

## Advances in the evaluation process of Postgraduate Studies in Nursing

*Avanços no processo de avaliação da pós-graduação em Enfermagem*

*Avances en el proceso de evaluación del posgrado en Enfermería*



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Postgraduate Studies have a very significant role in the academic, scientific, and technological development in a country—and Brazil is not different. In Nursing, the education of master's and doctoral students is based on the idea of teaching/movement; in other words, it does not happen in a linear way, but rather requires exchanges among the actors involved by means of critical thinking about the practice of care, people's relations at work and the development of science and technology in the field of Healthcare and Nursing.

Therefore, to think about post-graduation indicators means (re)thinking about the paths, the organization, and the meanings of the postgraduate education in the field of Nursing, leading us to ask ourselves: have we advanced in that journey? What are the challenges we need to face?

The Higher Education Personnel Improvement Coordination (CAPES) is a foundation linked to Brazil's Ministry of Education (MEC) that works for the expansion and consolidation of Postgraduate Studies (Master's degree and PhD studies) since 1951, with the goal of continuous development of higher education personnel. In 1981, the development of the National Plan of Postgraduate Studies became a responsibility of the academic institutions, and therefore the institutions need to develop, evaluate, follow and coordinate the activities related to Master's and PhD Studies. To ensure and maintain the quality in such education, CAPES has an evaluation system that can be divided into two processes: entrance and continuity in the courses distributed in 49 fields.

The assessment for continuity became a four-year process in 2013 and in the last quadrennium (2017-2020), it has evolved including a strong trend for multidimensionality<sup>(1)</sup>. The evaluation process was based on the relevance of thinking and improvement of the assessment model of Brazilian Postgraduate Studies, understanding that universities need to have a leading role in their planning and evaluation, giving value to social and economic impact of the knowledge that was generated and focused on regional and national needs.

The inclusion of indicators that value the education of postgraduate students, innovation, globalization, and knowledge transfer to society has proven to be a key factor. The quality of the developed projects, interdisciplinarity and proper infrastructure were also considered and valued.

The assessment form included three questions with 12 items/indicators. Regarding the program's proposal, the items assessed are: articulation, up-to-date fields of concentration and compliance, lines of research, current projects, curriculum structure, and the available infrastructure considering the program's goals, mission, and modality. Faculty's profiles

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and adequacy to the program's proposal are also considered, as well as the program's strategic planning, the relations with the academic institution strategic plan for managing future development, adjustments, and improvement in infrastructure, besides including the best education for their students in terms of intellectual—bibliographic, technical and/or artistic—production. The processes, procedures, and results of the program's self-assessment regarding student's education and intellectual output are also part of the assessment item within this question.

The innovation in the assessment of the second question (development) included the item referring to the quality and adequacy of dissertations or equivalent academic papers regarding the program's fields of concentration and lines of research, and the analysis of the destination, work and assessment of the program's graduate students considering their development. The analysis of the intellectual output quality of students and alumni was maintained in this question, as well as the analysis of the quality of research activities and faculty's intellectual output in the program, besides the quality and involvement of faculty members regarding the program's activities.

Finally, in the question concerning impact on society, the impact and innovative spirit of intellectual output was assessed considering the program's nature, its economic, social, and cultural impact, and its internationalization, (local, regional, national) integration and visibility.

The field of Nursing finished the most recent evaluation cycle with 78 programs, among which 37 academic Master's and PhD programs, 2 professional Master's and PhD programs, 16 academic Master's programs, 22 professional Master's and 2 academic PhD programs<sup>(2)</sup>.

The evaluation process of the field presented the paths and challenges that will have to be faced together. Among them we can highlight overcoming the differences, considering regional and national diversity, as well as the various postgraduate studies traditions, centered only in the evaluation of the scientific output.

One of the challenges is to leverage the training of PhD professionals in Nursing, through national and international inter-institutional partnerships, promoting the discussion about best practices in research and the development of strategic research that is guided by the national agenda of priorities on healthcare and sustainability of SUS, the Integrated Healthcare System in Brazil.

Likewise, it is relevant to mention the inclusion of young doctors in Master's and PhD programs for faculty renovation, and for the consolidation and cooperation in the development of centers of teaching and research excellence, resulting in innovation for care, management and knowledge in Nursing.

The evaluation of postgraduate courses in Brazil is extremely important to ensure the excellence and the relevance of the academic system in the country. However, it is imperative to overcome the existing challenges and look for improvement perspectives that consider the diversity and complexity of the courses. The flexibilization of the evaluation process and the involvement of all the stakeholders have proven key features for improving the quality of Brazilian postgraduate programs. Only then we will be able to train qualified professionals and contribute in a meaningful way to the scientific, technological, and social advances in the country.

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