

# HESI® Specialty Exams

# Best Practices



## Understanding HESI Specialty Exams

**HESI Specialty Exams** are designed to measure students' ability to apply concepts related to specific clinical nursing concept areas and are the ideal way to test students throughout nursing curriculums.




**Key Point:** A recent HESI data science analysis of more than 200,000 students revealed a direct correlation between students taking HESI Specialty Exams consistently through their nursing program and improved performance on the HESI Exit Exam, and ultimately the NCLEX.

## Optimizing HESI Specialty Exams in Your Program

The first step to success with HESI is a strong testing policy that outlines the intention of standardized exams in the program and the expectations for students. To optimize HESI Specialty Exams in your program, consider implementing the following practices.

### Strategies for Integrating Specialty Exams into the Curriculum

- **Include Specialty Exams consistently through the program.** HESI Specialty exams are available for 15 different RN nursing specialty areas and 11 different PN nursing specialty areas. There are even exams available for combination courses, such as Maternity and Pediatrics.  
 **Explore how to successfully implement Specialty Exams throughout your curriculum for early success**
- **Establish a consistent benchmark score through the program.** Specialty exams are written specifically for a particular content area, and therefore, are appropriate to the level of the student. Setting a consistent target threshold score helps motivate students and sets consistent expectations through the program.
- **Ensure Specialty Exams have weight in the associated courses.** While we do not recommend these exams be considered high-stakes, research shows that students perform better when there is some grade weight associated. We recommend all policies and practices comply with the NLN Fair Testing Guidelines.
- **Consider using a HESI Specialty Exam as your course final.** This is one way to establish a common and consistent expectation with HESI through the program.
- **Offer Version 2 of HESI Specialty Exams,** when possible, for students who aren't successful on the first attempt. Students who take the second version will receive new remediation based on their performance on that exam.

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## Strategies for Utilizing Specialty Exam Results and Remediation

- **Encourage students to review their exam performance** and identify individual strengths and weaknesses.  
▶ **Share how they can review their HESI Dashboards and use the data to improve their performance**
- **Encourage faculty to review exam results.** Every HESI Specialty Exam provides detailed performance data for the cohort and for each individual student. Faculty can use this data to identify and assist at-risk students, provide cohort-level intervention in areas of weakness, as well as identify any potential curricular gaps.  
▶ **Leverage the HESI Readiness for NCLEX Dashboard to receive early and actionable insights into students' NCLEX readiness starting with their first HESI Specialty Exam**
- **Require remediation.** All Specialty Exams include multimodal remediation, including packets of content individualized to each student's areas of weakness along with pertinent HESI Case Studies to allow students to apply knowledge. You may also choose to include self-quizzing in relevant content areas using a tool such as EAQ for the NCLEX.  
▶ **Ensure your students are familiar with how to complete exam remediation**

### Remediation Strategies with EAQ

- ▶ Students should first identify their primary areas of weakness with the HESI Dashboard then **use EAQ to create quizzes for personalized remediation to help effectively close knowledge gaps**