

Rutgers University-Camden — School of Nursing

Key Findings



Streamlined assessment
in a newly established
program



Simplified exam
creation for large,
multi-section courses



Provided insights into
student performance and
exam item quality

In 2013, The School of Nursing at Rutgers University-Camden merged with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Stratford. Each nursing program had differing approaches to assessment. As the newly combined school embarked on its first academic year, faculty from one nursing program used ExamSoft, while faculty from the other nursing program used another exam platform. It was not long before the entire undergraduate program at the School of Nursing agreed to adopt ExamSoft for its ease of use, valuable assessment data, and efficient grading tools.

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1926 as the South Jersey Law School, Rutgers University-Camden merged with Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey to form a single school in 1950. What began as single arts and sciences program at Rutgers-Camden has since expanded to include School of Business-Camden, Rutgers Law School, and School of Nursing-Camden.



School of Nursing–Camden was an offshoot of the Rutgers–Camden College of Arts and Sciences. It became a School of Nursing and integrated with the nursing program at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) in 2013. Today, School of Nursing–Camden offers a traditional undergraduate program, a 15-month Accelerated Bachelor of Science (ABS) in Nursing, an RN-BSN program, as well as several graduate and professional programs.

The School of Nursing seeks to instill students with a commitment to social justice and the public good and provides clinical opportunities that align with these values. Since January 2021, nursing students in the baccalaureate program have served the vital role of administering COVID-19 vaccinations to patients in New Jersey’s Camden County, promoting the wellbeing of their community while also satisfying clinical requirements for graduation.

NAVIGATING THE NURSING-CAMDEN MERGE

When the nursing program at UMDNJ combined with Rutgers to create School of Nursing–Camden, faculty from each program needed a way to unite their separate processes. UMDNJ faculty traditionally taught courses within the accelerated BS program, while Rutgers faculty normally taught courses within the traditional BS program.

As faculty were assigned to courses outside of their usual programs, they brought the teaching tools and technologies they were most familiar with into their respective classrooms. In order to establish consistency in these combined programs, the School of Nursing needed to decide which technologies it should officially adopt for course programs and which it should sunset.

Why did School of Nursing–Camden start using ExamSoft?

- ✓ To establish greater consistency
- ✓ To unite separate processes
- ✓ To continue the success from UMDNJ’s ExamSoft implementation

THE STEADY ROAD TO IMPLEMENTATION

UMDNJ had been using ExamSoft's digital platform to deliver assessments since 2010, and the solution felt like home to students and faculty alike. Going into the merger, the UMDNJ faculty felt strongly that they wished to continue using ExamSoft in their new roles at the Rutgers-Camden program.

As UMDNJ instructors were assigned to teach in the traditional BS program, they opted to use ExamSoft for assessment in these courses. Rutgers-Camden faculty began to realize how ExamSoft could improve the assessment process as they saw the results firsthand, and what began as a handful of courses using ExamSoft after the 2013 merger expanded to nearly the entire undergraduate program by 2016.

As more faculty decided to adopt ExamSoft in their courses, they were assisted by the program coordinators who came over from UMDNJ. With over four years of experience training faculty to use the ExamSoft platform before the merger, this support team helped Rutgers-Camden faculty work through every step of implementation in their courses — from building exams in the faculty portal to troubleshooting issues on exam day.

These program coordinators also lent their support after initial training was complete, reviewing faculty exam postings for discrepancies, distributing passwords before exam sessions, and assisting students with any tech-related issues. With the continued support of this team, faculty were more comfortable with the idea of ExamSoft and more willing to make the transition.

REAPING THE BENEFITS OF THE SWITCH

The predominant reason for adopting ExamSoft among Rutgers-Camden faculty was the platform's ease of use, which allowed them to overcome any initial resistance to the change. Features for building and organizing item banks in the faculty portal rivalled other assessment solutions in use at the school, and as a large undergraduate program with multiple sections per course, the ability to duplicate exams has been particularly attractive to faculty.

For instance, the exam duplication feature allows faculty to conveniently clone an exam and modify the questions for make-up exams to prevent answer-sharing with peers. Exam duplication also helps those who teach different sections of the same course create different exams with similar content simply by changing item distractors (i.e., incorrect options for multiple-response questions).





“I don’t build my exams with questions that 95% of students get correct. I’m looking for that 80%, 70%, or so. I want a discriminating question.”

— Dr. Margaret Avallone, Associate Dean, Baccalaureate Program;
Clinical Assistant Professor

School of Nursing faculty have found post-exam reports useful for guiding student conferences. Generating these reports has allowed faculty to show students which questions they missed and identify content areas they may need to review. Discussing these reports with students also helps them cultivate better test-taking strategies when encountering certain question formats or content on future exams.

Dr. Margaret Avallone, Associate Dean of the Baccalaureate Program and Clinical Assistant Professor, is among School of Nursing faculty that utilize Strengths & Opportunities Reports in their courses. With these reports, Margaret has been able to identify top-performing students as well as students who may be at risk. She has sent these reports to the school’s student success coach in order to show a complete picture of a given student’s performance and help target remediation to the specific needs of that student.

ITEM ANALYSIS USING PSYCHOMETRICS

Before releasing post-exam reports to her students, Dr. Margaret Avallone performs a thorough review of exam items using psychometric data. Here’s a look at her process, which takes about one hour from start to finish:

- ① Observe the KR-20 score to gauge consistency between exam items. Multiple response questions can throw the score, so Margaret doesn’t lean solely on the KR-20 measurement.
- ② Determine the difficulty level of individual exam items. For more challenging items, Margaret looks at the upper and lower 25% of students. If a large number of students answered incorrectly, but the upper 25% answered correctly, she may keep the item.
- ③ Review items the upper 25% of students missed. Margaret considers each item based on what she taught and looks out for any unclear or ambiguous phrasing.
- ④ Adjust answers to exam items as necessary. If Margaret decides that one of her items is unclear, she may accept multiple answers or drop the item altogether.
- ⑤ Revise questions in the item bank for use on future exams. For items that every student answered correctly,
- ⑥ Margaret may consider revising these items in the test bank.
- ⑦ Run the exam scores with item adjustments.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

When Rutgers University–Camden switched to remote assessment in Spring 2020, university administration purchased a license for a remote testing platform. Unfortunately, this platform was not compatible with the School of Nursing’s ExamSoft usage. Nursing instructors were concerned that they would lose the valuable assessment data stored within ExamSoft’s faculty portal, as well as capabilities for exam creation and item analysis.

Despite faculty hesitation, the School of Nursing moved ahead with importing their exam content into a new learning management system for remote assessment in Summer 2020. Faculty found the process incredibly difficult from the start and the interface wasn’t nearly as intuitive as ExamSoft’s faculty portal. In Fall 2020, when the School of Nursing discovered an opportunity to reimplement ExamSoft through an ExamSoft grant program — using ExamID and ExamMonitor for remote assessment — faculty jumped at the chance.

Heading into 2021, the School of Nursing predicts that it will continue to deliver remote assessments in the semesters to come. Whatever the year has in store, the school plans to do what it takes to keep ExamSoft for administering assessment in its programs.

MOVING FORWARD

With the School of Nursing’s main program coordinator leaving for another role, faculty are beginning to take on more responsibilities in exam administration. Until the school fills this position, faculty will be tasked with managing communications leading up to exam day and helping students troubleshoot any issues during exam sessions, in addition to their usual responsibilities for exam creation and grading.



Once faculty have fully adjusted to their responsibilities in exam management and remote assessment, the School of Nursing hopes to further explore item tagging in ExamSoft. Margaret sees an opportunity to tag questions by essential learning objectives within the baccalaureate program, which can help to track curricular compliance with accreditation standards. Faculty can also prepare students for board exams by tagging questions to points within the NCLEX test plan, identifying gaps in learning among students and directing effective study habits. School of Nursing faculty are excited to dive deeper into these features in order to enrich their experience with ExamSoft and continue to grow together as a collaborative group of educators promoting excellence in nursing.

“With ExamSoft, we’re not satisfied to say, ‘We’ve done everything and we’re doing everything perfectly.’ We know that we’ve only scratched the surface.”

– Dr. Margaret Avallone, Associate Dean, Baccalaureate Program; Clinical Assistant Professor

What’s on the horizon for School of Nursing–Camden



Tagging questions by essential learning objectives



Tracking curricular compliance with accreditation standards



Preparing students for their future board exams



ExamSoft is the digital assessment platform that helps institutions achieve higher levels of course, program, and student success. With an intuitive testing application, ExamSoft makes it simple to create, administer, and grade exams, and generate detailed performance reports from the results — all to provide educators with a complete and accurate view of student learning.

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 US & Canada: 866.429.8889, ext. 2
International: +1 954.429.8889, ext. 2