

## Employed Student Nurse Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: What are Employed Student Nurses (ESNs)?**

**A:** ESNs are employed nursing students who are registered in Canadian **registered nursing** education (BSN) programs and have successfully completed two or more years (including practicum placements) of a CRNBC-recognized Registered Nursing Program.

**Q: What is the difference between ESNs and student nurses?**

**A:** This table outlines the differences between ESNs and student nurses:

| ESNs   | Student Nurses  |
|--|---|
| Employment is the primary goal.  | Learning is the primary goal.   |
| Responsible for providing nursing care to patients, supervised by an RN who is responsible for overall plan of care. | Responsible for their own practice and the preceptor is responsible for overall patient care. |
| Performance is evaluated the same way that other team members are evaluated.   | Performance is evaluated by an instructor, with input from the preceptor and unit.            |

**Q: Do the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (CRNBC) and Island Health have policies around ESN practice?**

**A:** Island Health’s guidelines are congruent with CRNBC’s policy on Employed Student Registrants. To review this information, check out:

- Employed Student Registrants (<https://crnbc.ca/Standards/PracticeStandards/Pages/employedstudent.aspx>)
- Employed Student Registration (<https://crnbc.ca/Registration/ESR/Pages/Default.aspx>)
- Frequently Asked Questions (<https://crnbc.ca/REGISTRATION/ESR/Pages/FAQ.aspx>)
- Regulatory Supervision of Nursing Student Activities (<https://crnbc.ca/Standards/PracticeStandards/Pages/regulatorysupervision.aspx>)

**Q: What is Professional Practice’s role?**

**A:** Professional Practice is responsible for overall ESN program oversight and is a contact for any complex practice concerns. Human Resources and Professional Practice work together to share information with applicants interested in ESN work.

**Q: How are ESN practice concerns addressed?**

**A:** As with other employees, the unit leadership team (i.e., Managers, Clinical Nurse Educators, Clinical Coordinators, and Clinical Nurse Leaders) plays a key role in developing plans to address any identified ESN practice concerns. As needed, additional supports such as Professional Practice, Human Resources, and professional regulatory colleges can be drawn upon for support and resources.

**Q: Do ESNs need to renew their ESN registration with CRNBC each year? If so, until when is the CRNBC ESN registration valid?**

**A:** Yes, if they plan to work as an ESN it is *mandatory* to have practising ESN registration with CRNBC and renew it annually. Typically, the ESN registration with CRNBC is valid until the last day of February.

**Q: Who guides and directs ESNs during their shifts?**

**A:** ESNs must always be scheduled supernumerary and have a supervising RN available to authorize the ESN to perform skills/activities and to address immediate concerns or specific questions.

**Q: What do managers and units need from ESNs?**

**A:** It is essential that managers and units have regular contact with ESNs about scheduling, employment, and educational experience. ESNs should let their unit leader and Human Resources know if there are any changes in contact information.

**Q: How is the ESN schedule determined?**

**A:** ESNs negotiate their hours of work with their unit leadership. ESN shifts may be composed of days, evenings or nights, weekdays or weekends. ESNs should be supernumerary and not be scheduled for statutory holidays or overtime.

During school breaks, unit needs are the first priority for scheduling. During full time school, ESNs should not be scheduled for night shifts; managers are encouraged to be flexible around school demands.

**Q: How many hours can ESNs work, and who is responsible for tracking this?**

**A:** ESNs are each allocated a minimum of 275 hours to be used by March 31<sup>st</sup> each year. All orientation, hours of work and ongoing education activities are paid employment. ESNs are expected to track their hours and communicate to their managers if they will not be able to use all their hours. Additional hours may be funded through the program cost centre at the discretion of the managers.

**Q: How do I know if an ESN can perform a skill or activity?**

**A:** ESNs are responsible for articulating their competencies with skills/activities. Before a skill/activity may be performed, the supervising Registered Nurse must authorize the ESN to carry out the skills/activities. Prior to authorizing an ESN to complete the activity, the ESN and supervising RN should review the *ESN Employer Controls on Practice* document. Additionally, the unit or area can restrict ESNs from practising particular skills/activities and should communicate this restriction to the ESNs and employees on the unit.

**Q: Can ESNs learn and apply new skills/activities as an ESN?**

**A:** No, ESNs do not learn new skills or activities while employed as an ESN. The intent is for ESNs to consolidate the skills/activities they learned *and* successfully passed in their basic registered nursing education under the regulatory supervision of an RN.

**Q: Can an ESN take verbal orders or transcribe written physician orders?**

A: ESNs cannot take verbal orders. ESNs may transcribe written physician orders but they must have them checked *and* co-signed by the supervising RN.

**Q: Can ESNs work on the same unit as they currently work (in a different role) or currently have a Consolidated Practice Experience (CPE)?**

A: To avoid role confusion, ESNs should not hold ESN positions on the same unit that they currently are employed (in a different role) or where they are currently having their CPE.

**Q: Do ESNs accrue seniority?**

A: The terms and conditions of this role are outlined by a Letter of Understanding signed between the employer (HEABC) and BCNU, and the Collective Agreement. Seniority accrued as an ESN will be recognized within their BCNU certification unit as an RN if the ESN gets a permanent position within one year of graduation.

**Q: Can ESNs take leaves of absence from school?**

A: The ESN position is contingent on continued enrolment in a school of nursing program in good standing. If any student takes a leave of absence from school for *any* reason, they are not able or eligible to work as an ESN until they are reinstated as an active student.