Brunswick	0.02
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.32
Nova Scotia	0.30
Northwest Territories/Nunavut	0.31
Ontario	0.25
Prince Edward Island	0.23
Saskatchewan	0.14

Average logit

Passing standard: 0.00 logit

Figure C2. 2015 average NCLEX-RN test-plan performance of Canadian-educated graduates by province or territory of education — Management of Care

Province/Territory	Average logit
National Average	0.22
Alberta	0.18
British Columbia	0.31
Manitoba	0.27
New Brunswick	-0.02
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.30
Nova Scotia	0.28
Northwest Territories/Nunavut	0.50
Ontario	0.23
Prince Edward Island	0.22
Saskatchewan	0.05

Passing standard: 0.00 logit

Figure C3. Average NCLEX-RN test-plan performance of Canadian-educated graduates by province or territory of education — Safety and Infection Control

Province/Territory	Average logit
National Average	0.26
Alberta	0.12
British Columbia	0.37
Manitoba	0.28
New Brunswick	-0.01
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.43
Nova Scotia	0.31
Northwest Territories/Nunavut	0.25
Ontario	0.31
Prince Edward Island	0.25
Saskatchewan	0.13

Passing standard: 0.00 logit

Figure C4. 2015 average NCLEX-RN test-plan performance of Canadian-educated graduates by province or territory of education – Health Promotion and Maintenance

Province/Territory	Average logit
National Average	0.28
Alberta	0.31
British Columbia	0.35
Manitoba	0.38
New Brunswick	-0.02
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.34
Nova Scotia	0.35
Northwest Territories/Nunavut	0.27
Ontario	0.25
Prince Edward Island	0.34
Saskatchewan	0.30

Passing standard: 0.00 logit

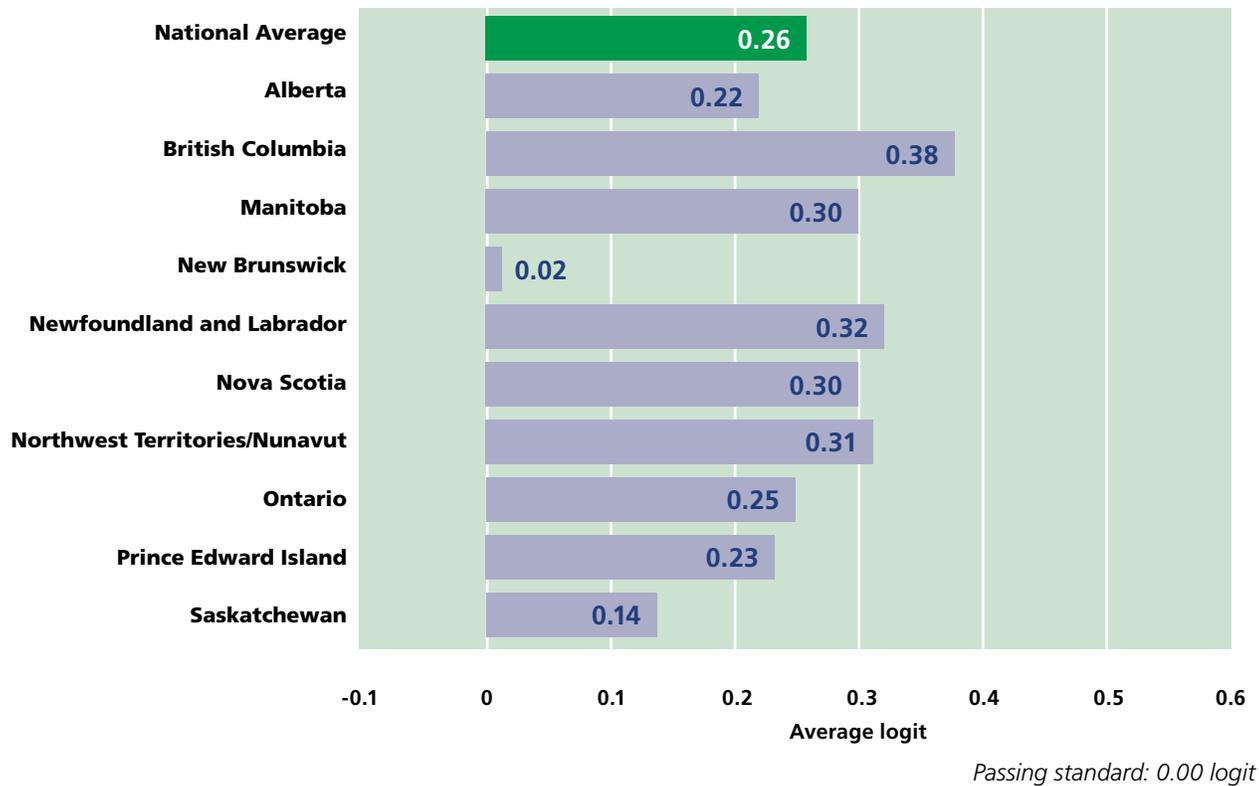**Figure C5. 2015 average NCLEX-RN test-plan performance of Canadian-educated graduates by province or territory of education — Psychosocial Integrity**

Province/Territory	Average logit
National Average	0.31
Alberta	0.32
British Columbia	0.43
Manitoba	0.43
New Brunswick	0.14
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.40
Nova Scotia	0.47
Northwest Territories/Nunavut	0.09
Ontario	0.28
Prince Edward Island	0.29
Saskatchewan	0.15

Passing standard: 0.00 logit

Figure C6. 2015 average NCLEX-RN test-plan performance of Canadian-educated graduates by province or territory of education — Basic Care and Comfort
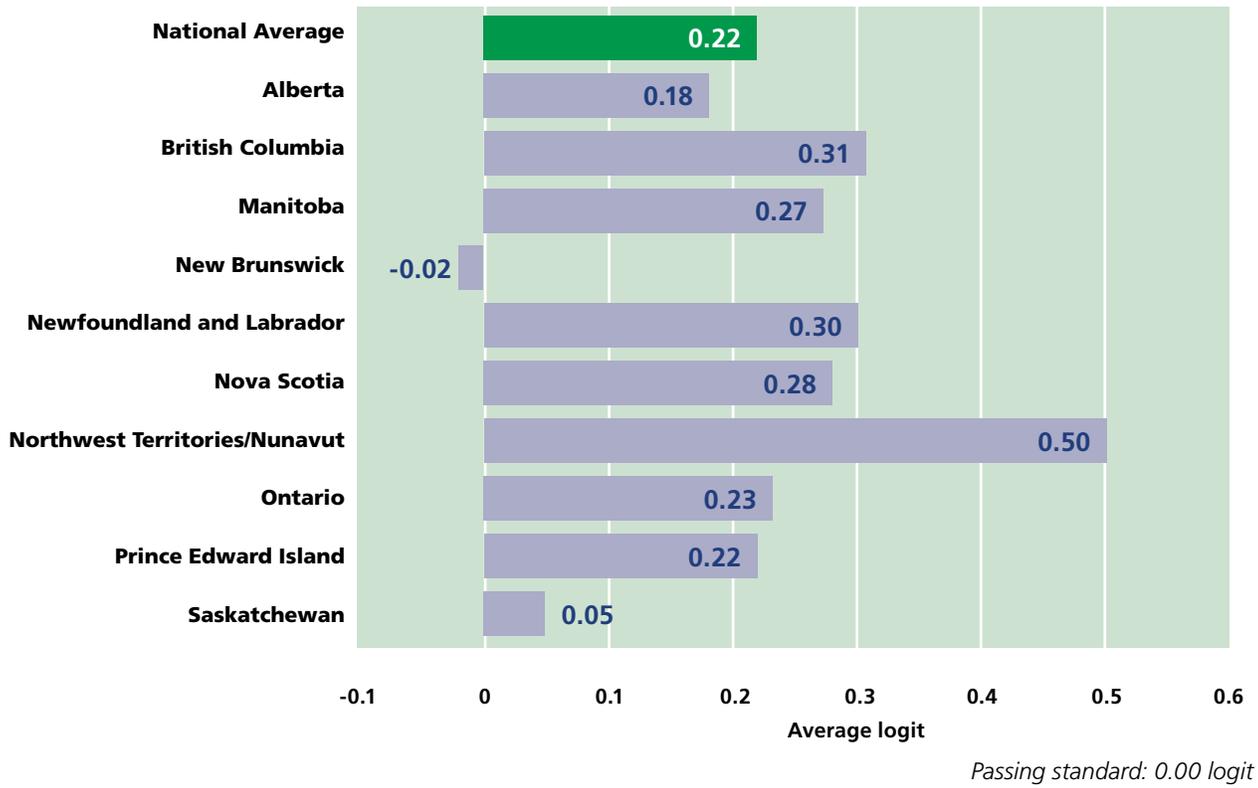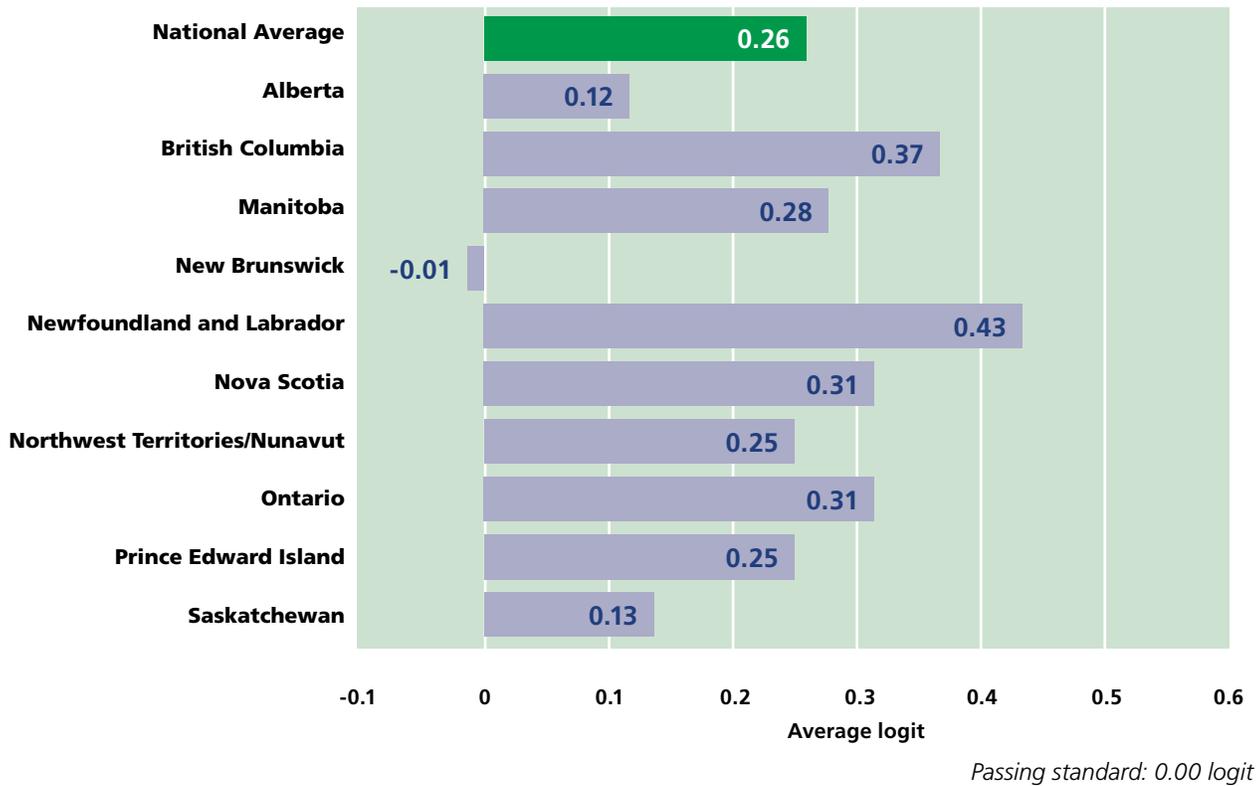
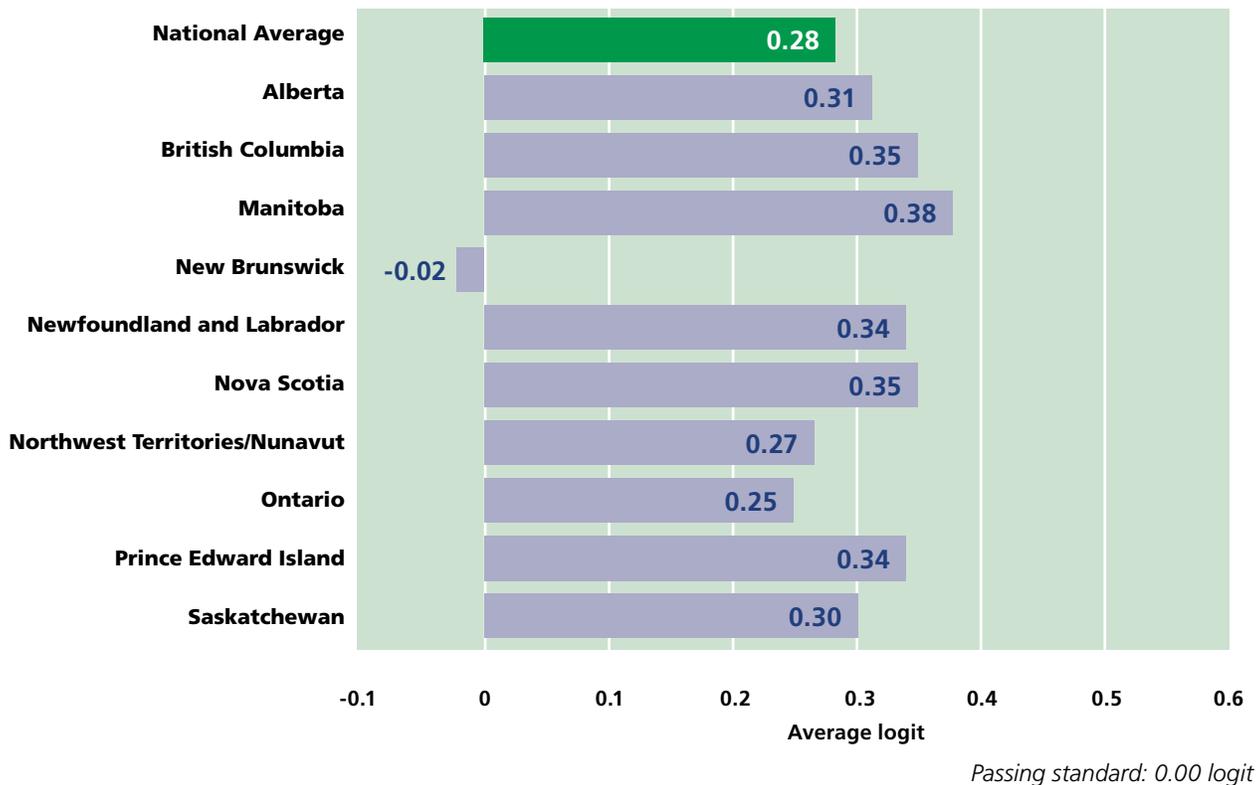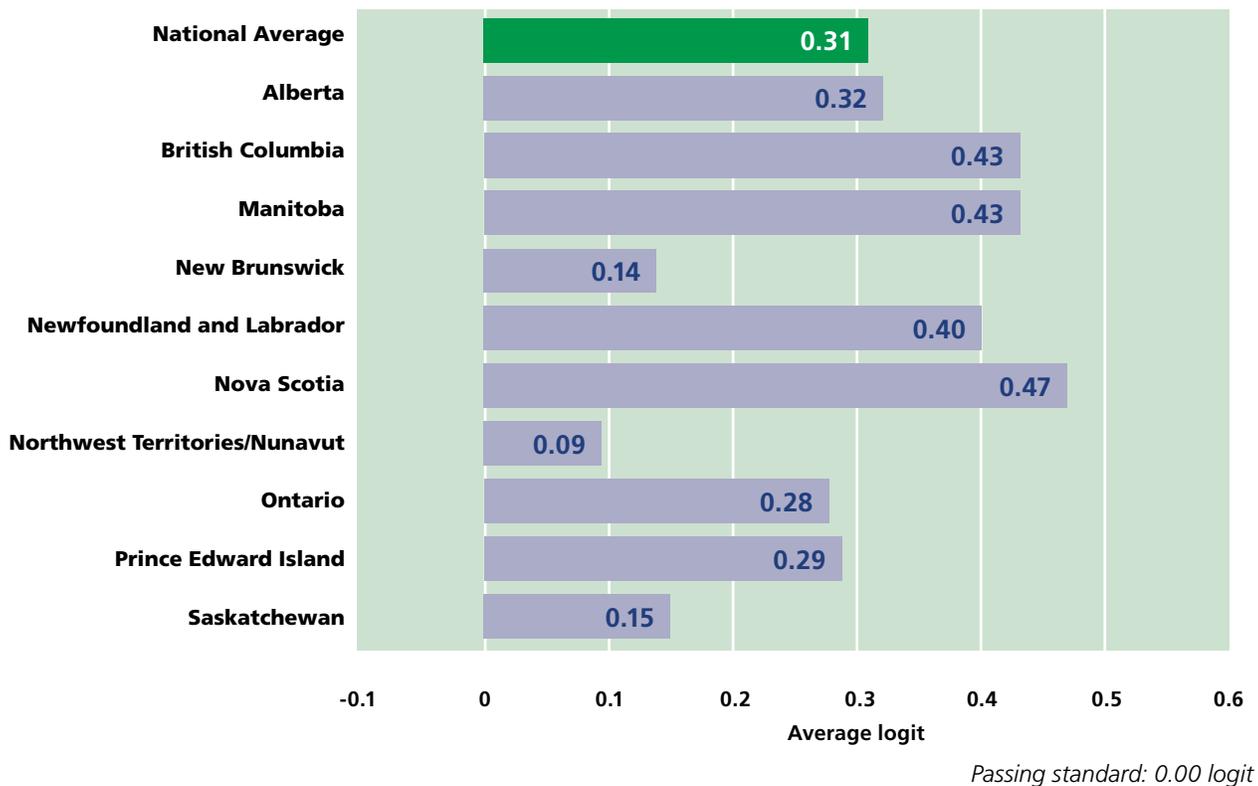| Province/Territory	Average logit
National Average	0.28
Alberta	0.29
British Columbia	0.41
Manitoba	0.33
New Brunswick	0.12
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.37
Nova Scotia	0.36
Northwest Territories/Nunavut	0.53
Ontario	0.25
Prince Edward Island	0.21
Saskatchewan	0.17

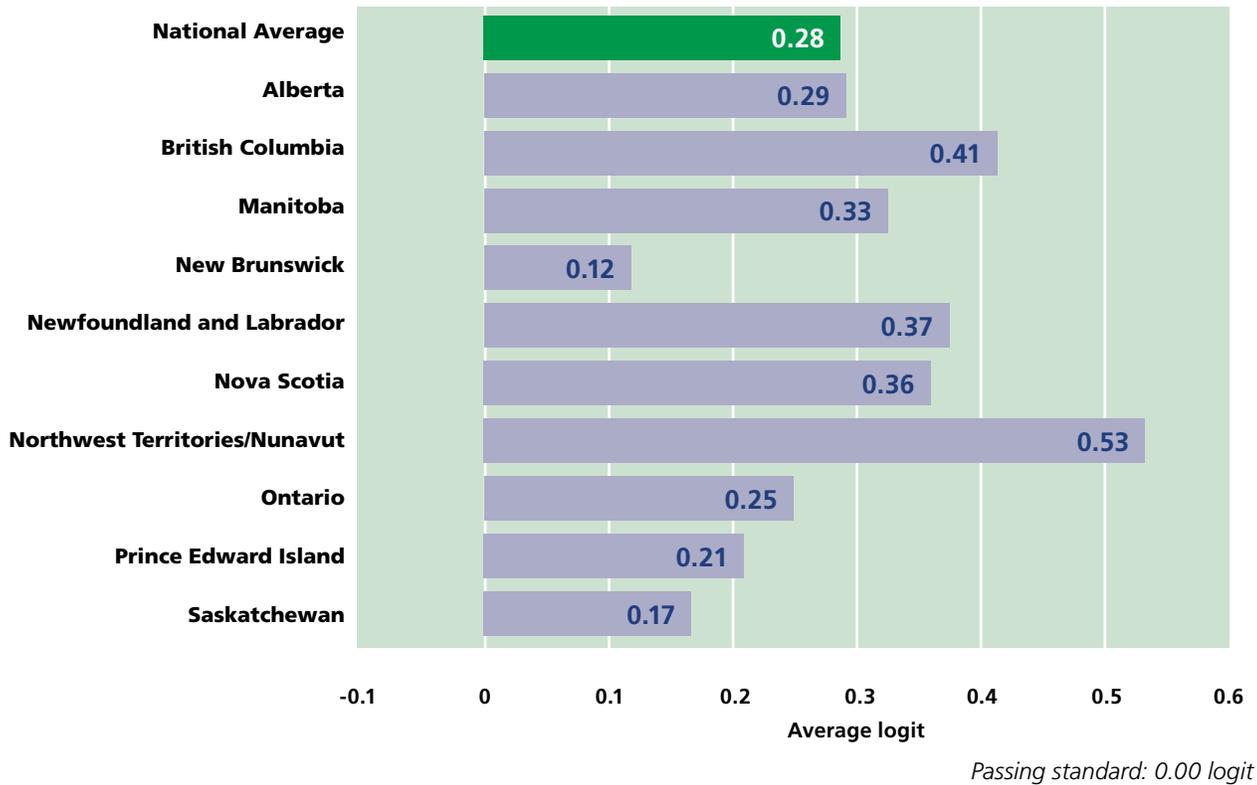Average logit

Passing standard: 0.00 logit

Figure C7. 2015 average NCLEX-RN test-plan performance of Canadian-educated graduates by province or territory of education — Pharmacological and Parenteral Therapies

Province/Territory	Average logit
National Average	0.28
Alberta	0.27
British Columbia	0.44
Manitoba	0.31
New Brunswick	0.03
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.31
Nova Scotia	0.18
Northwest Territories/Nunavut	0.34
Ontario	0.27
Prince Edward Island	0.11
Saskatchewan	0.20

Average logit
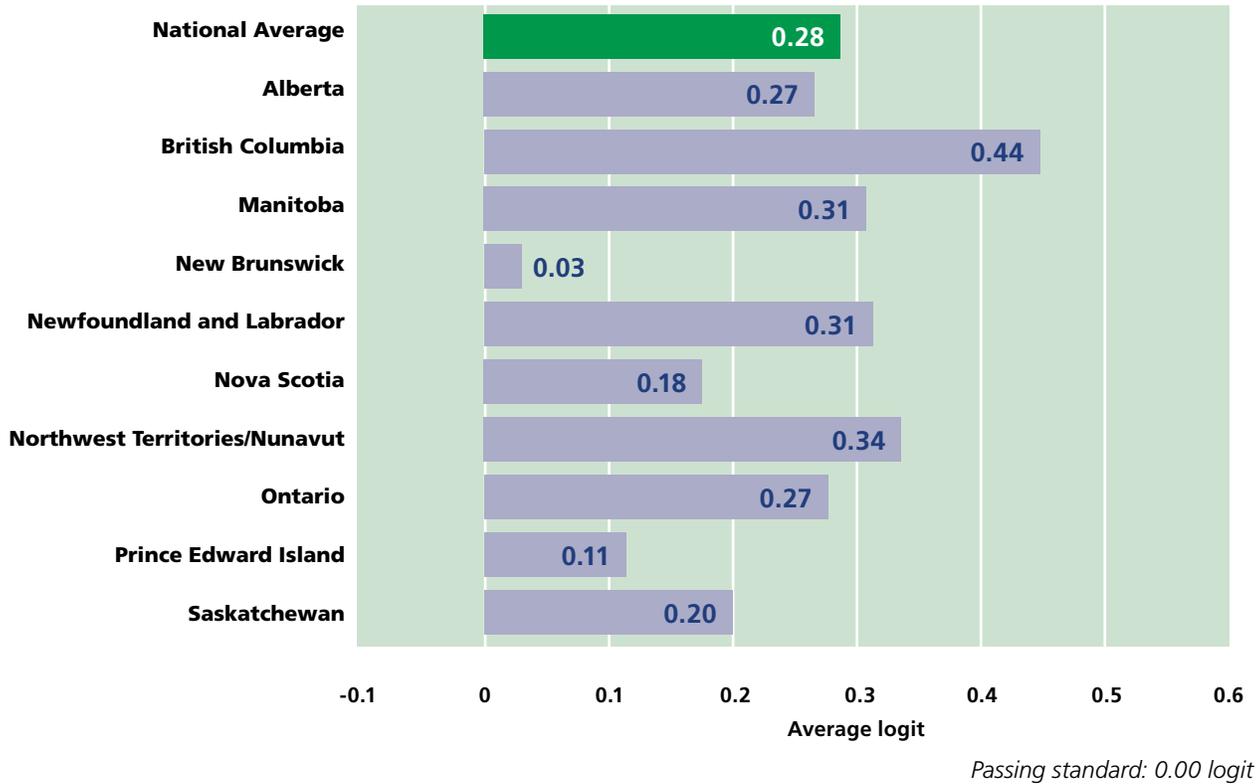
Passing standard: 0.00 logit

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Figure C8. 2015 average NCLEX-RN test-plan performance of Canadian-educated graduates by province or territory of education — Reduction of Risk Potential

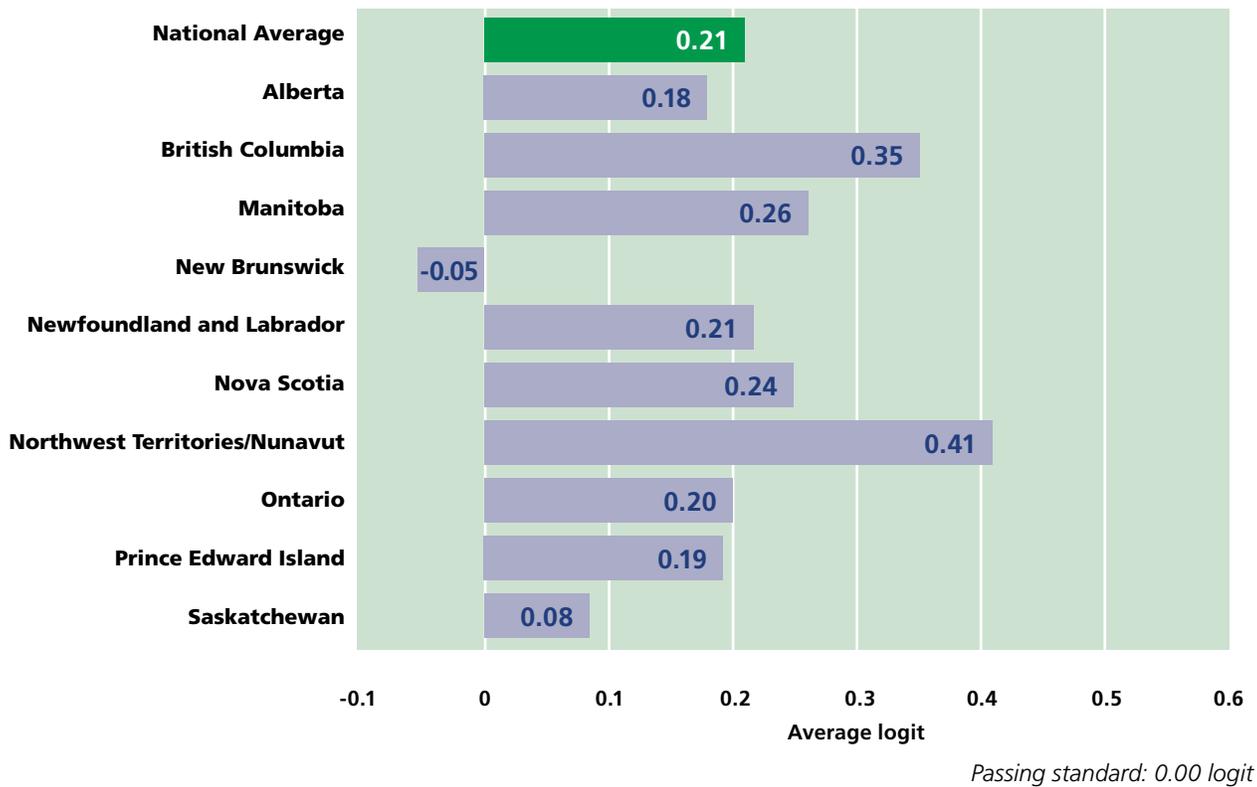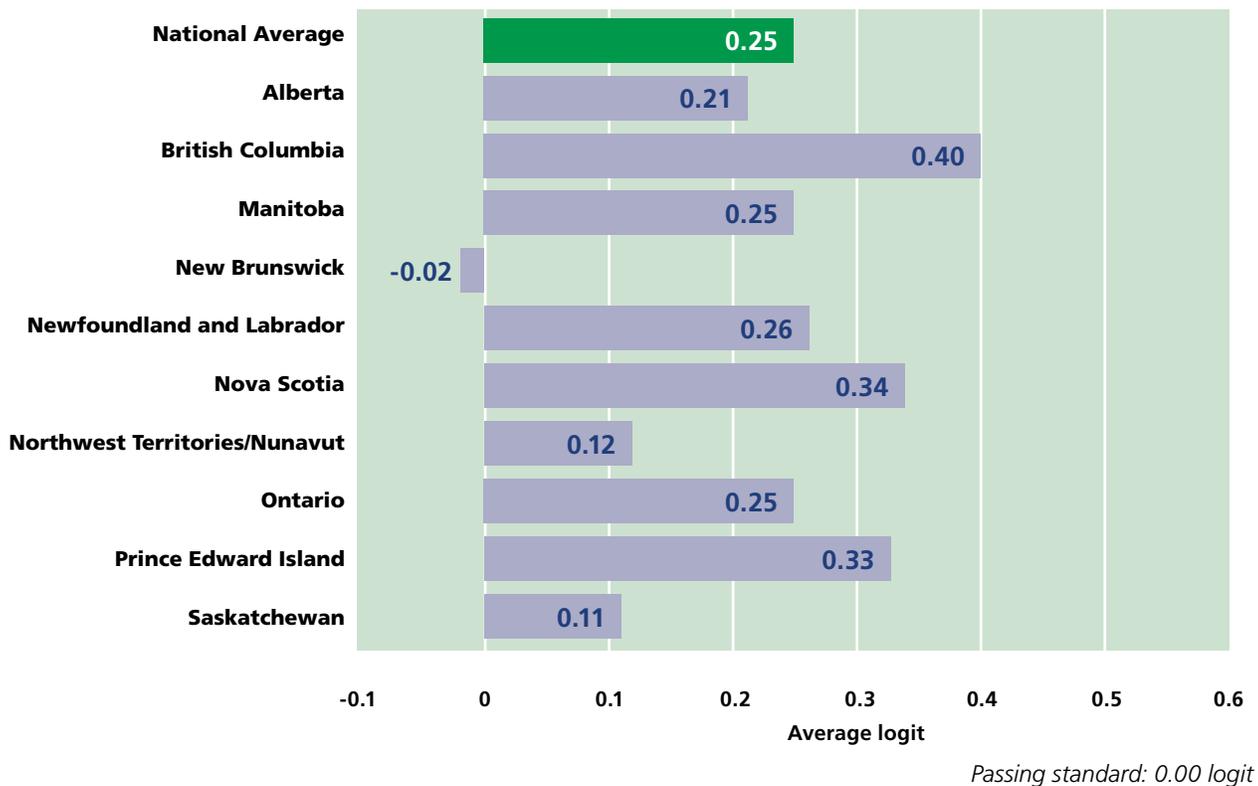| Province/Territory	Average logit
National Average	0.21
Alberta	0.18
British Columbia	0.35
Manitoba	0.26
New Brunswick	-0.05
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.21
Nova Scotia	0.24
Northwest Territories/Nunavut	0.41
Ontario	0.20
Prince Edward Island	0.19
Saskatchewan	0.08

Average logit

Passing standard: 0.00 logit

Figure C9. 2015 average NCLEX-RN test-plan performance of Canadian-educated graduates by province or territory of education — Physiological Adaptation

Province/Territory	Average logit
National Average	0.25
Alberta	0.21
British Columbia	0.40
Manitoba	0.25
New Brunswick	-0.02
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.26
Nova Scotia	0.34
Northwest Territories/Nunavut	0.12
Ontario	0.25
Prince Edward Island	0.33
Saskatchewan	0.11

Average logit

Passing standard: 0.00 logit

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