

CLINICAL COURSES GRADING PRACTICES SURVEY * (See page 5 for summary and conclusions)

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PROG. TYPE	LTR / # GRADE	PASS/ FAIL	COM- BINE	COMMENTS
ADN LPN		X		
BSN		X		Just changed the curriculum. Old - graded clinical - last class to graduate will be 2005. Clinical is a companion course. So a student can pass clinical and fail theory. New - pass/fail clinical that is part of the theory course.
ADN BSN				Anxious to see what your results will show
ADN		X		The clinical grade is satisfactory or not; If satisfactory, then the grade given is the same as the theory grade. If the clinical performance is unsatisfactory, then the student fails both theory and clinical.
BSN MN	X			
ADN BSN		X		For both programs, clinical is considered part of a theory course. There is no separate letter grade for it. It is satisfactory / unsatisfactory.
ADN		X		We are still with pass/fail. We have been working on a form that is amenable to giving a number grade, but still working on it.
RN BSN		X		We use a pass/fail method for clinical. However, if students fail either the didactic or clinical portion of the course they fail the entire course and take both over. They may take only one clinical course over once...after this they are terminated from the program.
ADN BSN		X		
ADN		X		The grade for the course comes from the classroom (mostly quizzes and exams).
ADN		X		
ADN		X		Students receive one grade for the lecture and clinical. The clinical is thought of as pass/fail but if they fail clinical they also fail the lecture portion of the course.
Dipl		X		
Dipl		X		
BSN		X		This is a hot issue we are currently discussing at faculty meetings.
ADN RNBSN				
BSN		X		
ADN BSN				We assign satisfactory/unsatisfactory grades for clinical for both our ASN and BSN nursing curriculas. If a student earns unsatisfactory, then he/she repeats the clinical course
ADN		X		We combine theory & clinical grade There is no numeric grade for clinical. Clinical performance is judged as pass/fail, and the student must pass clinical in order to pass the course
BSN		X		
ADN RNBSN		X		

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BSN		X		
ADN		X		
ADN		X		
ADN		X		
ADN		x		
ADN		X		We have satisfactory - unsatisfactory on each clinical outcome (one unsatisfactory means the student fails the course)
BSN MSN				<p>We use the Bondy rating system.* Students and faculty rate students for each point as Independent or supervised (satisfactory) or assisted, marginal , or dependent (unsatisfactory) .</p> <p>All clinical courses (both BSN and MSN programs) use a clinical evaluation system that ends up with a Pass/Fail grade for clinical. Clinical is not a separate course...it is an integrated component of the nursing course...as such, a student must pass clinical in order to pass the course; the course grade is based on the theory component of the course. The grading outcomes are:</p> <p>CLINICAL THEORY COURSE GRADE</p> <p>Pass grade => 75 Pass (grades = A to C-)</p> <p>Pass grade < 75 Fail</p> <p>Fail any grade Fail</p>
BSN	X			Our theory portion is 70% of the course grade and our clinicals are 30% of the grade. Students must pass each portion with a 75 in order to pass the course. If the students fail one portion, that is a failure and the grades are not average together, if they pass both portions, then those grades are calculated together to get the final grade.
ADN		X		
BSN		X		I am looking forward to your results. P.S. It saved me from doing a survey.
ADN		X		
ADN		X		Students receive the same grade in clinical as the one they are given in the Theory part of the course.
LPN RN BSN Ladder				We do not give a letter grade for clinical it is a pass fail and if a student fails clinical but receives a C or passing in the theory they will receive a C- which is considered a fail as they need to repeat the course then Same with a pass in clinical but a C- or lower in theory they will fail or need to repeat the course and can only do that twice and then out of program. We have a laddered LPN to RN and then BSN completion also
		X		We went to graded clinical a few years ago. It was a matter of great debate for a number of years. The policy has settled in well. I don't think it's a matter for debate any more- not here anyway.
		X		
	X			
RN – BSN MN			X	

* Bondi, K. (1983). Criterion-referenced definitions for rating scales in clinical evaluation. Journal of Nursing Education, 22(9), 376-382

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PROG. TYPE	LTR / # GRADE	PASS/ FAIL	COM-BINE	COMMENTS
BSN	X Early Courses	X Later Courses		Our baccalaureate program is an upper division major. The major takes 8 quarters or 2 years. Some practicums are pass/fail (early in the program) and some are graded (usually later in the program). The faculty continue to explore the advantages and disadvantages of these methods.
ADN BSN		X		We use a satisfactory/unsatisfactory system
BSN		X		On the course work, we use pass/fail for clinical evaluations, but they have to meet the criteria for passing which is quite detailed. We do checks at mid-term and "counsel" them as necessary. Clinical is not a separate grade from the course, but they HAVE to be passing clinical to complete the course even if they have an "A" in all written work, class work, and tests.
ADN			X	
BSB		X		Our school, which is a BSN program (augmented by FNP Master Level programs and an RNB program) gives pass/fail grades for all clinical courses. Faculty who teach clinical courses used to be able to make their own decisions about whether or not to give a pass/fail or a letter grade, so some courses did one thing and other courses did another. Two or three years ago the faculty as a whole voted to make all clinical courses pass/fail.
BSN	X	X		Undergraduate clinical course vary: some have a graded clinical and some have an Pass/Fail. For example, in the last semester, students have two large clinical course in which they have 225 clinical hours each. These courses are graded with a numeric grade. However, in some courses where clinical is fewer hours, the grade for clinical is a P/F
ADN		X		We, of course, have a complex process for evaluating clinical. Our clinical experiences are integrated within our major nursing courses. Typically the student take a 7-9 credit hour nursing course. From 3 - 5credit hours are dedicated to the clinical experience. Clinical experiences are graded on a S/U scale. However, to receive credit for the clinical 'pass', the student must also score 76% or higher on their didactic course average. On the converse, if the student receives a 'U' for the clinical experience, then the student will receive a failing grade for the entire course even if their test average is above 76%. Given our rigidity in grading S & U, I would be reluctant to have students receive letter grades. From a philosophical framework, I think we should put a value on clinical performance. From a logistics perspective, I think it could become one more form of student torture depending on how the grading was executed in our program. We tend to use detailed algorithms for grade determination that in theory are objective, but in reality do not require judgment in the evaluation process.
BSN	X			
BSN	X			
ADN	X			
BSN	X			We grade clinical performance and grade clinical assignments....these grades are averaged...we have discussed grading clinical pass/fail, too.
RN- BSN		X		
ADN	X			
ADN			X	We combine theory & clinical grade
ADN		X		We give a pass/fail grade for clinical performance and a letter grade for the theory portion. Students must pass both parts during the same semester to receive credit for the course.

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PROG. TYPE	LTR / # GRADE	PASS/ FAIL	COM-BINE	COMMENTS
ADN		X		
BSN		x		
ADN	2004	2003		At this time we have a combined clinical/theory grade. The clinical is graded as pass/fail. If they fail clinical, the highest theory grade they can receive is a "D". Starting next year we are changing to separate clinical courses at which time we will need to grade clinical. We are working on the system for doing so
AAS.			X	Clinical is pass /fail but the care plans that are completed as a part of clinical go into the theory grade. Students must have a 75% test average before the care plan points can go into the theory grade.
Dipl				We give a pass/fail for the clinical portion of a course. The student must pass both the classroom theory (70%) and receive a passing clinical grade in order to pass the course. Thank you for including us in your data.
ADN		X		The course grade comes from the theory grade. If they fail clinical, they get a F for the course.
BSN		X		
ADN		X		I am eager to hear a summary of your findings.
LPN		X		It is based upon the achievement of a 1-4 scale, if a student gets a 1 on any objective by the end of the course, they do not pass. they are rated at mid course and at the end of the course with special attention and contracting going on during the course as part of the due process.
ADN		X		Clinical practice is graded "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory". If one's clinical practice grade is "Unsatisfactory", an "F" will be issued for the course regardless of current theory grade.
		X		The students must satisfactorily pass clinical but the grade is the same grade they earn in lecture.
BSN		X		
ADN		X		We give a pass or fail for our clinicals. One other question I would be interested in asking is whether or not schools place the clinical grade and the didactic grade on the transcript or do they only report the didactic? Also, does everyone fail the student if they do not pass either didactic or clinical? Can they repeat either segment separately?
ADN				Our clinical is part of the total course. The clinical evaluation form produces a numerical score, and there is a passing score for each course. So it is ultimately pass/fail. If a student fails the clinical portion of the course, they fail the course. (The numerical score is not computed into the total course grade). Thanks for doing this! I look forward to your results!
ADN		X		We give pass/fail, but of course the student has to pass the theory portion of the course as well and vice versa before being permitted to proceed in the program.
ADN				We give pass fail, although the students constantly complain
ADN		X		We combine theory and clinical grade with clinical being pass fail.
BSN		X		We give a letter grade for the theory portion of the course and Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory for the clinical portion of the course. Students must pass both portions of the clinical courses to be successful.

PROG. TYPE	LTR / # GRADE	PASS/ FAIL	COM-BINE	COMMENTS
Dipl		X		There has been much discussion over the years of a letter grade vs S/U grade. Our faculty is of the belief that it is easier to make the judgment regarding S/U because they are either meeting the objective or not. In assigning a letter grade, more subjectivity comes into play, I am interested in reading the results from this survey.
		X		
Dipl		X		Clinical nursing courses are a combination of a theory grade (>76%) and a satisfactory in clinical. Failure to meet either or both criteria results in a failure of the nursing course. If repeated, the course must be completed in its entirety, both components must be repeated.
ADN	X			We use a point system. Students achieve theory points for tests/assignments and in clinical, student achieve points for clinical assignments, clinical performance evaluation, clinical skills, etc. Students must achieve 76% of the clinical points in theory and 76 % of the theory points. If this is achieved, the two scores are added together for the final grade. If a student does not achieve 76% in one area, their grade for the course reflects the part of the course that they did not pass. Another reason that we have kept one grade for both clinical and theory is if we have students that do not pass they take both theory and clinical together again. We feel that it is in their best interest for success on the state board exam.
ADN LPN	X			Currently, our clinical is part of our theory. Students receive the theory grade for the course. Clinical is a pass/fail component of the course In fall we will be moving to separate clinical courses and grading
ADN	X			
LPN			X	We combine our theory and clinical grade The clinical evaluations are averaged for one grade; the clinical paperwork (care plans, case studies, objectives turned in, etc.) is averaged for one grade; these two are then averaged to arrive at one clinical grade.
ADN	X			

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS: This study arose out of an informal discussion among 3 nurse educators at the NLN Summit in San Antonio, Texas, in September, 2003. As we discussed the pros and cons of grading systems, I began to wonder about the grading practices for clinical courses in most schools. I did a random email questionnaire, using email addresses from the NLN participant list and others I had on file. The results are as follows:

Total # of Schools Responding: 79	# Giving Pass/Fail: 59 (75%)	# Giving Clinical Grades: 15 (19%)	# Combining Theory & Clinical Grade: 5 (6%)
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Conclusions: Based on this limited study, it seems that the trend is to give Pass/Fail for clinical courses. As much as I would like a comprehensive study of ALL schools---which would give definitive results---time constraints and logistics don't allow this at this point in time. This is a *preliminary* study that suggests a trend. It doesn't *verify* the trend. The many comments above (cut and pasted from email responses) suggest that the decision to give Pass/Fail versus a letter grade for clinical courses is a difficult one. As someone who writes and consults on critical thinking, I know the importance of holistic evaluation. Pass/Fail clinical grading doesn't reward "clinical stars" in the same way that it does "classroom stars". Based on these results, I will write an article in the first edition of my newsletter, *The Critical Thinking Indicator*, addressing the problems with promoting and evaluating critical thinking in clinical courses that give Pass/Fail grades. To all of you who participated, here's a great big **THANK YOU!** Got comments? Email: AlfaroTeachSmart@ol.com