

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY
WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA
SCHOOL OF NURSING**

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/10/2017

REVIEW DATE: May 2022

**Professional Behaviors Policy
Undergraduate and Graduate Students**

Introduction

The nursing profession insists its members be responsible, accountable, self-directed, ethical and professional in behavior. Nursing has earned the public's trust by holding firm to these behaviors. The process of becoming a professional begins with you entering Purdue's nursing program. Students demonstrate professionalism by attending and being punctual for classes and clinical experiences, by exhibiting courteous behavior, and by being prepared for and being fully engaged in class/clinical assignments/activities.

The University's Student Code of Conduct that establishes expected behavior for all students notes, *It is the responsibility of all Purdue students to live by this code, not out of fear of the consequences of its violation, but out of personal self-respect.* Additionally, the School of Nursing faculty believe student integrity, trustworthiness and honesty are vital concerns linked to positive patient outcomes and patient safety.

The foremost privilege and responsibility of a professional nurse is to selflessly serve patients/clients. Given such an important privilege and responsibility, nursing students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner commensurate with a health professional. Most nursing students arrive on campus with a well-developed value system that is further refined as they progress through their college experience in general and their professional education in particular. As a result, while there is little emphasis on disciplinary procedures, there are certain behaviors, such as dishonesty, lack of personal responsibility, and substance abuse, which will not be tolerated and will receive swift and decisive attention. So there is no ambiguity with regard to unprofessional and unacceptable behaviors, this policy and the policy on alcohol and drugs use address behaviors that fall into these categories.

Students should not only demonstrate appropriate professional and ethical behaviors but should also expect such behaviors from fellow students. As it is the responsibility of a professional nurse in practice to adhere to standards of practice, requirements of the law, and to report unprofessional, unethical, or unlawful behaviors, it is the responsibility of students in the nursing program to report suspicious actions or behaviors of others. Students who observe unprofessional or unethical behaviors are encouraged to address the situation directly with their fellow student and are responsible to report the conduct or behavior to the course faculty or program head. These conversations are considered confidential.

While at Purdue, nursing students are engaged in a number of professional relationships and therefore have obligations to different individuals and groups. These groups include patients and their families, other health professionals, the profession itself, fellow students, community partners, clinical facility staff, university personnel and other campus organizations in which the student participates.

Approved by Faculty 05.08.12; Revised by Faculty 05.10.17

The School's clinical partners also speak to professional behavior expectations as noted in the following excerpt from the agreement between the School of Nursing and an affiliated clinical agency.

Affiliating Agency reserves the right in its sole and absolute discretion to exclude from its facility any students whose work or conduct may reflect discredit to the Affiliating Agency or the program [School of Nursing] or whose progress is not satisfactory to Affiliating Agency.

As a health professional program, the School of Nursing has a responsibility to state nursing licensing boards to attest that students professional preparedness and character warrant their applying for licensure at the conclusion of the educational program. Licensure protects the public from harm by setting minimal qualifications and competencies for safe entry-level practice.

Professional Behaviors Required of Nursing Students

1. **Nondiscrimination:** nursing students shall provide care to patients/clients without discriminating based on race, creed, color, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. Nursing students shall demonstrate respectfulness of patients'/clients' values, culture and religion. Becoming culturally competent in delivering health care means students need to understand their own world views and those of the patients/clients they encounter. Adapting to different cultural beliefs and practices and communicating respect for others viewpoints is part of being culturally competent. Students are expected to obtain cultural information and apply it to their practice.

2. **Confidentiality:** nursing students shall be educated about and adhere to HIPAA policies. Health records may not be removed from a health care institution. Students may extract information from the record to direct care and will be instructed by faculty how to handle de-identified information. Students must follow organizational policy about copying parts of the chart.

3. **Relationship building:** students should always strive to establish a therapeutic and caring relationship with patients/clients. This professional relationship is based on a trust and mutual respect that must not be violated. Failing to be prepared for clinical, failing to assess and evaluate a patient's/client's status, and failing to institute a nursing intervention for which the student has taken responsibility is a violation of this trust.

4. **Representation:** nursing students shall accurately represent themselves as being a student to others including, but not limited to, colleagues, faculty members, representatives of the University and their affiliates, partner institutions, community partners, patients/clients, nurses and other members of the health care team. Proper representation is important for any student work regardless of how it is communicated (in writing, orally, or posted on some medium such as YouTube).

5. **Assessment of personal competence:** nursing students shall seek consultation and supervision whenever their ability to carry out patient/client care is inadequate because of lack of knowledge or experience. Failing to obtain instruction or supervision when implementing nursing procedures or practices for which one lacks the educational preparation, ability, knowledge or experience is unethical.

6. **Personal responsibility:** nursing students must take responsibility for their own actions and set a high standard for self and work to achieve established goals. Misrepresentation of physical presence or of participation in clinical experiences is unethical. One must also take responsibility for using sound judgment when ill if status would put others at an unacceptable exposure risk. This is particularly

important when working with individuals with compromised immune systems, pregnant women, and newborns and their families. If you have reason to believe you have been exposed to a contagious illness, have active symptoms or were diagnosed with an infectious disease, notify your clinical faculty member to determine your best action. Personal responsibility also includes reporting unethical or inappropriate behavior of fellow students or colleagues that may jeopardize patient safety.

7. Professional demeanor: nursing students are representatives of Purdue University School of Nursing and must realize their behavior may positively and negatively affect the judgment of others about the School. Nursing students are expected to be thoughtful and professional when interacting with faculty and staff, patients/clients and their families, other students, the public, and all members of the health care team. When acting as a Purdue nursing student, professional behavior is required both on and off campus, in digital environments and on social media.

Expected Student Behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Using critical thinking skills in determining one's actions in the clinical setting
- Demonstrating empathy in the care of others
- Accepting responsibility for one's own actions, including preparing sufficiently for class and clinical
- Being respectful of other students and faculty by not engaging in activities that might disrupt class including but not limited to cellphone use, inappropriate web browsing, and side conversations
- Adhering to the School's dress code and having a neat, clean appearance. This includes responding promptly when feedback is given by a faculty member that one's dress, jewelry or hygiene (including fingernails) is outside the bounds of the dress code
- Attending (arriving and leaving as scheduled) orientations, class, and clinical
- Taking exams as scheduled and completing assignments on time, including patient/client care
- Responding appropriately and in a timely fashion to constructive criticism and feedback from faculty, clinical site staff, and peers
- Giving prior notification in writing or voice mail to faculty if unable to meet commitments and following up with faculty regarding potential make-up requirements
- Dealing with others (peers, faculty, staff, patients/clients and their families) in an honest, respectful, sensitive and nonjudgmental manner that communicates respect for individual differences
 - Nonuse of inappropriate language, gestures or remarks
 - Nonuse of intimidation, coercion or deception in working with patients/clients, families, staff, other students, faculty, and university staff
- Demonstrating teamwork and helping behavior for colleagues that exemplifies an assertive, rather than aggressive approach
- Respecting others' space and time through actions such as turning off cell phones, avoiding disruptive sidebar conversations, and refraining from texting others in class and clinical settings
- Recognizing nurses and nursing students have professional boundaries and it is possible to be either over-involved or under-involved with patients. *As a health care professional, a nurse strives to inspire the confidence of clients, treat all clients and other health care providers professionally, and promote the clients' independence. Clients can expect a nurse to act in their best interest and to respect their dignity. This means that a nurse abstains from obtaining personal gain at the client's expense and refrains from inappropriate involvement in the client's personal relationships* (NCSBN, 2011, p. 2).
- Recognizing it is unethical to disparage to anyone the professional competence, knowledge, qualifications or services of a colleague. The manner in which one expresses criticism should reflect

the demeanor of aspiring professionals. Faculty are open to receiving and responding to constructive suggestions. Concerns should be expressed to the appropriate faculty member. This presents an opportunity to refine one's skill at providing feedback to others. When possible, discussion should occur in person rather than email because of the inability to amplify or clarify messages. This discussion should happen in a timely manner to allow for appropriate action to be taken by the receiving party.

- *Abiding by Purdue University Code of Honor and Regulations Governing Student Conduct.* Academic honesty is an expectation of students in the School of Nursing as it is for all Purdue students. Experience suggests that some students may not appreciate that academic honesty is viewed by faculty in the same light as honesty in professional nursing practice. The School's philosophy, guidelines, and procedures for assuring academic honesty and for dealing with alleged incidents of academic dishonesty are consistent with those of the University. Refer to: *Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students* available on the Office of Dean of Students website. A number of examples of academic dishonesty are spelled out in this document, including providing answers to others during an exam or allowing others to copy a paper or assignment. If academic dishonesty occurs in any form, immediate and appropriate disciplinary actions, as seen fit by School of Nursing faculty and the Office of the Dean of Students, will be taken.
- A Student Honor Pledge was voted on by Student Government and endorsed by the University Senate Spring 2017. All students are expected to uphold the pledge stating, ***As a Boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together – we are Purdue.***

Review of Unprofessional Behaviors

A faculty member may conduct or ask for a review of a student's conduct. Potential consequences of unprofessional behavior include reduction in a grade, failure in the course/clinical, dismissal from the School of Nursing, and expulsion from the University. The School may dismiss a student from the nursing program if the student's character does not reflect professional tenets of nursing, such as cheating, lying or falsifying patient information. An academic action may be overturned on an appeal through the Grade Appeal Process only if the academic action was arbitrary or capricious, meaning that not all the important facts were considered.

All behaviors inconsistent with those articulated in this policy will be documented and such documentation will remain a part of the student's record throughout the nursing program. An accumulation of four minor occurrences, or any occurrence that potentially places the client, self or others in immediate danger, will result in a full review of the student's record. A faculty member may request a review for a single unsafe/unsatisfactory occurrence that does not create potential danger if the faculty member believes the behavior is significant enough to warrant a review.

To further clarify circumstances for action, the following examples are provided.

A student may be removed from the clinical site for any of these behaviors

- Failure to come to clinical prepared including inadequate knowledge of treatment, medications, or plan of care

- Habitual tardiness or absence (excused or unexcused)
- Unprofessional communication behaviors (examples: personal texting, checking social media; using profane language with patients, visitors, staff, or faculty)
- Failure to treat others with respect, honesty and dignity
- Inappropriate professional dress and appearance (includes not being appropriately dressed and ready to begin class/clinical on time)
- Inability to implement empathetic care
- Inattentiveness to clinical work as exhibited by being unavailable for patient/client care, engaging in personal discussions, texting, etc.
- Failure to implement appropriate action to ensure safety of patients/clients
- Exhibiting behavior(s) deemed unprofessional by faculty including being disruptive and or refusing to follow faculty directions
- Arriving at clinical setting under the influence of alcohol or other substance that can impair judgment (Refer to the School of Nursing policy on suspicion of use of drugs and alcohol and Purdue's drug free policy for students, faculty, and staff)
- Misrepresentation of physical presence or participation in clinical experience
- Breach in patient confidentiality or any HIPAA violation (privacy or security)
- Misuse or unauthorized use of computer resources or information
- Purposefully destroying property at the clinical site
- Stealing supplies or drugs
- Demonstrating unsafe clinical practice that places patient/client/family/staff/faculty in physical or emotional jeopardy, including neglect, abuse, or purposely injuring others
 - Physical jeopardy is the risk of causing physical harm
 - Emotional jeopardy means that the student creates an environment of anxiety or distress which puts the patient/client/family at risk for emotional or psychological harm
- Failure to comply with course or clinical site policies and protocols

A student may be asked to leave class for any of these behaviors

- Tardiness
- Disruptive or disrespectful behavior
- Inattentiveness to classroom work

Consequences of Unprofessional Behavior

When problem behaviors are identified, the involved faculty member will:

1. Counsel the student on the unacceptable behavior indicating the type of behavioral change that is expected
2. Document behavior, expected response and timeframe for remediation

If behavior is a major infraction, the student will be counseled by the faculty and referred to the School's Office of Student Services where the student will meet with an academic counselor and the director of the program in which the student is enrolled (e.g., Director of Undergraduate Program, Director of Graduate Program). The infraction will also be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.

If behavior from a minor infraction does not change within the given timeframe, faculty will document the incidents and the attempted interventions using the protocol for resolution of student issues. The documentation will be reviewed by the appropriate program director and a meeting with an academic counselor and/or applicable program director will be scheduled. Sanctions may be applied at this time.

Students whose behavior is unprofessional will receive School of Nursing sanctions that may include grade reduction, course failure, suspension or dismissal from the class, suspension or dismissal from the School of Nursing. The Office of the Dean of Students may also put sanctions in place such as probation, suspension or dismissal from the University (refer to *Regulations Governing Student Conduct, Disciplinary Proceedings, and Appeals*).

Supporting Documents

American Nurses Association (2015). *Code of ethics for nurses and interpretive statements*. Available from www.ana.org; View only version: <http://nursingworld.org/DocumentVault/Ethics-1/Code-of-Ethics-for-Nurses.html>

Franciscan Alliance (2016). *Agreement of Affiliation Purdue University and Franciscan Alliance, Inc.*

National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2014). *Professional boundaries: A nurse's guide to the importance of appropriate professional boundaries*. Available at: www.ncsbn.org. https://www.ncsbn.org/ProfessionalBoundaries_Complete.pdf

National Student Nurses' Association, Inc. (2017). *Code of ethics*. Available at <http://www.nsna.org/nsna-code-of-ethics.html>

Purdue University (2015). *Purdue University student code of conduct*. Available at http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/student_conduct/

Purdue University (1998). *Alcohol- and drug-free campus and workplace policy (C-44)*. Available at: <https://www.purdue.edu/aod/regulations/index.shtml>

Purdue University School of Nursing (2006). *Reasonable suspicion drug and alcohol policy and testing guidelines for nursing students*. Available on SON shared drive.