

# Did QUALIS ended? Proposal of metrics to evaluate the nursing post-graduation scientific productions (2025-2028)



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The Brazilian *stricto sensu* post-graduate evaluation celebrates 50 years in 2026. This complex evaluative process solidified the post-graduation national system and built one of the pillars of Brazilian science.

Metter of fact, the Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES) guides evaluation of post-graduations through the analysis of their scientific productions. The assessment of the bibliographical production and of the scientific knowledge dissemination quality of this field specifically is made through channels considered trusted, such as scientific journals.

Although CAPES' evaluation of post-graduation scientific production does not measure directly the quality of the scientific propagational channels, in the dynamics of post-graduation, is undeniable that these evaluative movements are connected. This fact can be seen under the statement that researchers affiliated to post-graduations programs in Brazil were conditioned to considers QUALIS stratifications when looking for a journal to submit their scientific research, meaning looking beyond productivity without measures, which can affect negatively scientific quality and favors processes like predatory publishing<sup>(1)</sup>.

At its synthesis, Qualis' goals were, in summary, to put objectivity to the metrics attributed to each postgraduate program, in the form of a quadrennial retroactive evaluation. In parallel, this logic encouraged many scientific journals to adapt to different criteria of editorial quality, aiming for more visibility and to become references in their field, and consequently better their stratifications established by this logic.

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Narrowing down the subject to the Nursing area, it is known that talking about Qualis is talking about the history of Nursing as a science. In the year Qualis was created (1998), the field had a total of 14 post-graduation programs poorly spread across Brazil. Today, 85 programs are active and better geographically distributed. Even though this expressive growth is not necessarily a reason, it brought with it a question that cannot be ignored: in parallel to the advancement of the distribution expansion and of the access to Nursing Post-graduate programs, there is also necessity for advancement in the process of monitoring the programs and their scientific productions, including multidimensional perspectives of evaluation and focus on the tangible social impact.

According to data presented in the document of the field of Nursing that compares the quantity of A1 articles between 2019 and 2022, it can be seen a 33,6% increase, exposing an evolution in this time span. However, it was noted an increasement of publications of articles in journals evaluated in others fields that used indicators that differs from the ones used in Nursing, which can result in the reduction of bibliometric indicators in Brazilian Nursing<sup>(2)</sup>. This fact puts a spotlight in the necessity to adapt for new parameters.

Despite being built as a multifaceted strategy, the system Qualis Journals fell short to evaluate the complexity of bibliographical and scientific productions in Nursing. It is not enough to base the evaluation only on world-known bibliometric indicators, usually provided by consolidated databases, such as *Journal Impact Factor* (*Web of Science*), *CiteScore* (SCOPUS), H-index or SJR (*Scimago Journal & Country Rank*). However, even though, under a determined scenario, those tools induce academic productivity<sup>(1)</sup>, they also add objectivity to the ranking of different fields of scientific knowledge and favors editorial planning<sup>(3)</sup>.

Facing the exposed scenario, the main challenge was to find a method that not only reflected the high-level professional qualification, materialized (in part) in the quality of the publications, but also considered editorial diversity and all specific impacts the field intend to reach, nationally and internationally.

Amongst the critics to *Qualis Referência*, the difficulty to properly differentiate the programs would stand out, as also the use of indicators that did not broadly assured the journals' quality, such as Google Scholar's H-index. Such limitations pointed out the necessity to include qualitative analyses of the productions, to consider other metrics, such as the JCR, Scopus and other nursing specific databases impact and percentage information, and to focus on publishing in Nursing journals that consider the field's style of production.

For the next evaluative cycle of 2025-2028, CAPES changed the *Qualis Periódicos* system to "Article Classification". The main change is the end of a fixed rating to the journal, now being evaluated the individual impact of each article through the journal's bibliometric indicators or the qualitative analysis of each article, made by its own field. This new classification will have eight stratum and will provide autonomy to each field to choose their quantitative, qualitative and mixed criteria to classify the programs scientific productions.

In Nursing, the current<sup>(2)</sup> evaluation method adopts the concept of "stratum" that are subdivided in eight levels (A1 - A8), as well as the "not classified" category. The evaluation will search for a systemic point-of-view of the scientific productions, containing: consolidated bibliometric indications of the publishing channels, journals' databases/indexing sources, and also citation and altimetry indexes and qualitative analysis of published articles, this last ones to be realized a *posteriori*. In other words, the stratum is now of the **product/publication**, and not necessarily (but indirectly it is) of their **publishing channel**.

It is important to emphasize that it was a significant movement to the area to consider databases and indexing sources specifically of Nursing. It adds value to the area and helps to spread more visibility to our productions and channels of knowledge dissemination.

We emphasize that, to define the stratification criteria for evaluation in the 2025-2028 quadrennium<sup>(2)</sup>, the commission took as a basis the scientific production of the area in the quadrennium 2017-2020 and the biennium 2021-2022. The bibliometric bases and indicators used in the definition of the criteria by the nursing area were: SCOPUS (CiteScore); CLARIVATE (Impact Factor – *Journal Citation Reports* – JCR); Medline / Pubmed; SciELO; Rev@Enf; LILACS; BDEnf; CINAHL; RIC-CUIDEn and Latindex.

12 simulations were performed with different combinations of parameters, allowing the analysis of the discriminatory capacity between different levels of development of the programs, the incorporation of interdisciplinarity, the valorization of the nursing area and related areas, as well as the induction to the internationalization of the area, without prejudice or devaluation of national production. In addition, it is believed that in this new movement the area recovers an evaluation trend that was disrupted by *Qualis Referência*. In this process, we highlight that:

1. When performing the simulation of production stratification using the evaluation indicators of the 2025-2028 quadrennium, it is verified that the current criteria value the transversal, complex and integrated nature of nursing knowledge production. We emphasize that in stratum A1, 11% of the production was published in non-nursing journals and 14% in nursing. In stratum A2, 22.6% of the production was published in non-nursing journals and only 4.4% in nursing journals. In stratum A3, 19.2% of the production was published in non-nursing journals and only 6.3% in nursing journals. In stratum A4, 25.7% of the production was published in non-nursing journals and only 7.0% in nursing journals.
2. Overall, 12.4% of production is in A1 and A2, 56.1% of production in strata A1 to A4, with the highest concentration (16.7%) in A4; 10.0% in B1, 6.0% in B2, 6.6% in B3 and 9.1% in B4. Therefore, the criteria adopted allow discrimination between the programs in their various stages of evolution, objects of our evaluation.
3. Additionally, the procedure “2” proposed by CAPES will be adopted, in which the classification of the article will be carried out by direct bibliometric indicators of the article (Citation Index and altimetry, for quantitative analysis).

In addition to the criteria set out in the area document<sup>(2)</sup>, it is explicitly stated the incentive for the participation of teachers and students of the programs in interdisciplinary and integrative projects, and also that in the along the Master's and Doctoral's course of knowledge, the students have learning experiences, production and extension activities in different areas of knowledge. Therefore, it is evident the care and appreciation of interdisciplinary practices as a principle for quality training of Masters and Doctors, of the scientific impact of nursing, of the technological innovations, qualification of health care and of the improvement of public policies. These elements will be increasingly needed in bibliographic productions, including in a concrete way.

The nursing area seeks to make scientific knowledge comprehensive, to contribute to the construction of human well-being of individuals, groups and populations, strengthening the *Sistema Único de Saúde*. Reaffirming nursing as a science, it recognizes its disciplinary specificity as a branch of knowledge, and, at the same time, it emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinarity while considering the complex phenomena which Nursing works with and the need for theoretical, conceptual and methodological sharing with other areas of knowledge.

More than a change of metrics, a redefinition of values is in its way. And, in this process, Nursing comes not only to lead the production of knowledge, but also the critical thinking on how – and why – this knowledge is produced and how it is evaluated.

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