



Professional Standards and Behavior Code for Nursing Students

I. Overview/Preamble

All School of Nursing (SoN) faculty, staff and students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of professional behaviors and ethics. Honesty, integrity, and ethical conduct are central to the practice of professional nursing. Students should conduct themselves according to the standards expected of members of the professional community to which they aspire. The Professional Standards and Behavior Code for Nursing Students (hereafter referred to as the Professional Standards and Behavior Code) applies to students whether on campus, in practicums, or in their personal life, as behaviors can significantly impact the School of Nursing program.

Nursing students are part of the University of Wisconsin – Madison School of Nursing community, which includes faculty and staff and our professional colleagues at agencies and clinical sites. As a member of the SoN community, all students are subject to the [ANA \(American Nurses Association\) Code of Ethics for Nurses](#) as well as the rules and regulations contained in [UWS 14, 17, and 18](#) of the Wisconsin Administrative Code that governs student academic and nonacademic disciplinary procedures and conduct on University land, and to all other applicable state and federal laws. Violation of the Wisconsin Administrative Code may result in University disciplinary action including disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

The School of Nursing works with the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#) to provide reasonable accommodations to students who have followed the accommodations request process. However, the school reserves the right to determine if a requested accommodation is in conflict with the Professional Standards and Behavior Code. Examples of inability to accommodate are when a fundamental alteration to the Professional Standards and Behavior Code would result, compromise client care, or compromise the safety of others in the healthcare setting.

In addition to the Wisconsin Administrative Code, all SoN students must adhere to the School of Nursing Professional Standards and Behavior Code, The American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics for Nurses, all relevant HIPAA laws, and the standards set forth by clinical sites. As a professional nurse, individuals are held to the standards of behavior as expressed in the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses Interpretive Statements, 2014. The Code of Ethics for Nurses establishes the ethical standard for the nursing profession and provides a guide for nurses to use in ethical analysis and decision-making.

The values of integrity, compassion, advocacy, and a social commitment to improve the health of all are inherent to the field of nursing. The National League of Nursing believes that diversity and healthcare are inseparable, and only together can they create pathways that lead to ending health disparities and impact the quality and safety of patient care, which includes how nursing students are socialized into the field of nursing and into the workforce. Mutual respect and trustworthiness between faculty, staff, and students is necessary to promote optimal learning. For optimal learning to occur, students are expected to attend and actively participating in all classes, labs, simulations, and clinical rotations.

Participation in the Professionals Standards and Behavior Code provides evidence to the UW- Madison, SoN that the integrity of its members is unquestioned and accepted by those in the academic, clinical and research communities. The Professional Standards and Behavior Code sets the expectation that

students take the responsibility to respect and protect the integrity of the UW- Madison and SoN. It also demonstrates the School of Nursing's commitment to create a learning environment is safe, equitable, and intentionally diverse across gender, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, religion, and all other identity groups.

Therefore, unprofessional behavior towards faculty, staff, teaching assistants, peers, clinical partners, patients, family members or other professionals and the public are significant issues in the evaluation and progression of students enrolled in the UW- Madison School of Nursing program. Inappropriate behavior may be grounds for failure to progress, dismissal, and/or denial of the degree in nursing. Separate and apart from a violation of the Professional Standards and Behavior Code, students may also face University disciplinary action, as noted above, with regard to the same action.

II. Professional Standards

Guidelines and Responsibilities for Professionalism.

- **Professional Relationships** – Students are a direct reflection of the University, SoN, and the nursing profession at large. Students will communicate and treat clients, families, facility staff, faculty, University staff, peers, other professionals and the public in a professional manner. This includes addressing them appropriately, respecting individual rights to hold opinions that differ from their own, and promoting a positive climate.
 - **Treating others with respect** – Respect is a foundational component of the nursing profession. Students will demonstrate respect with clients, families, facility staff, faculty, University staff, peers, other professionals, and the public. Students will refuse to engage in, or condone discrimination on the basis of race, creed, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, marital status, lifestyle, disability, or economic status.
 - **Civility** – Nurses are required to “create an ethical environment and culture of civility and kindness, treating colleagues, coworkers, employees, students and others with dignity and respect...All RN’s and employers in all settings, including practice, academia and research, must collaborate to create a culture of respect the is free of incivility, bullying and workplace violence.” (ANA, 2014)
 - **Values** – All clients have a set of beliefs that inform their values. Students must provide care that respects a client’s belief system and works toward empowering clients to meet their health care goals.
 - **Honoring client’s identities** – Similarly, all clients have diverse identities. Students must attempt to understand clients’ individual health goals, their strengths and values, and their diverse identities in order to best support the client’s care.
- **Honesty and Integrity** – Communication is key to providing safe, quality care. Therefore, student behavior will consistently exemplify truthfulness and accountability. Communication with clients, family, faculty and clinical preceptors must be thorough, accurate and timely. Students are responsible for upholding and maintaining an honest academic environment, including reporting when an instance of dishonesty is thought to have occurred.
- **Professional Appearance** – Students should appear professional when representing the SoN. We understand that professional attire can reflect beliefs, values, attitudes, and aesthetics. These expressions of identity can coexist with professional appearance standards for nurses. Students should follow the School of Nursing’s [student professional attire standards](#). Additional

requirements may be set by a particular clinical agency, in which case students must comply with the requirements of the clinical setting in which they are practicing.

- **Responsibility and Judgment** – Students are accountable to the University, SoN, health care agency providing clinical experiences, and above all, clients and society as a whole. Students are expected to meet their educational and clinical responsibilities at all times. While personal issues can conflict or interfere with such obligations, every effort must be made by students to resolve the conflict in a professional manner by assuring that client care is not compromised and that appropriate members of the health care team and faculty are notified in a timely fashion.
 - **Compliance** – In order to maintain a student’s responsibility for patient safety, all students are required to be in full adherence to the school’s compliance program while enrolled in the SoN. Compliance documents must be kept up to date as an essential part of a student’s professional responsibility for patient safety.
 - **Attendance** – Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, simulations, and clinical experiences in order to fulfill credit requirements for each course. The [University calendar](#) is publicly available before the start of each semester. Students are expected to plan special events, travel, and outside activities during scheduled University breaks or as outlined by the program. Students are also expected to adhere to the attendance policy as outlined in the course syllabus.
- **Use of Technology** – The SoN believes in protecting the students’ rights of freedom of speech, expression and association, including their right to use social media. The SoN also believes in protecting the rights of patients with whom students interact, the rights of faculty members, the rights of other students and the public at large. Students are expected to monitor their own social media use and post only statements and images that appropriately represent them, the University and the profession.
 - UW-Madison’s Social Media Guidelines and Links: UW Madison guidelines for the use of different type of content on social media in various situations, and federal law regarding dissemination of confidential, private, or proprietary information under FERPA and HIPAA legislation can be accessed at <https://universityrelations.wisc.edu/policies-and-guidelines/social-media/>.
 - American Nurses Association principles for nurse’s use of social media can be accessed at <https://www.nursingworld.org/social/>
- **Safety** – Students should refrain from any deliberate action or omission of care that creates unnecessary risk of injury to the client, self, or others.
 - Students who demonstrate unsafe nursing practice that jeopardizes the client's or family’s physical or emotional welfare may be dismissed at any time from clinical. Unsafe clinical practice is defined as any behavior determined by faculty or a preceptor to be actually or potentially detrimental to the client or to the healthcare agency.
 - Students are expected to identify hazardous conditions while providing patient care. Students should receive instruction and training prior to performing skills and are expected to follow facilities policies and procedures. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the preceptor or faculty member if they have not been adequately trained to perform a procedure.
- **HIPAA** – Nursing students are required to complete HIPAA training and follow HIPAA guidelines as outlined in the [undergraduate](#), [DNP](#) and [PhD](#) student handbook.

III. Definitions of Unacceptable Behavior

Unacceptable student behaviors most commonly occur within three functional areas: Academic, Clinical, and Personal. The following are examples of violations of the *UW-Madison School of Nursing Professional Standards and Behaviors Code*. This list is not all-inclusive and does not purport to include all violations of the Student Code.

Academic Misconduct

As outlined in Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter 14, any sanction handed down by the University cannot be appealed through the School of Nursing. The following identifies components of academic misconduct and examples that include but are not limited to:

- **Plagiarism** – Taking credit for another person's work or ideas regardless of the medium, appropriating other's results or methods, copying the writing of others (including content from electronic sources) without properly citing the source; or taking false credit in any other manner.
- **Cheating** – Using unauthorized study aids, technology, or information from another person on an exam, report, paper, or other evaluative document; Using or attempting to use unauthorized notes, completing work in partnership with others without permission to do so; during online testing using the internet to search for unauthorized answers; providing/accepting online testing code when not in class, unauthorized altering of a graded work, then submitting it for re-grading; allowing another person to do all or part of one's work and to submit the work under one's own name; using notes or texts for an on-line exam, unless explicitly allowed by the faculty. Violating instructions regarding completion of assignments or recycling one's own.
- **Fabrication or Falsification of data** – Fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them. Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record (<https://ori.hhs.gov/defintion-misconduct>). Dishonesty in reporting results, ranging from blatant fabrication of data, improper adjustment of results and gross negligence in collecting and analyzing data, to selective reporting or omission of conflicting data for deceptive purposes.
- **Aiding and abetting dishonesty** – Providing material, information or assistance to another person with the knowledge or reasonable expectation that the material, information, or assistance would be used to commit an act that would be prohibited by the Student Code.
- **Falsification of academic record and official documents** – Without proper authorization, altering documents affecting academic records, forging signatures of authorization, or falsifying information on an official academic document, form, grade report, letter of permission, clinical record or any other official document.

Personal Misconduct

Students will adhere to the standards of professional nursing by treating peers, faculty, colleagues, and clients with compassion, integrity, and respect. The personal character and conduct of nursing students have impact on perceptions of the nursing profession as a whole. The following examples represent unacceptable violations of professional standards.

- **Commission of a crime** – Engaging in illegal, criminal, or a violent activity that would impact the student's ability to care for vulnerable populations, obtain or maintain a professional license, or secure employment in the nursing profession. Students are required to report all arrests and pending criminal- and Human Services-related charges to the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs within 48 hours of the incident.
- **Sexual misconduct or harassment** – The SoN adheres to the University standards for sexual misconduct and harassment as outline in [Title IX](#). This includes repeatedly sending uninvited e-mails, making phone calls or transmitting documents that are uninvited and unwanted, making threats, and any other inappropriate interpersonal behaviors that frighten, intimidate, or interfere with the work or study of any other person.
- **Incivility or bullying** – ANA defines incivility as “one or more rude, discourteous, or disrespectful actions that may or may not have a negative intent behind them” (ANA <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/violence-incivility-bullying/>). Incivility behavior may also include emails that are hostile, demanding, accusatory or threatening are examples of incivility. Bullying is described as “repeated, unwanted, harmful actions intended to humiliate, offend, and cause distress in the recipient” (ANA). Therefore, the intentional use of any words, gestures, social actions or activities to isolate, “other”, demean or demoralize another person is in violation of Professional Standards and Behavior Code.
- **Disruptive behavior** – This includes obstructing or disrupting classes, team projects, talks or other presentations, or any other activities or programs sponsored by the SoN.
- **Failure to demonstrate accountability, responsible planning, or commitment to education** – The University calendar is publicly available several months before the start of each semester. Additionally, the course calendar is posted prior to the start of the semester. We understand the need for work/life balance, and clinical placement schedules can often vary. We expect students will plan work schedules around campus and course calendars to the best of their ability. Special events, travel, and outside activities should be scheduled during University breaks. Students are expected to adhere to the attendance and assignment policy as outline in course syllabi.
- **Impaired / Drugs and Alcohol** – Students shall not participate in classroom and clinical activities while under the influence of alcohol or any psychoactive substances, unless the use of such a substance is under the orders of a physician and the student does not manifest impairment. This includes using prescribed, over the counter or illicit substances in a manner that is inconsistent with prescribed use.
- **Obstructing a SoN investigation** – This includes altering, destroying or deleting relevant documents and any other act that obstructs or hinders an investigation.
- **Inappropriate use of social media** – This includes posting negative, or untrue information about peers, faculty, other professionals, or clinical sites. Inappropriate social media use also involves communicating material that violates University policies, SoN policies, Honor Code, HIPAA rules, or state or federal statutes. Internet postings that violate these principles include, but are not limited to, sharing of confidential information, content construed as "bullying", images or language that represent nudity, sexual activity or misconduct, underage alcohol consumption, illegal acts, use of illegal drugs or other controlled substances, hazing activities, tobacco use, obscene gestures, and cheating.

Clinical Misconduct

In the clinical setting, students are expected to demonstrate professionalism, competence, integrity, accountability, and safety. These expectations extend across all aspects of the clinical experience, including interpersonal interactions, teamwork, communication, and practice.

- **Failure to prepare for the clinical experience** – Students must complete all onboarding requirements of the clinical practicum site, as directed, prior to the start of their clinical. Students are also required to develop a foundational set of practice skills, competencies, and knowledge for safe participation in the practicum. *Failure to complete onboarding requirements or adequately prepare for participation in the practicum may result in removal from the course.*
- **Engaging in irresponsible, unsafe, or harmful practice** - This includes but is not limited to:
 - negligence, carelessness, and failure to prepare
 - failure to complete nursing care or nursing tasks as assigned in a competent and thorough manner
 - intentionally carrying out a procedure without prior approval or adequate supervision
 - doing physical or mental harm to a client
 - abandonment of care responsibilities
 - refusing to assume the assigned and necessary care of a client
 - failure to comply with syllabus policies regarding engaging in risky behavior during a public health emergency.
- **Failure to report** – This includes failure to report an error, incident, or omission in care to the appropriate people, including nursing staff on the unit and clinical instructor.
- **Failing to document care accurately and completely** – This includes falsifying patient records or fabricating information in healthcare records, written documents, and oral reports within the clinical area as well as the School of Nursing.
- **Failures to communicate effectively** or collaborate with colleagues, contribute to teamwork, or respect the work of others.
- **Violating requirements of HIPAA or patients' rights to privacy** – This includes using identifiable information about a client in written assignments outside of the clinical area, accessing health records of patients not assigned to students, discussing confidential information in areas outside of the clinical site, sharing confidential information about a patient or organization with parties who do not have a clear and legitimate need to know; and referencing or discussing any details from the clinical setting on social networking sites and devices.
- **Unexcused absences or multiple incidences of tardiness** – Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes, simulations, and complete all clinical hours in order to fulfill credit requirements for each clinical course.
- **Fabrication, alteration, or exaggeration** of the duties performed, number of hours completed, or preceptor feedback pertaining to student performance in the clinical practicum.
- **Violations of the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses** are unacceptable.

IV. Post-incident Decision-Making & Sanctions:

In cases involving clinical misconduct, the student may be immediately removed from the clinical setting at the discretion of faculty. Further review will be completed in consultation with clinical faculty, leadership from the clinical setting, and the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs. Consideration will be given to the severity, potential risks, and context of the offense as well as any prior instances of misconduct. Final sanction decisions are made by the School of Nursing in response to clinical misconduct and are not negotiable or subject to appeal.

Following an incident of clinical misconduct, the student's status in the program will be subject to further review by the Dean of the School of Nursing and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

Procedures and Sanctions for Violations of the Professional Standards and Behavior Code

Reporting – All members of the nursing community- faculty, administrators, staff and students- have a responsibility to report any reasonable suspicion that a student has violated UW SoN Professional Standards and Behavior Code. A report must be made to the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs. Student concerns about whether to report a potential violation should be directed to a faculty member for the course. Faculty may consult with the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs before deciding to formally report the behavior. All student reports of suspected misconduct are confidential.

All faculty members are required to follow [Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter 14](#). In addition, all faculty are required to report all incidents of academic misconduct to the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs. The School of Nursing reserves the right to impose additional sanctions, based on severity, above and beyond those outlined in Chapter 14.

All faculty members are required to follow the UW Madison Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence as outline in [Title IX](#). In addition, all faculty are required to report all incidents of Title IX violations to the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs. The School of Nursing reserves the right to impose additional sanctions, based on severity, above and beyond those outlined in Chapter 17.

Regarding personal misconduct that falls under Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapters 14 and 17, all faculty members are required University policies and procedures. The School of Nursing reserves the right to impose additional sanctions, based on severity, above and beyond those outlined in Chapter 14 and Chapter 17. Cases involving personal misconduct that do not involve either Chapter 14 or Chapter 17 will be reported to and handled by the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs with input from faculty. Sanctions regarding personal misconduct include, but are not limited to a warning, counseling, restitution, community service, disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion from the School. If the student agrees with the sanction and the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs approves, the matter is closed.

If a student has a second violation of the Professional Standards of Behavior Code, it is expected that more serious consequences will result. The student's conduct will be evaluated closely, measured against the expectations for professional behavior and feedback sought from faculty about the student's overall conduct and fitness for professional nursing before a decision on a sanction is rendered by the Professional Standard Review Committee and the Assistant or Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

Reviewing: When an incident of misconduct is reported, the faculty member and Assistant Dean for

Academic Affairs will meet with the student, discuss the behavior and evidence and possible sanctions. The purpose of this meeting is to permit the faculty to review with the student the bases for his or her belief that the student violated the School of Nursing Professional Standards and Behavior Code, and to afford the student an opportunity to respond.

Based on the meeting, if the faculty determine that no violation occurred or that no disciplinary sanction is warranted, the matter will be considered resolved without the necessity for further action but a notion of the possible misconduct will be made in the students record which is kept in the Academic Affairs Office in the School of Nursing.

If the faculty determines that a violation has occurred and that sanctions are warranted the following shall occur:

- The faculty shall prepare a written report that includes a description of the violation, specification of sanction recommended, and a notice of report to the UW Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards for violations of Chapter 14, and 17.
- The written report will be delivered by electronic means. In addition, a copy of the report shall be retained in the student’s Academic file in the School of Nursing Academic Affairs Office.

Sanctions: Sanctions are determined dependent on the University of Wisconsin- Madison, the School of Nursing and type of misconduct.

- **Academic Misconduct** – Sanctions involving academic misconduct must follow University Administrative Code Chapter 14. Sanctions for academic misconduct as outlined in Chapter 14 include, but are not limited to, re-doing an assignment, re-taking an examination, undertaking an additional assignment, receiving a reduced grade, warning, suspension, or expulsion. The SoN reserves the right to impose additional sanctions beyond those as outlined by [Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter 14](#).

Violation	Sanction
Violation of Attendance Policy	See Course Syllabus
Any violation of Academic Integrity	Case by case basis. Sanctions can range from reduced grade to expulsion from the School of Nursing

If the student disagrees with the sanction, the student can appeal to the Professional Standard Review Committee. See section on Professional Standards and Behaviors Code Appeal Process.

- **Personal Misconduct**

Level of Incident	Sanction
Violation of Law	Sanctions addressed by law enforcement and the UW- Madison, Dean of Students. If incident takes place in clinical setting, the sanction could range from course failure to expulsion from the School of Nursing
Disruptive Behavior	Sanctions could range from meeting with faculty and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to course failure. Repeated incidents could lead to expulsion from the School of Nursing

Substance Abuse	See Substance Abuse Policy put in a link
Social Media	Case by case basis. Sanctions can range from probation to expulsion from the School of Nursing
Violation of the Professional Standards and Behavior Code	Case by case basis. Sanctions could range from meeting with the faculty and/or Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to course failure. Egregious or repeated incidents could lead to expulsion from the School of Nursing

If the student disagrees with the sanction, the student can appeal to the Professional Standard Review Committee. See section on Professional Standards Appeal Process.

- Clinical Misconduct:** In cases involving clinical misconduct, the student will be removed from the clinical setting. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Dean, in consultation with the faculty, and officials at the agency, will complete an immediate review of the misconduct where the misconduct occurred. Sanctions will be imposed at the conclusion of the review. All incidents of clinical misconduct will be handled on a case-by-case basis with the sanctions determined by the severity of the misconduct, and the potential risk to patients and organizations. Decisions on sanctions for clinical misconduct are not negotiable or subject to appeal.

Level of Incident	Sanction
Professional Misconduct	Possible removal from clinical setting. Remediation/guidance and no return to clinical until demonstrated competency. Sanctions could range from failure of the assignment or course to expulsion from the School of Nursing
HIPAA Violation	Removal from the clinical unit. Sanctions can range from failure of the course to expulsion from the School of Nursing.
Incident that does not cause harm to patient due to lack of knowledge	Remediation and guidance to critical nursing content. Return to clinical with demonstrated competency.
Patient Safety Issue- risk of harm to patient but no harm caused	Immediate removal from clinical setting. Remediation and no return to clinical until demonstrated competency. Sanctions could range from failure of assignment or course to expulsion from the School of Nursing
Harm to Patient	Case by case basis. Sanctions could range from failure of course to expulsion from the School of Nursing.

Professional Standards and Behavior Code Appeal

A student may appeal sanctions received to the Professional Standards Review Committee by submitting a written request to the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs within 10 business days of receiving the notification.

Appeals must be based on at least one of the following arguments and be clearly stated so in the written appeal:

- There were violations of procedure that seriously compromised the investigation and/or conclusions.
- The evidence clearly does not support the findings.
- The sanctions are excessive in relation to the violation.
- There is significant new evidence not reasonably available at the time of the investigation.

The written appeal must specify the following:

- Precise grounds on which the appeal is based (see above).
- Circumstances associated with the need to appeal.
- Arguments supporting the appeal.
- Description of proposed actions to be taken.

The Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs will determine if the appeal meets the above conditions. If not, the Assistant Dean will advise the student that the matter is ended.

Hearing for Appeals

- Each hearing committee of the SPSC will consist of 3 members, 2 faculty members and one student. The committee will be chaired by faculty member who will preside over the meeting. All hearings will be held in private, with strict confidentiality, limited to witnesses and committee members. All hearings will be recorded.
- All written evidence and witness lists need to be submitted by both sides to the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs one week prior to the hearing. All committee members will receive the packet 48 hours prior to the hearing for review.
- The SPCC committee members shall consider all the evidence. Each side will present relevant evidence and witnesses. All members of the SPSC hearing committee will have the opportunity to ask clarifying question of all witnesses.
- After the hearing, the SPSC hearing committee will go to a private room to deliberate. These deliberations will not be recorded. The committee can decide to dismiss the sanction, uphold the sanction and/or impose additional sanctions. To find a defendant in violation, a majority vote is needed. All information discussed during deliberations must be kept confidential.
- The student will receive the committee's decision electronically within one week of the hearing.
- Please see supplemental 1.0 for further detail for student membership on the hearing appeals committee and the hearing appeals procedure

Confidentiality Statement

The SoN is committed to protecting students' right to privacy. The information and records relating to this process will be handled consistent with applicable laws and University policies concerning student privacy and related confidentiality issues.

Reviewed and Approved by APC May 8, 2020

Resources:

Code of Ethics PDF. (n.d.). Retrieved April 2, 2020, from <https://www.nursingworld.org/coe-view-only>

ANA Board of Directors. (2015 22). ANA Position Statement on Incivility, Bullying and Workplace Violence. Retrieved April 2, 2020, from <https://www.nursingworld.org/~49d6e3/globalassets/practiceandpolicy/nursing-excellence/incivility-bullying-and-workplace-violence--ana-position-statement.pdf>

National Student Nurses' Association. (n.d.). Code of Ethics.pdf. Retrieved April 2, 2020, from <https://www.dropbox.com/s/a229ong58d5jx4p/Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf?dl=0>

University of Iowa Honor Code

UW-School of Pharmacy Code of Conduct

UW- Medicine Code of Conduct