

Table A: Characteristics and Findings of Included Studies

| Author (year) | Source/ Country | Aim | Design | Sample | Key Findings related to the Research Question |
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| Beck (2016) | Midwest, USA | Describe nursing faculty experiences with SEOCS utilized in undergraduate nursing courses, grading practices, administrative review of performance, and offering of teaching contracts. | Qualitative design; individual interviews | Full-time and adjunct nursing faculty teaching in pre-licensure programs from a multi-campus college system; n= 11 . | (a) faculty were exposed to unacceptable student behaviors that had long-lasting, devastating effects; (b) faculty perceived some students' comments as hurtful and unrelated to teaching effectiveness; (c) faculty awarded students with higher final course grades and/or points earned on assessments than were merited; (d) faculty perceived a lack of support from course coordinators or administration when assigning low grades to students; and (e) students' evaluations of faculty were weighted heavily in faculty performance evaluations and administrative offerings of teaching contracts. |
| Bickes & Schim (2010) | Michigan USA | Describe an educational intervention to enhance evaluation fairness and accuracy of students' scholarly writing. | Pre-experimental design; pedagogical intervention implemented. Objective evaluation methods included revised grading rubrics, a faculty development | Grades earned by 144 undergraduate students enrolled in a community health nursing course. <i>Before group:</i> n = 54 students; <i>After group:</i> n = 90 students. | The implementation of revised evaluation methods resulted in a significant decrease in the number of A grades (from 88 to 49%) and a greater number of C grades (from 7 to 15%). |

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| | | | workshop, and process for blinded grading of students' papers. | | |
| Chen (2018) | Texas, USA | Determine grading patterns in four disciplines: rehabilitation services, communication science and disorders, social work, and nursing; determine whether instructor demographics and course characteristics influenced grading. | Archival study | Data set included grades earned by undergraduate and graduate students, during 12 full-length semesters, from four academic departments from the health sciences college at a large public university: nursing, communication science and disorders, rehabilitative services, and social work | <p>Nursing had less grade inflation than other academic departments. The mean GPA in the fall term was higher than spring term. Overall, master's courses had higher mean GPAs than undergraduate courses and larger courses had higher GPAs than smaller courses.</p> <p>Instructors' demographic characteristics explained 3% of the variance, a statistically significant finding. Higher course grades were awarded by female instructors than by male instructors; and by African-American and Hispanic-American faculty than by European-American faculty. Faculty rank and employment status was not a significant predictor of grades.</p> |
| Docherty (2018) | Oregon, USA | Explore and understand the phenomenon of failure to fail. | Qualitative multisite case study using replication analysis. | Demographically diverse baccalaureate and community college faculty; n= 18 faculty | Failing to fail occurred across educational settings. Themes: The good enough approach; clinical/didactic dichotomy; student stage in program; team grading, and being the bad guy. Grading as part of a team was perceived as a process that could support or hinder failing to fail. |

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| | | | | (13 university; 5 community college) | When faculty worked to standardize grading, by using grading rubrics, the result was often not as objective as desired. Recommended a collective approach to grading including pedagogical preparation. Faculty reported that grading rubrics were not always followed; faculty interpretation of rubric played a role. |
| Docherty & Dieckmann (2015) | Oregon, USA | Assess evidence for “failing to fail” in undergraduate nursing programs. | Cross sectional descriptive survey; 37 item survey instrument developed by authors. | Full-time and part-time undergraduate nursing faculty from 9 community colleges and 5 universities; n = 84 (response rate 33.6%). | 43% of faculty respondents had given higher grades than students earned. Nearly 34% of respondents reported that knowing the student influenced how they graded written assignments. Qualitative themes (faculty perceptions): Pressure to “conform to team teaching norms and a level of conscious bias.” Colleagues “were uncomfortable or unwilling to fail students” an “injustice to both faculty and student” when the student eventually failed. Fear of possible litigation led some faculty to pass student; Didactic assessment may be more straightforward; Institutional processes influenced some faculty to pass students they felt they should fail. |
| Kilanowski & Abbott (2017) | Ohio, USA | Investigate interrater reliability in an online RN to BSN program | Descriptive survey and pilot study. Surveyed grades awarded by faculty in five online nursing courses, total | Grades submitted for a writing assignment required in multiple sections of an online course from one college setting; | Range of scores for writing assignments in the 19 examined sections was 79.78 to 100, with a mean range of 91.99 to 97.94. Results suggest possible grade inflation. “...Student performance was high and was reliably assessed as such or the online nursing program suffers from grade inflation” (p. 360). |

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| | | | of 19 course sections. Seven faculty members submitted grades for up to three writing assignments as well as final course grades. | | |
| Oermann, Saewert, Charasika, & Yarbrough (2009) | USA | Describe assessment and evaluation strategies and grading practices used by nurse faculty. | National web-based survey; 29-items focused on respondent demographics (12 items); assessment/evaluation strategies used across the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning domains (9 items); and related grading practices (8 items). | Final sample included 1,573 faculty respondents from prelicensure RN programs; the response rate could not be calculated. | <p>Faculty said they ensured fair and consistent grading by establishing standards, completing formal training in evaluation methods, and using multiple reviewers for some evaluation strategies. Rubrics were used in many schools for evaluation and grading.</p> <p>The school's NCLEX-RN pass rate was the most important factor on decisions about assessment methods and course grading practices.</p> <p>In all types of programs, assessment methods included papers, group projects, and case study analyses but tests were weighted most heavily in the course grade.</p> <p>Only half of faculty respondents considered research on the effectiveness of assessment strategies to be important in their decisions.</p> |

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| O' Flynn-Magee & Clauson (2013) | Western Canada | Explore nurse educators' beliefs, values, and practices about grading students' academic work. | Qualitative design; two focus groups. Data analysis with thematic analysis. | Faculty from several ranks, with variety of teaching experiences, and representing both undergraduate and graduate programs; n = 13. | <p>Nurse educators' beliefs and values about grading contributed to grade inflation.</p> <p>The theme of "Ethical Practice" comprised ethical principles: equity, confidentiality, anonymity, consistency, and objectivity.</p> <p>The second theme, "Grading as Relational Practice", described educators' emphasis on the importance of respecting students' efforts and promoting their self-esteem, in addition to caring about, sharing power with, and communicating with students.</p> <p>Participants' views about students' clinical competence sometimes led to a subjective approach to evaluation.</p> <p>Based on their findings, identified grading guidelines to support nurse educators' efforts to grade fairly.</p> |
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| Reynolds (2015) | New York State, USA | Provide information about passing grades and their corresponding numeric grades in undergraduate nursing programs in NY state. Also, to report differences in grading between faculty. | Descriptive survey study | Full-time (FT) and adjunct faculty from baccalaureate and associate degree nursing programs. n= 384 FT and 96 adjuncts from 33 BSN and 63 ADN programs | <p>There was a statistically significant difference in both the number of A's and C's awarded by faculty teaching in ADN and BSN programs.</p> <p>Faculty teaching in ADN programs assigned fewer A's than faculty teaching in BSN programs. ADN faculty awarded more C's than BSN faculty. Faculty teaching in ADN programs assigned more B's than faculty teaching in BSN programs; however, the difference was not statistically significant.</p> |
| Salamonson, Halcomb, Andrew, Peters, & Jackson (2010) | Australia | Examine differences in a) student satisfaction with tenured and sessional faculty, and b) assessment scores awarded by tenured and sessional faculty for students' written assignments. | <p>Comparative survey study. Surveyed students' perceptions of teaching and course satisfaction and compared to the grades given by sessional and tenured faculty for a written assignment.</p> <p>Teaching and course satisfaction</p> | Students enrolled in a 3 year baccalaureate nursing program at an Australian university; n= 566 students | <p>Compared with tenured full-time faculty, sessional faculty received higher ratings of teaching satisfaction from first and second year students, but not from third year students.</p> <p>Sessional faculty awarded higher grades to students in year one and year two than full-time faculty. Researchers concluded students may have given sessional teachers higher ratings because of the higher grades received from them.</p> <p>Salamonson et al. proposed that tenured faculty had higher expectations for the quality of students' written work.</p> |

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| | | | measured with Perceptions of Teaching and Course Evaluation Tool (online version). | | |
| Scanlon & Care (2004) | Western Canada | Investigate extent to which grade inflation was an issue within a western Canadian faculty of nursing | Case study with retrospective analysis of students' GPAs. | Data set: Student GPAs at a single school of nursing over a 25 year time frame. | Nursing students GPAs increased significantly over a 25 year period. Clinical course grades contributed significantly to course grade inflation. "Students often appeal to the caring nature of nursing faculty, citing how hard they worked on the assignment or project" (p. 476). |
| White & Heitzler (2013) | Washington, DC, USA | Examine the effect of increasing the rigor and objectivity of evaluation methods in a graduate level nursing research course. | Retrospective comparative study. Grade distributions of students before implementation of rigorous objective evaluation methods were compared with those of students who took the revised version of the course. | De-identified grade distributions from 16 semesters of a graduate nursing research course. Grade distributions from 5 semesters comprised the before group; Grade distributions from 11 semesters of students comprised the after group. | Implementation of revised evaluation methods in the graduate research course resulted in a statistically significant decrease in grades. Prior to course revisions A (79%) was the modal grade followed by A- (10%), B+ (4%), and B (4%); "a large positive skew" (p. 76). After course revisions A- was the modal grade followed by B+, and percentage of C grades "more than doubled." (p. 76). |

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| | | | <p>Original course did not include tests; did include group work.</p> <p>Faculty revised course: created valid, reliable multiple choice tests, added precise rubrics, eliminated group work.</p> | | |
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