

Abstract

Social and professional paradigm shifts of the 1990s moved Holistic Nursing into the mainstream of healthcare, resulting in the need for national certification of Holistic Nurses. Given the assumptions that certification examinations are based on the knowledge, skills and abilities prerequisite for competent practice in a given specialty and that the certification credential tells the public and peers the certificant has such knowledge (Stomberg, 2005), The American Holistic Nurses Association's Leadership Council (AHNA-LC) initiated certification processes in 1994. Upon the request of AHNA-LC, the American Holistic Nurses' Certification Corporation (AHNCC) assumed these responsibilities in April, 1997. Since then, AHNCC has overseen the revision of the first certification process for holistic nursing prepared at the baccalaureate level and development of a second one designed for holistic nurses prepared in graduate nursing programs. The following paragraphs describe these developmental processes.

Background of the Certification Processes

The Holistic Nursing Certification Process was initiated in 1994 by an AHNA Certification Committee (AHNA-CC) under the direction of The American Holistic Nurses' Associations Leadership Committee (AHNA-LC). They defined five phases necessary to complete their work.

- 1) Role delineation and knowledge specification;
- 2) Recognition of Holistic Nurse Leaders with Lifetime Certification;
- 3) Certification of Holistic Nurse Leaders by Equivalency Packets;
- 4) Certification of Holistic Nurses by Portofolio Review;
- 5) Certification of Holistic Nurses by a valid and reliable national examination.

Phase 1. Since role delineation is necessary prior to certification development, the first step was to conduct a study to determine the nature of Holistic Nursing knowledge and skills, and how Holistic Nurses defined and operationalized their practice roles¹. The findings from this study were used to refine the definition of Holistic Nursing (AHNA, 1998; 2003). With this work completed, the context was in place for certification of holistic nurses.

Phase 2. The next step was to recognize nurses who had set the standard for Holistic Nursing through lifetime work. These nurses, recommended by the AHNA-CC and approved by LC were given Lifetime Certification. Initially, 12 nurses were honored by AHNA in this phase. Later (1998) AHNCC added Martha Rogers, resulting in a total of 13 Holistic Nurses with Lifetime Certification.

Phase 3 was aimed at recognizing nurses who had practiced Holistic Nursing prior to the inception of AHNA; nurses who had demonstrated leadership in the Holistic Nursing movement. These nurses were invited to submit extensive Equivalency Packets, demonstrating their expertise. Their packets were reviewed by a minimum of three colleagues, and then approved by the AHNA-CC or AHNCC's Board of Directors². One hundred and thirty-five (135) nurses were certified through this process. This phase was discontinued by AHNCC, in December, 1997.

Phase 4 overlapped with Phase 3 from October through December 1997, and then continued independently for another two years. During this phase, nurses who practiced Holistic Nursing and wished to have their life work reviewed for consideration were invited to submit extensive portfolios that documented their educational preparation, described their roles as holistic nurses, and demonstrated how they operationalized their expertise in their personal and professional lives. Their Portfolios were reviewed by three previously Certified Holistic Nurses³. Five hundred and twenty-nine (529) nurses were certified through the Portfolio Process. This phase was discontinued by AHNCC in December, 1999.

Phase 5. Certification of nurses by national examination was the outcome goal of AHNA-LC and AHNCC. While the work of Phase 5 actually started in 1995, the first examination was offered June 15, 1999. Certification by Examination continues to date. Candidates for Certification by Examination are required to meet the criteria set by AHNCC (AHNCC Handbook and Application Packet, 1997⁴). They include a baccalaureate degree; a current, uncensored license as a registered nurse in the United States; and evidence of current education or continued education of Holistic Nursing. These documents are submitted with an Application for Certification. Once approved to proceed, applicants are required to complete a

Qualitative Assessment documenting their ability to integrate foundational concepts of Holistic Nursing into their life and practice. Upon completion of this step in the process, candidates are approved to sit for the National Examination for Holistic Nurses.

Development of the Holistic Nurse-Board Certified (HNC or HN-BC) Examination

The conceptualization and development of the first certification examination was initiated under the direction of AHNA- LC in June,1995. At that time, AHNA-LC contracted with the National League for Nursing (NLN) to develop and administer a valid and reliable examination designed to test competency in Holistic Nursing. A group of nurses, certified in Phases 1 and 2 above, were convened to draft items for the first national examination. Two hundred and sixty-nine (269) items were compiled, tested, rewritten, and retested under the direction of NLN⁵.

Finally, an exam with one hundred and fifty (150) items plus fifty (50) experimental items was accepted for the first examination. It was administered to 6 candidates on June 15, 1999. Variations of that examination were offered twice a year until 2004 when a new examination was put in place. Item analysis and reliability tests were provided by NLN in December 2000. For a variety of reasons, AHNCC discontinued the contract with NLN and initiated work with the Professional Testing Corporation (PTC) in New York City. On January 1, 2001, PTC took over the administration and analysis of the examination. Thereafter, item analysis and reliability tests were performed with each administration. Based on these reports and a review of the linkages between the examination items and the newly revised Standards of Holistic Nursing (AHNA, 2003), the AHNCC Board determined that the basic examination needed revisions. The developmental procedure for the new Basic Examination was coupled with the procedure used for the Advanced Examination. They will be described together in following paragraphs.

Recognizing a Need for an Advanced Holistic Nursing Examination

During late 1999 and early 2000 several forces were in play, pointing toward the need for another examination that would test for Advanced Holistic Nursing. AHNA-LC discussed the need for Advanced Standards of Practice at the same time that the AHNCC Board discussed the profiles of applicants for Holistic Nurse Certification. AHNCC had initiated an audit of their files to assess the characteristics of their applicants. The data showed:

- 1) Applicants who were unsuccessful in achieving certification held less than a baccalaureate degree.
- 2) Of those who were successful, 38% had less than a baccalaureate degree, 19% were baccalaureate-prepared, and 43% were graduate-prepared.
- 3) Those with "less than a baccalaureate", were all certified by portfolio while the baccalaureate and graduate-prepared nurses were certified by Equivalency, Portfolio and Examination.
- 4) When the number of persons certified by examination only were reviewed, 35% had graduate degrees!
- 5) Of the graduate-prepared nurses certified by examination, 28% had graduate degrees in nursing, The other 7% had graduate degrees in other disciplines.

While all of the findings from the AHNCC audit were interesting, the proportions of baccalaureate (65%) to graduate level examination applicants (35%) were astounding. Clearly, certification in Holistic Nursing appealed to graduate-prepared nurses. In addition, the number of ADN and diploma nurses who sought certification was interesting. More than twice the number of ADN and diploma nurses had pursued Holistic Nursing Certification when compared to the Baccalaureate nurses. These discoveries led to an AHNCC Board discussion about the differences among the three levels of nursing, i.e. the associate and diploma, baccalaureate and graduate level Holistic Nurses. It was determined that leveling was possible (Table 1).

With this in mind, we returned to the original role description survey (Dossey, B., Frisch, N., Forker, J., & Lavin, J. (1998) and discovered that nurses had reported such differences. This finding stimulated interest in the Qualitative Assessments (QA) previously submitted by certificant applicants. Interestingly, when the QAs were categorized by ADN and diploma, baccalaureate and graduate preparation, many similarities existed among each of the two groups that signified the difference in education, but differences existed among the graduates' QAs. Graduate nurses prepared in Nursing programs provided substantially more evidence of the understanding and use of Nursing theory and research than those prepared in non-nursing programs. When the ADN and diploma, baccalaureate and graduate nurses prepared in nursing programs were considered, their QAs consistently reflected the criteria described in Table 1.

(Insert Table 1)

Nurses prepared in non-nursing programs varied; some were comparable to those with nursing degrees, but many were not. While the non-nurse program certificants were more sophisticated in their approach to Holistic Nursing than baccalaureate level nurses, the variance in their practices suggested that their sophistication (in respect to the baccalaureate nurses) was due to personal journeys rather than educational consistency. These differences were reflected in their description of their practices.

(Insert Table 2)

These data and other factors (Table 2) were discussed during the February, 2002 AHNCC Board of Directors Meeting. The Directors voted unanimously to develop a second level examination in Holistic Nursing concurrent with the revision of the first level examination.

Examination Revision/ New Exam Development

PTC was contacted to discuss processes that could produce a valid and reliable examination. With their input and the expertise of the Board, a plan was developed and then revised. Assumptions underlying the plan are shown in Table 3. The plan included 13 phases

(Insert Tables 3 & 4)

(Table 4). Each phase was dependent upon successful completion of the previous phase. Thanks to the dedication of all participants, the process moved smoothly. Each phase is discussed briefly below.

Phase 1: Distinguish baccalaureate and advanced levels of Holistic Nursing

Before certification examinations could be prepared, the Standards of Practice for Advanced Holistic Nursing (AHNA, 2003) had to be written. It was important that these standards be built on the first level of Standards and Core Values, but also go beyond to reflect

the roles, knowledge and skills of graduate prepared Holistic Nurses. To accomplish this feat, in January, 2000, AHNA-LC appointed a task force to write advance practice standards. By June, 2000, the Task Force to Develop Standards for Advanced Practice's procedures was established and the first and second drafts of the document were completed. While Holistic Nursing's Core Values (and related concepts) are the same at the two levels of nursing, the Standards for Practice varies based on the educational preparation of the nurse (AHNA, 2003). These documents reflected these differences.

AHNCC worked closely with our AHNA Liaison to coordinate activities between AHNA and AHNCC. As described above, an internal audit of AHNCC files had indicated that:

- 1) there was a need for a certification process at the advanced level;
- 2) nurses prepared at the graduate level described their roles differently than those prepared at the baccalaureate or below; and
- 3) these differences in role descriptions could be identified *and* related to type of graduate education (nursing versus non-nursing).

By September, 2001, the 5th draft of the document had been reviewed, revised and approved by the Task Force. The work of the Task Force was published in AHNA's Beginnings, May-June, 2001 and approved by AHNA-LC in January, 2002. With a new set of Standards in hand, a timeline for developing an examination for advanced Holistic Nursing was established. A draft of the proposed procedures was submitted to AHNCC Board members for review. A revised plan (Table 4) was approved at the October, 2002 meeting.

Phase 2: Identify Core Value Concepts and Related Content

Most of the work that relates to this phase was undertaken during Phase 1. Nevertheless, it was important for AHNCC to clarify the differences between *application* of concepts between the two levels. We used the Core Values and Standards of Holistic (2003) nursing to determine *what content* to include and the criteria created during our earlier work (Table 1) to determine *how* it should be applied. Finally, we were ready for Phase 3.

Phase 3: Content review

While we had distinguished levels of content in Phase 2, we had not assured ourselves that *the content was all inclusive*. That is, although the major *concepts* of Holistic Nursing are reflected in the discussions of the Core Values and related in the Standards for Practice, specific content had not been identified. Therefore, it was necessary for us to consider the *specific phenomena that could be used to describe a concept*. This process was initiated during this phase and continued throughout the entire examination development process.

Phase 4: Identify potential item writers.

Earlier we had determined that we needed to do two things: 1) revise the basic level examination so that it more accurately assessed knowledge and skills expected at the first level, and 2) prepare a new examination. For each of these we knew we needed item-writers prepared at the graduate level. Earlier work had indicated that many of those who attended nursing programs *thought* differently. For example, they included more evidence of the use of nursing theory and nursing research than those prepared in non-nursing programs. Therefore, we decided that:

- 1) Applicants for the new examination must have either a masters or doctorate in Nursing to qualify for the examination,

- 2) All graduate nurses prepared in nursing programs were potential item writers.
- 3) Item writers needed Provisional Certification as Advanced Holistic Nurses.
- 4) Full Certification would be granted as soon as the examination had been developed and tested.

Phase 6: Establish item-writing protocol

On February 5, 2004 two hundred and fifty (250) letters (Figure 1) were sent to graduate prepared nurses with Nursing degrees. All those who responded were sent a follow-up packet that included: A statement of congratulations describing Provisional Certification and the process for final certification; a letter of agreement with AHNCC; a set of guidelines for formatting, preparation, and submission of items (Appendix A)⁶; a preformatted, PC disc containing AHNA Basic and Advanced Standards and Core Values (Appendix B); a set of documents prepared by Noreen Frisch explicating core content at each level, and a set of instructions from PTC on item writing. The security of documents was ensured by using two-way, registered and certified mail.

We requested a minimum of ten (10) items from each writer, using the documents included in the packet. Writers were asked to review the Standards and Core Values, *identify their unique area of expertise*, and then write items for *specific Core Value sublevels (as described in the AHNA documents) using the preformatted disc that reflects the Core Values and Standards and their sublevels*. We expected that the writers' expertise would vary so that there would be items written across the Core Values and at both, the basic or advanced level. A minimum of two references for each item was required to validate the information in the proposed items.

Phase 7: Item compilation

Sixty-six (66) of those who received the Phase 6 packet sent their documents and discs in preaddressed, secure mail to the Professional Testing Center (PTC). All the items were taken from the discs and compiled, creating two files: one for each of the two examinations. Original discs were archived until finalization of the examination. At that time, they were destroyed. Packets received through March 30, 2004 were included in this process. No additional packets were received.

Phase 8: Item review 1

Items compiled according to Core Values and related Standards were edited by PTC staff for grammar and spelling to ensure that responses were worded consistently (e.g. avoiding double negatives or confusing language), and the grammar and spelling were correct. They were also checked to ascertain that sufficient items had been written for each Core Value and related Standard(s). Finally, draft examinations were sent by secure mail to each of the AHNCC Examination Task Force (AHNCC- Exam Task Force) Members. Each member was asked to review the items for:

- a) appropriateness for Core Value, Standard and Level;
- b) assessment of related concept;
- c) clarity;
- d) grammar;
- e) appropriateness of the stem, considering Core Values, Standards and Level;

- f) appropriateness of responses, considering accuracy, ability to serve as a distracter, and consistency;
- g) redundancy with other items; and
- h) accuracy and appropriateness of reference.

They were also asked to make recommendations for corrections, leave item as is, recommend delete (and explain why), or indicate “undetermined”.

Phase 9: Item review 2

The recommendations from the AHNCC Exam Task Force were compiled and returned to each of the AHNCC Exam Task Force members by secure mail. Five days after receipt of these documents, a telephone conference was held to discuss each item. Further revisions, deletions, etc., were accomplished at that time. This included a secondary evaluation of the individual items for content validity and finally, an evaluation of groups of items for construct validity. The results from this process were once again compiled and sent to PTC in preparation of Phase 10.

Phase 10: Protocol check

Through a telephone conference with Sallyann Henry, CEO of PTC, we confirmed that the compiled items would be organized into draft form of an examination that could be reviewed at a prescheduled meeting. We requested that the items be temporarily listed according to Core Value/Content to facilitate our continued efforts to evaluate content and construct validity and to check for overall construct validity of the examinations. We agreed that the items would be mixed when the final examination was prepared. We also discussed use of items included in the previous examination. Several factors had been noted as the original examination was evaluated: 1) some items were inappropriate, redundant, or misleading; 2) some were written for what we now knew to be Advanced Holistic Nursing (N=9); and some seemed to be good items. Since the P and R values of the last group reflected consistency across examination periods (N=39), we wanted to retain many of the original items in either our examination or our item bank.

Phase 11: Item review 3

Professional staff members at PTC again reviewed the items for clarity, consistency, and grammar. They also reviewed them to ensure that there were sufficient items for each Core Value. Finally, PTC composed two draft examinations: basic and advanced. The basic examination contained two hundred and twenty-six (226) potential items including “39 good items” from the original examination; the rest were new items. The advanced examination contained two hundred and twenty-four (224) newly written items. These draft examinations were sent by secure mail to each of the Board Task Force members with directions for the next review meeting (Appendix E).

Phase 12. Examination review

On June 15-16, 2004, the AHNCC Task Force for Examination Development and PTC members met to review the two examinations. Each item was reviewed for accuracy, clarity, consistency, appropriateness and redundancy. Grammatical corrections, negative wording, and other changes were made throughout the process. Several items were deleted from each draft. In addition, some of the items from the Basic Level exam were moved to the Advanced Level.

Accepted redundant items were identified to be used as “rotating items” from a databank. The final items accepted for each examination were reviewed again to assure construct validity. Finally, two sets of items were accepted by consensus of those present. The final examinations contained one hundred and seventy-eight (178) and one hundred and ninety-eight (198) items for the Basic and Advanced levels respectively.

Cut off scores were determined using a modified-Angoff method discussed in Goodwin (1995) and critiqued in Ricker (2003). This approach is recommended with criterion-referenced tests (rather than norm-referenced tests). The assumption is that a standard that connotes excellence will be set. This standard will separate the master prepared candidate from the non-masters candidate. Accordingly, items were considered in terms of relevance and difficulty. Then, members of the task force reviewed the test to determine how many items must be answered correctly to warrant certification as well as how many items a minimally-prepared candidate might answer. Percentage scores were calculated based on these factors. A minimum deviation was considered for measurement error and finally, a cut-off score was identified. Finally, our decision was compared against scores achieved by examinees from 1998-2002 including the first test taken by fifteen (15) of the top holistic nurses in the nation and an additional one hundred and twenty-eight (128) qualified HN-BC candidates (Appendix F).

Phase 13. Statistical analysis of the examinations.

PTC provides continued feedback, following each examination, indicating the reliability and validity of the examination. Since the 2004 Examination Development process, two hundred and twelve (212) and sixty-two (62) basic and advanced examinations respectively have been given. Reliability data indicate that the examinations have good discriminatory power and are reliable assessments of Holistic Nursing at each level. Furthermore, passing rates have indicated that our decisions regarding cut-off scores were appropriate.

Future Work of AHNCC

AHNCC will continue to oversee the development, administration, and revision of the Certification Processes for Holistic Nurses. This means that PTC will continue to provide analysis of each of the test administrations for the Board's review and consideration, and the AHNCC Board will use these data to determine the reliability and validity of the Examinations.

Test revisions are scheduled for every 3-5 years, depending on the number of applicants for certification and changes in the profession. AHNCC will also continue to explore implications of Nursing education on certification and to periodically conduct role delineation studies. Participation by AHNA members and AHNCC Certificants will be requested through announcements in AHNA's Beginnings and e-Newsletter.

Summary

The purpose of this article is to describe the process used in revising the basic level examination and developing the advanced level examination. Factors that influenced AHNCC in determining the need for a second exam and examination leveling are discussed. The processes used to develop both examinations and to assure reliability and validity of both examinations are presented.

References

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Appendix A
Follow-up Letter and Instructions

February 5, 2004

Dear Colleague,

Congratulations! On behalf of the American Holistic Nurses' Certification Corporation, I am delighted to send this certificate of Provisional Status, Advanced Holistic Nursing Certification (AHN-C, P). Thank you for your expedient response and willingness to participate in this important movement. We hope that you are proud to be one of the first Holistic Nurses in the world to carry this designation. We know that you will represent holistic nurses with dignity, honor and humility and that you will proactively support the Standards and Core Values represented by the AHN-C. As I stated in our letter dated January 5, 2004, we will send an official AHN-C certificate as soon as our examination for Advanced Holistic Nursing Certification is ready, sometime in 2005. We will keep you informed.

In the interim, we request your assistance in examination preparation. More specifically, we request that you consider submitting a minimum of ten items that can be used in forthcoming examinations. We would appreciate having items for each level that test specific content. For example, if you choose to write an item for Core Value 1.1, please write one for the Basic Examination and one for the Advanced Examination. All items will be multiple choice with four possible answers, only one will be correct. Guidelines are enclosed for item writing.

All items received will be reviewed and edited before they will be considered in final form. This work will be done jointly by the Board of Directors, AHNCC; staff from the Professional Testing Corporation, and selected persons who hold the Provisional Status of Advanced Holistic Nursing Certification (AHN-C, P).

We are enclosing several items to facilitate your process. Please review each of these carefully before you start your work.

- A packet from PTC that describes item writing.
- A single page set of Guidelines that include specific information about the format, preparation and Submission of your items.
- A PC disc that contains the AHNA Standards for Basic and Advanced Practice. This disc also contains a listing of the Core Values. This listing relates directly to the Standards and will be used to guide your thinking as you prepare your items.
- A set of documents prepared by Noreen Frisch that explicate Core Content that relates to each of the Core Values by level of practice. You will note that these documents show the relationship and the differences between Basic and Advanced Practice.
- A letter of agreement with AHNCC. It is absolutely necessary that we maintain security of all items at all time. Therefore, if you decide that you would like to participate in this work, we ask you to carefully read and sign this Letter of Agreement and return it when you submit your items. Naturally, your signature indicates your willingness to follow the protocol indicated in this letter/form.

Appendix A (Continued)

Thank you for your assistance in the ongoing work of the Certification Processes of Holistic Nurses. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us either by email (ahncc@flash.net or helenerickson@mail.utexas.edu) or telephone.

Peace and joy to you and yours,

Helen Erickson, PhD, RN, HNC, FAAN
AHNCC Board of Directors, Chair

Appendix A (Continued)
Letter of Agreement

To Whom It May Concern:

I, _____, understand that I have been invited to submit examination items for the Certification Examinations for Holistic Nursing. I understand that the Basic Level Examination is for the HNC or Holistic Nurse Certified and the Advanced Level Examination is for the AHNC or Advanced Holistic Nursing Certified. I also understand that my signature below indicates my willingness to submit such items and that once submitted, they become the property of the American Holistic Nurses' Certification Corporation (AHNCC). Furthermore, I understand that there are to be absolutely no copies of any items I submit nor any records or documents of item content maintained in my possession after they are submitted to AHNCC. Furthermore, I understand that I am to maintain security of all items submitted by promising that I will never discuss, write, talk about or communicate in any other way the content of the items. Finally, I understand that I am to submit the one and only copy of these items to AHNCC by certified, secure mail and that they shall be sent in time to be **received no later than March 30, 2004.**

Please use the following Checklist to assure compliance of the above agreement. Place your initials in each blank line to indicate your agreement.

- _____ My items were developed using the AHNA Standards and Core Value guidelines.
- _____ All items are typed into the disc sent by AHNCC using Times Font Size 12.
- _____ All items responses have four options, multiple choice, one correct answer only.
- _____ I have identified the correct answer by using a key such as * or ©.
- _____ Items are organized according to the Core Value indicated on the disc, for example, items written to test Cover Value 1.1 at the Basic Level are written under 1.1 Basic Level. Items written to test Core Value 4.2 at the Advanced Level are written under 4.2, Advanced Level., etc.
- _____ References are written in APA format.
- _____ All copies of these items are submitted with this document. No paper copies, disc copies, hard drive copies or other types of copies are retained by myself or anyone of my knowledge.
- _____ All said documents are forwarded to PTC in the preaddressed, certified envelope provided by AHNCC.

I sign this agreement with complete willingness to participate according to the standards and criteria stated above.

Signature

Date

Appendix A (Continued)
AHNCC Guidelines For Writing Examination Items

General Discussion

Seven (7) pages of general information/instruction regarding the writing of good examination items prepared by the Professional Testing Corporation (PTC) are included in your packet. PTC is the organization that administers our current examination. They will also be responsible for helping us revise our Basic Examination as well as develop and test our Advance Examination. I think you will find some interesting information in this packet. More specific guidelines for item preparation are listed below. We ask you to follow these Specific Guidelines as much as possible. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at ahncc@flash.net.

Specific Guidelines**A) Format**

1. Write single stem items with 4 possible answers.
2. ONLY one answer can be correct.
3. Alternative answers might be similar to the correct answer, but must be clearly wrong.
4. All items require at least one reference to be valid.
5. No double negatives.
6. All questions must be brief and unambiguous.

B) Preparation of Items

1. Use ONLY your disc to prepare your items; do not keep any hard copies of the disc or otherwise.
2. Select the Core Value you wish to address with your first item (e.g. Core Value 1)
3. Select which part of the Core Value you wish to address with your first item (e.g. 1.3) and which subsection (e.g. 1.3.1)
4. Under that Core Value Heading (e.g. Core Value 1, 1.3 Holistic Ethics, Subsection 1.3.1), INDENT and then WRITE your question stem and follow it with four possible answers. Use the following format to indicate your item.
 - 1.3.1 (Write your stem)
 - a) (Write response 1)
 - b) (Write response 2)
 - c) (Write response 3)
 - d) (Write response 4)
5. Write at least two references immediately below the item; use APA format. For example:
 - 1.3.1 (Write your stem)
 - a) (Write response 1)
 - b) (Write response 2)
 - c) (Write response 3)
 - d) (Write response 4)

Appendix A (Continued)

Frisch, N.C., Dossey, B.M., Guzzetta, C.E., & Quinn, J.A. (2000). *American Holistic nurses standards of practice: guidelines for caring and healing*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen.

Hickey, J. V., Ouimette, R.M., & Venegoni, S.L. (2000). *Advanced practice nursing: change roles and clinical applications*. (2cd ed.) Baltimore, MD: Lippincott, Williams, & Wilkins.

6. Repeat this process until you have finished. We would like you to write at least 5 items related to Basic Holistic Nursing and 5 items related to Advanced Holistic Nursing. If you wish to write more, we'll be happy to receive them.

C) Submission of Items

1. When you are finished writing items, SAVE the contents on the disc we sent you. Please save it in two formats: Word and Rich Text Format.
2. Complete, sign and date the Letter of Agreement included in this packet and place it in the pre-addressed return envelope provided.
3. Enclose the disc in the return envelope.
4. Be sure that you have destroyed any documents that you might have used to create these items. This includes hard copies or computer copies of the AHNA Standards for Nursing. If you wish to retain a copy of the AHNA Standards, please contact AHNA and request permission and submit the appropriate fee. (NB: AHNA currently charges \$15.00 for a copy of these standards)
5. Post the preaddressed, stamped and certified envelope no later than March 30, 2004.

Appendix B
Disc Format for Item Writers,
Basic and Advanced Holistic Nursing Examinations

Level I. Basic Holistic Nursing

Core Value 1: Holistic Philosophy, Theories and Ethics

1.1 Holistic Philosophy

1.1.1

1.1.2

1.1.3

1.1.4

1.1.5

1.1.6

1.2 Holistic Theory

1.2.1

1.2.2

1.3 Holistic Ethics

1.3.1

1.3.2

1.3.3

1.3.4

1.3.5

1.3.6

Core Value 2: Holistic Education and Research

2.1 Holistic Education

2.1.1

2.1.2

2.1.3

2.1.4

2.1.5

2.2 Holistic Research

2.2.1

2.2.2

2.2.3

2.2.4

2.2.5

2.2.6

Core Value 3: Holistic Nurse Self-Care

3.1 Holistic Nurse, Self-Care

3.1.1

3.1.2

3.1.3

3.1.4

Appendix B (Continued)

3.1.5

3.1.6

Core Value 4: Holistic Communications, Therapeutic Environment, and Cultural Diversity

4.1 Holistic Communication

4.1.1

4.1.2

4.1.3

4.1.4

4.1.5

4.2 Therapeutic Environment

4.2.1

4.2.2

4.2.3

4.2.4

4.2.5

4.3 Cultural Diversity

4.3.1

4.3.2

4.3.3

4.3.4

Core Value 5: Holistic Caring Process

5.1 Assessment

5.1.1

5.1.2

5.2 Patterns/Challenges/Needs

5.2.1

5.2.2

5.2.3

5.2.4

5.3 Outcomes

5.3.1

5.3.2

5.4 Therapeutic care plans

5.4.1

5.4.2

5.4.3

5.4.4

5.4.5

5.4.6

5.5 Implementation

5.5.1

5.5.2

5.5.3

Appendix B (Continued)

5.5.4

5.5.5

5.6 Evaluation

5.6.1

5.6.2

5.6.3

Appendix B (Continued)

Level II. Advanced Holistic Nursing

Core Value 1: Holistic Philosophy, Theories and Ethics

1.1. Holistic Philosophy

1.1.1

1.1.2

1.1.3

1.1.4

1.2. Holistic Theory

1.2.1

1.2.2

1.2.3

1.3 Holistic Ethics

1.3.1

1.3.2

1.3.3

1.3.4

1.3.5

Core Value 2: Holistic Education and Research

2.1 Holistic Education

2.1.1

2.1.2

2.2 Holistic Research

2.2.1

2.2.2

2.2.3

2.2.4

2.2.5

2.2.6

2.2.7

2.2.8

Core Value 3: Holistic Nurse Self-Care

3.1 Holistic Nurse, Self-Care

3.1.1

3.1.2

3.1.3

3.1.4

Core Value 4: Holistic Communications, Therapeutic Environment, and Cultural Diversity

4.1 Holistic Communication

4.1.1

4.1.2

4.1.3

4.1.4

4.1.5

4.2 Therapeutic Environment

4.2.1

4.2.2

4.2.3

4.2.4

4.2.5

4.3 Cultural Diversity

4.3.1

4.3.2

4.3.3

4.3.4

Core Value 5: Holistic Caring Process

5.1 Assessment

5.1.1

5.2 Patterns/Challenges/Needs

5.2.1

5.3 Outcomes

5.3.1

5.4 Therapeutic care plans

5.4.1

5.5 Implementation

5.5.1

5.5.2

5.5.3

5.5.4

5.6 Evaluation

5.5.1

Appendix C
Letter Sent To Deans, Endorsed Schools

November 23, 2004

Dear Colleague,

You are receiving this letter because you are an AHNCC Endorsed School. As the Executive Director, I am both honored and delighted to write you on behalf of the AHNCC Board of Directors. My goal is to provide you with some information regarding AHNCC, update you on recent decisions made by the Board, and to explain how those decisions impact your students and graduates.

1) We are very pleased to inform you that 917 nurses have become Certified Holistic Nurses (HN-BC) and are therefore eligible to affix the credential HN-BC to their title. Those who carry this credential are certified at the entry level of Holistic Nursing. In addition, AHNCC is prepared to offer an Advanced Holistic Nurse Certification (AHN-BC) starting March 2005. The educational requirements for the two credentials are a baccalaureate degree for the HN-BC and a graduate degree in Nursing for the AHN-BC. Graduates from your master's program will be eligible to sit for either the HN-BC or the AHN-BC examination starting March 31, 2005. Your graduates who are interested in becoming Certified as either an HN-BC or an AHN-BC can check our website (AHNCC.org) or contact our office (ahncc@flash.net) for further information. There are no changes in the Application or Certification Process other than the choice of Examination. For more information regarding the revised Application, please see our website, ahncc.org.

2) Those currently Certified as HN-BC who have a graduate degree in Nursing are eligible for a short-term grandfathering opportunity. This opportunity is open until March 31, 2005. After that date anyone seeking an AHN-BC will be required to complete the entire Certification Process. All grandfathering applications for the AHN-BC must be received in our office by March 31, 2005 to be recognized. However, we want to accommodate those who are currently enrolled in Endorsed School graduate programs. These people will have until May, 2006, to finish. They must have a transcript indicating completion of their program in our office by July 31, 2006. As stated above, their Application for grandfathering must be in our office by March 31, 2005. Their file will be retained until July 31, 2006 for completion. After that date it will be destroyed. We have sent a letter to all HN-BCs to inform them of the grandfathering opportunity, so you do not need to be concerned that your master's prepared graduates who hold the HN-BC will miss the deadline date. However, those currently enrolled may need clarification of the specific dates.

3) Consistent with our many changes and updates, there will be an increase in fees starting January 1, 2005. The new fees are posted on our website, ahncc.org.

4) We are also very happy to inform you that starting March, 2005, our Examinations will all be computer-based. This change has several important implications for those seeking Certification.

Appendix C (Continued)

Currently, we offer our Examination twice a year, at 12 sites around the country. We have very specific dates and times for the Examination; no exceptions. With our new process, the Examinations will be offered in 700 sites across the United States. In addition, twice a year there will be a two-week block of time that the Examination will be offered. Candidates will make an appointment at a site of their choice during that two-week period. We think that this will make it much easier for nurses to find an Examination site near their home and at a time convenient to them. This change should reduce the cost of taking the examination since most candidates will not find it necessary to shoulder the burden of travel, over-night stay and sometimes loss of work. We hope you will share this new opportunity with your graduates and colleagues interested in Holistic Nursing Certification.

5) We also want to remind you of the opportunity awarded faculty from your School who are involved with the Holistic Nursing courses but are not Certified. They are allowed to do a modified application process to be qualified for the examination. If any of your faculty are interested in this process, please contact us at ahncc@flash.net

Finally, we hope to keep in touch with you periodically. We would like to do this by email as much as possible. We would appreciate your response to this letter indicating your current email address and your contact person. If you prefer to receive hard copy of correspondence, we will of course recognize your request.

We are proud to have your name in our list of Endorsed Schools of Nursing. If you have questions or need clarification, please contact us by email at ahncc@flash.net.

Peace and Blessings,

Margaret Erickson, PhD, RN, AHN-BC

Appendix D
Letter Sent To Life-Time Certificants

Dear Colleague

Recently we sent a letter to each of our nurse colleagues currently certified by the American Holistic Nurse's Certification Corporation (AHNCC). This letter addressed several issues, including the new examination coming out in March 2005 and the opportunity for Grandfathering until that date. Since you are on that roster, you should have received a copy. However, just to be sure that you are kept informed, I am writing you at this time.

You are one of only a few persons who hold Lifetime Certification in Holistic Nursing (HNC). We honor you and hold you in great esteem. Therefore, The Board of Directors has asked that you be personally invited to transfer your Lifetime Certification to the Advanced Holistic Nursing credential. We regret that we need to ask for a minimal processing fee of \$65.00, but assure you that there will be no further fees requested. We are enclosing an Application Form to expedite your process. If you have already sent your request or already been Grandfathered, please just disregard this paragraph.

We would also like to invite you to participate in the work of AHNCC by volunteering to serve on one of our Task Forces. I have enclosed the Protocol adopted by AHNCC 11/2002 for Task Force Members. We know that you are very busy, so we simply ask that you maintain this information in your files, and whenever possible, contact us. We always have work that needs to be done and know that you would represent Holistic Nursing and us very well.

We continue to honor your many contributions to our profession and thank you for creating a pathway for the rest of us to follow.

Peace and blessings,

Margaret Erickson, PhD, RN, AHN-BC
Executive Director, AHNCC

Appendix E
Letter from PTC To AHNCC Examination Task Force Members

To: AHNCC Examination Task Force
From: Sallyann Henry, PTC
Date: June 2, 2004

Enclosed are the following materials for review in preparation for the June 15-16 meeting:

1. Core Values for Advanced and Basic Levels
2. Complete Reference list for all submitted items
3. Drafts of the Basic Level Holistic Nursing Certification Examination and Advanced Level Holistic Nursing Certification Examination with test items listed in content area order. Items in the drafts are presented in content order to assist in the review process. Each item's unique number (a number used by PTC to track the item in the databank), content area code (which corresponds to the Core Values for each level), and key (correct answer) are printed directly above the item. The reference appears below each item.

On the Basic Examination, note that some questions have P and R values. These questions have been used in prior tests and these numbers indicate candidate performance on the items. The P value represents the percentage of candidates who got the question right last time it was given. The R is the point biserial coefficient of correlation which indicates the tendency for the high scoring candidates to answer the item correctly and the low scoring candidates to answer it incorrectly. The higher the R, the more discriminating the item.

Please review all test items very thoroughly PRIOR TO the meeting for accuracy, clarity, consistency, and appropriateness. Also, verify the correctness of the key and content code and indicate any possible duplicate or overlapping items within each examination.

To expedite the review process, write suggestions for revisions or additions directly on the drafts. At the meeting, we will go through the drafts on an item by item basis and discuss any items that are brought to the attention of the group by one of the reviewers. For each of these items, we will either make changes to correct the item, leave the item as is, take the item out of the draft (but leave it in the item bank), or delete the item from the test and item bank. Thus, *it is crucial that you review the materials beforehand and mark suggestions directly on the drafts*. Drafts will be collected at our meeting and destroyed upon completion of our work.

If you have any questions about the examination review process, please contact me prior to the meeting at.....

I am looking forward to meeting with you in Phoenix.

(Signed by) Sallyann Henry

Appendix F
Test Analyses, 1998-2002

<u>EXAM #/DATE</u> ¹	<u>EXAMINEES</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>MEAN SCORE</u>	<u>% CORRECT</u>
Spring 1998	Volunteers	15	(60-84% correct) ²	76%
June 15, 1999	Potential HNC	6	114.28 ³	76%
September 25, 1999	Potential HNC	11 ⁴		
January 29, 2000	Potential HNC	13	112.11	75%
March 18, 2000	Potential HNC	5 ⁵		
September 23, 2000	Potential HNC	22	113.45	75%
January 27, 2001	Potential HNC	23 ⁶		
September, 2001	Potential HNC	13	108.54	72%
March, 2002	Potential HNC	25	110.52	73%
June, 2002	Potential HNC	10	114.40	74%
October, 2002	Potential HNC	23	112.36	75%

¹ NLN Administered Examinations and provided data analysis through January 27, 2001.

² HNC's; exam consisted of 269 items.

³ Exam consisted of 150 real items and 50 experimental items.

⁴ Combined with June 15, 99 candidates.

⁵ Combined with January 29, 2000 candidates

⁶ Only raw scores received from NLN; no aggregate data.

Table 1.
Comparison of knowledge and skills by educational level

Diploma and Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate
Ability to apply core concepts. For e.g. Holism, Presence, Intentionality, Unconditional Acceptance, Caring, Healing, etc.	Ability to use research and theory in description, application and analysis of core concepts.	Ability to design studies and analyze research findings related to the practice and advancement of Holistic Nursing
Ability to create caring environments, empower clients, and design care plans that are mutually conducive to growth and health.	Ability to provide theoretically-based individual and family focused care using research findings.	Ability to provide sophisticated theoretically-based individual and family-focused care based on research findings.
	Ability to provide leadership in the advancement of Holistic Nursing in limited settings.	Ability to provide leadership for other health-care providers in provision of theory-based, research-supported care of the holistic person.
		Ability to design and implement research activities that advance Holistic Nursing knowledge.

Table 2.

Forces that converged, indicating the need for a second examination.

AHNA's LC, recognizing the need for Standards of Advanced Holistic Nursing, had assigned to a Task Force the responsibility of developing such Standards and clarifying the differences between the two levels of Standards.
The original role delineation study (IPAKHN) indicated a range in practice and knowledge expertise that might be related to educational level.
100% of the 13 nurses granted life-time certification were graduate-prepared.
45% of the nurses certified by Equivalency and Portfolio were graduate-prepared.
28% of the nurses certified by Examination were graduate-prepared
Graduate-prepared nurse Equivalency and Portfolio packets were more sophisticated than those presented by other nurses (Table 1), reflecting higher level expertise.
Graduate-prepared nurses' QAs paralleled the Equivalency and Portfolio packets of other graduate nurses.
AHNCC office received numerous calls requesting information regarding certification at the Advanced level.
Faculty in several schools of nursing requested review of graduate programs. AHNCC recognized that Endorsing graduate educational programs mandated a second level certification program.

Table 3.

Assumptions underlying the *Proposed Process for Examination Development and Revision*.

1. There are three levels of Holistic Nursing Practice. Two of them mandate certification at this time: The baccalaureate Holistic Nurse and the graduate-prepared or Advanced Holistic Nurse (HN and AHN respectively).
2. Practice at the Baccalaureate and Advanced levels is based on AHNA approved Standards of Practice
3. Both levels of AHNA Standards of Practice can be reflected in a Core Curriculum for each level.
4. Advanced Holistic Nurses have prerequisite skills and knowledge attributed to the Holistic Nurse.
5. National Certification for each of the two levels is best achieved through a Certification Process overseen by the American Holistic Nurses' Certification Corporation (AHNCC).
6. Examinations for the two levels are driven by the respective sets of Standards approved by AHNA.
7. National Certification for the two levels is signified by HNC (HN-BC) for the Baccalaureate and AHNC (AHN-BC) for the Graduate-prepared nurse.

Table 4.

Planned phases, activities and goals for examination development and revision.

Phase	Activity	Initiate	Goals
1. Distinguish Basic and Advanced levels of Holistic Nursing.	Request AHNA's LC submit the two levels of standards to AHNCC as soon as they are approved.	10/19/2002	Using the two levels of Standards, identify Core Values for each level.
2. Identify Core Value Content/concepts	LC will assign AHNs to assume responsibility for Core Value development.	Fall, 2003	Using Core Values as the "Umbrella", identify Core Value Content unique to each Core Value.
3. Content/concepts review	AHNCC Task Force will assume responsibility.	Winter-Spring, 2003-2004	Review content/concepts for each Core Value for uniqueness and differentiation of level of practice.
4. Identify potential item writers.	Send a letter to all certified nurses with graduate degrees in nursing inviting them to apply for one-time opportunity for grandfathering (from HN-BC to AHN-BC) and to become item-writers.	January, 2004	Establish a cohort of graduate-prepared nurses for item writing
5. "Provisional Grandfathering"	Send letters and certificates to all graduate nurses who responded to #4 (see Appendix A).	February, 2004	Create a cohort of qualified AHN-BCs who can/will write items for the two examinations.
6. Establish item-writing protocol	Send protocol, directions and contract to all new AHN-BCs with item-writing protocol, inviting their participation (see Appendix A).	February, 2004	Establish the protocol for item-writing and submission of items.
7. Item compilation	Compile items according to level and core value (see Appendix B).	April, 2004	Compile items by Core Value, divided by level of HN.

Table 4 Continued			
8. Item review 1	Send compiled drafts items (by secure mail) to AHNCC Board members for review, revision and consideration. Factors considered: accuracy, content/construct validity, repetition, wording, clarity, grammar.	April, 2004	Refine and revise items for both examinations. First check for content validity.
9. Item review 2	Send revised draft items (by secure mail) to AHNCC Board members for second review, revision, and consideration.	April, 2004	Continue refinement of both examination items. Third check for content validity and first check for construct validity.
10. Protocol check	Discuss with PTC issues related to examination development.	May, 2004	Request that valid and reliable items from first level, first examination be inserted into new examination for level one, assuring that they meet content and construct validity. Other items are deleted.
11. Item review 3	Send further revised items to PTC for examination construction, further editorial work, and comments.	May, 2004	Continue refinement of items for both examinations. Continue checks for content and construct validity.
12. Examination review	Meet with AHNCC Board and PTC members to review each item, both exams, assure that content and construct validity are addressed and finalize examinations	June, 2004	Finalize examinations; set passing scores; plan for administration of new examinations; and plan for review of exams after first examination.
13. Item analysis	Factor analyses were undertaken to determine whether the items fell into factors related to the Core Values and Standards of HN.	July, 2004	Pretest examination provided evidence that the items selected for the examinations created distinct and unique factors that related to the Core Values at each level.

Figure 1.

Letter inviting graduate nurses to participate.

January 5, 2004

Dear

The Board of Directors for the American Holistic Nurses' Certification Corporation is delighted to inform you that our long-term vision of an Advanced Holistic Nursing Certification is coming to fruition! A magnificent document prepared by the Task Force appointed by the AHNA LC and Chaired by Lea Gaydos and Noreen Frisch will be submitted to Leadership Council in January, 2004 for review, revision and hopefully, approval. This document will provide the information we need to distinguish between the two levels: basic Holistic Nursing (HN) and advanced Holistic Nursing (AHN). It will also provide us with guidelines for writing new examination items for both levels. Our tentative goal is to offer the first examination for Advanced Holistic Nursing (AHN-BC) in March, 2005. Once the advanced examination is in place, persons who currently hold Holistic Nursing Certification (HN-BC) will be offered a one-time opportunity to be grandfathered as an AHN-BC. Thereafter, anyone qualified to be an AHN-C will have to take the advanced examination.

We are writing you at this time for two reasons. First, knowing that many of you are already well-qualified for this advanced certification, we want to offer a Provisional Advanced Holistic Nursing Certification (Provisional AHN-BC) prior to the above mentioned Grandfathering period. Second, we are seeking item writers for our AHN-BC examination. Those who are selected for Provisional AHN-BC will qualify as item writers for both the basic and advanced examinations and will automatically be awarded AHN-BC as soon as the examination is in place.

Because of your stature and your work in Advanced Holistic Nursing, your name has been nominated by a member of the Board of Directors as a potential candidate for Provisional Advanced Holistic Nursing Certification. Therefore, you are being invited to request Provisional Advanced Holistic Nursing Certification. If you choose to accept this invitation, you will need to submit the following items no later than February 1, 2004:

- A letter of intent,
- A current resume or curriculum vitae,
- An official copy of your transcript documenting your graduate degree, and
- A check for the \$65.00 Grandfathering.

Immediately following receipt of your letter of intent, resume, transcript and Grandfathering fee, we will send you a Provisional AHN Certificate and instructions regarding item writing. For security reasons, you will have a maximum of 2 weeks to complete this phase. Items received after March 30, 2004 will not be considered for inclusion in forthcoming examinations. All items received by March 30, 2004 will be included for consideration with due process. If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or telephone. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,
Helen Erickson, PhD, RN, HNC, FAAN
Chair, Board of Directors
The American Holistic Nurses Certification Corporation

Endnotes

¹ These findings were later published in the Journal of Holistic Nursing (Dossey, Frisch, Forker & Lavin, 1998).

² In April, 1997 the Certification Program was taken over by the American Holistic Nurses Certification Corporation (AHNCC). At that time, Equivalency Packet Reviewers reported to the Board of Directors (AHNCC) who granted final approval.

³ As with the Equivalency Packet participants, the final approval of these applicants was granted by the AHNCC Board, after the Incorporation of AHNCC in April, 1997.

⁴ Available online at ahncc.org

⁵ By the time AHNCC was incorporated in 1997, a contract had already been written with NLN and the items for the examination were drafted. AHNCC assumed responsibility for the examination during the period of time of item revisions and final examination acceptance.

⁶ Concurrently, letters were sent to: all qualified applicants who had applied to take the HN-BC examination informing them that they could take the AHN-BC examination instead; Deans of Endorsed Schools informing them of the changes and advising them of their students options (Appendix C); and all Life-time certificant (Appendix D).