



Use of Title Standards

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Purpose

The *Use of Title Standards* are developed and approved as outlined in Section 133 of the *Health Professions Act* (HPA, 2000). The purpose of the Use of Title Standards is to identify the titles, abbreviations, and initials **REGISTRANTS**¹ may use in Alberta, and to establish the expectations for their use. This includes the use of the title '**SPECIALIST**'.

The HPA (2000), Part 7, Section 128, provides schedules that authorize the titles, abbreviations, and initials that registrants of a **REGULATED PROFESSION** can use. This section of the HPA outlines the prohibition and the exception to the use of protected titles including college, registered, regulated, regulated health professional, doctor, surgeon, pathologist, oncologist, nurse, and specialist. Unauthorized use of protected titles and abbreviations can result in fines and other penalties as outlined in Sections 129 and 130 of the HPA.

Title protection assures the public that an individual

- has met the regulatory college's requirements for registration; and
- is authorized to practise nursing.

Protected titles create a boundary for professional practice. Titles are reserved for registrants of the regulated profession and cannot legally be used by unqualified and unregulated individuals. When people fraudulently pass themselves off as regulated professionals, it presents a risk to public safety and protection (Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence, 2010).

¹ Words or phrases in **BOLD CAPITALS** upon first mention are defined in the glossary.

Titles, Abbreviations, and Initials that Can Be Used by Registrants

The *Registered Nurses Profession Regulation* (Alta Reg 232/2005, s 14) identifies the titles, abbreviations, and initials that can be used by registrants of the CRNA. They are as follows:

- 14(1)** A regulated member registered on the registered nurse register may use the title "registered nurse" and the initials "RN".
- (2)** A regulated member registered on the **CERTIFIED GRADUATE NURSE** register may use the title "certified graduate nurse" and the initials "CGN".
- (4)** A regulated member registered on the nurse practitioner register may use the title "nurse practitioner" and the initials "NP".
- (5)** A regulated member registered on the registered nurse register or the nurse practitioner register may in accordance with the standards of practice use the title "specialist" in connection with providing **PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**.
- (6)** A regulated member registered on the provisional register as a **GRADUATE NURSE** on the registered nurse register may use the title "graduate nurse" and the initials "GN".
- (7)** A regulated member registered on the provisional register as a **GRADUATE NURSE PRACTITIONER** on the nurse practitioner register may use the title "graduate nurse practitioner" and the initials "GNP".
- (8)** A regulated member registered on the courtesy register as a registered nurse may use the title "registered nurse" and the initials "RN".
- (9)** A regulated member registered on the courtesy register as a nurse practitioner may use the title "nurse practitioner" and the initials "NP".

These standards identify the minimum expectations for using protected titles, abbreviations, and initials by registrants. The criteria describe how registrants must meet each standard and are not listed in order of importance.

Standard 1: Use of Title

Registrants must use the title, abbreviation, or initials that are consistent with the category on the register in which they are registered.

Criteria

The registrant must

- 1.1 have a **PRACTICE PERMIT** to use a protected title;
- 1.2 not use a title, abbreviation, or initials alone or in combination with other words in a manner that states or implies that they are registered in a category on the register unless they are registered in that category;
- 1.3 include their title, abbreviation, or initials in all documentation;
- 1.4 only use the title, abbreviation, or initials consistent with the category on the register in which they are registered, when engaged in a practice recognized as the practice of nursing; and
- 1.5 not use a title, abbreviation, or initials in association with the **ENDORSEMENT** or promotion of products or services outside of their practice.

Use of the Title Specialist

The registrant authorized to use the title 'specialist' is an individual who has a high level of expertise in a clinical specialty and meets the standard. The focus of clinical specialty practice may be related to

- population (e.g., maternal/child, seniors);
- type of health problem (e.g., pain management, bereavement);
- disease or subspecialty (e.g., diabetes, orthopedics, cardiology);
- a practice setting (e.g., emergency department, home care, occupational health); or
- type of care (e.g., wound care, critical care, palliative care, etc.).

(Adapted from the Canadian Nurses Association, 2014)

Standard 2: Use of the Title Specialist

Registrants must meet the requirements to use the title 'specialist'.

Criteria

The registrant must

- 2.1** have a practice permit;
- 2.2** have three or more years of full-time experience in the specific clinical practice area where they currently practise to use the title 'specialist';
- 2.3** have a graduate degree applicable to the specific clinical practice area where they use their expertise to provide professional services; and
- 2.4** not use the title 'specialist' alone or in combination with other words in a manner that states or implies they are a specialist if they do not meet the requirements to use the title.

Glossary

CERTIFIED GRADUATE NURSE – Prior to 1983 this individual was a registrant who met all the requirements for registration except for the registration exam, as the legislation in effect at the time did not require them to pass a registration exam. When the *Nursing Profession Act* was proclaimed in 1983, a certified graduate nurse was grandfathered on the register. This category continues to exist in the HPA (2000); however; no new Alberta nurse can be added to this category.

ENDORSEMENT – Occurs when a registrant uses their credentials to lend credibility to a commercial product or service.

GRADUATE NURSE – A graduate of an approved or recognized entry-level nursing education program or an internationally educated nurse (IEN) applicant who is on the provisional register and is in the process of meeting the CRNA registered nurse registration requirements.

GRADUATE NURSE PRACTITIONER – A graduate of an approved nurse practitioner program who is on the provisional register and is in the process of meeting the CRNA nurse practitioner registration requirements. These individuals may be graduates from an approved nurse practitioner program leading to initial nurse practitioner registration or internationally educated nurse practitioners.

PRACTICE PERMIT – “A practice permit issued to a regulated member under Part 2 of the HPA” (HPA, 2000).

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE(S) – “A service that comes within the practice of a regulated profession” (HPA, 2000).

REGISTRANT(S) – Includes registered nurses (RNs), graduate nurses, certified graduate nurses, nurse practitioners (NPs), graduate nurse practitioners, and RN or NP courtesy registrants on the CRNA registry.

REGULATED PROFESSION – A profession that is regulated by the HPA (HPA, 2000).

SPECIALIST – An individual whose practice is focused in a particular clinical area and meets the standard approved by the CRNA.

References

Canadian Nurses Association. (2014). *Pan-Canadian core competencies for the clinical nurse specialist*. https://www.uregina.ca/nursing/assets/CNS/CNS_Documents/Pan_Canadian_Core_Competencies_for_CNS.pdf

Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence. (2010). *Protecting the public from unregistered practitioners: Tackling misuse of protected title*. https://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/docs/default-source/publications/policy-advice/tackling-misuse-of-protected-title-2010.pdf?sfvrsn=d8c77f20_10

Health Professions Act, RSA 2000, c H-7.

Registered Nurses Profession Regulation, Alta Reg 232/2005.