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# NLN CNEA Pre-Accreditation Candidacy Policy

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## OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

Nursing programs desiring to seek initial accreditation from NLN CNEA must first be considered eligible and ready to pursue NLN CNEA accreditation. Assessing program readiness through the pre-accreditation candidacy process provides program faculty the opportunity to discern the ability of the program(s) to meet the NLN CNEA Standards of Accreditation.

Nursing academic units desiring to seek pre-accreditation candidacy status for one or more of their nursing programs must first complete an online eligibility application. Upon submission the pre-accreditation candidacy application will be reviewed by the **CNEA** staff for completeness. All completed applications will be forwarded to the **CNEA** Program Review Committee (PRC) for review by the PRC's Initial Program Application Subcommittee (IPASC) which will render a recommendation to grant pre-accreditation status or to deny pre-accreditation status with rationale for the recommendation. The IPASC recommendation will be forwarded to the **CNEA** Board of Commissioners for action and final decision on the application.

If pre-accreditation candidacy is approved for the program(s) put forth, the nursing academic unit will have a *maximum of three years within which to complete the accreditation process and achieve* initial accreditation with NLN CNEA. Programs may move forward with an application for initial accreditation at any time after the granting of pre-accreditation candidacy status. Granting pre-accreditation candidacy indicates that the program(s) have the potential to meet the NLN CNEA Accreditation Standards but does not guarantee that a program will ultimately be successful in achieving NLN CNEA initial accreditation status when sought within the three year time frame.

Nursing programs who desire to seek pre-accreditation candidacy status and who have never been accredited, are newly developing, or in transition may request the assistance of a NLN CNEA accreditation process navigator and are encouraged to attend NLN CNEA educational programming related to accreditation standards, policies, procedures, and expectations in preparation for filing for pre-accreditation status.

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## PRE-ACCREDITATION CANDIDACY POLICY

Nursing programs seeking initial accreditation from NLN CNEA must first be considered eligible and ready to pursue NLN CNEA accreditation. Nursing programs begin the journey toward NLN CNEA accreditation by first making application to pursue initial accreditation through the pre-accreditation candidacy process. Nursing program personnel requesting pre-accreditation candidacy consideration are required to complete and submit an online pre-accreditation candidacy application. All applications are reviewed by the NLN CNEA staff for completeness prior to being forwarded to the Program Review Committee's Initial Program Application Subcommittee for review. Incomplete applications will be returned with comments designed to facilitate a completed application process. Recommendations from the IPASC are forwarded to the NLN CNEA Board of Commissioners for decision-making regarding awarding of pre-accreditation status. Programs perceived to be capable of meeting the NLN CNEA Standards of Accreditation within a three-year window are awarded pre-accreditation status which affords the opportunity to pursue and complete the initial accreditation process at a time of their choosing within the designated three year time frame.

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The pre-accreditation candidacy application must contain materials that demonstrate the following eligibility criteria:

1. Evidence that the governing (parent) institution of the nursing unit or program pursuing NLN CNEA accreditation is legally authorized to grant nursing degrees, diplomas, or credited certificates in the state or territory in which it resides.
2. The governing (parent) institution is also accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. If a program is operated by a hospital, vocational school, or other type of education institution, it must demonstrate that it holds a type of USDE recognized accreditation that is consistent with the mission of the governing institution and stated programmatic goals.
3. Evidence that the nursing program is legally approved or accredited by the state board of nursing in which it operates, as required by applicable state or territorial statutes.
4. Evidence to support a *reasonable conclusion* that the program can demonstrate the achievement of the NLN CNEA Standards of Accreditation.
5. A formal request from the chief academic nurse administrator, and co-signed by the chief executive officer of the legally designated governing institution of their desire to initiate the NLN CNEA accreditation process.
6. Evidence of publicly posted notices at the time of submission of the application requesting third-party comments from communities of interest.
7. Payment of non-refundable initial application filing fees as published at the time of application.

**PLEASE NOTE:** *Any nursing unit (or program) or parent institution seeking NLN CNEA pre-accreditation candidacy that has previously been denied accreditation or pre-accreditation*

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# NLN CNEA Pre-Accreditation Candidacy Policy

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*status by another accrediting agency must provide documentation related to the conditions of the denial and steps taken to rectify the issues which prompted the denial action.*

*Pre-accreditation candidacy applications **will not be accepted** from any institution or program that has pending action, including warning or probationary status, against their operational authority within their state or territory or with a regional, national, or other nursing accreditation body.*

## NURSING CONSORTIA

Nursing programs that have formed officially recognized consortia may be eligible to seek NLN CNEA pre-accreditation candidacy through the process outlined in the preceding section. All governing institutions within which the consortia nursing programs exist must sign the request for pre-accreditation candidacy as a means of verifying their support to pursue initial accreditation from NLN CNEA as a unified entity. All nursing programs within the consortia that offer the same program type, sequential or accelerated programming, or innovative curriculum designs that lead to authorized degrees can be considered for candidacy as a single program entity. The parent institution(s) must be accredited by a regional or national accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The NLN CNEA staff is available to answer questions regarding nursing consortia and their eligibility to apply for pre-accreditation candidacy status.

## THIRD-PARTY COMMENTS

NLN CNEA expects the engagement of communities of interest in the accreditation process including faculty, students, administrators, alumnae, and community as an indication of stakeholder commitment to program quality and integrity. As part of the pre-accreditation candidacy process, the academic nursing unit is required to communicate information regarding the NLN CNEA accreditation process and established timetable to their defined community of interest.

During the pre-accreditation candidacy review process, the program is required to publicly post a notice informing students, communities of interest, and other members of the public of their rights and responsibilities to submit comments directly to the NLN CNEA staff regarding the program(s) under review. ***The program must submit evidence of such posting when submitting the pre-accreditation application.*** Third-party comments will be shared with the NLN CNEA Program Review Committee's Initial Program Application Subcommittee and the Board of Commissioners during the review process. The comments will be shared with the chief academic nursing officer who will be given an opportunity to respond to the comments if desired. Third-party comments and a program's response are not part of the pre-accreditation application but are considered additions to the application materials submitted for review by the IPASC. Third-party comments must be received by the NLN CNEA no later than 14 days prior to the scheduled IPASC review.

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# NLN CNEA Pre-Accreditation Candidacy Policy

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## PRE-ACCREDITATION CANDIDACY REVIEW DECISIONS:

- 1. Pre-Accreditation Status Granted for a Maximum Period of Three Years:** Upon formal notification in writing that pre-accreditation status is granted by NLN CNEA, the nursing program has three years from the date of the NLN CNEA Board of Commissioners' initial action in which to complete the accreditation process and achieve initial accreditation.
- 2. Denial of Pre-Accreditation Status:** Upon review and recommendation by the NLN CNEA Program Review Committee's Initial Program Application Subcommittee, the NLN CNEA Board of Commissioners determine that, at the time of application, the program has not demonstrated evidence that supports a reasonable conclusion that the program will comply with the accreditation standards and quality indicators within the designated three year time frame. The chief academic nurse administrator will be formally notified in writing of this decision. The notification will identify areas of concern related to the NLN CNEA accreditation standards that were identified as an outcome of the Board of Commissioners' deliberations. A program may resubmit for pre-accreditation candidacy after a minimal waiting period of 12 months following a denial. The new pre-accreditation candidacy application must also contain an explanation and supporting documentation that delineates the steps the program has taken to correct the previously identified areas of concern that lead to the prior denial of pre-accreditation candidacy status. As an adverse decision, the Board of Commissioners' action is appealable.
- 3. Termination of Pre-Accreditation Status:** The pre-accreditation status of the program may be terminated by NLN CNEA if the three year maximum time frame to complete the accreditation process is exceeded, and thus not met. The pre-accreditation status may also be terminated by NLN CNEA if the accreditation status of the governing institution changes; the accreditation status or state regulatory status of the nursing program changes; or other substantive institutional or program changes occur affecting the stability of the nursing program.
- 4. Voluntary Withdrawal from Pre-Accreditation Status:** The chief academic nurse administrator may formally request a withdrawal of pre-accreditation status prior to pursuing accreditation status at any time during the three year pre-accreditation term. A program may resubmit an application for candidacy status after a wait period of 12 months without historical bias if the pre-accreditation status was voluntarily withdrawn. An exception to this wait period may be granted by the NLN CNEA Executive Committee for valid reasons.

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## PUBLIC NOTICE OF PRE-ACCREDITATION STATUS

The NLN CNEA publicly discloses all Board of Commissioner actions regarding program pre-accreditation status and accreditation status. Nursing academic units may choose to publicly disclose the NLN CNEA accreditation status of its programs. For programs receiving PRE-ACCREDITATION status from NLN CNEA the nursing academic unit must use the following public statement:

“The [insert name of the institution and program(s)] holds pre-accreditation status from the National League for Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation, located at 2600 Virginia Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20037. Holding pre-accreditation status does not guarantee that initial accreditation by NLN CNEA will be received.”

## COMPLETING THE PRE-ACCREDITATION CANDIDACY APPLICATION PROCESS

The pre-accreditation application consists of two distinct sections. The *first* section requests information regarding the program(s) being put forth for pre-accreditation candidacy consideration and the parent /governing institution in which the programs reside. The *second* section of the application asks for documentation of the alignment of program and institutional resources with program and institutional mission and goals, and how the programs, at the time of application, align with the NLN CNEA Standards of Accreditation. Application materials are located on the NLN CNEA website at [www.nln.org/cnea](http://www.nln.org/cnea).

**NOTE:** *Misrepresentation of information on the pre-accreditation candidacy application is grounds for denial of pre-accreditation status. The signatures of the institutional chief executive officer and chief academic nurse administrator on the application form signify the information to be accurate to the best of their knowledge and the academic nursing unit's acknowledgment of this provision. Pre-accreditation candidacy will not be granted to programs that have had the legal operational authority of their institution or program denied or revoked or if there is pending action, including warning or probationary status, against their operational authority or with a regional, national or other nursing accreditation body.*

*Pre-accreditation candidacy will not be granted to nursing programs that have either been denied accreditation or had their accreditation status withdrawn **within the last 12 months** by another national nursing accreditation body.*

*Programs that have previously had their accreditation status withdrawn or denied by another national nursing accreditation body may request a preliminary review by the NLN CNEA Board of Commissioner's Executive Committee for individual consideration of the potential to pursue pre-accreditation candidacy with the NLN CNEA. The program is required to fully disclose the circumstances that precipitated the action to deny or withdraw accreditation along with supporting evidence that the program has taken the steps necessary to rectify the situation that led to accreditation being denied or withdrawn. The **CNEA's** Executive Committee's decision to grant permission for the program to pursue pre-accreditation candidacy does not guarantee the program will be approved for pre-accreditation status.*