

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INNOVATED DEGREE EXAMINATION IN THE NURSING CAREER AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN CHILE

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**Abstract:** **Introduction:** The title exam corresponds to an evaluation carried out in the last year of professional nursing training. In this, it is expected to evaluate the competences that contribute to the graduation profile and for this we must have relevant evaluation instruments. In the context of curricular change, the idea of innovating the nursing degree examination of a public university in Chile was born. **Method:** The new exam was implemented in 2017 to all students in the 5th year. The elaboration of the new modality was developed in five stages of collective and cyclical construction. **Results:** It was possible to successfully implement a new exam distributed in three moments, of an experiential nature and linked to professional practices. In this experience there were strengths and weaknesses that have been improved through reflection and teaching work, making the exam still valid. **Conclusions:** It is relevant to use evaluative methodologies that allow us to make well-founded and coherent judgments with the current educational model, in order to guarantee professional graduates with the compromised competencies to society. Undoubtedly, reflection and collective work allow improving the teaching-learning processes and their evaluation. **Keywords:** Innovation, Exam, Degree, Nursing.

## INTRODUCTION

Curricular innovation in Chile was born as an initiative of the council of rectors of Chilean public universities (CRUCH) at the end of the 90s, when faced with similar problems and when observing the experience of higher education institutions internationally, in especially the European one that incorporated a set of reforms that made it possible to adapt to the new social reality, reforms oriented in multiple directions: teaching methodologies, teaching structure,

guarantee of learning processes or quality and, of course, in promoting the student and teacher mobility (CURIEL, 2010)

In 2014, the School of Nursing where this innovation was carried out began the process of curricular change promoted by CRUCH. (COUNCIL OF CHILEAN UNIVERSITIES RECTORS, 2012) which meant a redesign of the study plan of the career which ended up including changes in the curricular structure, modular organization, integration of knowledge, incorporation of new methodologies, teacher qualification among others, all with a purpose, to be able to respond to the commitment made to society, through the graduate profile and contribute to the training of the best professionals in our country.

These changes were made understanding nursing education as a complex social practice, of an ethical nature, which supposes uncertainty in the didactic actions and the construction of multiple meanings about it. (MEDINA, 1999)

For students to be able to acquire competencies in the domains of care management, education, management and administration, as well as transversal generic ones, became one of the great new challenges.

In this context of curricular innovation and specifically competency-based training for nursing students, in 2017 it was proposed to change the end-of-degree exam, "Title Exam" that is carried out in the last year of professional training and that is leading to the title of nurse / or, considering that the current one did not allow evaluative judgments of complex competences, competences whose purpose is to train students so that they know how to act pertinently in a particular context, choosing and mobilizing a double equipment of resources: personal resources and resources of networks and context, being able to give reason for the decisions adopted, and taking

responsibility for them and their effects. (UNIVERSITY OF CHILE, 2021)

For years, the title exam was carried out in a single format, face-to-face, orally, before a committee of teachers from different areas of nursing, with characteristics of a theoretical exam, through case analysis, which evaluated both disciplinary and professional knowledge. The evaluation instrument was made up of 5 open questions which had to be developed by the students in the established time.

The evidence found at the national level tells us that the exams leading to the title of nurse have not undergone modifications in recent years and are mostly oral and/or written theoretical.

In Spain, more than 20 years ago, the structured objective clinical assessment (OSCE) was incorporated in a standardized manner to assess competencies in sixth-year medical students. (JOSÉ M. RAMOSA, M. ASUNCIÓN MARTÍNEZ-MAYORALB, FRANCISCO SÁNCHEZ-FERRERA, JAVIER MORALESB, TOMÁS SEMPEREC, 2019). In the area of nursing, in recent years OSCE experiences have emerged at the Universities of Castellón and Málaga, Andalucía and Burgos. (ALMODÓVAR-FERNÁNDEZ et al., 2021) as final tests to obtain the degree.

There is no evidence of experiential qualification exams for the nursing career.

**Objective:** To implement a new methodology for the exam leading to the professional title in fifth year students of the nursing career of a public university in Chile.

## METHOD

The implementation of this innovative exam began in 2017 and is valid to date. The elaboration of the new evaluation modality was developed in five stages of collective and cyclical construction.

**1.-Detection of needs:** Stage in which through reflections with different actors of

the educational community, the current study plan, the current evaluation and its gaps were analyzed. The need to give continuity to the exam was also verified, incorporating the necessary modifications to carry out an evaluation relevant to the current curriculum.

**2.-Planning the new methodology:** In order to propose a coherent evaluation with the educational model and curriculum by competence, the proposal was assigned to the teaching commission of the nursing school, made up of academic experts in teaching and whose main functions are: To ensure quality of the teaching given in professional courses and unify subjects in relation to teaching and student evaluation. After evaluating different methodological strategies.

The proposal built contemplated a title examination made up of three instances:

- Experiential examination, in the context of primary care, (family health center) in a care center in agreement with the institution.
- Experiential examination, in the context of tertiary care, in a hospital, the same place where he or the student carried out his professional practice.
- Presentation of an oral and written nursing work based on evidence, linked to a problem evidenced in their professional practice.

As an evaluative instrument, a performance guideline was proposed, which was composed of the areas to be evaluated (disciplinary, generic, transversal and procedural competences), an appreciation scale, scoring and description of the evaluative judgments.

**3.-Presentation to Faculty authorities:** The proposal was presented to the institutional instances, Undergraduate Directorate and Secretary of Studies of the Faculty of Medicine, for their approval and in order that it be aligned with the institutional legal and regulatory aspects.

**4. Application of the evaluation:** The evaluations were carried out of a practical nature in clinical contexts at different levels of

care, before an evaluation commission, with an instrument that allowed evaluating the performance of the students.

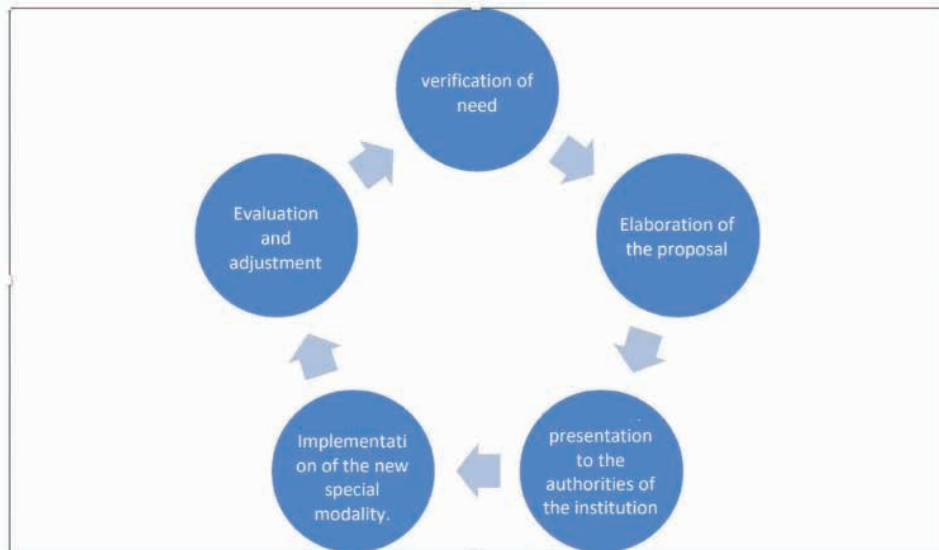


Figure 1. Cyclic model of implementation of the innovated test

## RESULTS

During the first year, all the students of the 2017 cohort were evaluated, 20 specialist teachers in different areas of care management participated and 9 hospital institutions (adult and pediatric areas) were used, 12 urban and 6 rural family health centers, all with current agreement with the institution.

All the exams carried out were face-to-face, at the end of the professional practices, they were given before a committee made up of at least two teachers from the Nursing department and the two clinical characteristics exams were developed in 3 moments, in which the students must have:

- 1) Provide nursing care to a person at a given time.
- 2) Present the assessment of nursing and actions carried out, justifying their actions.
- 3) Carry out reflection on action in relation to the experience of the title exam.

As an evaluation instrument, a performance

guideline was used, which measured disciplinary, generic, transversal, and procedural competencies in context and real time. Teachers evaluated through observation, dialogue, and reflection. The qualifications obtained were directly proportional to those obtained in their professional practices.

In order to know the experience of implementing the experiential exams, surveys were used on the digital platform of the institution for students and a self-administered questionnaire for each teacher, in addition to a collective reflection. These instruments collected qualitative information related to the strengths and weaknesses of the process, aspects to be improved, facilitating elements, problems encountered, as well as the capacity of the new model to assess complex competencies.

As a result of the applied instruments, the students evaluated the exam positively. Teachers mention collaborative work as a main strength during the development of the implementation

and rectify the relevance of the exam for the evaluation of complex competences. In addition, the capacity of the model to evaluate transversal competences of the study plan such as reflective practice, correct decision making in emergent situations and student autonomy in their performance is revealed.

As aspects to be improved, the physical spaces were mentioned due to lack of coordination with the health centers, lack of time for the development of the exam and it is suggested to improve some elements of the performance guidelines.

With the cyclical model that allows permanent evaluation of the exam, in recent years the improvements suggested by both students and teachers have been incorporated.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Undoubtedly, it is essential to carry out evaluations consistent with the training model that the institution imparts in order to ensure the quality of professionals who graduate from them.

Although it is true that the exam carried out over the years made it possible to assess cognitive competencies, integrate knowledge and apply it to clinical cases, it did not allow measuring performance or competencies in the complex spaces where nursing practice takes place.(MEDINA, 1999).

Although today some universities are incorporating models for end-of-degree exams, consistent with the competency-based educational model, such as the structured objective clinical assessment (OSCE) (ALMODÓVAR-FERNÁNDEZ et al., 2021) the evidence found in the area of nursing is still incipient. It is also important to evaluate the availability of the simulation centers that are currently used for the development of undergraduate training.(SOLÀ POLA, MONTSERRAT; MARTÍNEZ CASTELA,

DANIEL; MOLINS I MESALLES, AINHOA; PULPÓN SEGURA, 2011), the costs associated with the contracting of simulated patients, and the time of the academics dedicated to the creation of the stations and their evaluation. In this scenario, it is known that this evaluation has important evidence of its effectiveness, but at the same time it is highly expensive.(PATRÍCIO et al., 2013).

It is relevant to point out that no evidence was found of the completion of an end-of-degree exam leading to professional qualification in an experiential format, with real cases in health centers, therefore, it seems necessary that similar experiences exist, in order to measure its actual effectiveness.

As a conclusion, it can be declared that incorporating an experiential exam seems a good way to evaluate performance competencies that cannot be evidenced in other types of exams, they provide us with the necessary information to make a judgment in relation to performances such as reflective practice, correct decision-making in emergent situations and student autonomy. Undoubtedly, it must be considered that in order to carry it out, management and coordination with health centers willing to offer the adequate spaces to comply with the test in its entirety are required, in addition to having a group of teachers who travel to them to carry out the test. the evaluations.

To this day, this title exam model is carried out successfully, allowing a coherent evaluation of the innovative curriculum and educational model of the medical school. As a School of Nursing, the cyclical model has continued to be applied, which allows new improvements to be incorporated in each version. One cannot fail to mention the relevance of the collective work of the teaching group, which allows them to be involved in the generation of changes that ultimately improve the teaching-learning processes and their evaluation.

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