



Nursing Student Handbook

Undergraduate Programs

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ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic Integrity

WKU nursing students are expected to demonstrate a high standard of academic honesty in all aspects of their work and college life. Without intellectual integrity there cannot be genuine learning. Academic dishonesty represents a direct attack on this integrity.

Students are expected to demonstrate honesty in pre-admission documents and exams and while in the nursing program when completing tasks including but not limited to tests and examinations, homework, laboratory and clinical work, writing papers, and use of information technology. Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty will prevent program admission, result in a failing grade on the assignment/exam, and/or result in a failing grade in the nursing course(s). In addition, faculty will notify the Dean of Students of the violation per WKU's Academic Misconduct Policy and follow the procedures outlined in the policy: <https://wku.edu/studentconduct/process-for-academic-dishonesty.php>. Repeat occurrences of this type of behavior can result in dismissal from the program.

Cheating

Cheating is defined, but not limited to, the wrongful giving, taking or presenting of any information or material by a student with the intent of aiding himself/herself or another in any academic work. Such behavior is not acceptable. Any behavior of academic dishonesty will be addressed in a conference with the student and a panel of faculty. A score of zero will be applied to an examination or assignment for academic dishonesty. Abstracted from Western Kentucky University Student Handbook, "Cheating-No student shall receive or give assistance not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination or in the preparation of an essay, laboratory report, problem assignment or other project which is submitted for purposes of grade determination."

It is understood that because of the nature of the nursing curriculum at Western Kentucky University, a certain amount of teamwork and sharing of information is necessary for completion of assignment; however these situations will be clearly identified by the course instructor.

Cheating on an examination can take a variety of forms including:

- Discussing the examination during the examination with anyone except the instructor or the instructor's substitute unless specifically authorized to do so by the instructor.
- Giving, receiving, or soliciting unauthorized aid during any examination, take-home examination, or make-up examination before or after the regular scheduled examination has been administered.
- Using materials in any examination except those that are specifically authorized by the instructor.
- Exchanging materials with another student during the examination unless authorized to do so by the written examination instructions.
- Violating any rules that the instructor has established for an examination period.

Plagiarism

A nursing student must not plagiarize materials of others. Students' work is expected to be the result of their own thought, research, or self-expression. Plagiarism is the act of presenting the information, ideas, organization, or phrase of another source without appropriate acknowledgment or credit given, either intentionally or because of gross negligence. Any act of plagiarism by a nursing student is not acceptable. Abstracted from Western Kentucky University Student Handbook- *"Plagiarism-To represent written work taken from another source as one's own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of a student must be his/her own. One must give any author credit for source material borrowed from him/her. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage without reference to the source after having changed a few words is also plagiarism."*

Course content, study notes, study guides and other course-related material may not be altered, shared, and reproduced on social media or in any manner without the written consent of the faculty. Students may not purchase or otherwise obtain test questions or test banks from nursing textbooks, which are to be available to faculty only. This is in violation of the textbook copyright and will be subject to legal repercussions as well as dismissal from the nursing program. You may not represent yourself online or otherwise as a nursing faculty member to obtain access to materials that are for faculty use only. You may purchase and use nursing review books, which have sample NCLEX questions and are not part of the test database used for the development of nursing exams given in SONAH.

ADA Accommodation Statement and Accommodations

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC) located in Downing Student Union, 1074. SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from SARC.

Any student who is admitted into a WKU Nursing Program and has a letter of accommodation form from SARC allowing testing accommodations will be required to schedule all exams with course faculty. This scheduling procedure will ensure the proper testing environment and promote student success.

If an instructor believes a requested accommodation will change the fundamental nature or essential curricular components of the course or program, this will be conveyed to the student and SARC. This is particularly true where an academic program is designed to prepare students for a profession in which licensure or accreditation requirements must be met, and the requested accommodation will require or result in an unacceptable deviation from the established norm.

Testing Accommodations Policy and Procedure

Purpose and Scope

To standardize application for testing accommodations within the SONAH to those required for students taking nursing licensure and certification exams, the following policy will apply to nursing students who are requesting testing accommodations for SONAH courses.

Policy

Students requesting testing accommodations within WKU SONAH must meet the same rigorous standards as those required for nursing licensure and accreditation exams.

Procedure

- All students seeking testing accommodations within the SONAH must work through Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC) PRIOR to taking any exam for which they want accommodations. Retroactive accommodations will not be allowed under any circumstances.
- After all required documentation has been submitted to SARC, course faculty are to be notified by the student of the recommended testing accommodations.
- The SONAH will work with testing services to provide any required testing accommodations for all candidates who provide the above required documentation.
- The SARC will keep copies of all documentation supporting the need for testing accommodation for accreditation and state board of nursing audit reports.

HIPAA/Confidentiality Policy

The *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act* (HIPAA) ensures the protection of patient health information and mandates confidentiality and security measures for handling patient health information. Information obtained by students through their activities and experiences in nursing clinical/laboratory/classroom settings related to patients/clients, personnel, and facilities are considered confidential. Such matters are discussed for the purposes of learning in nursing conferences and classes only.

WKU policy prohibits the recording of any personally identifiable client information in any format. This includes but is not limited to written information, photocopies, audio or digital recordings, video, or pictures of clients or client records. Papers related to clinical/laboratory experiences will not identify any person, agency, or agency personnel by name. Student papers may contain the student and clinical instructor names only. Websites that contain online personal journaling with reflections, comments, and/or hyperlinks provided by the writer have legal implications with regards to HIPAA, even if they are password protected or shared with a limited audience. Sharing protected health care related information (including pictures) obtained during classroom, laboratory, or clinical experiences or from patients/clients in this or any other manner is a violation of federal regulations and as such may result in dismissal from the program (see professional conduct).

English as a Second Language (ESL) Proficiency Policy

A certain level of English proficiency is necessary for academic success in nursing as well as for patient safety. In addition to the University requirements, all applicants (international and U.S. residents) to the undergraduate nursing programs must attest to one of the following:

1. English is my first (native language).
2. English is not my first language, but I attended 4 years of high school or post-secondary education in an English-speaking country and all courses were taught in English.
3. English is not my first language, and I did not attend 4 years of high school where all courses were taught in English.

Those who attest to #3 above must take the TOEFL internet-based test (TOEFL iBT) and obtain the following minimum scores to demonstrate proficiency in English:

Minimum Scores for ESL Admission to the Undergraduate Programs in Nursing

- Minimum Cumulative Score of 84 combined AND
- Minimum Individual Scores of
 - 24 in Speaking
 - 20 in Writing
 - 20 in Reading
 - 20 in Listening

Test Preparation and TOEFL iBT Registration:

- Complete information on the TOEFL iBT. Free test preparation materials, testing sites, and registration is available online at <http://www.toefl.org>. Applicants may register for the TOEFL iBT by Internet, telephone (1-800-468-6335) or mail.
- To request official TOEFL iBT scores to be sent to Western Kentucky University, enter Institution Code 1901.
- Only official score reports will be accepted. TOEFL scores are valid for two years from the test date.

Nursing students for whom English is not their native language should be aware that they may not be able to complete the program of study within the described time frame. Individual advising is available and is directed toward assisting students to be successful.

Admitted ESL nursing students who have difficulty in the nursing program may be required to engage in activities including, but not limited to, participation in additional ESL speaking, reading, or writing courses, to increase the probability of their success in the program and on the certifying examinations.

Military Absence Policy

Instructors will provide accommodations for military and veteran students who require absences due to military duties or Veteran Administration medical appointments. Accommodations and specific timeframes to make up all missed assignments, quizzes, and tests will be given and

mutually agreed upon by the instructor and student. Students are responsible for notifying faculty members of absences as far in advance as possible, when possible, and for ensuring that their absence is documented. Absences can be verified by official orders, appointment notification, or through the Office of Military Student Services. <https://www.wku.edu/veterans/>

Military Withdrawal

Students who are members of any branch of the United States Armed Services, including the National Guard, who are called to active duty while enrolled at WKU are entitled to options including withdrawal. <https://www.wku.edu/veterans/militarywithdrawal/>

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Professional Conduct of Nursing Students

Western Kentucky University nursing students are expected to demonstrate a high standard of professional conduct in all aspects of their academic work and college life. Professional nursing behavior is guided and shaped by adherence to the American Nurses Association *Scope and Standards of Practice* and the Code for Ethics and other agencies' code of ethics, such as the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) Code of Professional Conduct, NSNA Code of Academic and Clinical Conduct, and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education Standards for Accreditation of Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Education Programs.

The professional behavior of nursing students is thus directed by these standards and guidelines, as well as by clinical agency policies, Federal regulations, and laws such as HIPAA and WKU policy. Professional misconduct may result in a student's dismissal from the nursing program.

Disrespectful or Inappropriate Behavior

As members of the nursing profession, it is imperative that nursing students recognize their responsibility to society and their patients and exhibit behavior representing high standards, polite etiquette, compassion, and respect for human dignity. Disrespectful or inappropriate behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- non-preparedness for a class or clinical
- failure to notify faculty members in advance if they are not able to attend clinical for any reason
- refusing a class or clinical assignment
- not following the prescribed school or clinical agency policy for dress, smoking, and hygiene standards
- use of profanity with patients/ancillary staff, degrading comments, or actions
- disrespectful nonverbal communications
- fraudulent behavior, deception, and/or neglect of patients.

Students who engage in disrespectful or inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the class or clinical setting and may be given an unsatisfactory performance or a failing grade for that class or clinical day. Students who repeat such behaviors may receive a failing grade for the course or be dismissed from the program.

Dismissal for Non-Academic Reasons – Professional Misconduct

A student who engages in unsafe, unethical, or inappropriate conduct in a clinical or non-clinical setting may be dismissed from the nursing program. Students who engage in behavior that places patients, staff members, other students, faculty, or themselves at risk will be asked to leave the class or clinical area immediately. This policy includes but is not limited to verbally or physically threatening patients, staff, students or faculty, violation of federal or state regulations, being under the influence of alcohol or other mind-altering drugs, and/or performing actions outside of the nursing student scope of practice.

When a faculty member determines that a student may need to be dismissed from the nursing program because of unsafe, unethical, or grossly inappropriate conduct, the faculty member will inform the SONAH Director and appropriate Program Coordinator of the problems identified and the rationale for a recommendation to dismiss the student from the program. The faculty, Program Coordinator and SONAH Director will meet with the student. Students dismissed from the program have the right to appeal the dismissal as described in the WKU Student Handbook.

If the student is retained within the program following professional misconduct, the student will have a written misconduct statement placed in their student record. The student will be given guidelines to follow concerning remediation and will be dismissed if the guidelines for remediation are not followed or if additional instances of professional misconduct are committed.

This policy serves as written warning to students of the professional misconduct policy. The WKU Nursing Programs reserve the right to impose discipline against a student without additional warnings if circumstances justify such action at the discretion of the WKU Nursing Programs. Nothing herein shall be interpreted to require the WKU Nursing Programs to provide additional warnings to a student prior to any disciplinary action being taken, and the WKU Nursing Programs reserve the right to dismiss a student at any time for violation of School, Agency, or University Policies, professional conduct codes, or federal regulations.

Disciplinary Action for Professional Misconduct

Nursing students are expected to follow the NSNA Code of Ethics, and all policies outlined in the SONAH Student Handbook. Expectations for appropriate student conduct are discussed in the Academic and Student Behavior sections of the SONAH Student Handbook. If a faculty member and the Program Coordinator considers a student's behavior to be in violation of these policies, a written Professional Conduct Violation will be issued. Copies of violations will be provided to the student, Program Coordinator, and placed in the student's file. Students will be required to meet with the Program Coordinator and SONAH Director if they receive more than one Professional Conduct Violation.

A student who receives three (3) Professional Conduct Violations will be dismissed from the nursing program. However, a student may be immediately dismissed with or without previous conduct warnings for:

- behavior that endangers patients, staff, faculty, or peers
- performing actions outside of the nursing student scope of practice
- use of drugs and/or alcohol during class and/or clinical
- violation of state and/or federal laws.

National Student Nurses' Association Code of Academic and Clinical Conduct

As students are involved in clinical and academic environments, we believe that ethical principles are a necessary guide to professional development. The following Interpretive Statements are offered as a framework to help guide nursing students in ethical analysis of responsibilities, professional conduct, and decision making in academic and clinical settings as they adhere to the NSNA Code of Ethics for Nursing Students.

Students of nursing have a responsibility to society in learning the academic theory and clinical skills needed to provide safe, quality nursing care. The clinical setting presents unique challenges and responsibilities for the nursing student while caring for human beings in a variety of health care environments.

The Code of Academic and Clinical Conduct is based on an understanding that to practice nursing as a student is an agreement to uphold the trust society has placed in us. The statements of the code provide guidance for nursing students in their personal development of an ethical foundation and need not be limited strictly to the academic or clinical environment but can assist in the holistic development of the person.

As students are involved in the clinical and academic environments, we believe that ethical principles are a necessary guide to professional development. Therefore, within these environments we:

1. Advocate for the rights of all clients.
2. Maintain client confidentiality.
3. Take appropriate action to ensure the safety of clients, self, and others.
4. Provide care for the client in a timely, compassionate, and professional manner.
5. Communicate client care in a truthful, compassionate, and professional manner.
6. Actively promote the highest level of moral and ethical principles and accept responsibility for our actions.
7. Promote excellence in nursing by encouraging lifelong learning and professional development.
8. Treat others with respect and promote an environment that respects human rights, values and choice of cultural and spiritual beliefs.
9. Collaborate in every reasonable manner with academic faculty and clinical staff to ensure the highest quality of client care.
10. Use every opportunity to improve faculty and clinical staff understanding of the learning needs of students.
11. Encourage faculty, clinical staff and peers to mentor nursing students.
12. Refrain from performing any technique or procedure for which the student has not been adequately trained.
13. Refrain from any deliberate action or omission of care in the academic or clinical setting that creates unnecessary risk of injury to the client, self, or others.
14. Assist the staff nurse or preceptor in ensuring that there is a full disclosure and that proper authorizations are obtained from clients regarding any form of treatment or research.

15. Abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages or any substances in the academic and clinical setting that impair judgment.
16. Strive to achieve and maintain an optimal level of personal health.
17. Support access to treatment and rehabilitation for students who are experiencing impairments related to substance abuse and mental or physical health issues.
18. Uphold school policies and regulations related to academic and clinical performance, reserving the right to challenge and critique rules and regulations as per school grievance policy.

Adopted by the NSNA Board of Directors, October 27, 2009 in Phoenix, AZ. Amendments were adopted by the House of Delegates at the NSNA Annual Convention on April 8, 2022, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

National Student Nurses' Association Code of Professional Conduct

As a member of the National Student Nurses' Association, I pledge myself to:

1. Maintain the highest standard of personal and professional conduct.
2. Actively promote and encourage the highest level of ethics within nursing education, the profession of nursing, and the student nurses' association.
3. Uphold and respect all Bylaws, policies, and responsibilities relating to, the student nurses' association at all levels of membership, reserving the right to propose changes and to critique rules and laws.
4. Strive for excellence in all aspects of communication, collaboration, decision making, leadership, and management at all levels of the student nurses' association.
5. Use only legal, ethical, and human rights standards in all association decisions and activities in accordance with NSNA's Core Values.
6. Ensure the proper use of all association funds and resources in accordance with the fiduciary responsibilities set forth in NSNA Bylaws, policies and state/federal law.
7. Ensure impartiality and prevent conflicts of interest, neither provide nor accept personal compensation to or from another individual and/or organization while serving as members of students nurses' associations.
8. Maintain the confidentiality of privileged information entrusted or known to me by virtue of an elected or official position in the student nurses' association.
9. Affirm and support diversity and inclusion by refusing to engage in or condone unjust discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, citizenship, religion, national origin, disability, illness, legal status, or personal attributes.
10. Uphold integrity in personal, professional, and academic life by refraining from and reporting any form of dishonesty, using proper established channels of communication and reporting as set by the policies of the organization in question.
11. Always communicate internal and external association statements in a truthful and accurate manner by ensuring that there is evidence-based data and objective information used by the student nurses' association.
12. Cooperate in every reasonable and proper way with association volunteers and staff by working with them to advocate for student rights and responsibilities and the advancement of the profession of nursing.

13. Use every opportunity to improve faculty understanding of the role of the student nurses' association.
14. Use every opportunity to raise awareness of the student nurses' association's mission, values, purpose, and goals at the school, state and national chapter level as defined in bylaws and policies.
15. Use NSNA opportunities to form your Professional Identify in Nursing.

First adopted by the 1999 House of Delegates, Pittsburgh, PA. Amended by the House of Delegates at the NSNA Annual Convention on April 7, 2017, in Dallas, TX. Interpretative statements added November 2017. Further amendments were adopted by the House of Delegates at the NSNA Annual Convention on April 8, 2022, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Social Media

Often students do not realize that items posted in various electronic media can be accessed even if they have been deleted and even if the student uses various privacy settings. These documents are discoverable in a court of law. Privacy settings are not sufficient to ensure privacy and will not keep a student from being legally responsible for the information that they post. Nurses and nursing students are held to a higher standard than the general public due to their positions of public trust and their potential ability to damage the reputation of a clinical facility with irresponsible postings. Therefore, the following policy for appropriate Social Media use will apply to all WKU nursing students.

Policy

The SONAH ascribes to the recommendations for social media use published by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2024). Students enrolled within the SONAH will follow the policy for use of social media. Students found in violation of this policy will be subject to dismissal from the nursing program.

1. Nurses must recognize that they have an ethical and legal obligation to maintain patient privacy and confidentiality at all times.
2. Nurses are strictly prohibited from transmitting by way of any electronic media any patient-related image. In addition, nurses are restricted from transmitting any information that may be reasonably anticipated to violate patient rights to confidentiality or privacy, or otherwise degrade or embarrass the patient.
3. Nurses must not share, post or otherwise disseminate any information or images about a patient or information gained in the nurse/patient relationship with anyone unless there is a patient care-related need to disclose the information or other legal obligations to do so.
4. Nurses must not identify patients by name, or post or publish information that may lead to the identification of a patient. Limiting access to postings through privacy settings is not sufficient to ensure privacy.
5. Nurses must not refer to patients in a disparaging manner, even if the patient is not identified.
6. Nurses must not take photos or videos of patients on personal devices, including cell phones. Nurses should follow employer policies for taking photographs or videos
7. of patients for treatment or other legitimate purposes using employer-provided devices.
8. Nurses must maintain professional boundaries in the use of electronic media. Like in-person relationships, the nurse has an obligation to establish, communicate and enforce

professional boundaries with patients in the online environment. Use caution when having online social contact with patients or former patients. Online contact with patients or former patients blurs the distinction between a professional and personal relationship. The fact that a patient may initiate contact with the nurse does not permit the nurse to engage in a personal relationship with the patient. Nurses must consult employer policies or an appropriate leader within the organization for guidance regarding work related postings.

9. Nurses must promptly report any identified breach of confidentiality or privacy.
10. Nurses must be aware of and comply with employer policies regarding use of employer-owned computers, cameras and other electronic devices, and use of personal devices in the workplace.
11. Nurses must not make disparaging remarks about employers or co-workers. Do not make threatening, harassing, profane, obscene, sexually explicit, racially derogatory, homophobic or other offensive comments.
12. Nurses must not post content or otherwise speak on behalf of the employer unless authorized to do so, and must follow all applicable policies of the employer.

While the policy above refers to patients, employers, co-workers, it also applies to others including but not limited to classmates, faculty, clinical agencies, and staff nurses. Students are to immediately report any breach of this policy by others to SONAH faculty/clinical instructor.

Acceptance of Gifts

Occasionally clients or family members may wish to thank students or staff for a job well done by giving them a small gift. While the School of Nursing and Allied Health does not encourage this practice, it is essential that faculty and students abide by the policy of the clinical institution regarding gift acceptance. Students must discuss the situation with the faculty before accepting any gift.

Student Employment

The School of Nursing and Allied Health is responsible for student performance only while in courses requiring laboratory and/or clinical experiences under guidance of WKU faculty members. Nursing students who are employed in a clinical role of any type must adhere to the regulations of the Kentucky Board of Nursing or other state board of Nursing. Student employees are the responsibility of the employer. Nursing students may not wear school uniform, school ID badge, or other school emblem while employed.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

Health and Safety Policies

All students will be required to submit documentation of meeting the SONAH Health and Safety Policies, (including relevant vaccinations) prior to enrolling in clinical/practicum nursing courses. Students are responsible for all costs associated with meeting the following requirements. Requirements are subject to change based on agency policies and any changes will be communicated to students.

- **Liability Insurance:** All students in the SONAH must purchase the appropriate individual Nursing Student Professional Liability Insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000/\$3,000,000. The policy must be in effect on the first day of class in a clinical nursing course and must be kept current throughout the program of studies. Specific clinical agencies may have additional policy requirements that will be communicated to students.
- Criminal background check
- Negative drug screen performed at WKU Student Health Services for the BSN Program or at an approved vendor for other WKU Nursing Programs.
- Medical History
- Medical Exam
- Immunization certificate including documentation of a Td (tetanus/diphtheria) within the last ten (10) years.
- Annual Influenza (flu) vaccination required. Should you decline the annual influenza vaccination you will be required to follow clinical facility requirements which include but may not be limited to wearing a mask when involved in direct patient care for the duration of the influenza season (typically October through March).
- COVID-19 Vaccination is recommended and often even required by healthcare facilities in which students will complete clinical requirements. Should a student not want to be vaccinated for COVID-19, the following options are available but please note the nursing program cannot guarantee student achievement of clinical course objectives as a healthcare agency may deny student placement without COVID-19 vaccination.
 - Request religious exemption if applicable. Please note not all healthcare facilities accept religious exemptions, therefore, clinical placement not guaranteed.
 - Request medical exemption if applicable. Please note not all healthcare facilities accept medical exemptions therefore, clinical placement not guaranteed.
- Students will be required to receive any other immunizations required by clinical agency contracts for agencies in which they are scheduled for clinical activities.

- Titers for each of the following: Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Varicella. If student is found to be non-immune, then student must be re-immunized unless there is presumptive immunity which consists of documentation of 2 separate vaccinations.
- Documentation of a two-step TB skin test or T-Spot results prior to beginning courses and an annual TB skin test. If the student has a positive skin test, they are required to follow the guidelines for follow-up and/or treatment as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control.
- All students must be vaccinated against Hepatitis B with confirmed titer or sign a declination statement.
- Certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) from the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, or American Safety and Health Institute (ASHI) for the health professional is required of all nursing students as a prerequisite for entrance. This certification must be maintained throughout the program.
- You must have personal health insurance prior to entry into any clinical nursing course. This insurance is required by some clinical agencies and is needed to defray the cost of hospital and medical care for any illness or injury that might be sustained while in the nursing program and the substantial monetary liability that you, as a student, might incur as a result of failure to have such insurance. If you are not currently covered, you may want to consider affordable student policies. Information regarding WKU's student health insurance can be found at [Students – Med Center Health](#) but you are not required to purchase through WKU.
- Students will also be responsible for providing any additional information that may be required by a health care agency to complete clinical rotations at that agency.

Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Policy

Faculty and students of the SONAH at WKU must seek appropriate treatment, follow-up, and counseling after exposure to blood or body fluids.

Exposure would be considered:

- A percutaneous injury in which a health care worker is injured by a sharps object
- A mucocutaneous exposure incident with contact of a mucous membrane or non-intact skin with blood, tissue, or other potentially infectious bodily fluids (CDC).

Procedure

If a student or faculty member is exposed to a bloodborne pathogen during a scheduled clinical experience the agency's exposure policy should be followed. The student/faculty will:

- Notify the appropriate agency representative and follow the agency's protocol of exposure to a bloodborne pathogen. The student or faculty member should initiate immediate treatment as outlined in the agency's policy.

- Students should notify their faculty member that an exposure has occurred, and the faculty will report the exposure to the appropriate WKU supervisors and assist the student in completing any required agency documentation.
- Copies of the agency incident report document and summary of care provided to the individual should be forwarded to the clinical faculty member and program coordinator in the case of students. Faculty members should forward the required documentation to their immediate supervisor.
- In the case of students, the WKU Student Incident-Injury Report form (found on the SONAH website) should be completed within 24 hours.
- The exposed individual is responsible for any costs related to testing and treatment of self and testing of the source.

While it is an individual decision whether to comply with the recommended post-exposure screening, treatment, counseling, or follow-up, the student/faculty should be offered available resources such as the Barren River District Health Department.

Latex Sensitivity Policy

1. It is the student's responsibility to inform faculty if they have a known allergy to latex, or if they suspect symptoms of latex sensitivity. Symptoms may include but are not limited to the following: runny nose, itching eyes, asthma, eczema, contact dermatitis, and rarely shock.
2. In the event of a known latex allergy, continued enrollment in the program will be dependent upon the recommendations of an appropriate health care provider and the student's ability to meet core standard requirements.
3. If there is a known allergy to latex, the student should avoid contact with latex gloves and other products containing latex, avoid inhaling the powder from latex gloves worn by other students or workers in the clinical setting or laboratory, and carefully follow the student's health care provider's instructions for dealing with allergic reactions.
4. In campus laboratory experiences, the lab coordinator will make appropriate accommodation for students with latex allergy.
5. To decrease the chances of developing a latex sensitivity, students should use non-latex gloves when available, avoid oil-based hand cream or lotion under gloves, and wash hands with mild soap and dry thoroughly after removing latex gloves.
6. If you suspect that you are having symptoms of latex sensitivity, immediately report those symptoms to faculty, avoid direct contact with all latex containing products, and see a health care provider experienced in treating a latex allergy.

Criminal Background Check

Various clinical healthcare agencies utilized by the WKU Nursing Programs require a criminal background check of current nursing students. Clinical agencies have the right to deny a student clinical placement at their facility if the student has been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor. If a clinical agency refuses a student clinical access due to a criminal conviction, the student may be unable to meet the clinical objectives of the nursing course and may be dismissed from the Nursing Program. Students will have a criminal background check upon admission to the nursing program. In addition, students are required to notify the Program Coordinator immediately of

any criminal charges that occur once they are in the program. A student's failure to notify the Program Coordinator of any change in their criminal record since initial admission will also result in the student's immediate dismissal from the program.

Drug and Alcohol Use

To uphold the highest standards of the nursing profession, the SONAH has adopted a drug-free environment. Students are required to submit a negative drug screen upon admission and submit to random drug screening throughout the program. Students seeking an exception to the drug free policy must complete the Student Medication Exception Form upon admission (form is available on the SONAH website, under student forms). This form must be completed by the health care provider who prescribes the medication. Students who test positive for controlled substances at any point in time and do not have a current exception form on file with the SONAH verifying their approved use of the substance will be dismissed from the nursing program.

To avoid any possibility of a false positive drug screen, students will not ingest any product that is related to an illegal substance. This includes poppy seeds, hemp food products such as hemp seeds and hemp oils, or other products that may be developed from plants or chemicals that are related to illegal drugs. The student bears full responsibility for what they take into or apply to their bodies, so a positive drug test for any reason will be viewed as cause for dismissal.

Acting in any nursing student role, including attending class or clinical or acting as a nursing student in the community setting, or driving to and from these activities, including student organization activities, while under the influence of illegal drugs and/or while publicly intoxicated violates the drug free policy and will result in dismissal from the nursing program.

Drug Screen Procedures Pre-Admission to the Nursing Program

- All students entering the nursing program will be required to have a negative drug screen upon admission to the nursing program.
- This preadmission drug screen will be at the student's expense and must be completed at WKU's Health Services for the BSN Program or at an approved vendor for other SONAH Nursing Programs.
- Students taking legally prescribed medications which may show up on a drug screen are required to report this medication at the time the medication is prescribed using the Medication Exception Form, located on the SONAH website, under Policies, Handbooks and Forms.
- In the event of a positive test result, confirmatory testing using a gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS) screening will be completed before the results are given to the student. This confirmation test will be performed at the student's expense.
- The Medical Review Officer (MRO) at the WKU Health Services or designee will review all positive drug screens. The MRO will contact all students with positive tests to determine if there is a valid reason for the results (e.g., OTC drugs, herb preparations,

and/or prescription drugs currently being taken). The MRO will also consult with the SONAH to determine if a prior Medication Exception Form was filed.

- The MRO makes the final decision on all drug test results and the decision of the MRO will be accepted by the SONAH. Any concerns about the validity of the test results or additional information concerning how a test might have registered as positive must be addressed through the MRO.
- The MRO will notify the Program Coordinator of all positive results. The Program Coordinator may also notify other appropriate administrators, committee members, or clinical agency representatives who are involved in the decision-making process concerning student admissions, dismissals, or clinical placement.
- The SONAH and /or the University reserves the right to refer the student to the Dean of Student Life for university disciplinary investigation and/or action.

Drug Screen Procedures Post-Admission to the Nursing Program

1. *Random Screening:* Random screening of students may be required at the discretion of the SONAH Director.
2. *Screening for Cause:* In the event a student is suspected of being under the influence of any substance that would impair judgment or performance while performing ANY activity which is related to your nursing student role (class, clinical or community settings, while driving to and from nursing activities and activities related to nursing student professional groups), the suspected individual will be asked to have a blood alcohol level and drug screen done immediately. The suspected individual will be instructed to call someone for transportation. The suspected individual will be suspended from all clinical nursing activities until the issue is resolved. The cost of the tests will be the responsibility of the student. Breathalyzer tests done by licensed police officers for suspected DUI or public intoxication which indicate impairment will also count as a positive screen. The SONAH Director and Program Coordinator must also be notified of any behavior which triggers for cause screening.
3. *Students taking legally prescribed medications:* Students are required to report this medication **at the time the medication is prescribed** using the SONAH Medication Exception Form, located on the SONAH website, under Policies, Handbooks and Forms. The prescribing health care provider must agree that the student is safe to take the medication while driving and practicing in a clinical setting before the student will be allowed to attend clinical functions while on medications that may impair judgment.
4. *Positive urine drug test result:* Confirmatory testing using a gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS) screening will be completed before the results are given to the student. This confirmation test will be performed at the student's expense.
5. *Medical Review Officer (MRO):* WKU Health Services or designee will review all positive drug screens. The MRO will contact all students with positive tests to determine if there is a valid reason for the results (e.g., OTC drugs, herb preparations, and/or prescription drugs currently being taken). The MRO will also consult with the SONAH to determine if a prior Medication Exception form was filed.
6. *MRO makes the final decision:* All drug test results, and the decision of the MRO will be accepted by the SONAH. Any concerns about the validity of the test results or additional

information concerning how a test might have registered as positive must be addressed through the MRO.

- *Program administrator notified:* The MRO will notify the Program Coordinator of all positive results. The Program Coordinator may also notify other appropriate administrators, committee members, or clinical agency representatives who are involved in the decision-making process concerning student admissions, dismissals, or clinical placement.
- 7. All students testing positive on drug screens will be dismissed from the program.
- 8. *SONAH and/or the University reserves the right:* SONAH and/or University reserves the right to refer the student to the Dean of Student Life for university disciplinary investigation and/or action. Test results for properly prescribed prescription medications which are covered under the Medication Exception form (see above) will be treated as medical information and held confidential per HIPAA rules. There is no assumption of privacy for test results indicating illegal drug use and the SONAH reserves the right to report illegal drug use to university authorities. A positive drug screen in a licensed individual (RN or LPN) will be reported to the Kentucky Board of Nursing or the licensing board of whatever state/s the individual holds a license.
- 9. *Students who are dismissed:* Students dismissed for drug or alcohol use may petition to be re- admitted to the nursing program, to re-admitted the program after at least one year of drug/alcohol evaluation and treatment. To be considered for re-admission to the nursing program, the student must submit a written petition to the Program Coordinator along with a letter from a treatment agency verifying completion of a drug evaluation/treatment program. Documentation must include a statement by the therapist that the applicant will be able to function effectively and provide safe, therapeutic care for clients in the clinical setting. **Readmission is not guaranteed.**
- 10. *Student with positive drug test is readmitted:* If student is readmitted to the nursing program, increased random drug screening will be performed at the student's expense throughout the program of studies. A second positive drug test will render the student ineligible to continue or be re-enrolled in the program.

Personal Illness, Emergency, and Extenuating Circumstances

Personal Illness

- **Fever:** Students may not attend class/clinical/simulation/lab if they have a fever or other evidence of a contagious illness. Students are expected to be fever-free for 24 hours after an acute illness before returning to the class or clinical setting.
- Students are required to provide advance notification by phone or email to the faculty member teaching the course if they are unable to attend a regularly scheduled class, lab, or clinical rotation due to illness. In an emergency where advance notice is not possible, the student is required to notify the faculty member teaching the course as soon as possible.

Emergency During Class, Lab, Clinical, or Simulation

- Nursing faculty are responsible for calling 911 and providing directions to the student's location if an emergency occurs and the student needs immediate medical attention.
- The student is responsible for any transport and treatment costs.

- Students should contact their personal health care provider for recommendations for follow-up treatment.

Extenuating Circumstances

- The presence of an extenuating circumstance will be determined by the faculty/instructor.
The presence of an extenuating circumstance does not imply that the student will be exempted from the attendance policy.
- Examples of an extenuating circumstance include accidents, personal illness, medical emergencies, and bereavement.
- *Vacations, weddings, routine medical and/or dental appointments, studying for an exam, job interviews, working at a job, etc. are not considered extenuating circumstances.*

CLINICAL SETTING

Core Performance Standards

Purpose and Scope

To document the required Core Performance Standards for SONAH's nursing programs. To document student's acknowledgement of their awareness of these standards and that they can meet these standards upon application to the nursing program ([The Americans with Disabilities Act - Southern Regional Education Board](#)).

Core Performance Standards

These are approved technical standards for students in nursing programs. Each institution must make explicit essential eligibility requirements for its nursing program by citing the core performance standards. The standards set forth cognitive, sensory, affective, and psychomotor performance requirements. Each core performance standard should be accompanied by examples of activities nursing students are required to perform.

To enter, remain and progress in WKU nursing programs, all students must be able to meet the following core performance standards, with or without reasonable accommodation. Examples of abilities listed below are not inclusive.

- **Gross Motor:** Students must have sufficient physical mobility to travel independently to and within hospitals, homes, clinics, schools, and other health related agencies. They must be able to move from room to room quickly and safely and maneuver in small spaces. They must have the gross and fine motor capability to provide safe care to clients independently. This requires the ability to sustain work requiring delivering services at the bedside, standing/walking for 8-12 hours, traveling independently, ability to reach above shoulders to manage IVs or monitors, ability to reach below waist to manage equipment, twist, bend, stoop, squat, push, pull, lift, support at least 50 pounds to position, transfer, and ambulate patients, ability to administer CPR to adults, children and infants, and perform physical movements quickly and efficiently to provide safe patient care.
- **Sensory and Fine Motor:** Students must have sufficient tactile and manual dexterity to (a) accurately manipulate equipment, (b) complete a physical assessment (palpation, percussion, auscultation, taking a pulse), (c) prepare and administer medications, (d) legibly print dates and times on medication vials, (e) perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation, (f) use a computer keyboard, (g) legibly and accurately document nursing care, and (h) perceive attributes of objects such as dimension, shape, color, temperature, and texture.
- **Visual Acuity:** Students must have sufficient visual acuity to (a) observe subtle changes in clients' conditions, (b) accurately read medical records and orders, (c) accurately read computer monitor screens and other equipment indicators, and (d) legibly and accurately document nursing care. Detect changes in color of various alarm lights and laboratory assays which are color based.
- **Auditory Acuity:** Students must have the auditory acuity with and without background noise that enables them to communicate with others and to assess the physical status of a

client (breath sounds, heart sounds, bowel sounds, auscultating blood pressure, etc.). Students must possess sufficient auditory acuity to respond to various alarm signals from different types of equipment, such as when the alarm is sounding from the patient's room and the student is in the hallway. Must be able to respond to normal volume speech in situations where unable to see lips move, as when the speaker is not facing the student or when the speaker is wearing a mask.

- **Communication Skills:** Students must have sufficient receptive, written and oral communication skills to accurately receive, read, interpret and comprehend the English language in written and verbal forms in order to (a) communicate effectively and professionally with clients, faculty, staff, and peers from a variety of social, emotional, cultural and intellectual backgrounds; (b) give oral and written reports to faculty and other members of the health care team; (c) teach clients and families; (d) accurately document, interpret, and comprehend nursing interventions and actions and client responses; (e) communicate data about clients in a timely manner; and (f) demonstrate a willingness and ability to give and receive feedback.
- **Emotional and Cognitive Skills:** Students must have sufficient emotional stability and cognitive skills to (a) process both verbal and written information in a reasonable amount of time; (b) demonstrate good judgement; (c) respect differences in patients, families and other students; (d) establish and maintain appropriate relationships and boundaries with clients, faculty, staff, and peers; (e) work closely with others, including touching and being touched by others during patient care and in training situations; (f) take responsibility for their own actions; (g) complete all responsibilities in the assessment and implementation of nursing care for patients in a timely, safe and effective manner; (h) adapt to changing and high paced environments without becoming overwhelmed; and (i) have adequate environmental awareness and emotional stability to remain calm and function effectively in multiple, complex settings that may be stressful, noisy and may be potentially harmful. This includes exposure to communicable diseases, personal injury, death of patients, and violence in the workplace.

Change in Ability to Meet the Core Performance Standards

Students who experience a change that affects their ability to meet any of the core performance standards must notify their assigned faculty. Students unable to function safely and effectively in the clinical setting may be required to drop out of the clinical courses during the time they are unable to meet the core performance standards. If the student experiences a change but feels that they can continue to perform safely in the clinical setting, the faculty member will require documentation from the student's health care provider indicating that the student can safely function in the clinical setting.

Students Who Require Accommodations

Students requiring academic adjustment and/or auxiliary aids or services to meet the core performance standards must contact the WKU SARC Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC) and obtain an evaluation of any necessary accommodation prior to entering the nursing program. Written documentation from the SARC must be presented to the nursing program prior to starting nursing courses, so that any necessary arrangements can be made to provide appropriate accommodations (more information below). Please note that admission into the nursing program does not guarantee the student with a disability will be able to be placed at

specific clinical agencies, or that every clinical agency will be able to provide the same level of accommodation for students with disabilities.

Requesting Reasonable Accommodations

Students diagnosed with disabilities covered by the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act may be granted special accommodation in the nursing classroom or laboratory setting. Details concerning the accommodation required in each setting must be documented. Accommodations granted in one setting may be different than those granted in another setting and are not automatic. For example, an accommodation of double testing time for a learning disability in the classroom does not mean the student will automatically get double time to perform a procedure in a laboratory or clinical setting. It should be noted that in the clinical setting the ability to perform skills safely and effectively is mandatory and students must be able to perform the assigned clinical skills within the allotted clinical time. For example, it is not reasonable for the student to take 12 hours to provide the assigned patient care instead of 6 hours. It is the responsibility of the student to follow the appropriate procedure for requesting an accommodation through the WKU Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC). SARC, Downing Student Union (DSU) Room 1074, Monday-Friday, 8-4:30, 270-745-5004. sarc.testing@wku.edu.

Delegation of Clinical Learning Activities to Nursing Staff

Purpose and Scope

To protect patient safety and to comply with clinical agency requirements and Kentucky Board of Nursing recommendations the following policy will apply to all students who are accepted into any WKU SONAH nursing program.

Policy

Faculty teaching in the clinical setting is ultimately responsible for student learning activities. Faculty who sends students to distant units or off-site locations to perform advanced nursing skills are responsible for delegating oversight of students to appropriately qualified staff members.

Definitions

Basic Nursing Skills: When a student nurse is assigned to a hospital unit or to a community site away from the clinical instructor, the student may perform basic nursing skills at the request of the clinical agency. For example, students may perform vital signs, assist with patient hygiene, feeding and patient positioning. Students at the distant location may engage in basic nursing skills if the staff on the unit allow the student to do so. Participating in basic skills does not require a signed learning agreement form.

Advanced Nursing Skills

Student nurses assigned to distant clinical sites or units (such as surgery, endoscopy, emergency room, community health sites and other sites where a nursing faculty member is not immediately available) may not perform advanced nursing skills (invasive procedures or medication

administration) UNLESS there is an experienced Registered Nurse who is willing and able to oversee the student.

Appropriately Qualified Staff Member

For this policy, an appropriately qualified staff member will be a Registered Nurse with at least 2 years of experience in the clinical area who agrees to assist the student with the learning activity.

Procedure

- Clinical faculty members will decide in advance for students to be present at distant units or community sites.
- Clinical faculty members will communicate with staff members concerning student's learning needs and abilities.
- Participation in medication administration or invasive procedures at the distant location requires a *Learning Agreement Form for Advanced Nursing Skills*. Clinical faculty will distribute learning agreement forms to students as needed. The form is also available from the SONAH website.
- Students will be responsible for obtaining signatures from the staff nurse who observes the student performance at the distant site. Students are also responsible for returning the signed agreement to the clinical faculty.
- Faculty will return the forms to the program office staff, who will scan and file the forms by course and semester on the shared drive.



Learning Agreement Form for Advanced Nursing Skills

WKU nursing students assigned to your unit may perform basic nursing skills (vital signs, assist with patient hygiene, feeding and patient positioning) if the staff on the unit allow the student to do so. Basic Nursing Skills do not require a signed learning agreement form.

Advanced (Invasive and Medication) Nursing Skills

Student nurses assigned to distant clinical sites or units (such as surgery, endoscopy, emergency room, community health sites and other sites where a nursing faculty member is not immediately available) may not perform invasive skills nor administer medications UNLESS there is an experienced Registered Nurse who is willing and able to oversee the student. For this policy an appropriately qualified staff member will be a registered nurse with at least 2 years' experience in the clinical area who agrees to assist the student with the learning activity.

To be completed by Student

Student Name _____

Nursing Program and Semester (i.e., ASN/BSN 2nd) _____

Instructor _____

Date _____

To be completed by Unit Nurse

Agreement for Advanced Nursing Skills:

- I will review the student skills checklist for the skill in question.
- I have at least two (2) years of experience in this clinical area, or two (2) years of experience as a Registered Nurse.
- I will be present with the student during the skill and assist them as needed

Signature and Title _____

Clinical Area _____

Skills performed _____

Comments _____

Clinical Release Form

Restrictions for students in Clinical settings, to be completed by health care provider (MD/PA/APRN)

☐ **No Restrictions**

☐ **Temporary Restrictions** -if this has been checked, please provide specifications below by checking all that apply

☐ **Restricted lifting (maximum weight in pounds)** ☐10 ☐25 ☐50 ☐Other

☐ **No (check all that apply)**

☐crawling ☐kneeling ☐squatting ☐climbing ☐bending ☐stooping ☐twisting

☐ **Restricted pushing/pulling of _____ lbs.**

☐ **Restricted reaching (check all that apply):** ☐above chest ☐overhead ☐away from body

☐ **Restricted to one-handed duty. No use of:** ☐right hand ☐left hand

☐ **Restricted to (check all that apply, describe in detail below):** ☐walking ☐standing ☐sitting

☐ **Partial weight bearing (describe in detail below)**

☐ **No/Limited bending or twisting**

☐ **Wear splint:** ☐at all times ☐while in clinical setting

☐ **Do not Operate Machinery/Drive any Vehicle**

DESCRIBE RESTRICTIONS in detail (i.e. duration, nature of limitation, etc.). Supplement with extra pages if needed:

Student Name _____

Provider Signature _____ **Date** _____

End SONAH Nursing Student Handbook