



CNA Gerontology Exam Study Group

COURSE SYLLABUS

2026

Course Educator:

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Course Format: eLearning

Contact Information and Technical Support: support@desouzainstitute.com

Registration: Required

Prerequisite: *Participants must be writing the CNA Gerontology Certification Exam in spring or fall 2026.*

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A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Canada's population is aging and continues to include a growing number and proportion of older adults. Many older adults in Canada are healthy, active, independent, and living well in their community. Other older adults, however, experiencing multiple co-morbidities, require more extensive care from healthcare professional to maintain an optimum quality of life (Baumbusch, Dahlke, & Phinney, 2012).

Gerontological nursing "is a dynamic interaction between the older person and nurse to achieve health and wellbeing and respond to illnesses experienced by older people within the environment" (Canadian Gerontological Nursing Association, 2019, p.9). Gerontology nurses require specialized knowledge to competently care for patients with multi-morbidities, and in some scenarios, to provide palliative and end of life care.

Gerontological nurses "understand that nursing practice is complex and is delivered as an integrated whole, involving enactment of each of the SIX standards that underpin gerontological nursing care. These standards are Relational Care, Ethical Care, Evidence-Informed Care, Aesthetic/Artful Care, Safe Care and Socio-Political Engaged Care. These six standards often overlap and therefore should be all considered in the planning and provision of care. Canadian gerontological nurses enact the standards simultaneously, committing to a professional way-of-being that supports and reinforces continuous learning, innovating, care partner participating, community building, team building, mentoring, student guiding and health system advocacy. Through these actions gerontological nurses contribute to the strengthening of a healthy culture within which the health needs of older people and their care partners are met" (Canadian Gerontological Nursing Association, 2019, p.10).

The de Souza Gerontology Study Group offers preparatory work to assist independent adult learners as they study to write the CNA Gerontology exam. Participants will examine theories and concepts, and their application in clinical encounters 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 gerontology nurse (LPNs/RPNs, & RNs) with at least two years of experience.

B. COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the study group, you will be able to:

- Identify normal age-related changes, common conditions and diseases, and atypical presentations
- Articulate the unique and primary responsibility of the gerontology nurse to advocate for the rights of older adults.
- Describe how to care for and support the older adult and their family with co-morbidities, some requiring palliation, and at end of life.
- Describe how to work in partnership with older adults to incorporate their individual preferences, expectations, needs and experiences into the goals of care and subsequent intervention.
- Identify how to collaborate with members of an interprofessional team to meet the physical, psychosocial and spiritual needs of the older adult.
- Describe and articulate how exemplary care is guided by best practice, is evidence-informed and respects the dignity and integrity of the older adult.
- Interpret how gerontological 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, from the diagnosis of a co-morbidity or life-limiting illness until death of the older adult.
- Interpret specialized knowledge, skill, attitude and creativity as integral components of primary, secondary and tertiary care provided to the older adult and their family.
- Differentiate and use the unique body of knowledge of gerontological nursing practice that includes health promotion and disease prevention, assessment and management of pain and other symptoms, as well as psychosocial, functional, social, cultural, development, environmental, spiritual, grief and bereavement needs of an older adult.
- Describe and demonstrate through case studies ethical principles that are integrated in the provision of gerontological nursing and service delivery.
- Incorporate leadership, education, research, mentorship, collaboration, coordination and advocacy as essential components to advance the clinical delivery of gerontological nursing.

C. MODE OF LEARNING

The main mechanisms to facilitate learning in this course will entail eLearning and a half day virtual workshop. An integrative approach will be used with the competency categories embedded throughout each learning mode. This approach is reflective of the requirements for knowledge synthesis for the CNA exam and the complexities nurses experience in clinical practice.

eLearning

eLearning, offered through the de Souza eLearning centre, will cover the following activities: the application of knowledge, self-directed reading assignments, quizzes, activities and optional discussion forum participation. The eLearning environment fosters a self-directed approach for participants to progress through the modules at a convenient time, either at home or work. The course timetable in Section H on pages 7-8 of the course syllabus outlines weekly expectations for participants.

- Learning and application: Sections and modules are developed by the de Souza education team to reflect the latest knowledge in Gerontology. The content is up to date and the learning format is interactive.
- Readings are intended to enhance the eLearning content surrounding key topic areas.
- Quizzes via the eLearning platform will be included after each section and are intended to assess knowledge acquisition, understanding, and application directly linked to the content covered by the units/sections and modules.
- Technical support will be provided throughout the course.

Workshop/ symposium

A ½ day (webcast) symposium will be held for participants to facilitate targeted review of the CNA competencies. The competencies selected for review will be based on the study group participants' knowledge gaps identified in the pre-study group knowledge quiz, and based on participants' initial areas of lower confidence in practice. In addition, a mock exam will be made available online following the symposium. Date: TBD.

D. MODES OF EVALUATION

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

- A baseline evaluation: this survey assesses your knowledge, attitude, confidence, and learning methods before you begin the eLearning modules for the course.
- eLearning modules/units/sections, quizzes, activities, required readings and discussion forum postings: It is recommended that you will participate in a meaningful way to demonstrate learning through the weekly collaborative forum discussions.
- Symposium: attending the half day symposium is **optional**. If you attend the symposium, you must complete the symposium day evaluation.
- Post evaluation: At the end of the course, you will be required to complete a post course evaluation. This will be facilitated electronically through eLearning.

When you have met the all the above requirements, you will receive a downloadable certificate of completion via your *My Account* and will receive 20 learning hours. Please note: the certificate of completion will be available two weeks after the closing of the online course.

E. COMPETENCIES

This course gives learners the opportunity to apply theoretical and clinical competencies of a practicing gerontological nurse with at least two years of experience (CNA Gerontology LPN/RPN Exam Blueprint, 2019, p. 1; RN Exam Blueprint, 2016, p. 1).

A number of competencies will be evident within each module and encompasses both the College of Nurses of Ontario Standards of Practice and Canadian Nurses Association Hospice Gerontology Exam blueprint.

Participants will study the following competency categories that will prepare them to certify as a fully competent gerontological nurse (CNA RN Gerontology Exam Blueprint, 2016, p. 4; CNA LPN/RPN Gerontology Exam Blueprint, 2019, p. 4):

1. Culture and Human Diversity
2. Assessment
3. Health Promotion and Risk Reduction
4. Illness and Disease Management
5. Ethical, Legal and Health System Issues
6. Professional Practice
7. Information and Health Technologies

See Appendix A and B to view Summary Chart of Gerontological Nursing Exam Development Guidelines.

College of Nurses of Ontario Standards

- Accountability
- Continuing competence
- Knowledge
- Knowledge application
- Leadership
- Relationships
- Professional relationships

Standards & guidelines link:

<http://www.cno.org/learn-about-standards-guidelines/standards-and-guidelines/>

F. TIME REQUIREMENT AND EXPECTATIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

To be successful in completing the requirements of this study group, you are encouraged to set aside 2 to 3 hours each week to complete each section as learning is primarily self-directed. The total learning hours for this course is **20** hours.

Sections and modules are to be completed sequentially; participants can choose to go ahead and complete learning activities in multiple sections and modules at once.

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 four sections/ modules through the eLearning system. It is strongly recommended for participants not to plan a vacation during the course offering period.

For the final workshop session, participants have the option to attend a half day workshop. For more information about the workshop refer to Section C.

G. EDUCATOR AVAILABILITY

This course is **self-directed**. However, a course educator is available to:

- Answer your questions related to course content.
- Monitor the registration process.
- Be available to you for questions throughout the course.

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

Your educator is:

- Komal Patel Saini

Contact Information and Technical support is available by contacting support@desouzainstitute.com

H. COURSE TIMELINE

The baseline survey must be completed first. The sections/modules can be completed in any order. The course timeline provided below is provided as a guide.

Section/ Module	Topic	Post Date	Date to complete
Intro.	eLearning Center Orientation	Within first week of the course	End of first week of the course
Getting Started	Baseline Participant Survey	Within first week of the course	End of first week of the course
1	Care of the Person and Family	Within first week of the course	End of first week of the course
2	Pain Assessment and Management	Within second week of the course	End of second week of the course
3	Disease Assessment and Management: Sleep, sensory, integumentary	Within second week of the course	End of second week of the course

4	Disease Assessment and Management: Neurological, cognitive, delirium, dementia, and mental illness	Within third week of the course	End of third week of the course
5	Disease Assessment and Management: Nutrition, GI, GU, Sexual function	Within fourth week of the course	End of fourth week of the course
6	Disease Assessment and Management: Cardiovascular, Respiratory, and Musculoskeletal	Within fifth week of the course	End of fifth week of the course
7	Disease Assessment and Management: Endocrine/metabolic, and infections	Within sixth week of the course	End of sixth week of the course
8	Disease Assessment and Management: Cancer	Within seventh week of the course	End of seventh week of the course
9	Safety: Abuse, Restraint Use, Polypharmacy, Falls	Within seventh week of the course	End of seventh week of the course
10	End of Life	Within eighth week of the course	End of eighth week of the course
11	Ethics, legal and health system issues	Within eighth week of the course	End of eighth week of the course
Workshop	Date to be determined – (TBD)		
Final Evaluation	Final Study Group Evaluation	End of study group – Complete by the course end date	

In order to receive a certificate of completion all course requirements must be met and successfully completed by the course end date.

I. GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE DISCUSSION

Discussion related to course content will take place in the collaboration discussion forums. The collaboration discussion forums in this course is optional. However, you can use it to share ideas and clarify your understanding of course content and readings.

J. 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 educator.

K. VIRTUAL LIBRARY

de Souza Institute has a virtual library that can be accessed 24/7 by course participants using your de Souza Institute login and password. There are 1500 e-Journals, 200 e-books and 8 on-line databases (e.g., CINAHL, Ovid-Medline) you can access to get the additional reading materials for your course.

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

L. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

eLearning Centre Orientation

The eLearning Centre [Orientation course](#) 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 very short free course 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 support@desouzainstitute.com.

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

M. 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](#)

Appendix A: LPN/RPN

Summary Chart Gerontological Nursing Certification Exam Development Guidelines as seen in Exam Blueprint and Specialty Competencies by Canadian Nurses Association 2019 (page p. 8).

Summary Chart

Gerontological Nursing for LPNs/RPNs Certification Exam Development Guidelines

STRUCTURAL VARIABLES	
Examination Length and Format	Approximately 160-165 multiple choice questions
Question Presentation	55-70% independent questions 30-45% case-based questions
The Cognitive Domain	Knowledge/Comprehension 15-25% of questions Application 45-55% of questions Critical Thinking 25-35% of questions
Competency Categories	Culture and Human Diversity 4-9% of questions Assessment 18-25% of questions Health Promotion and Risk Reduction 22-30% of questions Illness and Disease Management 22-30% of questions Ethical, Legal and Health System Issues 8-12% of questions Professional Practice 3-7% of questions Information and Health Technologies 3-7% of questions
CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES	
Client Age and Gender	The age of the client will be 60 years and over and will be determined by the health situations presented in the questions. The questions will be inclusive of all genders and identities.
Client Health Situation	In the development of the Gerontological Nursing for LPNs/RPNs Certification Exam, the client is viewed comprehensively within the physiological, psychological, functional, social, cultural, developmental, environmental and spiritual dimensions of a total life experience up to and including death.
Health-Care Environment	It is recognized that gerontological nursing is practiced in a variety of settings. The health-care environment is specified only where it is required for clarity or in order to provide guidance to the examinee.

Appendix B: RN

Summary Chart Gerontological Nursing Certification Exam Development Guidelines as seen in Exam Blueprint and Specialty Competencies by Canadian Nurses Association 2024 (page p. 7).

Summary Chart

Gerontological Nursing Exam Development Guidelines

STRUCTURAL VARIABLES		
Examination Length and Format	Approximately 160-165 multiple choice questions	
Question Presentation	60-70% independent questions 30-40% case-based questions	
The Cognitive Domain	Knowledge/Comprehension	15-25% of questions
	Application	45-55% of questions
	Critical Thinking	25-35% of questions
Competency Categories	Culture and Human Diversity	3-7% of questions
	The Aging Experience	3-7% of questions
	Health Promotion	15-25% of questions
	Comprehensive Gerontological Assessment	20-25% of questions
	Syndromes and Health Challenges	22-28% of questions
	End of Life Care	3-7% of questions
	Ethical, Legal and Health System Issues	5-10% of questions
	Professional Practice	3-7% of questions
	Information and Health Technologies	3-7% of questions
CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES		
Client Age and Gender	The age of the client will be 65 years old and over and will be determined by the health situations presented in the questions. The questions will divide equally between gender.	
Client Health Situation	In the development of the Gerontological Nursing Certification Examination, the client is viewed comprehensively within the physiological, psychological, functional, social, cultural, developmental, environmental and spiritual dimensions of a total life experience.	
Health-Care Environment	It is recognized that gerontological nursing is practiced in a variety of settings. The health-care environment is specified only where it is required for clarity or in order to provide guidance to the examinee.	

Bibliography (key references)

(<https://www.cna-aiic.ca/en/certification/exam-preparation/bibliographies/gerontological-nursing-certification-bibliography-rns>)

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3. Hirst, S. P., Lane, A. M., & Miller, C. A. (2015). Miller's nursing for wellness in older adults (Cdn. ed.). Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins.
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