

Differences Between BON Approval and Accreditation

As background, licensure in nursing is a two-pronged system. In order for nursing graduates to be eligible to take the NCLEX, the U.S. nursing regulatory model dictates that the new nurse must show evidence of graduating from a BON-approved nursing program. By making students eligible to take the NCLEX, nursing faculty verify that nursing students are competent to practice. Therefore, nurse educators have enormous power in the licensure model in the U.S. BONs rely on each other to make sound program approval decisions so that mobility across jurisdictions can be as seamless as possible. There is no doubt that redundancy currently exists between program approval by BONs and national nursing accreditation. However, there are some important differences in BON approval and national nursing accreditation:

1. The missions of national nursing accreditations and BONs approval differ. Accreditors assess quality and continuous quality improvement and program effectiveness while BONs, with their mission of public protection, evaluate and enforce standards.
2. BONs are strategically positioned to assure that all of these programs meet standards. BONs are particularly in close touch with developing programs.
3. BONs, by virtue of being state/jurisdiction-based, have the unique opportunity of being able to understand the nursing education issues in that specific jurisdiction, as compared to national accreditors.
4. National nursing accreditors do not have statutory authority to close nursing programs that don't meet standards, while BONs have this legal authority over nursing programs.
5. BONs are seeing increased numbers of new programs and routinely investigate fraudulent nursing programs, working closely with state agencies to issue cease and desist orders.
6. A BON's oversight of nursing education programs serves the public's best interest by curtailing programs that are shown to have high attrition and/or licensure exam failure rates.
7. BONs may share information about fraudulent programs through conference calls and webinars, and are able to communicate with each other about questionable programs through NCSBN's members-only, Web-based program, the Falsified Identity Tracking System (FITS).
8. If there are sufficient grounds, BONs can act right away when there are problems with nursing programs. The national nursing accrediting agencies are reliant on their boards' of directors meeting twice a year to take action and therefore cannot act as quickly.

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