Abstract. Objective: To characterize the technical courses in nursing offered at the Technical Schools of the unified Health System in the Brazilian Northeast and analyze their pedagogical documents. Method: Qualitative, descriptive study, developed at six Technical Schools that offer the technical course in nursing. As a source of data, the Political Pedagogical Projects and Teaching Plans of the courses were used. To collect the data, the indirect documentation technique was used, through three structured scripts, which contained questions related to the courses’ characteristics and pedagogical documents. The documentary analysis generated a matrix with two analysis categories to characterize the courses and analyze their pedagogical aspects. The anonymity of the participating schools was safeguarded, respecting the ethical and scientific principles, and the study received approval from the Research Ethics Committee under opinion 2.121.511. Results: The course characteristics converge among the schools, highlighting the proposed objective, which is to train nursing technicians with social commitment and professional ethics, in accordance with the health needs of the population and demands of the Brazilian health system; profile of the graduates, which is related to the development of the expected student competences, involving the four dimensions of knowledge; and competency-based curriculum model, whose matrix is divided by modules/axes, in which the curricular components are inserted. As for the documents that were analyzed, the schools present their Political Pedagogical Project in a global way and the most recent projects come from ETSUS1, 3 and 6, dated 2016. As for the team responsible for its elaboration/update, at ETSUS1, only the management team participated in this construction process. It was only at ETSUS3 that the external community, represented by the family, played an active role. The Teaching Plans consist of a single document, constituting the main course file, in which detailed information is described, particularly related to the distribution and conformation of the didactic units. The Teaching Plan of ETSUS1 is not dated and the most current plan comes from ETSUS6. In relation to the menus of the didactic units, only ETSUS3 outlines this item. ETSUS2 does not present the program objectives and contents. Problematization is adopted as the teaching method adopted, but ETSUS5 does not assume the methodological path it adopts for the teaching-learning process. All schools approach evaluation in a procedural and continuous way. Finally, only ETSUS4 describes the references used to justify the program content. Final considerations: The course characteristics demonstrate that the Technical Schools have engaged in the training of professionals focused on the quality of health care and nursing and committed to citizenship and professional ethics. Nevertheless, the fragility found in the documents emerged as an urgent challenge to be overcome, in order to better support the teaching-learning process and qualify the training.

Keywords: Education, Nursing, Associate; Nursing; Schools, Health Occupations; Unified Health System.