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Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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AP® Research Academic Paper 2022 Scoring Guidelines

The Response...				
Score of 1 Report on Existing Knowledge	Score of 2 Report on Existing Knowledge with Simplistic Use of a Research Method	Score of 3 Ineffectual Argument for a New Understanding	Score of 4 Well-Supported, Articulate Argument Conveying a New Understanding	Score of 5 Rich Analysis of a New Understanding Addressing a Gap in the Research Base
Presents an overly broad topic of inquiry.	Presents a topic of inquiry with narrowing scope or focus, that is NOT carried through either in the method or in the overall line of reasoning.	Carries the focus or scope of a topic of inquiry through the method AND overall line of reasoning, even though the focus or scope might still be narrowing.	Focuses a topic of inquiry with clear and narrow parameters, which are addressed through the method and the conclusion.	Focuses a topic of inquiry with clear and narrow parameters, which are addressed through the method and the conclusion.
Situates a topic of inquiry within a single perspective derived from scholarly works OR through a variety of perspectives derived from mostly non-scholarly works.	Situates a topic of inquiry within a single perspective derived from scholarly works OR through a variety of perspectives derived from mostly non-scholarly works.	Situates a topic of inquiry within relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives, although connections to some works may be unclear.	Explicitly connects a topic of inquiry to relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives AND logically explains how the topic of inquiry addresses a gap.	Explicitly connects a topic of inquiry to relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives AND logically explains how the topic of inquiry addresses a gap.
Describes a search and report process.	Describes a nonreplicable research method OR provides an oversimplified description of a method, with questionable alignment to the purpose of the inquiry.	Describes a reasonably replicable research method, with questionable alignment to the purpose of the inquiry.	Logically defends the alignment of a detailed, replicable research method to the purpose of the inquiry.	Logically defends the alignment of a detailed, replicable research method to the purpose of the inquiry.
Summarizes or reports existing knowledge in the field of understanding pertaining to the topic of inquiry.	Summarizes or reports existing knowledge in the field of understanding pertaining to the topic of inquiry.	Conveys a new understanding or conclusion, with an underdeveloped line of reasoning OR insufficient evidence.	Supports a new understanding or conclusion through a logically organized line of reasoning AND sufficient evidence. The limitations and/or implications, if present, of the new understanding or conclusion are oversimplified.	Justifies a new understanding or conclusion through a logical progression of inquiry choices, sufficient evidence, explanation of the limitations of the conclusion, and an explanation of the implications to the community of practice.
Generally communicates the student’s ideas, although errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization distract or confuse the reader.	Generally communicates the student’s ideas, although errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization distract or confuse the reader.	Competently communicates the student’s ideas, although there may be some errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization.	Competently communicates the student’s ideas, although there may be some errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization.	Enhances the communication of the student’s ideas through organization, use of design elements, conventions of grammar, style, mechanics, and word precision, with few to no errors.
Cites AND/OR attributes sources (in bibliography/ works cited and/or in-text), with multiple errors and/or an inconsistent use of a discipline-specific style.	Cites AND/OR attributes sources (in bibliography/ works cited and/or in-text), with multiple errors and/or an inconsistent use of a discipline-specific style.	Cites AND attributes sources, using a discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited AND in-text), with few errors or inconsistencies.	Cites AND attributes sources, with a consistent use of an appropriate discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited AND in-text), with few to no errors.	Cites AND attributes sources, with a consistent use of an appropriate discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited AND in-text), with few to no errors.

Academic Paper

Overview

This performance task was intended to assess students' ability to conduct scholarly and responsible research and articulate an evidence-based argument that clearly communicates the conclusion, solution, or answer to their stated research question. More specifically, this performance task was intended to assess students' ability to:

- Generate a focused research question that is situated within or connected to a larger scholarly context or community;
- Explore relationships between and among multiple works representing multiple perspectives within the scholarly literature related to the topic of inquiry;
- Articulate what approach, method, or process they have chosen to use to address their research question, why they have chosen that approach to answering their question, and how they employed it;
- Develop and present their own argument, conclusion, or new understanding while acknowledging its limitations and discussing implications;
- Support their conclusion through the compilation, use, and synthesis of relevant and significant evidence generated by their research;
- Use organizational and design elements to effectively convey the paper's message;
- Consistently and accurately cite, attribute, and integrate the knowledge and work of others, while distinguishing between the student's voice and that of others;
- Generate a paper in which word choice and syntax enhance communication by adhering to established conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

How will the shortage in staff of registered nurses affect the future of current nursing students in Southern California?

1

How will the shortage in staff of registered nurses affect the future of current nursing students in

Southern California?

April 14, 2022

AP Research

Word Count: 4003

How will the shortage in staff of registered nurses affect the future of current nursing students in Southern California?

2

The heroes of our society are constantly being mistreated through the lack of support needed to get through each day. Registered nurses are heroes because they aid patients back to good health by providing care and support, along with educating them on ways to maintain their wellbeing. However, every day nurses are overwhelmed by all the responsibilities that come with being a caretaker, especially with the virus, Covid-19. Even before the virus, there has been a scarcity of staff within the field for about sixty years which is still continuously growing to this day. There is a lack of awareness of the decrease in staff, not many individuals enhance this awareness which is increasing the chances of our hospitals losing more nursing staff and possibly current nursing students who are in the process of becoming one. Some do not ascertain the long-term effect this issue can have on the future, it may cause a huge change in the nursing field if this issue affects current nursing students. More people should be aware of the shortage of nurses because the longer this issue is ignored, the fewer nurses we are going to have.

Addressing the issue of nursing staff brought up the question of How will the shortage in staff of registered nurses affect the future of current nursing students in Southern California? Having only a small variety of people who know about the issue and the effects that this shortage has on hospitals, patients, and nurses themselves puts a risk on the availability of future health care. Also, the concern for the future nurses, is that it has been difficult for them to graduate because of the overload of patients in hospitals. This creates longer hours for nurses who are on call to work and even ones who are not. Unfortunately, overload of patients is not the only cause of this issue. These issues include the stress put on nurses, the coronavirus, the retirement of older nurses, the struggle of finding nurses to come work, not enough graduate nurses being hired, and many more that you will read later in this paper.

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The most important effect people need to acknowledge about the shortage of registered nurses is the increasing amount of stress that has developed throughout the years of this being an issue. It has driven each and every nurse to be experienced burn out and is even driving some to quit their jobs. This then creates the number of staff to drop, meaning less nursing staff, which equals less care for patients. An article titled, “Nurse Shortage In California Reaching Crisis Point” written by Catherine Burger, who has a medical degree in Human Medicine from Michigan State University College, explains the impact covid-19 has had on the nursing shortage. According to Burger, Covid-19 does play a substantial role in the cause of shortness of staff because it has decreased the number of nurses who are employed and has put hospitals in the position where they are also struggling with equipment. Burger states, “...without the staff to keep up with the influx of patients, nurses found themselves in the stressful positions of providing care as hospitals struggled to provide enough equipment and necessary PPE” (Burger, 2021). A large amount of covid patients has added on to the patients who are in the hospital for other natural needs of healthcare causing there not to be enough equipment to help hospitalize those patients, putting more stress on those nurses not being able to provide care for every single patient.

There are many possible ways that there is a nursing shortage, but it seems to be that the coronavirus is one of the main sources of the increasing problem of this issue. Working in a hospital around sick patients, specifically, ones that are infected with the coronavirus can expose those nurses to that virus. Being in an environment filled with patients that carry the virus puts all nurses at a higher risk of obtaining it, especially older nurses who are much more vulnerable. Rebecca Wolfson a multi-media producer and reporter has an article titled, “California Faces

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Short-Term Nursing Shortage From Covid-19 Retirements,” in which she mentions the high exposure to the coronavirus at hospitals, causes older nurses to consider retiring. It also leads other registered nurses to quit within the next two years (Wolfson, 2021). Wolfson also mentions that hospitals are facing challenges in filling those nursing positions of the ones who are quitting or retiring. Nursing programs are not accepting more nursing students that are needed and it has created a more difficult route for the nursing students and for those positions to be filled. The nursing shortage will just continue to cycle starting with nursing programs not accepting more than half of their applicants, and nurses wanting to retire and quit. This is affecting the healthcare system extensively because of the lack of staff in hospitals and the effects coronavirus has put on this problem.

The virus has made the shortage of nurses worse, it has also created a picture in people's heads of fear and death. According to an article titled “How The Coronavirus Might Worsen California’s Nurse Shortage” by Claire Trageser and Jill Castellano, who are investigative reporters state that colleges across California are having to pull nursing students from their clinical experiences in hospitals in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic. This is a way to reduce the spread of covid-19 and protect the nursing students from being exposed, but students may not have the clinical hours that are required to graduate, which will continue California’s ongoing nursing shortage (Trageser, Castellano, 2020). The virus has caused more worries within the field leading back to the nursing shortage which is putting the future of nursing at stake.

On top of nursing students not being able to graduate because of the loss of hospitalization hours, nursing programs are also one of the leading causes of the nursing shortage. Nursing programs are falling behind in accepting students who want to be in their

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nursing program because of how competitive and difficult they are. Matt Krupnick who wrote an article titled “When Nurses Are Needed Most, Nursing Programs Aren’t Keeping Up With Demand” states that over 1,200 students applied to enter the associate degree program in nursing at Long Beach City College but they only accepted 32, also that California State University is not enrolling any students until at least next fall (Krupnick, 2021). Nursing teachers are also quitting in large numbers, which is decreasing the amount of required clinical training nursing students need in order to graduate (Krupnick, 2021). It is worsening the education system for nursing students because they are losing their nursing teachers, their chances to get clinical hours, and even the chance to get into a nursing program.

All of these causes and effects of the nursing shortage can lead one to wonder if it will continue to grow far into the future. The shortage of nursing staff has been uncontrollably unstable for the past three years because of the coronavirus, and it might have caused a long-term effect on the future of nurses. An article titled “The Future Of Nursing 2020-2030” is about exploring the thoughts of nursing in the future of 2030, and improving the well-being of the people in the U.S. in the 21st century, which is held together by a committee. These visions the committee considers are great ways to help the nursing shortage as a result of the pandemic. The committees are very dedicated to helping this issue because they want to take into account the dramatic changes in clinical care, nurse education, nursing leadership, and nursing community partnerships as a result of the pandemic (National Academy Of Medicine). Having this information is a liability for this issue and could be a short-term solution, being that not many people are educated enough and are not aware of the issue or this committee.

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Another issue that includes coronavirus and is affecting nursing students' education, is that “budgets are so constrained that student nurses are forced to buy their protection equipment or PPE” (Krupnick). Hospitals do not have enough money to provide nursing students with protection from the coronavirus, including masks, shields, gloves, etc. also with the basic equipment required to be a nursing student.

Being that nursing staff have been in shortage for a while and not many people know how they are feeling emotionally, mentally, and physically, or what the causes of this issue are. Participants were chosen to be interviewed which will allow their voices to be heard, getting a first-hand perspective on how the lack of staff has been affecting them and the hospital care. They were asked to sign for consent to sit down, have a one-on-one conversation while being asked questions such as, “What do you know about the nursing shortage? Do you believe this issue has a long-term effect on the future of the nursing field? Do you believe covid-19 plays a big role in the nursing shortage?” and more. Getting a first-hand perspective and having a one-on-one conversation with these nurses can help me the experience and better understand where they are coming from and further allow me to prove to others that they are going through a tough time. The participants could also have possible answers to why there has been a shortage and why it is continuing to still happen. Getting their input on what they know about the shortage could reveal how it possibly will affect the future of nursing students. There were a few nurse participants that were willing to sit down and talk about what they know, including a hospital nurse, a nurse that has recently graduated from nursing school, and a school nurse. The first interview was with a registered nurse who is currently employed at a local hospital, the second was with a recent nursing graduate who is specialized in school nursing and I asked them a series

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of questions. Along with if the nursing shortage has personally affected them or anyone they know if they are comfortable with answering that question. Most importantly they were asked if they think covid-19 has caused the issue to grow bigger and how it has a part in the shortage of nurses.

While the participants were being asked a series of questions, their answers were recorded onto a word document and will be used as evidence, and each interview did not last longer than 30 minutes to an hour because of the sake of time. After contacting the current participants who have signed a consent form, I was hoping they would possibly know of other registered nurses who are willing to do the same, but it turns out most of them were busy or not willing to participate. Which created less perspectives for me to see and connect to the research I had already done. Unfortunately, in the middle of the method, some of the participants were unable to participate so it brought me down to two participants in total, which is not the amount that I wanted.

As for my results, I did manage to get enough information from those two participants to use as evidence. Regarding the subjects who were not able to participate, each participant had a similar response to the series of questions, just different experiences. Participant one, who is a stroke nurse at a hospital in Southern California, was asked about their personal experience and what they knew about the issue. He stated that they struggle with getting staff to work day and night to come in and take care of the patients in the hospitals. When they are not able to fill in those positions for the nurses who are not working that day, it is difficult to take care of the patients who are sick due to not enough nurses that are available to work. Those sick patients go to the emergency department and stay there for hours causing them to get even sicker because of

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the lack of care they are receiving. This is causing a large affect on patients as well as nurses because it puts patients care at risk of not getting the actual care that they need in order to stay healthy. Along with nurses, who worry about their well-being themselves, they are rushing throughout the hospital trying to get to as many patients as they can since there are not enough workers to provide that care for them. Which puts more weight on their back with stress and responsibilities. With mostly all hospitals under the impression that they need more nurses, they are fighting to hire the same registered nurses, and are competing for their service to fill in those missing work positions.

Participant number two is a recent nursing graduate who works for an agency and is currently working at a school as a school registry nurse. She was asked the same question and stated that she got hired into the field because she was needed to help with the nursing shortage. This made her a perfect participant to interview because she was a nursing student while the pandemic was still in motion. They were both asked if they think there will be a long-term effect on the future of the nursing field and both participants agreed with “yes” and had similar responses as to why. Participant number one said that there are a lot of senior nurses that are retiring which is adding to the shortage, along with schools for nurses, because they are not producing enough nursing graduates. With a similar idea, participant number two states that “we can't fit as many nurses into nursing schools, as we need to replace the nurses that are leaving.” Which is the cause of a loop in why we are in a nursing shortage, because since nurses are quitting and retiring we can't fill in those spots with incoming nurses because there are not enough being hired into the field. With the craziness within the field they are looking for hardworking and dedicated people that could handle the stress, to get hired into the field. Their

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responses connect with the information that I have found in many articles which proves to me that that information is true and nurses are suffering greatly from not being able to have as much help from their colleagues.

The participants were also asked what they think caused this issue, adding to what they have mentioned before but they both have very different experiences. Participant number one says that nurses are quitting their position in hospitals to become travel nurses because being a travel nurse has more benefits. For example, they get sent to different parts of the world to help patients in need of care and they get paid much more than a regular registered nurse. Participant number 2 mentions the baby generation of nurses and how not many of them are planning to be hired into the field because the program is only allowing a certain amount of students in. The baby generation of nurses is the new incoming nursing students or the generation that are planning to become a nurse. Overall, since there are a lot of senior nurses that are retiring and not enough nursing students getting hired into the nursing field, it adds to the shortage of registered nurses. It causes more destruction and is very difficult trying to fill in those missing work positions.

Going back to the coronavirus and how it has made a major impact on the nursing shortage, these participants were asked if the covid-19 virus has played a big role in the nursing shortage. Both of the participants come to the agreement of yes it does play a big role because it has caused a major build-up of stress on the nurses. The loss of retired nurses and not enough incoming nurses create such busy work for those nurses because as participant number two states, "Since a lot of people are at retiring age, they also don't want to get sick and even more so wanting them to retire which makes hospitals even busier, creating such busy work." The retiring

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nurses are causing the number of employed nurses to decrease, making it more difficult to fill in the spots of those who had already quit, along with not many nursing graduates being able to get hired. This is why nurses are so burnt out and are driving even more to quit. As a recent graduate participant number two mentioned that it is difficult for students to get hired because they want people who are genuine and who know how to work.

Adding on to the stress nurses have gained, one of the more mind-blowing pieces of information that were gathered is when the question “What major changes in the nursing field were made because of the coronavirus?” was asked. Participant number one had said that it is mandated for nurses to come in and work even if they have covid but have no symptoms, or they would be laid off. Along with that participant number two was asked the same questions and she had a similar response, saying that nurses are getting fired from their jobs for being unvaccinated which adds to the number of nurses missing from the field. She also mentions that patient care has been decreasing because the number of patients has increased due to the nurses that are leaving or getting fired. These issues are causing the quality of patient care to go down and creating a more overwhelming environment and job for the nurses. Participant number two also states that in California there is a ratio of patients that the nurses receive, and in the medical field there is a maximum of six patients that each nurse receives. But because of the nursing shortage and the huge amount of losses, some of those ratios have increased to about eight people per nurse, and because of that, the quality of patient care has gone down. She makes a really good point when she mentioned that they now have added to the number of patients each nurse gets because that is one of the reasons why our nurses are being so burnt out. Due to the amount of

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responsibilities they originally had this added to them causing the stress that all nurses are stating, which is driving them to quit.

Arguably the most important question that I asked the participants was if this nursing shortage has affected them personally because getting to know their personal experiences can show that it is affecting nurses more than people think. Participant number one said that it has been affecting him personally because currently, he is now a stroke nurse, but he is being forced to work at his old position in the ICU, which is the intensive care unit in a hospital for patients that are very ill. It affects him and even other nurses because it adds another level to their stressfulness when their job is already stressful. This should not be okay for nurses to be working in other specialties, it creates a confusing and more stressful environment in hospitals, in which nurses and other healthcare takers do not need. He also mentions how they do not get any breaks to even, drink water, eat food, use the restroom, and they do not even get to go on as many vacations because of how there is limited staff. This is one of the reasons why nurses are quitting, because it is said that nurses are quitting to become travel nurses, they get to travel the world, and be on vacation, while saving people's lives all at the same time. However, Participant number two has a different experience than participant number one because she was barely finishing nursing school. It has affected her because she said when graduated from nursing school, hospitals were so busy due to the lack of nurses that there were not many people to interview, and weren't able to get back to them because of how busy everyone was. Which decreased the amount of experience the nursing students could have had, along with the lack of practice and help to prepare them for the actual job of being a nurse.

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A cause of nursing burnout is how covid has taken a toll on people because they do not have enough help. Nursing students who graduated last year have been burnt out because of how busy hospitals are and according to participant number two, they “don't know if they can do it anymore.” According to participant number one, nurses are getting overworked and hospital administrations are taking away their help, he states that “we're not getting paid enough for this very stressful job.” He mentions that they are always “cutting corners” which can put the patient's health in danger and the health of the nurses as well.

Asking the participants the question “do you think if we spread more awareness of this issue it would help?” they responded very differently and is the first question where they both had different opinions. Participant number one thinks that spreading awareness is not going to benefit as much because “money runs the health industry and if they could cut corners somewhere, they will do it to save a penny.” That is coming from the experience of working in a hospital and what he has seen within the hospital's borders. However, participant number two says that yes spreading more awareness could help this issue, but “within our state.” She states that if it can be spread “the state can make more opportunities for students to become a nurse, or influence them to be in the field.”

Besides all of the good outcomes of my method, not everything went right in the process of developing my results. As a result of being in a nursing shortage, many nurses are so busy it was difficult to get in contact with some nurses I wanted to be a part of my research. I lost some of my original participants because they were too busy with their schedules that it was hard to work around it and find a time when they are free. Being that I could not get a hold of some subjects I was left with only two participants to interview, bringing me to my limitation of

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perspectives I could bring into my research. At first, it was one of my major concerns while putting all my data together, but it was handled once I came to the realization that I had enough information that was collected when doing literature reviews to connect them with each other. With all of the causes and affects of the nursing shortage, it is putting a very high risk of hurting the future of the nursing program if colleges and hospitals are not allowing that many students to be put in the nursing field or even allow them into a nursing program.

The future of nursing students are under a lot of pressure and is filled with a variety of questions, asking when will the shortage stop, or if it will ever stop. The shortage of registered nurses does have a huge effect on current nursing students today, but a bigger problem that has affected this issue is the coronavirus. With all of the information collected almost every single source used mentions the coronavirus and how it has worsened the shortage of nurses, and I have concluded that the nursing shortage is not only affecting nursing students but also affects all of us, including registered nurses and patients. It seems to be that, comparing a hospital nurses experience with a recent graduate in the school nurse specialty experience, that this shortage is affecting mostly nurses overall. With that being said being aware of the nursing shortage issue is important to show appreciation for nurses and the work they do to provide care for others by taking the time out of their day.

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Academic Paper

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Sample: G

Score: 2

This paper earned a score of 2. While the paper begins with a narrowing topic of inquiry and a research question, “How will the shortage in staff of registered nurses affect the future of current nursing students in Southern California?” its focus shifts and broadens, as evidenced on page 6. The researcher states, “Participants were chosen to be interviewed which will allow their voices to be heard, getting a first-hand perspective on how the lack of staff has been affecting them and the hospital care.” The answer to this question is present in the paper’s literature review, specifically in the discussion of the Catherine Burger article discussed on page 3. It is again discussed on page 4 where the researcher states, “Nursing programs are not accepting more nursing students that are needed and it has created a more difficult route for the nursing students and for those positions to be filled. The nursing shortage will just continue to cycle starting with nursing programs not accepting more than half of their applicants, and nurses wanting to retire and quit. This is affecting the healthcare system extensively because of the lack of staff in hospitals and the effects coronavirus has put on this problem.” This problem is compounded in the paper’s conclusions on page 13 (see final paragraph), where the paper, once again, repeats what is already known. Because the student does not generate new evidence supporting their research question, there is no new understanding conveyed.

It is also important to note that the shifting focus from nursing students to exploring perspectives of nursing staff during the Covid staffing crisis prevents the paper’s focus from being carried out through the method and the overall line of reasoning.

This paper does not earn a score of a 3 for all the reasons listed above. Additionally, though, the paper’s method section is not reasonably replicable. While parts of the interview questions are embedded, the complete questions are never provided. This is illustrated on page 6 when the paper states the questions but adds to them by saying “and more.” Additionally, the paper only uses 5 sources, none of which are scholarly. Communication is impaired due to informal phrases like “the more mind-blowing pieces of information that were gathered” (page 10), and there is a lack of clearly demarcated sections.

This paper does not earn a score of 1 as there is an attempt at a method and generating new evidence via the interviews of two nurses. But, as stated earlier, the method is not reasonably replicable and is significantly misaligned with the paper’s stated goals.