

Guidelines for Education Requirements for Registered Psychiatric Nurses in Canada

To become a Registered Psychiatric Nurse (RPN) in Canada, you must have successfully completed a recognized psychiatric nursing education program or equivalent. The regulatory bodies for RPNs in Canada have jointly established the following minimum accepted educational requirements for registered psychiatric nursing.

If you are an internationally educated nurse (IEN), we encourage you to use this guide to determine if your psychiatric nursing education background could meet the criteria for psychiatric nursing education equivalency in Canada.

Entry-level Competencies

Psychiatric nursing practice involves integrating evidence - informed theory into clinical decision making and judgement. It cannot be reduced to a list of tasks. Thus, Canadian RPN regulators have established the minimum accepted educational requirements for Registered Psychiatric Nursing based on the entry-level competencies.

The Registered Psychiatric Nurse Entry-Level Competencies (2014) reflect contemporary, evidence - informed psychiatric nursing theory, research, education and clinical practice. The Canadian Psychiatric Nursing education programs prepare entry - level RPNs to apply general medical/surgical nursing and psychiatric nursing knowledge to work with clients who have complex psychosocial, mental health and physical needs.

Clinical and practicum experiences in the psychiatric nursing education program provide opportunities for experiential learning of curriculum concepts and content linked to attaining the entry-level competencies. The theoretical components of a psychiatric nursing program will also be assessed using the Registered Psychiatric Nurse Entry-Level Competencies (2014).

Clinical Practice

In addition to the above requirements, a minimum of 1000 clinical practice hours, including medical and surgical nursing, is required. These hours do not include periods of leave. For example, we do not count vacation, public holidays or sick time in these minimum hours.

We define clinical practice as an organized, formal learning experience in a practice setting, where the student psychiatric nurse is under direct supervision of an instructor or is working with a preceptor. In the clinical practice components of the program, the student must be working towards achieving specifically identified competencies in psychiatric nursing.

Clinical practice hours must include:

- i. A minimum of 775 clinical hours in psychiatric nursing
- ii. A minimum of 225 clinical hours in general medical/surgical nursing