

**NORTHERN LIGHTS COLLEGE  
REGISTRAR'S OFFICE  
PROGRAM INFORMATION AND COMPLETION GUIDE**

**Program Name:** Health Care Assistant  
**Credential/Certification:** Certificate in Health Care Assistant  
**Date Submitted:** May 2026  
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**Program Contact:** Program Chair: Erika Reimer

**Dean:** Nicole Dahlen, Dean

**Document Author:** Much of the following material has been borrowed from the following resources: Health Care Assistant (HCA) Program Provincial Curriculum (2023), Health Care Assistant (HCA) Supplement to the Provincial Curriculum (2023), Revised 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition; Health Care Assistant Program Recognition Guide (2024), and HSPnet Practice Education Guidelines for BC (Sept 2025).

**Program Description:** The Health Care Assistant (HCA) program is designed to provide students with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to function effectively as front-line caregivers and respected members of the healthcare team. Under the direction and supervision of a health professional, graduates provide person-centred care aimed to promote and maintain the physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and spiritual health and well-being of clients and families. Upon completion of the program, graduates are prepared to work in a variety of practice settings including home support, assisted living, complex care, special care units, other home and community care settings, and acute care.

**Admission Requirements:**

Evidence of both of the following must be provided prior to acceptance:

1. Proof of Grade 10 completion (or equivalent) OR mature student status.
2. Proof of meeting HCA Program Entry - English Language Competency Requirements
  - For applicants with three years of full-time instruction in English\*: English 10 completion or equivalent.
  - For applicants with less than three years of full-time instruction in English\*: Standardized English language proficiency test score.

\*Defined as three (3) years of full-time secondary and/or post-secondary education at a recognized institution, on the list of Approved English Speaking Countries. Secondary

education will be considered starting from grade 8. English as a Second Language (ESL) courses will not be considered.

Note: If the program is accepting international students, a clear police certificate from the country of origin must also be included as a program entry requirement.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS

To be accepted into a recognized BC HCA program, applicants are required to demonstrate proficiency in English. Students must be able to communicate effectively in English to be successful in their studies and capable of providing safe and competent care to patients/clients/residents in the work environment during practice education components.

To ensure consistency and quality assurance, institution-created tests are not acceptable for the assessment of HCA program applicants.

1. Applicants who provide evidence of three years of full-time instruction in English\*\* must also provide proof of one of the following.

- a) Completion of Grade 10 English\*\*\* (or higher). A minimum of a C grade is acceptable.
- b) Completion of college courses determined to be equivalent to Grade 10 English (or higher) by post-secondary institutions. A minimum of a C grade is acceptable.
- c) ACCUPLACER Next Generation Test Results: Reading 230, Writing 230 and Writeplacer 4.

\*\*Applicants must provide a transcript and/or a BC personal education record as evidence of completion of a minimum of three years of full-time secondary (inclusive of grade 8) or post-secondary instruction in English. It is expected that the student has taken full time studies with a minimum of 18 credits per academic year (60% courseload). Documentation should indicate completion of a minimum of six semesters with a minimum of 54 credits in total.

\*\*Includes any English Language Arts 10 course or GED indicating completion of the English requirement and demonstrating minimum of three years of schooling.

2. Applicants who cannot provide evidence of three years of full-time instruction in English are required to provide proof of one of the following standardized proficiency tests from an authorized assessment agency.

- a) Canadian Language Benchmarks test (in person or remote).\*\*\*\* Test in the last year. Listening 7, Speaking 7, Reading 6 and Writing 6.
- b) Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELPIP General). Test in the last two years. Listening 7, Speaking 7, Reading 6 and Writing 6.
- c) International English Language Testing System (IELTS Academic, IELTS General or IELTS Academic Online). Test in the last two years. Overall score of 6 with a minimum of 6 in Speaking and Listening and no score lower than 5.5 in Reading and Writing.
- d) Canadian Academic English Language Assessment (CAEL or CAEL Online). Test in the last two years. Overall Score of 60, with no section less than 50.

e) The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT or TOEFL iBT Home Edition). Test in the last two years. For tests taken prior to Jan 21, 2026, overall score of 76 with no score lower than 20 in Speaking and Listening and no score lower than 18 in Reading and Writing. For tests taken on or after Jan 21, 2026, overall score of 4 with no score lower than 4 in Speaking and Listening and no score lower than 3.5 in Reading and Writing.

f) Pearson Test of English (PTE). Test in the last two years. PTE Academic - Overall score of 50 with no score lower than 50 in Speaking and Listening and no score lower than 45 in Reading and Writing. PTE Core - No score lower than 68 in Speaking, 60 in Listening, 51 in Reading and 60 in Writing.

\*\*\*HCA Educators must ensure that the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) test is conducted at a recognized Language Assessment Centre/Location by a certified CLB language assessor (e.g., CLB Placement Test (CLBPT) completed at a Centre for Language Benchmarks (CCLB) Assessment Centre). Self-assessment tests, e.g., CLB-Online Self-Assessment (OSA) cannot be accepted for HCA program entry.

Please note: In addition to the listed tests, recognized BC HCA Programs have the discretion to admit applicants with one of the following:

- 1) A CLB Report Card from a LINC Program indicating “Completing” CLB Speaking 7, Listening 7, Reading 7 and Writing 7 AND “Recommended Class Placement” as Speaking 8, Listening 8, Reading 8 and Writing 8
- 2) Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses (CELBAN) results (test in the last two years) with the following minimum scores: Speaking 7, Listening 7, Reading 6, Writing 6
- 3) Occupational English Test (OET): computer only (test in the last two years) with no score lower than C/280 in Speaking and Listening and no score lower than C/250 in Reading and Writing.

The following countries are considered as those with English language systems / institutions, where English is a primary and official language, and the language used for education:

American Samoa, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Botswana, British Virgin Islands, Canada, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Falkland Islands, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Gibraltar, Grenada, Guam, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malta, Mauritius, Montserrat, New Zealand, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, United States Virgin Islands, Zambia, Zimbabwe

## POST-ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

After acceptance into the program, students will be required to complete and show proof of successful completion of all of the following by the first day of class. All certifications must remain valid throughout program:

1. First Aid Certification (standard, emergency, or occupational)
2. CPR Level "C" or "Basic Life Support (BSL)" Certification
3. Foodsafe Level 1 certificate (or a certificate course deemed equivalent)
4. Submission of a completed NLC Immunization Requirement form which includes immunizations outlined in the Practice Education Guidelines of BC - Communicable Disease Prevention. Please make an appointment with a public health nurse immediately as the immunization process can take up to three months in some cases.
6. Negative TB test indicating the absence of active tuberculosis.
7. N95 fit testing for proper respiratory mask fitting.
8. Schedule B Criminal Record Check (CRC) for working with "children and vulnerable adults." No student will be permitted in the program until the CRC has been received and reviewed by NLC. Students are obligated to report any Schedule B criminal convictions that occur after they authorize a Criminal Record Check and while they are still enrolled in the program. Failure to do so may result in immediate dismissal from the program. Please apply for the CRC immediately, as the application process may take up to six weeks.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1. Students in NLC's HCA program have an average of 28 hours of classes, laboratories, and other learning activities per week. A comparable number of individual study hours is required. Furthermore, in clinical learning situations, students will be in close contact with individuals with a variety of health issues. For these reasons, students should be in satisfactory physical and emotional health to ensure success in the program.
2. Applicants wishing to transfer from another HCA Program must provide evidence that the above admission requirements have been met. Applications for transfer credit will be reviewed on an individual basis. Transfer-based admission will be dependent on available space.
3. Students who do not meet program progression criteria and reapply for admission in a subsequent intake must satisfy the following two items:
  - a. Demonstrate that all current admission criteria have been met.
  - b. Provide evidence of completing any upgrading or re-entry requirements.
4. Attendance is mandatory as outlined in the HCA Student Handbook.

**Length of Program:** (weeks and total hours) Approximately 31-34 weeks/745 hours for full time studies. Part time study may be considered upon request and seat availability.

**Program Intake:** (start/finish dates) September intakes: September through May for full time studies. February intakes: February through October for full time studies. Program must be completed within 2 years for part time study.

**Available Seats:** 24 per intake.

**Application Deadline:** Applications for the Health Care Assistant program will open October 1st each year, with the program beginning the following September. Applications will also open March 1st each year, with the program beginning the following February. Qualified applicants will be made on a first-come, first-qualified basis until the designated number of seats are full.

**Career Prospects:** Health care assistants work in a variety of practice settings including home support, assisted living, complex care, special care units, other home and community care settings, and acute care.

**Affiliations/Partnerships:** Northern Health and related facilities: e.g., Dawson Creek Society for Community Living, Fort St. John Association for Community Living.

**Location:** Theory classes are delivered via MS Teams with an instructor in real time. Lab classes are based on the Dawson Creek and Fort St. John Campuses. Clinical learning experiences may occur in a variety of settings, including Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Chetwynd, and Fort Nelson. Efforts will be made to place students in convenient clinical locations, but all students should be prepared for in-region travel. Transportation, meals, and accommodation are the student's responsibility. After a clinical or preceptorship site is assigned by the Program Chair and instructor, no changes are permitted.

**Additional Requirements/Supplies:** (fees, supplies, materials)

In NLC's Health Care Assistant program, various E-Learning modules on the PHSA Learning hub must be completed prior to practice education as outlined in the Practice Education Guidelines for BC - Student Orientation (<https://spe.healthcarebc.ca/Documents/Practice%20Education%20Guidelines/P-1-15-06.pdf>)

A substantial amount of course and program resource materials is provided solely in electronic form. Minimum computer requirements are published on NLC's website. See <https://www.nlc.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Minimum-Computer-Requirements.pdf>

Printing of resource materials is a student responsibility. Please contact your campus library for printing costs if you plan to use campus facilities. Basic computer literacy skills are strongly recommended. Applicants needing assistance with basic computer skills are asked to discuss their computer skills with an Admissions Officer at the time of application.

Students are required to purchase textbooks for the program.

Appropriate attire and shoes are necessary for lab courses and for clinical and preceptorship experiences. Students must purchase standardized program uniforms from the NLC Bookstore.

Long shifts may be required for some components of the program.

Keys to success:

- Openness to new ideas
- An ability to self-evaluate, be self-reflective, and hold oneself accountable
- Maturity
- High standard of personal hygiene and grooming
- Ability to concentrate
- Consistent attendance
- Personal integrity and ability to exercise discretionary judgement
- Physical stamina
- Timely completion of all homework and readings for all courses/classes
- Continuously evolving intuitive and creative skills
- A caring philosophy and ability to work well within a team environment (understand, respect, and appreciate roles within a team)

**Eligibility for Canada Student Loans:** (Yes or No)

Yes

**Required Minimum Grade:** (overall and/or minimum within a course)

70% for all theory courses; the lab component of HCAT 124 is graded Pass/Fail with a mastery level of B+ (80%) required for a pass; practice-education courses (HCAT 126, HCAT 127 and 128) are graded PASS or FAIL.

**Residency Requirement:** (percentage of courses which must be taken at NLC)

A minimum 25% of total program hours must be completed at NLC. Typically, students will complete the entire program at NLC; however, given the existence of a provincial curriculum, transfer credit may be considered from recognized institutions. Students should consult an Admissions Officer for more information.

**Required Courses:** (list courses required to complete credential and total hours for each course)

- HCAT110 Common Health Challenges (115 hours)
- HCAT111 Lifestyle and Choices (30 hours)
- HCAT112 Interpersonal Communications (50 hours)
- HCAT113 Introduction to Practice (30 hours)
- HCAT123 Concepts for Practice (70 hours)
- HCAT124 Personal Care and Assistance (120 hours)

HCAT125 Cognitive and/or Mental Challenges (60 hours)

HCAT126 Practice Experience in Multi-Level and/or Complex Care 1 (150 hours, instructor led)

HCAT127 Practice Experience in Multi-Level and/or Complex Care 2 (60 hours, preceptor led)

HCAT128 Practice Experience in Home Support and/or Assisted Living (60 hours, preceptor led)