

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Proposed Uniform Articulation Agreement Between The University of North Carolina RN to BSN Programs and the North Carolina Community College System Associate Degree Nursing Programs

Request: The State Board of Community Colleges is requested to approve the proposed Uniform Articulation Agreement between The University of North Carolina Registered Nurse (RN) to Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN) Programs and the North Carolina Community College System Associate Degree Nursing Programs. A goal of the proposed Uniform Articulation Agreement is to create a uniform, statewide academic progression agreement that will promote educational advancement opportunities for registered nurses moving between North Carolina community colleges and the constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina in order to complete Bachelors of Science in Nursing degrees.

Background: In 2010, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies published a report entitled *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. One of the report's primary recommendations proposed that, in the interest of improved national healthcare, nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training. One way to achieve this goal would be through an improved educational system that promotes seamless academic progression.

Historically, there have been attempts to assist nurses in North Carolina to more easily advance their education. Since 2012, the North Carolina Future of Nursing Coalition has been working to re-energize these efforts. One of the Coalition's stated goals is "...to develop a uniform, statewide articulation academic progression agreement between the public university and the community college systems to promote educational advancement opportunities (to help) RNs to complete BSN or higher degrees."

As noted by the Foundation for Nursing Excellence in 2011, "...though there are articulation agreements both at the (UNC) system level and between individual community colleges and universities, there is no uniform, statewide articulation on the general education and nursing prerequisite courses required for RNs to enter and complete the BSN degree within the state-funded institutions." This is a major barrier for licensed nurses who plan to apply to more than one RN to BSN program since they cannot do so without taking duplicative courses. The development of a single list of required courses acceptable to both the UNC and North Carolina community college systems would smooth the educational pathway for RNs who have earned associate degrees in nursing in North Carolina and wish to complete undergraduate nursing degrees at UNC System RN to BSN programs.

There are eleven UNC institutions that offer the RN to BSN program. All eleven provosts have reviewed and accepted the agreement. Fifty-five community colleges offer the Associate Degree in Nursing. All fifty-five colleges have reviewed the agreement and are supportive of it.

If approved by the UNC Board of Governors and the State Board of Community Colleges, the proposed Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing Articulation Agreement (RN to BSN AA) will be effective August 1, 2015 for all community college nursing students entering in associate degree nursing programs and who successfully complete an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree in nursing. Nursing students who were enrolled in an AAS degree program or completed the program prior to Fall Semester 2015 are subject to the conditions in place at the individual institutions at the time of their original enrollment as long as they have been continually enrolled.

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**UPDATED PROPOSAL FOR A UNIFORM ARTICULATION
AGREEMENT**

BETWEEN

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA RN TO BSN PROGRAMS

AND

**NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM ASSOCIATE
DEGREE NURSING PROGRAMS**

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I. Background

In 2010, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies published a report entitled *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. That report, based upon a two year study completed in collaboration with The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, received considerable national attention. One of the report's primary recommendations proposed that, in the interest of improved national health care, nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training. One way to achieve this goal would be through an improved educational system that promotes seamless academic progression.

There have been a number of attempts to assist North Carolina nurses to more easily advance their educations. However, the outcomes have been less substantive than might have been wished. Since 2012, the North Carolina Future of Nursing Action Coalition has been working to re-energize these efforts and has as one of its stated goals "...to develop a uniform, statewide academic progression agreement between the public university and community college systems to promote educational advancement opportunities (to help) RNs to complete BSN or higher degrees."

The Coalition, which is working with a range of other state stakeholders, recognizes that "...though there are articulation agreements both at the (UNC) system level and between individual community colleges and universities, there is no uniform, statewide agreement on the general education and nursing prerequisite courses required for RNs to enter and complete the BSN degree within the state-funded institutions." (FNE, 2011) This is a major barrier for licensed nurses who plan to apply to more than one RN to BSN program since they cannot do so without taking additional, often duplicative courses. The development of a single list of required courses acceptable to both the UNC and North Carolina community college systems would smooth the educational pathway for RNs who have earned associate degrees in nursing in North Carolina and wish to complete undergraduate nursing degrees at UNC System RN to BSN programs.

II. Purpose and Rationale

This document presents a uniform, statewide academic progression agreement that will promote educational advancement opportunities for registered nurses moving between North Carolina community colleges and the constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina in order to complete BSN degrees. It describes a progression degree plan that includes required general education and nursing prerequisite courses that are acceptable to all state funded RN to BSN programs. Students who follow the progression degree plan will meet the entrance requirements at all of the North Carolina public RN to BSN programs. Nurses may then apply to any of these programs without taking additional and sometimes duplicative courses.

This proposal supports the mission of the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges and Goals 1 and 2 of the University of North Carolina's strategic document *Our Time Our Future, University of North Carolina Strategic Direction*. It moves these objectives forward by reducing barriers that currently exist for associate degree prepared nurses who wish to earn baccalaureate degrees and by creating a more seamless and rational transfer process for community college nursing students. This coordinated approach should increase RN to BSN graduation and retention rates for Registered Nurses who enroll in state funded RN to BSN programs.

This proposal also serves state workforce needs as described in the 2010 Institute of Medicine report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* and in the 2013 North Carolina Chief Nursing Officer Survey completed by the North Carolina Future of Nursing Action Coalition. According to the coalition, increasing the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate or higher degree to 80% by 2025 should:

- Improve health outcomes for North Carolinians through a higher educated nursing workforce;
- Expand consumer access to primary care through an increased number of advanced practice nurses; and
- Increase the critical pipeline of faculty to prepare an adequate nursing workforce for the future.

III. Policies

The Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing Articulation Agreement (RN to BSN AA) is made between the State Board of the North Carolina Community College System and The University of North Carolina Board of Governors. It applies only to those North Carolina community colleges that operate associate degree nursing programs and to those constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina that operate RN to BSN Programs. For the list of participating programs, see Appendix A. The RN to BSN AA applies to all community college nursing students who enter associate degree nursing programs after the effective date of this agreement and who successfully complete an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree in nursing at those community colleges. The RN to BSN Transfer Committee (RNBSNTC) oversees refinements of and changes in the regulations.

A. RN to BSN Transfer Committee (RNBSNTC)

Authority to interpret and make changes in the RN to BSN AA rests with the RNBSNTC. The RNBSNTC is an eight member co-chaired committee appointed by the Presidents of the North Carolina Community College System and The University of North Carolina. Questions concerning the RN to BSN AA should be directed to the appropriate system's chief academic office (CAO) with an explanation of the institutional policy that may (appear to) be in conflict with RN to BSN AA policy. The CAO will forward unresolved questions to the RNBSNTC for resolution. Each system will appoint one ex-officio non-voting member of the RNBSNTC. For further details, see Appendices B and C.

B. Transfer Credit Appeal

If an RN to BSN student perceives that the terms of the RNBSNTC have not been honored, he or she may follow the RN to BSN Transfer Credit Appeal Process as outlined in Appendix D. Each university and community college nursing program covered by this agreement will provide a link to that Appeal Process on its web site.

IV. Regulations

A. Transfer of Credits

The RN to BSN AA establishes the procedures governing the transfer of credits for students who graduate from North Carolina Community College AAS programs and apply to RN to BSN programs at constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina. The RN to BSN AA does not address admission to a specific institution or an RN to BSN program within an institution.

1. Eligibility

To be eligible for the transfer of credits under the RN to BSN AA, an applicant must enter a community college nursing program on or after the effective date of this agreement and must earn an AAS degree in a North Carolina Community College with a GPA of at least 2.0 and a grade of C or better in all RN to BSN AA courses. All other applicants to RN to BSN programs at constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina are eligible to transfer credits on a course-by-course basis.

2. Definitions of General Education Courses, Pre-major Courses and Major Courses

The AAS Degree in Nursing at North Carolina Community Colleges requires a maximum of 76 hours of credit for graduation. These credits cover three areas of study:

- **General education requirements** that represent the fundamental foundation for success and include study in the areas of English composition, humanities/fine arts, natural sciences/mathematics, and social/ behavioral sciences.
- **Courses in the nursing major** that prepare the student to pass the NCLEX-RN and ensure that the programs meet state Board of Nursing accreditation requirement. These include classroom and clinical experiences working with patients across the lifespan in hospital and community settings and cover a wide range of health and illness concepts.
- **Additional courses** that support later learning within the major. These include additional natural and social sciences course and additional electives.

In order to use the RN to BSN AA effectively, students should follow the prescribed five block course list. (Appendix E) These courses are drawn from the 2014 Universal General Education Transfer Component and Transfer Course list.

3. Procedures governing transfer of Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Nursing degrees.

- a. The RN to BSN AA enables registered nurses who have graduated from North Carolina community college AAS nursing programs to complete a common list of courses that meet the entrance requirements at all of the RN to BSN programs at the constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina.
- b. A student who completes an AAS in Nursing with a GPA of at least 2.0 and a grade of C or better in the RN to BSN AA courses listed in Appendix E Blocks one through three and who holds a current unrestricted license as a Registered Nurse in North Carolina will have fulfilled the UNC institutions lower-division general education requirements as well as nursing program entry requirements. However, because nursing program admissions are competitive, no student is guaranteed admission to the program of her or his choice.
- c. These students will receive at least 58 semester hours of academic credit upon admission to a UNC institution.
- d. Additional credit for nursing course (NUR) content taken as a part of the AAS degree program is awarded by a university after an RN student has successfully completed a minimum of one and maximum of two university level nursing courses. For details, see Appendix E Block 4
- e. Individual nursing programs may require a maximum of two courses or six credits to meet school specific degree requirements that are not a part of the RN to BSN AA. In no case will these additional requirements necessitate completing more than 128 credits in order to earn a BSN. Each UNC RN to BSN institution will develop, publish, and maintain on their website a RN to BSN degree plan that identifies specific degree requirements that are not part of the RN to BSN AA.

- f. The fact that a student may have earned less than a C in a course that is beyond the listed semester hours of credit included in the transfer five block degree plan will not negate the provisions of the RN to BSN AA.
- g. Registered nurses who earn AAS degrees in Nursing and who complete RN to BSN AA designated courses that are included in this five block degree plan will receive credit for all courses completed with a grade of “C” or higher.

4. Certification of Transfer Component Courses and Associate in Applied Science degree completion

Certification of completion of the Associate in Applied Science degree in Nursing is the responsibility of the community college at which the courses were completed. Transcript identification of the Universal General Education Transfer Component Courses is also the responsibility of the community college at which the courses were completed. Students who have not completed an Associate in Applied Science degree in Nursing are not covered by the RN to BSN AA and must complete the receiving institution’s general education requirements and have their transcripts evaluated on a course by course basis.

5. Transfer of Courses not originated at North Carolina community colleges

Transfer courses that do not originate in a North Carolina Community College or UNC institution may be used under the RN to BSN AA with the following stipulations:

- a. Courses must be completed at a regionally accredited institution of higher education;
- b. Courses must meet general education requirements; and
- c. Courses may total no more than 14 hours of general education course credit.
- d. If the courses are used to complete the AAS degree, the courses will transfer as a part of the degree.

6. Transfer of Advanced Placement (AP) course credit

Advanced Placement (AP) course credits, awarded for a score three or higher, are acceptable as part of a student’s successfully completed AAS degree under the RN to BSN AA.

B. Impact of the RN to BSN AA on other articulation agreements

The RN to BSN AA takes precedence over bilateral articulation agreements established between constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System but does not necessarily preclude such agreements. Institution-to-institution articulation agreements that fall within the parameters of the RN to BSN AA and enhance

transferability of students from community colleges to senior institutions are acceptable. Institutional agreements conflicting with the RN to BSN AA are not permitted.

C. Compliance Procedures

The RN to BSN Transfer Committee (RNBSNTC) is charged with ensuring compliance of institutional policies and practices regarding the RN to BSN AA. To that end, an RN to BSN AA Review Team comprised of one UNC representative and one community college representative will survey and review the nursing program's transfer credit policies and procedures of three UNC institutions per year. The RNBSNTC will report its findings to the chief academic officers of University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community College System.

D. Students enrolled prior to Fall 2015

Students who entered or completed an AAS program in nursing at a North Carolina Community College prior to Fall 2015 are subject to the conditions in place at the individual institutions at the time of their original enrollment (as long as they have been continually enrolled) or degree completion.

Appendices

Appendix A: Participating Programs 2014

NCCCS Associate Degree Nursing Programs

Alamance Community College	Fayetteville Technical Community College
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College	Forsyth Technical Community College
Beaufort County Community College	Gaston College
Bladen Community College	Guilford Technical Community College
Blue Ridge Community College	Halifax Community College
Brunswick Community College	Haywood Community College
Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute	Isothermal Community College
Cape Fear Community College	James Sprunt Community College
Carteret Community College	Johnston Community College
Catawba Valley Community College	Lenoir Community College
Central Carolina Community College	Mayland Community College
Central Piedmont Community College	McDowell Technical Community College
Cleveland Community College	Mitchell Community College
Coastal Carolina Community College	Nash Community College
College of The Albemarle	Piedmont Community College
Craven Community College	Pitt Community College
Davidson County Community College	Randolph Community College
Durham Technical Community College	Richmond Community College
Edgecombe Community College	Roanoke-Chowan Community College
	Robeson Community College

Rockingham Community College	Surry Community College
Rowan-Cabarrus Community College	Tri-County Community College
Sampson Community College	Vance-Granville Community College
Sandhills Community College	Wake Technical Community College
South Piedmont Community College	Wayne Community College
Southeastern Community College	Western Piedmont Community College
Southwestern Community College	Wilkes Community College
Stanly Community College	Wilson Community College

UNC System RN to BSN Programs

Appalachian State University

Fayetteville State University

East Carolina University

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University

North Carolina Central University

University of North Carolina Charlotte

University of North Carolina Greensboro

University of North Carolina Pembroke

University of North Carolina Wilmington

Western Carolina University

Winston- Salem State University

Appendix B: **RN to BSN Transfer Committee Procedures**

Articulation between the North Carolina Community College System and The University of North Carolina is a dynamic process. To ensure the currency of the RN to BSN AA, occasional modifications to that agreement may be necessary. These modifications may include the addition, deletion, and/or revision of courses on the transfer list. The RNBSNTC will receive requests for modification only upon the recommendation of the chief academic officer of the NCCCS or UNC. Additions, deletions, and modifications may be subject to faculty review under the direction of the RNBSNTC. Because the modification process involves faculty and administrative review, this process may require up to 12 months for final action. Decisions made by the RNBSNTC will be consistent with all pertinent accreditation standards.

The Faculty Review Process

Any member of the RNBSNTC may request that a course under consideration be forwarded to the Faculty Review Committee. The Faculty Review Committee will be asked to review the course and the proposed action.

1. The Faculty Review Committee will consist of the following representatives:
 - a. 3 UNC faculty members
 - b. 3 NCCCS faculty members
2. Appointments to the committee will be for three years but may be renewed.
3. The Faculty Review Committee will receive a request to review a course(s) from the assigned representative(s) of the RNBSNTC within one week of the RNBSNTC meeting where the request was made.
4. Faculty Review Committee members will forward their comments, suggestions, and recommendations to the assigned representative(s) of the RNBSNTC prior to the next scheduled RNBSNTC meeting.

The assigned representative(s) of the RNBSNTC will report the results of the Faculty Review Committee at the next RNBSNTC scheduled meeting for action.

Approval of the requested action will require a majority of the RNBSNTC members.

Addition of Courses to the Transfer List

All additions to the RN to BSN AA transfer list must be drawn from the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement in effect at the time that the request for the addition is made. Such additions may be recommended by a participating institution through the following process:

1. The Director of a nursing program at any one of the participating colleges or universities makes a written request for inclusion of a specific course as a general education, a pre-major or elective to the CAO of their college or university. That CAO submits a written

request for inclusion on the transfer list to The University of North Carolina CAO. That individual will consult with the CAO of the North Carolina Community College System

2. The CAOs or their designees at UNC and at NCCCS will then seek feedback and endorsement about whether to pursue the change from their respective campuses. A two-thirds favorable response is required for the change to be pursued.
3. The CAO of either system may submit the request for action to the RNBSNTC a minimum of thirty days prior to the next RNBSNTC meeting.
4. The RNBSNTC reviews the request. Any member of the RNBSNTC may request that a course be referred to the Faculty Review Committee. For all courses that are approved, the Committee records their action and rationale of action.
5. The NCCCS Office or the UNC System Office will distribute notification of action to all the participating colleges or universities.

Deletion of a Course from the Transfer List

The director of a nursing program at any one of the participating colleges or universities may request that a course be removed from the RN to BSN AA transfer list by following similar procedures as outlined in items 1-5 in the *Addition of Courses to the Transfer List*.

Change in the Designation of a Course

The director of a nursing program at any one of the participating colleges or universities may request a change in the designation of a course in the RN to BSN AA (i.e. Elective to General Education or Pre-Major) by sending the request and rationale to the CAOs of the two systems. Either of the system CAOs may submit the request to the RNBSNTC for action.

Any member of the RNBSNTC may request that a course under consideration be forwarded to the Faculty Review Committee. The Faculty Review Committee will be asked to review the course and the proposed action.

Appendix C

RN to BSN Transfer Committee Membership

RNBSNTC members shall serve three-year, staggered terms. An individual may serve no more than two consecutive terms. Some initial appointments may be for 1 or 2 years to allow for staggering of terms

RNBSNTC shall have co-chairs, one from the NCCCS members, and one from the UNC Members. Co-chairs shall be elected by the membership, and shall serve staggered terms.

NCCCS Members:

- Four representatives including
 - One representative from the NCCCS administration
 - Three representatives from the community college member schools. These three members will be nominated by their peers and reviewed for approval by the CAO of the NCCCS. Self-nomination with endorsement by peers is permitted.

UNC Members

- Four representatives including:
 - One representative from the University of North Carolina
 - Three representatives from the university member schools. These members will be nominated by their peers and reviewed for approval by the CAO of UNC. Self-nomination with endorsement by peers is permitted.

Appendix D

RN to BSN Articulation Agreement Transfer Credit Appeal Procedure

Guiding Principle: If a student from a North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) college believes the terms of the RN to BSN AA have not been honored by a University of North Carolina (UNC) institution to which the student has been admitted, the student may invoke the RN to BSN AA Transfer Credit Appeal Procedure.

Steps in Filing an Appeal

Step #1:

- **By the last day of classes of the first semester for which admission is offered**, the student must submit an RN to BSN Transfer Credit Appeal Form along with any supporting documentation to the Director of Admissions or other campus designee at the UNC campus to which the student has been admitted. Students first enrolling at the senior institution in a summer session must submit their appeal by the end of the subsequent fall semester.
- **The student must specify on the appeal form the specific RN to BSN AA language that is in contention. Appeals that lack this information will not be considered.**
- The Director of Admission or other campus designee will review the appeal and respond in writing (email or letter) to the student within 15 business days.

Step #2:

- If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Director of Admission or other campus designee, he/she may appeal on the same form to the Chief Academic Officer (Provost) of the specific University within 15 days of written notice of the director's decision.
- The Provost will review the appeal and respond in writing (email or letter) to the student within 15 business days of receiving the student's appeal.

Step #3

- If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Provost, he/she may appeal to the RNBSNTC subcommittee, composed of the Co-chairs, a representative from the UNC General Administration, and a representative from the NCCCS. The student must submit the appeal to the subcommittee within 15 days of the receipt of the Provost's decision. The appeal to the RNBSNTC subcommittee should be sent to:

UNC-GA RN to BSN Transfer Committee
RN to BSN AA Appeal

PO Box 2688, Chapel Hill, NC 27515

If a consensus is reached by the subcommittee, the student will be notified within 15 business days; if a consensus resolution is not reached, the appeal will be forwarded by the subcommittee to the full RNBSNTC within 10 business days. The RNBSNTC will review the appeal and notify the student of the final decision within 10 business days of receiving the appeal.

RN to BSN Transfer Credit Appeal Procedure

University of North Carolina/North Carolina Community College System

Section 1: Student Information *(to be completed by the student submitting the form)*

- The completed form and any supporting documentation **must be submitted to the UNC institution's Director of Admission by the last day of classes of the first semester for which admission is offered or by the end of the subsequent fall semester for students enrolling in the summer.**
- You must specify the nature of the appeal and cite the specific RN to BSN AA language that is in contention. Appeals that do not include this information cannot be considered.

Last Name: _____ First: _____ MI: _____
 (Please print or type)

Address: _____
 (Number and Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Telephone: _____ Email: _____
 (Area code/Number)

Community College from which AAS was earned: _____

UNC institution offering admission: _____ beginning (semester/yr) _____

Section 2: Basis for your appeal: State your concern(s), citing specific language in the RN to BSN AA that is applicable to your contention. Attach RN to BSN AA supporting documents.

Student Signature: _____ Date _____

Appendix E:
Five Block Degree Plan with Transfer Course List

Block 1 (23 course credits)

- Consists of certain prerequisite nursing courses that are (or will be) taken as a part of all North Carolina community college AAS nursing programs. The courses are:

Course Category	Transferable courses	Credits
English Composition	Select two: ENG 111, 112, 114	6 (3,3)
Human Anatomy and Physiology with lab	BIO 165&166 or 168 & 169	8 (4,4)
Humanities/Fine Arts	Select one from the following: ART 111, ART 114, ART 115, MUS 110, MUS 112, PHI 215, PHI 240, HUM 115	3
Psychology	PSY150, PSY 241	6 (3,3)

Block 2 (18-19 credits):

- Consists of additional university general education requirements that are not a part of an AAS degree but are required to earn a BSN.
- These general education requirements will be met by completing one listed course in each of the first four categories and two in the last.

Course Category	Transferable courses	Credits
English Literature	ENG 231,232	3
History	HIS 111, 112, 131, 132.	3
Fine Arts	Select one <u>additional course not taken in Block 1</u> from the following: ART 114, ART 115, MUS 110, MUS 112	3
College Transfer Math	MAT 143 or MAT 171	3 or 4
Sociology	SOC 210 and one of the following: SOC 213, SOC 220, SOC 225, SOC 230, SOC 240	6(3,3)

Block 3 (17-18 credits):

- Consists of additional nursing or other requirements that are not a part of an AAS degree but are required to earn a BSN. These courses are:

Course Category	Transferable courses	Credits
Statistics	MAT 152	4
Microbiology with lab	BIO 175 or 275	3 or 4
Chemistry with lab	CHM 151 or CHM 130 and CHM 130A or CHM 131 and 131A	4
Social Science/ Elective: Select 2 from either category or one from each.	ECO 251, ECO 252, POL 120. Suggested electives include but are not limited to foreign language, speech, culture, and computer science. Electives must be selected from the Transfer Course List in the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement.	6 (3,3)

Note: Individual nursing programs may require a maximum of two courses or six credits to meet school specific degree requirements that are not a part of the RN to BSN AA. In no case will these additional requirements necessitate completing more than 128 credits in order to earn a BSN. Each UNC RN to BSN institution will develop, publish, and maintain on their website a RN to BSN degree plan that identifies specific degree requirements that are not part of the RN to BSN AA.

Block 4 (normally 30-34 credits but may vary depending on credit allocation in block 5):

- Consists of credit awarded by the constituent institutions' for nursing course (NUR) content taken as a part of the AAS degree program.
- These credits are awarded only after an RN student has successfully completed one or two initial nursing courses.

Block 5 (remaining credits, normally 30-34 but may vary depending on credit allocation in block 4):

- Consists of university-based courses that are taken as a part of the RN to BSN program.
- The number of awarded credits in blocks 1 through 5 must total between 120 and 128; the number of credits required to earn a BSN at the UNC constituent institutions' RN to BSN Programs.