



UT Health Science Center: College of Nursing

CON: ASA-100 - Professionalism Policy

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POLICY

It is the policy of the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) College of Nursing (CON) to foster the development of professional behavior in students, and to have procedures in place to monitor and report concerns in this regard.

RATIONALE AND PROCEDURE

1. As students in a healthcare professional school, nursing students have the responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this status and are expected to adhere to the standards of personal diligence and integrity applicable to their future profession. These standards are embodied in the [American Nurses' Association Code of Ethics for Nurses](#) (2015). Additional requirements, both general and specific, are provided in the materials on professionalism presented at orientation, in class, and conveyed during clinical training.
2. Concerns regarding professionalism will be assessed by a Professionalism Committee consisting of three faculty members primarily teaching in the BSN program, and three faculty members primarily teaching in the Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) program for a total of six faculty members either self-nominated or nominated by their peers and duly elected by a majority vote of the faculty in the CON. Members will serve two years with DNP faculty terms running on odd-year cycles and BSN faculty terms running on even-year cycles. A chair will be elected by the six appointed faculty members. The chair will serve as a non-voting member except in instances of a tie vote. In addition, the Professionalism Committee will include one student from the BSN program and one student from the DNP Program, selected by the Program Directors, to serve on the committee; these students will have voting rights. However, the student whose conduct is at issue may elect not to have student representatives present during the proceedings for any reason, including a perceived conflict of interest. The request must be provided to the Chair in writing within five calendar days following notification that a hearing will take place. It is incumbent upon all members of the Professionalism Committee, whether student or faculty, to disclose any potential conflicts of interest and recuse themselves when the nature of the proceedings and student whose conduct is at issue is disclosed.

3. The Executive Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs serves on the Professionalism Committee as a non-voting member.
4. Any concerns regarding a student's professionalism may be reported to a faculty member serving on the Professionalism Committee or the Executive Associate Dean of Academic Affairs using a designated form (Appendix 1). Methods of submission are described below in this section. ***Professionalism concerns shall not be reported directly to students serving on the Professionalism Committee.*** Stakeholders, faculty, staff, and students can report professionalism concerns.
 - a) For all professionalism concerns, students may submit a Professionalism Form anonymously via [Maxient](#), the system used by the UTHSC Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards to manage student conduct records.
 - b) Professionalism Forms (Appendix 1) may be submitted directly to a Professionalism Committee member or Chair or to the Executive Associate Dean of Academic Affairs who will forward them to the Professionalism Committee. Regardless of the recipient of the concern, the Executive Associate Dean of Academic Affairs must receive a copy. An anonymous submission of a concern via [Maxient](#) is emailed to the Executive Associate Dean of Academic Affairs automatically.
 - c) All reported concerns should include information, if known, on the seriousness of the alleged conduct and, if applicable, whether a pattern of conduct is involved.
 - d) All concerns, whether submitted by form or anonymously and whether they were submitted to the Chair of the Professionalism Committee or a member of the committee, will be submitted and stored in [Maxient](#) by the Executive Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.
5. Upon receipt of a Professionalism Form, the actions of the Professionalism Committee will proceed as follows:
 - a) The Professionalism Committee Chair will review the concern to determine if it fits within the scope of Professionalism. If the concern fits within another UTHSC process, then the concern will be forwarded by the Chair to the appropriate administrator (i.e., Student Conduct Office, Honors Council, etc.).
 - b) If the concern fits within the scope of Professionalism, the Professionalism Committee Chair will appoint a committee member to review and perform fact finding inquiry into the allegation of a violation of the Professionalism Policy. The assigned committee member must be one of the faculty on the Professionalism Committee. That committee member will perform a fact-finding inquiry into the context of the alleged violation(s), and provide all relevant information electronically to the chair of the Professionalism Committee. The assigned committee member may speak to any witnesses, including the student whose conduct is at issue, and obtain all relevant information pertaining to the allegation(s).
 - c) Once the fact-finding inquiry is complete, the assigned committee member will provide their recommendation as to whether there is enough evidence to support conducting a formal Professionalism Committee Hearing.
 - i. If the assigned committee member reports there is a preponderance of evidence to move forward to a hearing, the Chair will convene the Professionalism Committee to consider the matter, review the relevant information and consider five recommendations: no further action, warning, remediation, probation, or in the most egregious instances, dismissal, which will be decided by the CON Dean as the ultimate decisionmaker. At least five business days prior to the hearing, all

- committee members and the student whose conduct is at issue will receive a file from the Office of Academic and Student Affairs, containing all relevant evidence collected by the assigned committee member for review prior to the hearing.
- ii. The Chair will provide the student an opportunity to provide a written response to the concern and to submit any relevant information they would like considered five days prior to the Professionalism Committee meeting. The student will have the opportunity to attend the hearing in person and provide information relevant to the concerns. An attorney may not be present.
- d) A simple majority vote of the committee is required to reach a recommendation. At least six members of the Professionalism Committee must be present for the vote; however, the assigned committee member who reviewed the concern may not vote.
 - e) The findings and recommendations of the Professionalism Committee will be reduced to writing and forwarded within 5 business days of the hearing to the student and to the Executive Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.
 - f) If no further action is deemed necessary, the vote will be recorded, and the form will be stored in [Maxient](#). The reported concern will not impact the student's evaluation unless a subsequent Professionalism concern is considered by a future committee that suggests a pattern of unprofessional behavior by the student. If the new concern and the previous concern are related to the same unprofessional behavior, the previous concern may be considered along with the new allegations to determine if there is a pattern of behavior. The process outlined herein will be followed for inquiry into the new allegations. While an alleged pattern of behavior can be considered, a future committee cannot substitute the decision of the committee that originally considered the previous concern that resulted in a finding of no further action.
 - g) If the Professionalism Committee recommends dismissal and the CON Dean upholds that recommendation, the student has a right to appeal the decision in writing to the Chancellor via email within five (5) business days of notification from the Dean.

APPROVAL HISTORY

Effective: 07/01/2024

Appendix 1

Guidelines for Professional Behavior

Nursing students are expected to act in a professional manner at all times during their nursing school training, both on and off campus. The following statements provide general and specific guidelines for professional behavior in the categories of work ethic, teamwork, commitment to excellence and lifelong learning, standards for informed consent, confidentiality, social media and institutional representation and personal integrity.

Work ethic

Strive to learn from every class and clinical experience by being prepared.

Arrive on time for all education experiences (classroom, clinicals, labs, conferences, virtual meetings, small group sessions).

Demonstrate reliability, dependability, and accountability to patients, society, and the profession that supersedes self-interest by:

- Following policies regarding dress code;
- Following up on tasks, labs, studies, etc.;
- Taking responsibility for quality patient care;
- Completing all notes/documentation thoroughly and in a timely manner;
- Documenting findings, assessments, clinical reasoning, and plans accurately, clearly, and concisely.

Fulfill all requirements in a timely manner by:

- Maintaining personal health status: Immunizations, Tb skin test, Mask fit, drug test, etc.;
- Completing educational needs: registration, graduation requirements, paying fees on time, honoring all deadlines, etc.;
- Completing clinical needs: On-boarding duties, facility paperwork, etc.;
- Answering emails in a timely manner.

Teamwork

Be a team player and find ways to contribute meaningfully to the team.

Ask questions in a professional manner.

Be honest and forthcoming in presenting work done, and in interactions with patients, faculty, and staff.

Communicate any new information or concerns about a patient to the team (e.g., information disclosed to only you by a patient).

Let the clinical faculty know at least 24 hours prior regarding any issues that might arise in your ability to report to clinical sites on time, except in emergent incidents such as hospitalizations, accidents, etc. In such cases, please let the faculty know as soon as you are able. Repeated absences and “no call-no shows” may be considered a violation of the Professionalism Policy.

Treat others with dignity and respect. Ensure professional conduct in communicating with all members on the education or health care team. This includes:

- team members – faculty and fellow students;

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- ancillary staff - administrative staff, nurses, therapists, social workers, case managers, dieticians, pharmacists, maintenance/EVS staff, nutrition management staff, techs;
- course/faculty, preceptors or nursing supervisors and coordinators;
- diverse patient populations, including but not limited to diversity in gender, age, culture, race, religion, disabilities, and sexual orientation;
- patients and families.

Commitment to excellence and lifelong learning

Appraise scientific evidence from multiple sources continually. Appropriately implement new knowledge, standards, technologies, and services to manage the health problems of patients, populations, and communities and to improve outcomes.

Assess quality improvement needs and potential corrective actions systematically with a goal of implementing change to improve practice.

Participate in the education of patients, families, peers, and other health professionals.

Model behavior that upholds professional standards and prioritizes optimal patient care.

Understand the importance of a commitment to excellence through the continuation of one's own professional education and growth, acceptance of feedback by peers and others, and dealing openly and honestly with professional mistakes.

Recognize ethical issues relating to a nurse's responsibilities and obligations to patients, colleagues, and society (e.g., end-of-life issues).

Recognize the changing nature of health care and its inherent ambiguities and utilize appropriate strategies to manage uncertainty and adapt to change.

Employ self-awareness, self-care mechanisms, and appropriate help-seeking behaviors to manage stress and to balance personal and professional responsibilities.

Understand the potential for personal mental health issues that may result from the high-stress environment of the practice of nursing and recognize the availability of support resources. Seek out help when needed, and do not practice in a state of crisis.

Standards for informed consent

Do not obtain informed consent from patients on your own. Nursing students may pre-review the salient features of the consent with a preceptor or faculty and be present for the discussion. The consent form may only be signed by a physician at the time it was obtained.

Confidentiality

Do not violate confidentiality requirements by accessing or sharing patient information in a manner that is not necessary for patient care or learning within a course or clinical experience.

Do not post any UTHSC patient or clinical partner information (including but not limited to PHI (protected health information), pictures, or images) to social media sites or personal sites. This is prohibited even if the patient has provided authorization. Social media creates a potential risk of disclosing (inadvertently or otherwise) privileged or confidential information, including the identities of current or former patients.

Appendix 1

Alert your faculty, supervisor and/or contact the UTHSC HIPAA Privacy Officer if you see information posted by others that is confidential.

Social media and institutional representation

Recognize that as a student, you are personally responsible for your social media posts. These posts do not express the opinion or position of the University. UTHSC workforce members engaged in personal social media communications that reference UTHSC-related content should do so in a manner consistent with applicable UTHSC policies and procedures.

Personal integrity

Do not engage or attempt to engage in prohibited relationships with patients, patients' families, or their supervising or supervised team members. Prohibited relationships include romantic or sexual relationships, exploitative financial relationships, or relationships that take advantage of real or perceived authority in any other way.

Appendix 1

UT Health Science Center College of Nursing Professionalism Concern

Student Name _____

Date of Report _____

Completed By _____ (Circle One: Clinical Instructor Course Instructor Staff Support Faculty Peer)

Date Received _____

Information provided by: _____

The student has demonstrated a lapse in professional behavior in the domain(s) indicated below.

- Honesty and Integrity
- Representation of clinical information, activities, and attendance
- Professional relationships with patients and families
 - Demonstration of empathy and respect
 - Acting in patient’s best interest
 - Maintaining professional boundaries in patient and faculty relationships
- Fulfillment of responsibilities
 - Completing required paperwork and assignments
 - Performing patient-related tasks in daily activities
 - Keeping faculty informed
- Professional relationships with team members and colleagues
 - Demonstration of respect for and willingness to help others in daily activities
 - Reliability in responsibilities to colleagues
 - Demonstration of respect for peers, faculty, and staff
- Timeliness and attendance
 - Promptness for and engagement in classroom, clinical, and lab activities
- Self-improvement
 - Acceptance of and response to constructive feedback
 - Evidence of self-education outside of required activities

Other (please specify) _____

Comments, which may be derived from formal evaluation forms or from personal observations or conversations with peers or supervisors, are required and should be written in the space provided here. Please specify the context (e.g., preclinical, clinical, class, e-mail or other type of setting) and date(s) when behavior(s) occurred (cont. on back if needed). If this is a pattern of behavior that has been noted before, please discuss/describe this behavior and the dates reported or noted.

The section below is to be completed by the CON

Date discussed with the student: _____ **Describe plan for remediation (if required) (cont. on back if needed):**

Student Signature _____ **Faculty Signature** _____ **Date** _____

Signatures on this document are not an admission of responsibility