



CNA Hospice Palliative Care Exam Study Group

COURSE SYLLABUS

2026

Course Facilitator:

Komal Patel Saini RN(EC), MN, CON(C), CHPCN(C), CGNC(C)

Course Format: eLearning

Contact Information: Komal Patel Saini- komal.patelsaini@desouzainstitute.com

Technical Support: support@desouzainstitute.com

Registration: Required

Prerequisite: Participants must be writing the CNA Hospice Palliative Care Certification Exam in Spring or Fall 2026.

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

As the number of people diagnosed with cancer continues to increase, specialized knowledge is required across the cancer continuum to provide safe, competency nursing care. Despite advances in interventions to treat symptom and alleviate suffering, many people do not have access to caregiver who provide specialized care to people living with advanced illness. Hospice Palliative Care Nurses require specialized knowledge to competently care for patients with advanced illness and at the end of life. "Hospice palliative care nursing has a commitment to public and professional education, leadership, research and advocacy in caring for the person and family living with advanced illness" (Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association Nursing Standards Committee, 2002, p. 8).

The de Souza Hospice Palliative Care Study Group offers preparatory work to assist independent adult learners as they study to write the CNA Hospice Palliative Care exam. Participants will examine theories and concepts in order to achieve specific competencies as outlined in the CNA exam study guide blueprint. Based on this blueprint, the exam content consists of competencies of a fully competent practicing hospice palliative care nurse with at least two years of experience.

B. COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Articulate the unique and primary responsibility of the hospice palliative care nurse to advocate for a persons' right to maintain his/her quality of life for as long as possible
- Describe how to support an individual and their family to experience a dignified and comfortable death
- Identify how to collaborate with members of an interprofessional team to meet the physical, psychosocial and spiritual needs of the person and his/her family living with life-limiting illness
- Describe and articulate how exemplary care is guided by best practice, is evidence-informed and respects the dignity and integrity of the person and family
- Interpret how hospice palliative care nursing includes a therapeutic relationship
- Describe the implementation of a comprehensive, coordinated care plan that emphasizes compassionate whole-person care, including the physical, psychosocial and spiritual domains

- Describe and identify care that spans the continuum, including the developmental continuum (infancy to geriatrics) from the diagnosis of a life-limiting illness until death of the person and includes bereavement for the family
- Interpret specialized knowledge, skill, attitude and creativity as integral components of primary, secondary and tertiary care provided to the person living with life-limiting illness and the family
- Differentiate and use the unique body of knowledge of hospice palliative care nursing practice that includes assessment and management of pain and other symptoms, as well as psychosocial, spiritual, grief and bereavement needs
- Describe and demonstrate through case studies ethical principles that are integrated in the provision of hospice palliative care and service delivery
- Incorporate leadership, education, research, mentorship, collaboration, coordination and advocacy as essential components to advance the clinical delivery of hospice palliative care nursing

C. MODE OF LEARNING: eLearning

The eLearning environment fosters a self-directed approach. You can progress through the modules and exercises at a convenient time, at home or work. The course timetable, in **Section H** of the course syllabus, outlines our suggested weekly expectations for participants.

- **eLearning Modules:** Units have been developed by the de Souza education team to reflect the knowledge required to be successful on the CNA certification exam. The learning format is self-directed. Each unit consists of pre-readings, interactive activities, resources, a multiple choice quiz and additional supplemental readings.
- **Readings:** These readings are provided to address each of the CNA oncology competencies and should be utilized with the eLearning unit activities.
- **Collaborative Forum:** This is a form of learning that really depends on the active participation of the group and is intended to engage all participants enrolled in the course. Online discussions regarding module content, supplemental readings or activities will enhance knowledge acquisition, understanding, and sharing. It is encouraged that you share experiences, ideas or resources from clinical practice with others in the course. To avoid excessively long postings, try to keep your posting under 200 words in length.

- **Symposium:** A symposium will be held to facilitate targeted review of the CNA competencies for the exam. This ½ day workshop will be available via webcasting (i.e. zoom). The competencies selected for review in the workshop will be based on the study group participants' knowledge gaps identified in the pre-study group knowledge testing, and based on participants' initial areas of lower confidence in practice. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to write a mock exam during the week of the symposium via eLearning. The mock exam will allow participants to test their knowledge and identify core priorities for future study based on mock exam feedback. *You must register to attend this event separately. Workshop registration details and link will be posted in the course News and Announcement Section of the course once the course begins and details are finalized.*

D. MODES OF EVALUATION

As part of the evaluation process, you are required to complete the following:

- **A Baseline Participant Survey:** This survey obtains your demographics and assesses your knowledge, attitude, and confidence before you begin the eLearning modules for the course.
- **eLearning Units:** You must complete **all units, activities and quizzes** by the course end date. The grades for each activity and quiz will not influence whether you receive a study group completion certificate in your *My Account*. However, all activities and quizzes must have been attempted at least once to receive the certificate of completion. Grades in quizzes can be used to guide your studying.
- **Post Evaluation Survey:** Once you have completed the above requirements, you will be required to complete a post course evaluation survey, which can be accessed at the end of the eLearning course.
- **Results Reporting Survey:** A short survey where you must report on whether you have written the CNA certification exam and whether you were successful. After the course end date, all course units will be hidden except for this survey, which will remain open until a specified deadline in eLearning. You must complete this survey in addition to all of the above requirements in order to receive a certificate of completion.

When you have met the all of the above requirements, you will receive a downloadable certificate of completion via your *My Account*. The certificate of completion will be available

within 4 weeks of the closing of the course and you will receive an email with instructions on how to download.

Please note: this course is considered a non-credit course, therefore completion does not earn you credits towards de Souza designation. Failure to meet the above requirements will result in an “Incomplete” grade in your *My Account*.

The de Souza Institute welcomes comments and feedback that you have at any time. Please send feedback to the course facilitator.

E. COMPETENCIES

The course gives learners the opportunity to apply theoretical and clinical competencies of a practicing hospice palliative care nurse with at least two years of experience (CNA HPC Exam Blueprint, 2019, p. 1).

A number of competencies will be evident within each module and encompasses the Canadian Nurses Association Hospice Palliative Care Exam blueprint. The following categories will be covered (CNA HPC Exam Blueprint, 2019, p. 5):

1. Person and Family-Centered Care
2. Pain Assessment and Management
3. Symptoms Assessment and Management
4. Care in the Final Days
5. Loss, Grief, and Bereavement
6. Collaborative Practice
7. Education, Professional Development and Advocacy
8. Ethics and Legal Issues

See Appendix A for the *Summary Chart of the CNA Hospice Palliative Care Nursing Certification Exam Development Guidelines*.

F. TIME REQUIREMENT & EXPECTATIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

To be successful in completing this course, you are encouraged to set aside 2 to 3 hours each week to complete the course sections. Learning is primarily self-directed. The total learning hours for this course is 16.5 hours.

Units do not need to be completed sequentially; you can choose to go ahead and complete learning activities at your own pace.

Your course activity completion will be reflected in your **grade book**. Evidence of engagement through active participation will result in a positive learning experience. You will be expected to complete all sections/modules through the eLearning course. It is strongly recommended for participants not to plan a vacation during the course offering period.

G. REQUIRED READINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Readings are included with each unit. Additional activities, quizzes and discussions are included to augment the readings. The recommended text is based on the CNA exam blueprint text recommendations. Virtual Library readings are recommended in areas where the text book does not fully cover the exam content.

Peden, J., deMoissac, D., MacMillan, K., & Mushani-Kanji, T. (2013). *99 common questions (and more) about hospice palliative care: A nurse's handbook (4th ed.)*. Edmonton, AB: Regional Palliative Care Program, Capital Health.

Ferrell, B. R., & J. A. Paice (Eds.). (2019). *Oxford textbook of palliative nursing (5th ed.)*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Available via de Souza Institute's Virtual Library. Hard copies can be purchased at many university bookstores.)

Pereira, J.L. (2016). *The pallium palliative pocketbook (2nd ed.)*. Edmonton.

Canadian Nurses Association. (2017). *Code of ethics for registered nurses*. Ottawa: <https://www.cna-aiic.ca/~media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/code-of-ethics-2017-edition-secure-interactive>.

Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association. (2013). *A model to guide hospice palliative care: Based on national principles and norms of practice*. Ottawa: <https://www.chpca.net/media/319547/norms-of-practice-eng-web.pdf>.

Click [here](#) for a full list of CNA recommended readings.

Additional Supplemental Readings – Virtual Library: Each unit will have additional supplemental readings from the virtual library that you may choose to include in your learning. These readings have been selected by the facilitator to enrich your learning experience and may be incorporated on a self-directed basis.

H. SUGGESTED COURSE TIMELINE

You **do not** have to complete the weekly course activities exactly as outlined below. However, you must complete all course requirements **by the course end date**.

	Suggested Weekly eLearning Activities
Week 1	✓ eLearning Centre Orientation – <i>Optional, but highly recommended</i> ✓ Baseline participant survey ✓ HPC baseline knowledge quiz ✓ About hospice palliative care
Week 2	✓ Hospice palliative care research, advocacy and self care ✓ Care of the person and family
Week 3	✓ Pain assessment and management
Week 4	✓ Symptom assessment and management: Nutrition and metabolic, GI and GU
Week 5	✓ Symptom assessment and management: Respiriology, cardiology, circulatory, neuro-cognitive & musculoskeletal
Week 6	✓ Symptom assessment and management: Immune system, skin and mucous membrane
Week 7	✓ Loss, grief and bereavement ✓ Last days/hours/imminent death care
Week 8	✓ Collaborative practice/education ✓ Ethics and legal issues

Symposium Day—TBD	
Evaluation	✓ Symposium Day Evaluation Survey ✓ Post Evaluation Survey
Results Reporting	✓ All course units will be hidden after the course end date ✓ You will only have access to complete the <i>Results Reporting Survey</i> after you write the CNA exam and must be done by the specified deadline

I. FACILITATOR AVAILABILITY

This course is self-directed. The course facilitator will answer your questions related to course content.

You can expect the facilitator to respond to your questions within 24-48 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend.

Technical support is available by contacting email support@desouzainstitute.com

J. FACILITATOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Komal Patel Saini, RN(EC), MN, CON(C), CHPCN(C), CGNC(C)

Komal began her nursing career in 2006. Komal values lifelong learning and has demonstrated this in many professional activities she has engaged in including the chairing of the Oncology Interprofessional Unit Base Council and the William Osler Oncology Journal Club. In 2011, Komal completed an RNAO clinical fellowship that focused on Oncology and Palliative Pain and Symptom Management. Komal holds a BScN (Honours) from the University of Windsor (2006) and holds a Masters in Nursing with a teaching focus from Athabasca University (2014). She obtained her Oncology CNA certification in 2010, Hospice Palliative Care CNA certification in 2012 and Gerontology CNA certification in 2019. Komal achieved her de Souza APN designation in 2013 and completed the Post Master's NP program with a focus in primary health care from Athabasca University in August 2018.

K. SOCIAL FORUM

This forum is provided for you to post news, items of general interest, share information about yourselves and to raise topics of interest beyond the specific questions being discussed in the module-specific forums. All messages of a social nature can be posted in this forum. This forum is open to all participants, including the facilitator.

L. VIRTUAL LIBRARY

de Souza Institute has a virtual library that can be accessed by those registered in this course or any other de Souza Institute continuing education program. This resource enables you to access over 1500 e-Journals, 200 e-books and 8 on-line databases such as CINAHL or Ovid-Medline. You can use the virtual library to access the additional reading materials for your course. The virtual library can be accessed 24 hours a day using your login and password.

The direct link is: <https://library.desouzainstitute.com/login>.

M. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

eLearning Centre Orientation

The eLearning Centre Orientation is designed to introduce you to online learning and to help you understand how to navigate through the de Souza Institute eLearning centre and courses. It is strongly recommended that you complete this orientation so that you will be able to successfully navigate de Souza's eLearning environment.

de Souza Institute Support

If you have questions about the content of a course, please email your course facilitator.

If you need assistance accessing or navigating the eLearning Centre, please refer to the eLearning Orientation course. If you have questions or have any technical difficulties, please contact support@desouzainstitute.com.

N. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Click the links below to read de Souza Institute's respective policies.

[Academic Honesty and Copyright Policy](#)

[Cancellations, Incomplete and No Show Policy](#)

[Request for Accommodation Policy](#)

Course content and resources provided in this course are based on best practice guidelines from provincial and national bodies. Local protocols and policies vary among healthcare organizations; please consult educators within your organization if you have specific questions related to local protocols and policies.

APPENDIX A

Summary chart—Hospice Palliative Care Nursing Certification Exam Development Guidelines as seen in [Exam Blueprint](#) and Specialty Competencies by the Canadian Nurses' Association (2019, p. 9)

STRUCTURAL VARIABLES		
Examination Length and Format	Approximately 165 objective questions	
Question Presentation	60-70% independent questions 30-40% case-based questions	
The Cognitive Domain	Knowledge/Comprehension	10-20% of the questions
	Application	55-65% of the questions
	Critical Thinking	20-30% of the questions
Competency Categories	Person and Family-Centered Care	10-15% of the questions
	Pain Assessment and Management	15-20% of the questions
	Symptom Assessment and Management	20-25% of the questions
	Care in the Final Days	10-15% of the questions
	Loss, Grief, Bereavement and Psychosocial Considerations	7.5-12.5% of the questions
	Collaborative Practice	5-10% of the questions
	Education, Professional Development and Advocacy	5-10% of the questions
	Ethics and Legal Issues	7.5-12.5% of the questions
CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES		
Culture	Questions are included that measure awareness, sensitivity, and respect for different cultural values, beliefs, and practices and vulnerable populations.	
Health Situation	In the development of the Hospice Palliative Care Nursing Certification Exam, the client is viewed holistically. The health situations reflect a cross-section of diseases within the continuum of advanced life-limiting illness and address physical, psychosocial and spiritual aspects of care which includes the person, family and care provider.	
Health-Care Environment	It is recognized that Hospice Palliative Care nursing is practiced in a variety of settings. In this exam, the health-care environment is specified only where it is required for clarity or in order to provide guidance to the examinee.	