Operational Guideline 8: Clinical Career Ladder Oversight and Function

**Purpose**

This Operational Guideline defines the decision-making parameters affecting the PNSO’s Clinical Career Ladder (the Ladder), differentiating between the **structure** of the Ladder and the **processes** to implement and sustain that architecture.

The Career Ladder Committee, defined in the PNSO Bylaws, Article IX, Section 1, plays a significant role in both of these aspects of Ladder decision-making.

The Career Ladder Committee has the responsibility and authority to provide coordination of the peer review process for advancement, validation, and revalidation, and mentoring of clinicians in their professional growth to advance on the Clinical Career Ladder. The Career Ladder Committee establishes guidelines for the Clinician III/IV Career Ladder and the APN Career Ladder Panels. This Guideline specifies the membership, duties and function of the Clinician III/IV Panels, and the APN Career Ladder Panel. It is the individual responsibility of each UVA Health System RN to be conversant with the process as outlined in the Handbook, and adhere to the rules and deadlines outlined there as applies to their position.

**Principles**

**Career Ladder Structure:**

- The essential structure of the Clinical Career Ladder -- currently a Clinical arm and an Advanced Practice arm, each containing several nursing roles along a continuum from Novice to Expert -- is defined by a collaboration between the CNO (or designee, on behalf of formal nursing leadership and organizational needs) and the PNSO President and Cabinet (on behalf of the membership; usually delegated to the Career Ladder Committee to explore different models and the logistical needs thereof).
- The CNO drives certain structure decisions, reflecting the needs of the organization. The PNSO has significant input in the implementation thereof, but not veto power over the decision itself. The degree to which Cabinet's review/approval is solicited depends on this. Unless the changes reflect essential needs of the organization, Cabinet must approve proposed changes prior to their implementation; non-negotiable changes to the architecture are announced to Cabinet prior to their implementation.
- The CNO is open to suggestions regarding architecture restructuring from PNSO leadership and membership, including the Clinical Ladder Committee. Among other sources of inspiration, these proposals may be suggested by the evolving state of career ladders/nursing roles reflected in national nursing literature.
- At the CNO’s discretion, some nursing roles may not be considered part of the Clinical Career Ladder, nor governed by their hiring and advancement processes.

**Career Ladder Processes:**

- The Career Ladder Committee has the responsibility and authority to provide coordination of the peer reviewed **processes** for advancement, validation, and revalidation within the Clinical Career Ladder. Details and guidelines governing the Clinical Career Ladder processes for each clinical level are maintained in the [Clinical Career Ladder Handbook](#). Major changes in policy or process
are proposed for Cabinet’s approval prior to implementation. Updates to the Handbook are posted on the PNSO website in time for each year’s first major advancement season.

- The Career Ladder Committee (with Cabinet’s approval) selects the membership for the Clinician III/IV Career Ladder and the APN Career Ladder Panels, orients them to their roles annually, and oversees their work to ensure an equitable decision-making process for all Career Ladder advancement/revalidation candidates.

- In accordance with Bylaws Article IV, Section 3 (2a): To be eligible to serve as President, a member must be a nursing leader and active member of the PNSO with Clinical Career Ladder panel experience. A President-elect may obtain Clinical Career Ladder panel experience while concurrently fulfilling the President-elect role. PNSO President Elect will serve on the panel at the level of their practice (i.e. President Elect who is a clinician III or IV will serve on a Clinician III/IV panel; and a President Elect who is an APN will serve on the APN Career Ladder Panel).

### Process for Appointing Key Decision-Makers

See Bylaws Article IX, Section 1.

1. **Membership:** The Career Ladder Committee is composed of the chair and vice-chair of the Clinician III/IV Career Ladder Panels, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the APN Career Ladder Panel, and the Dean of the School of Nursing. The Executive Committee appoints a chair for the Advisory Group.

2. **Duties:**
   - The Career Ladder Committee shall:
     1. Provide oversight for the Clinician III/IV and APN Career Ladder Panels.
     2. Publish the schedule and procedure for the advancement, validation, and revalidation processes in advance of any deadline for application for advancement, validation, or revalidation.
     3. Prepare a slate of nominees for future membership on the Panel, including recommendations for Chair and Vice-Chair of the Clinician III/IV Career Ladder Panel and Chair and Vice-Chair of the APN Career Ladder Panel, and present to the Executive Committee.
     4. Periodically review the criteria for advancement and recommend revisions in the criteria to the Cabinet.
     5. Report to the Cabinet at least quarterly providing a summary of activities and bringing forward any recommendations.
     6. In concert with the Director of Nursing Governance Programs, work with nurse managers, Nursing Education Services and Human Resources to assure that the policies and procedures regarding Ladder activities are relayed appropriately to newly hired nurses and to nurses in the Health System desiring advancement on one of the career ladders.

### Clinician III/IV Career Ladder Panel - The Clinician III/IV Career Ladder Panel (Clinician III/IV Panel) has the responsibility and authority to provide a peer review process for advancement, validation, and revalidation for the Clinician III and IV levels on the Nursing Career Ladder.

Membership: The Clinician III/IV Panel is composed of clinical and administrative leaders. The PNSO Cabinet annually reviews and appoints the members of the Clinician III/IV Panel. The term of service is two years with no more than one half of the membership rotating off at a time. An exception may be made for the President-Elect to serve a one-year term prior to assuming the role of President. The Executive Committee appoints a chair for the Clinician III/IV Panel. The Clinician III/IV Panel is divided into workgroups for the purposes of peer review for Clinician III/IV advancement, validation, and revalidation. Each workgroup consists of a Clinician IV Chair, a Medical Center Manager/Director, and two Clinician III members. Three of the panels
will have a fifth member who will be a Clinician IV; all Clinician IV candidates will be reviewed by one of these panels.

Duties: The Clinician III/IV Panel shall:
Conduct the peer review process and render recommendations to the Chief Nursing Officer regarding advancement, validation, and revalidation on the Nursing Career Ladder for the Clinician III and IV levels. The Chief Nursing Officer has final approval of advancements, validations, and revalidations.

APN CAREER LADDER PANEL - The APN Career Ladder Panel (APN Panel) has the responsibility and authority to provide a peer review process for advancement, validation, and revalidation for APNs on the Nursing Career Ladder.

Membership: The APN Panel is composed of clinical leaders and the Dean of the School of Nursing. The PNSO Cabinet annually reviews and appoints the members of the APN Panel. The term of service is two years with no more than one half of the membership rotating off at a time. An exception may be made for the President-Elect to serve a one-year term prior to assuming the role of President. The Executive Committee appoints a chair for the APN Panel. The APN Panel shall include representation from all APN levels.

Duties: The APN Panel shall: Conduct the peer review process and, in collaboration with the APN administrator, render recommendations to the Chief Nursing Officer regarding APN advancement, validation, and revalidation on the Nursing Career Ladder. The Chief Nursing Officer has final approval of advancements, validations, and revalidations.

Career Ladder Process – Details and guidelines governing the Clinical Career Ladder processes for each clinical level are maintained in the Clinical Career Ladder Handbook.