Alberta is home to more than 34,000 registered nurses (RNs). RNs are skilled, educated members of health-care teams. In Alberta, all entry level education programs leading to RN registration are at the post-secondary (university) baccalaureate (bachelor) degree level, after 12 years of elementary and secondary schooling. Graduates are prepared to care for people of all ages, in various practice settings. Theoretical and clinical education incorporates medicine and surgery, mental health, maternal and newborn (obstetrics), and child health (pediatrics). Alberta entry level education programs do not graduate specialists in a specific area of nursing. CARN A does not register specialists in a specific area of nursing.

The College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARN A) is the organization responsible for the regulation and licensure of registered nurses in Alberta, Canada. The mandate and focus of the regulation of nursing is protection of the public safety. Regulation of the profession assures the public that they are receiving safe, competent, and ethical care from qualified registered nurses. CARN A registration and a valid practice permit are required by law in order to work or practice as registered nurse in Alberta.

The registration process for internationally educated nurses (IENs) in Alberta occurs in several stages:

**Application for Assessment**

An application is made to CARN A for an assessment of eligibility towards meeting the entrance requirements for registration as a registered nurse in Alberta.

This starts with creating a User ID at www.nurses.ab.ca then submitting an Intent to Apply. CARN A begins the assessment of the applicant’s eligibility for registration only after all required application documentation is received.

The Health Professions Act (HPA) Sections 28 to 37 and the Registered Nurses Profession Regulation Section 9 (Substantial Equivalence), Section 10 (Registration examination attempts), Section 11 (Good character, reputation), Section 12 (Fitness to Practice), Section 13 (English language requirements) and Section 6 (Temporary Registration) provide the basis for CARN A application and registration requirements. The Health Professions Act and the Registered Nurses Profession Regulation can be found at www.nurses.ab.ca

Application and registration requirements include:
1. English language proficiency
2. Identity confirmation
3. Graduation from a generalist registered nursing education program
4. Verification of registered nurse registration
5. Currency of nursing practice
6. Fitness to practice
7. Good character, reputation
8. Passing the registration examination
9. Obtaining a satisfactory Alberta employer reference(s)
10. Fulfilling Continuing Competence Program requirements
The education of registered nurses around the world varies, not only from country to country but also from nursing program to nursing program and from hospital to hospital. Credential terms (such as degree or diploma) have different meanings in different countries and the depth and breadth of nursing education theory and clinical education is often not evident on transcripts. Transcripts from a nursing education program completed years ago may not reflect an applicant’s current nursing experience and competence. Health systems also vary from location to location and the role and expectations of the registered nurse within these health systems vary in terms of the breadth and scope of responsibilities the nurse carries out in practice.

**Section 28 (2) c) of the Health Professions Act states:**
An applicant may provide evidence of competence in the practice of the profession c) by satisfying the registrar, the registration committee or competence committee, of having as determined in accordance with the regulations, a combination of education, experience, practice or other qualifications, that demonstrates the competence required for registration as a regulated member.

**Substantially equivalent competence** is the term used by CARNA to describe the combination of education, experience, practice or other qualifications that demonstrates the competence required for registration as a regulated member.

**Section 9 (2) of the Registered Nurses Profession Regulation states:**
In determining whether or not an applicant’s qualifications are substantially equivalent …, the Registrar may require the applicant to undergo examinations, testing, and assessment activities to assist with the determination.

**Section 9 (3) of the Registered Nurses Profession Regulation states:**
The Registrar may direct the applicant to undergo any education or training activities the Registrar may consider necessary in order for the applicant to be eligible for registration.

CARNA assessment of substantially equivalent competence initially involves the review of educational transcripts, nurse registration verifications, and other documents which provide information regarding competence to practice. CARNA looks for evidence that the applicant currently possesses the competencies which will ensure they can fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the registered nurse in the Canadian health care system that are expected by the nursing profession, the public, and other health care providers. An applicant may be asked by CARNA to provide more information regarding their education program, nursing registration history, and nursing practice experience during this part of the assessment.

Following the review of application documents, CARNA may notify an applicant that a Substantially Equivalent Competency (SEC) assessment is required as part of the assessment of eligibility for registration. The SEC assessment involves paper and pencil examinations, and clinical lab and case management situations designed to provide the applicant with the opportunity to demonstrate their competencies. An applicant may be referred for a general assessment, or one or more focussed assessments for specialty clinical areas (Child Health nursing, Maternal/Newborn nursing, Mental Health nursing), or some combination of the general and focussed assessments.
If gaps are identified in competencies on review of application documentation or as established through an SEC assessment, CARNA will decide whether additional nursing education will be required before the applicant may pursue further steps in the registration process. Depending upon the nature and extent of any identified gaps, the assigned education may be in the form of one or more nursing theory or clinical courses, or a nursing bridging education program.

A full bridging education program, which includes theory courses and a supervised clinical experience, provides opportunities to learn about nursing in Canada and assist with acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for practice in the Canadian health care system. Mount Royal University (MRU) offers a full bridging program in nursing. For more information about the Bridge to Canadian Nursing program, please visit the MRU website at: http://www.mtroyal.ca/ProgramsCourses/FacultiesSchoolsCentres/HealthCommunityStudies/Programs/BridgetoCanadianNursing/

If competency gaps are extensive and there is not a sufficient foundation on which to build a bridge to Canadian nursing practice, CARNA may decide that an applicant must take an entire basic registered nursing education program in Alberta as a route to registered nurse registration.

The possible assessment decisions are:
- i. eligible to proceed directly to writing the registration exam and working with temporary registration without completing additional education,
- ii. completion of the full bridging program is required;
- iii. completion of one or more individual education courses is required;
- iv. not eligible for registration and the application is refused.

In some cases, the applicant is notified of their eligibility for restricted temporary registration and a restricted temporary permit. This decision means CARNA identified that the applicant has a gap in one or both of the following specialty areas: Maternal/Newborn nursing (Obstetrics), Child Health nursing (Pediatrics). The applicant is permitted to work as a graduate nurse with specific restrictions on their practice and they must fulfill certain conditions, such as additional education to fill the identified gap area(s), before the practice restrictions will be removed from their temporary permit and becoming eligible to write the registration examination. Restricted temporary permit holders are expected to progress toward full registered nurse registration.

Successfully completing the remaining requirements for registration as a registered nurse

This step includes:

- Passing the registration examination in not more than 3 attempts,

and

Demonstrating safe, competent, ethical nursing practice by working as a graduate nurse in Alberta with a temporary permit and obtaining satisfactory employer reference(s). Applicants apply for a temporary permit in order to work as a graduate nurse.
The Canadian Registered Nurse Examination (CRNE) is the current registration entrance exam required by CARNA. This requirement also applies to all new Alberta registered nursing graduates. The CRNE is considered a further measure of competence. The CRNE is scheduled three times per year on a date in February, June, and October and may only be written in Canada. Information about the examination and how to prepare may be found on the CARNA website at [www.nurses.ab.ca](http://www.nurses.ab.ca) and the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) website at [www.cna-aiic.ca](http://www.cna-aiic.ca).

CARNA also recognizes the professional nursing examination of the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec (OIIQ) offered since January 2000. Any attempt at a registration examination in Canada counts toward the three (3) attempts at the registration examination allowed by CARNA.

Holding temporary registration is not required to write the CRNE. However, since the CRNE can only be written in Canada, temporary registration allows the applicant to work while preparing for and sitting the examination.

Registration on the temporary register is at the discretion of the Registrar until the requirements for registration have been met. Temporary registration is valid for up to 6 months and may be renewed not more than 2 times for a maximum of 3 temporary permits, unless in the opinion of the Registration Committee, there are extenuating circumstances. *(Registered Nurses Profession Regulation 232/2005 Section 6)*. Regulation Section 22 Conditions identifies that, when issuing a practice permit, the Registrar may impose conditions on the permit.

It is CARNA’s expectation that a temporary permit holder intends to write the CRNE. Progress on meeting the CRNE requirement is monitored by CARNA during the temporary registration process.

The employer reference must be based on a minimum of 225 hours of employment, excluding orientation. The reference must provide satisfactory confirmation of good character and reputation and ability to practice safely, competently, and ethically in the Alberta health care system. Employer references satisfactory to the registrar are needed to maintain temporary registration and to go to initial RN registration.

**Eligible to apply for full registered nurse registration with CARNA.**

Once the applicant has completed all of the requirements, they are able to apply for a registered nurse practice permit. The CARNA practice year is October 1st to September 30th. Registered Nurse practice permits generally expire on September 30th and all registered nurses must apply to renew their CARNA practice permit by September 1st every year.

CARNA’s Continuing Competence Program (CCP) requirements are mandatory for individuals **applying for their first registered nurse practice permit** and when applying for annual renewal of their registered nurse practice permit. More information about the CARNA Continuing Competence Program can be found at the following link: [http://www.nurses.ab.ca/Carna/index.aspx?WebStructureID=1197](http://www.nurses.ab.ca/Carna/index.aspx?WebStructureID=1197)