OKLAHOMA BOARD OF NURSING
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Nursing Education Programs Offering
Non-Traditional Learning Options Guidelines

I.   Purpose: The Oklahoma Board of Nursing recognizes that nursing education programs must be responsive to the changing needs of students and the health care environment. Because the nursing shortage is an ongoing problem, programs are incorporating a variety of non-traditional learning options. Examples of non-traditional learning options include individually-paced programs, workplace-based programs, and distance learning programs.

The mission of the Oklahoma Board of Nursing is to protect the public through the regulation of nursing education and nursing practice. The Board considers requests for non-traditional learning options in concurrence with that mission. All requests will be evaluated to ensure that the minimum standards for approved nursing education programs are met (See *Rules of the Oklahoma Board of Nursing*, OAC Title 485 Chapter 10, Subchapter 5. Minimum Standards for Approved Nursing Education Programs). These guidelines are to assist nursing education programs to develop non-traditional learning options that are in accordance to the rules. The faculty must also consider other Board policies and guidelines in the development of non-traditional learning options. These policies and guidelines include, but are not limited to, *Nursing Education Programs with Extended and Multiple Campuses Policy* and *Preceptorship Policy.*

II.   Assumptions

       A.   Technological advances are providing new opportunities for nursing education to provide expanded access to high-quality nursing education.
       B.   The development of non-traditional learning options requires thoughtful planning, implementation and evaluation to ensure that graduates are adequately prepared for safe practice and that human and financial resources are available to ensure the viability of the program.
       C.   The faculty of the nursing education program must assume the leadership role in developing, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of non-traditional learning options, based on their expertise in nursing education.
       D.   The development of non-traditional learning options requires adequate time and financial resources to support the development of curriculum and policies that are educationally sound, for faculty development in new teaching and learning techniques, and to provide a conducive learning environment.

E. Students who enroll in a non-traditional learning program must be provided with clear information regarding the nature of the program, including the fact that it is a non-traditional program, and mechanisms for the provision of learning experiences.

F. A program has a commitment for continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable all admitted students to complete the degree or certificate in a publicized timeframe.

G. Policies and procedures for faculty workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property, and appropriate coverage/back-up coverage must be established by the program or institution, if different than general faculty policies and procedures.

III. Definitions

A. Individually-paced program: A board-approved nursing education program in which components of the courses are offered as learning modules that a student can complete at their own pace, within the parameters established by the program.

B. Workplace-based program: An extended campus site of a board-approved nursing education program offered at a health care facility for a cohort of students who may be employed at that facility.

C. Distance learning program: At least 50% of the theory components of the board-approved nursing education program are offered by correspondence, on-line, through video-conferencing, or via CD-ROM.

IV. Guidelines for Individually-Paced Programs

A. A sufficient number of nursing faculty members who have expertise in self-directed learning must be readily available to facilitate learning activities at all times when students are in the classroom or laboratory [Refer to 485:10-5-5.2 (a)].

B. If students are allowed to complete learning activities online or independently at home, procedures for providing access during regular school hours to nursing faculty members with expertise in self-directed learning must be established [Refer to 485:10-5-5.2 (a) and 485:10-5-4 (d) & e)].

C. The faculty, in collaboration with the student, must establish timelines for completion of each component of the program and for completion of the entire program. Mechanisms for tracking progress and policies for failure to meet deadlines must be in place and should be provided to the student in writing [Refer to 485:10-5-6].

D. Instructional modules should indicate the average number of hours for completion of each component. This average number of hours for completion of each module should be used to calculate total contact hours in the classroom and laboratory. Clinical hours must be established in accordance with the curriculum plan presented to the Board for approval. All clinical hours should

be completed, in order to ensure that students have adequate opportunity to gain the skills required at the level of licensure [Refer to 485:10-5-4.1 and 485:10-5-6]. Provisions for advanced standing credit may be made, in accordance 485:10-5-5 (d & e).

E. Clinical rotation schedules must be established to ensure that students, who may be at different levels of the program, have adequate opportunity to complete clinical learning objectives in a timely manner [Refer to 485:10-5-4.1].

V. Guidelines for Workplace-Based Programs

A. Health care facilities may work collaboratively with the nursing education program in the development of a workplace-based program by providing financial support and space to the school to support the provision of the extended campus program [Refer to 485:10-5-4 (a)].

B. The educational institution must retain control of the educational experiences, including, but not limited to, appointment, promotion, and retention of faculty; policies for admission, progression, and graduation; curriculum; clinical experiences and supervision; and evaluation of student learning [Refer to 485:10-5-2 and 485:10-5-3.2 (b)].

C. Clinical experiences for students enrolled in workplace-based programs must be comparable to clinical experiences of students on the main campus, and must ensure that students are prepared for the full scope of practice at the appropriate level of licensure [Refer to 485:10-5-6 (d & e) and 485:10-5-4.1 (e)].

D. Programs offered at extended campus sites must provide students equal access to learning resources, student services, nursing faculty, and other support services offered to students on campus in order to ensure that students at off-campus locations have equal access to the elements necessary for their success [Refer to 485:10-5-4 and 485:10-5-5.2 (a)].

VI. Guidelines for Distance Learning Programs

A. Adequate resources must be available to support the distance learning technology and to provide training to faculty to ensure that they have expertise in the utilization of distance learning technologies and that they are able to adapt their teaching methods accordingly [Refer to 485:10-5-4 (a) and 485:10-5-5.2 (e)].

B. Programs offered through distance learning technology must provide students equal access to learning resources, student services, nursing faculty, and other support services offered to students on campus, in order to ensure that students at distant sites have equal access to the elements necessary for their success. Mechanisms for provision of this access will be clearly described in written materials provided to students. [Refer to 485:10-5-4 and 485:10-5-5.2(a)].

C.	If part-time faculty members are used for clinical experiences in distant sites, provision must be made for orientation, supervision, and evaluation of these faculty members [Refer to 485:10-5-3.2 (b)].

D.	A distance learning program must establish appropriate mechanisms for assessing individual student outcomes. Mechanisms for ensuring the security of students' personal information, examinations and other materials used in the evaluation of student learning must be established [Refer to 485:10-5-7 (b)].

E.	Provisions should be made to ensure that technical support is readily available to faculty and students [Refer to 485:10-5-4 (a) and (e)].

F.	Responsibility for delivery of course content and associated learning activities lies with the program (with the exception of technical problems on a student's personal computer). When technical issues prevent the delivery of a class at a scheduled time or course content within a reasonable period of time, a back-up plan must be in place and the plan must be implemented to ensure continuation of the program of learning.

G.	Appropriate interaction (synchronous or asynchronous) between faculty members and students and among students must be built into the design of the program. Students enrolled in courses utilizing interactive television technology should have faculty members readily available at the distant sites to facilitate onsite learning activities such as small group work, quizzes, and seminars[485:10-5-5.2(a)].

VII.	Selected Bibliography

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VIII. **Regulatory Authority**

OAC §485:10-5-2, 3.2, 4, 4.1, 5.2, 6 and 7