

# Evaluation of the CNO Quality Assurance Program

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## Public Facing Report



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## Introduction

The College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) is the regulating body for over 190,000 Registered Nurses (RNs), Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs), and Nurse Practitioners (NPs) in Ontario, Canada. CNO established the Quality Assurance (QA) Program as a requirement of the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* to assist nurses in maintaining their competence and continually evaluating their practice. All practicing nurses are required to participate in the QA Program and each year, a number are randomly selected to complete QA Assessment and provide evidence of their completed activities to CNO. QA Assessment includes two separate components: Part A: Knowledge Assessment, which requires nurses to complete a set of learning modules followed by the completion of a knowledge check and Part B: Practice Assessment, which requires nurses to submit a learning plan and other activities to a QA Peer Coach for review. Peer coaching is offered to all nurses as an opportunity to work individually with their QA Peer Coach to understand and apply the feedback received to improve future practice, including strengthening their understanding and application of the standards of practice.

The CNO QA Program completed an evaluation to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the new QA platform, tools and processes that were utilized during the June and October 2023 QA Assessment. Ference & Company, an evaluation consulting firm, was contracted to conduct the evaluation including designing the evaluation process, collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing data from all sources, and developing the final report and recommendations. Data collected from participants was collected and stored on Canadian owned and hosted servers and feedback from participants was aggregated to ensure maximum anonymity.

## Methodology

Registered nurses, registered practical nurses, and nurse practitioners who completed their QA Assessment during the evaluation period were invited to participate in an online survey and/or key informant interview. A total of 325 surveys and 56 interviews were completed.

The evaluation was guided by an evaluation matrix (evaluation questions, indicators, and data sources), which was developed through the evaluation scoping and design process. The methodology for this evaluation included the following:

- **An Online Survey** which was distributed to nurses who successfully completed Part A (June and October selection) and nurses who received peer coaching for Part B (June selection). Peer coaches were also invited to complete an online survey to provide feedback.
- **Key Informant Interviews** which were completed with three groups of participants (nurses who completed Part A, CNO staff, and nurses who received peer coaching for Part B).
- **A Background Document/Data Review** of data held by CNO was reviewed for information pertaining to the evaluation questions.

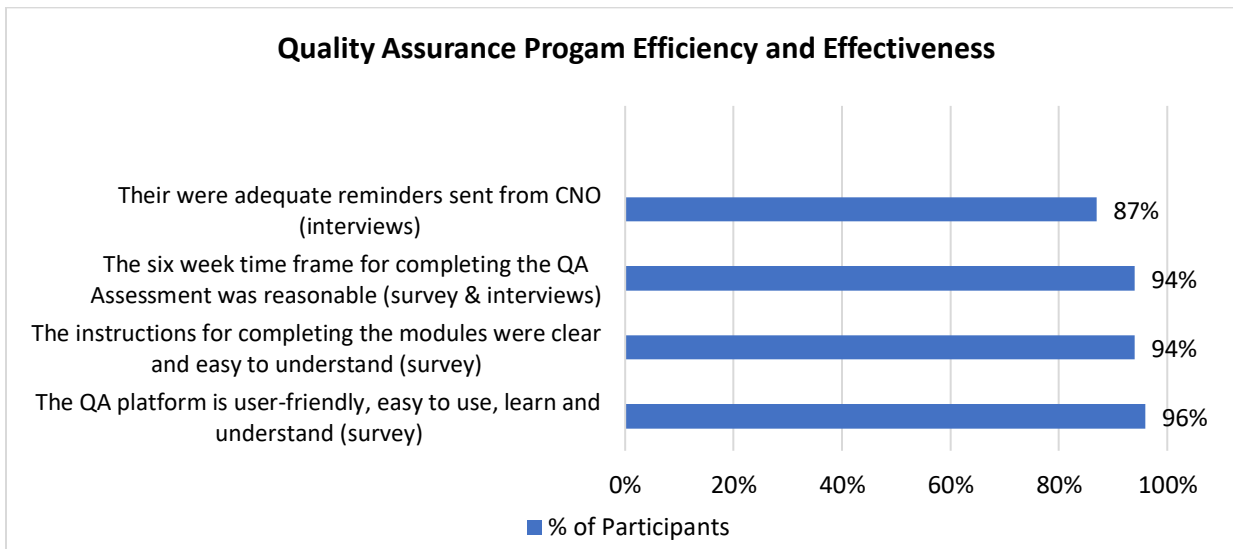
## Summary of Key Findings

### QA Program Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Nurses and CNO staff agreed that the new notification process in the messaging centre, which was implemented at the October selection, requires some improvement to enhance efficiency. Nurses suggested that clearer communication regarding the expectations, content,

and timelines of the assessment, as well as more information about upcoming selections would be useful.

- Nurses reported a high level of satisfaction and felt supported by CNO staff while participating in their QA assessment, with 65% of nurses who completed a survey rating their satisfaction as very satisfied or satisfied.
- Nurses felt that clearer communication with respect to sharing more information regarding the QA Assessment process (what it is, why they occur, when they occur, what to expect, etc.,) was needed to improve satisfaction and feelings of being supported.



#### **Part A: Knowledge Assessment Component**

- Nurses are successfully completing Part A of the program. In total, 974 nurses completed Part A during the June launch and October selection.
- 98% of nurses agreed or strongly agreed that they were familiar with CNO's standards of practice and had a high level of understanding of their accountabilities highlighted in all three modules included in the Part A QA Assessment.
- CNO staff shared that the Part A QA Assessment modules are an effective tool to provide information. Integrating knowledge checks or short assessments throughout the module may facilitate greater knowledge adherence and application to practice.

#### **Part B: Practice Assessment Component**

- Nurses are also successfully completing Part B of the program. During the evaluation period, 365 nurses completed Part B.
- Peer coaching was reported as beneficial in assisting nurses who experienced difficulties in successfully completing their QA Assessment.
- Improvements to SharePoint and the scheduling system would facilitate a more efficient peer coaching process.

## **Conclusions**

The evaluation found that CNO's Quality Assurance Program is achieving its intended goal of continuing to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the new QA platform, which will support

CNO as they engage more nurses in QA Assessment. The new platform, and the tools and processes used, improved the efficiency of the QA Program, as the number of nurses selected to participate in October increased considerably from the June Assessment. In addition, CNO staff, nurses, and peer coaches believe that the QA Program provides quality information to nurses to help them identify knowledge gaps and maintain their continuing competence by continually evaluating their nursing practice. As the QA Program continues to reach its intended goal, CNO may look at continuing to enhance the QA Assessment process by:

1. Continuing to incorporate automation into the QA Assessment process, which may include, moving Part B to the QA platform.
2. Considering the incorporation of a knowledge testing component into the Part A assessment to better understand if nurses understand and are able to apply content from the learning modules.
3. Improving communication about the QA Assessment process and its goals, to ensure proper understanding, preparation, and improve engagement among nurses.
4. Enhancing the peer coaching process by addressing challenges to the messaging centre, scheduling system, and online features.

The feedback and data collected during this evaluation has been used to inform improvements to the QA Assessment for 2024, including increased automation, more frequent and clearer communications, and updating the QA Platform to ensure maximum usability for all participants.

If you have any questions about the QA Assessment or this report, or would like a copy of the full report, please contact **QA Assessment Program** at [QAassessment@CNOmail.org](mailto:QAassessment@CNOmail.org), 416-963-3922 or 1-800-387-5525 (ext. 3922).