

The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing Professional and Technical Standards for Nursing Practice

Responsibilities and standards in nursing practice are determined by the Board of Nursing, national accreditation guidelines, and clinical agencies. Practicing nurses and nursing students are held to very high standards of integrity and competencies in order to perform responsible safe care. According to the Board of Nursing Rules & Regulations, accepted standards of nursing practice include “behaviors indicating honesty, accountability, trustworthiness, reliability, and integrity”. In addition, as clearly described in various clinical evaluation tools and course guidelines, students must be able to provide safe patient care.

Technical Standards for Nursing Practice

Nursing is a practice discipline and successful completion of the nursing program requires that students demonstrate ability to effectively and safely perform several essential skills. All students are assessed in practice labs and clinical practicums throughout the program to confirm adherence to the technical standards, with or without accommodation.

Intellectual Requirements: Critical thinking is an important part of clinical judgment needed to provide safe patient care. Students must be able to measure, calculate, reason and quickly analyze information, in order to apply complex information in the classroom and clinical settings.

Gross and Fine Motor Requirements: Nursing students must be able to provide general care (including preparing medications and administering treatment, and completing patient assessments). For example, students must be able to perform basic life support (CPR), and function in an emergency situation, and have the ability (within reasonable limits) to assist a patient in moving, such as from the chair to the bed.

Observation Skills: Student nurses must be able to observe patients accurately to assess their condition and perceive signs of disease and responses to treatments through physical examination, including visual images, auditory information (patient voice, heart tones, bowel and lung sounds) and palpable changes in certain organs and tissues.

Communication Requirements: Nursing students must be able to communicate effectively with patients, staff, physicians, and family members, verbally and in writing. Students must be able to process and accurately convey information about the patient status to faculty, staff, and other health care providers in a timely manner.

Social and Behavioral Requirements: Student nurses must possess sufficient mental and emotional health to exercise good clinical judgment, promptly complete assignments, and function in what can be a physically and emotionally demanding dynamic environment. Nursing students must be able to demonstrate compassion, empathy and concern for others while maintaining a mature, sensitive and effective relationship with patients, family, and other professionals.

Professional Integrity and Ethical Standards

In addition to all of the University of Texas at Austin Honor Code, the School of Nursing recognizes the strong link between honesty in academic work and professional integrity. See the School of Nursing Undergraduate Student Handbook Honor Code, pages 9-1. (http://www.utexas.edu/nursing/docs/ug_stu_manual_2011.pdf) Any act of academic dishonesty, including cheating in the classroom or fabrication of reports or records of interactions with clients, is considered incompatible with ethical standards of nursing practice. Students must be able “to promptly and fully self-disclose facts, circumstances, events, errors, and omissions when such disclosure could enhance the health status of patients/clients or the public or could protect patients/clients or the public from unnecessary risk of harm (Board of Nursing).” See the Board of Nursing, Rule 213.27 Good Professional Character (<http://www.bon.texas.gov/nursinglaw/rr.html>) for additional examples and details including descriptions of licensure restrictions for individuals with convictions of crime. All nursing students are required to have a clear criminal background check.

Students will have access to confidential medical records and sensitive information regarding the patients, families, and community agencies while providing nursing care as a student. Students must agree to maintain the highest standards of professional integrity with regard to this information and comply with all legal requirements regarding the privacy of patient records. This includes but is not limited to written, verbal, and electronic social-networking transmission of information. For more information see: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/index.html>