

Policy: Professional Conduct

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to define the professional conduct expectations for students in the Bachelor of Nursing (BN) Programs, promoting accountability, integrity, and adherence to safe and ethical nursing practice.

DEFINITIONS:

Professional Conduct refers to behavior that supports, enables, and promotes excellence in nursing education and practice for oneself and others. It reflects membership in a professional community where values are enacted and shared, and accountability for one's actions is expected.

Unprofessional Conduct is behavior that conflicts with the values of the nursing profession and is therefore unacceptable within the professional community. Such behavior may impede or compromise the BN Programs, or endanger the safety and well-being of students, colleagues, faculty, or community members.

Professional Boundaries define limits that separate therapeutic behavior from actions that, regardless of intent, could reduce the benefit of care to clients, families, and communities. These boundaries establish safe and effective relationships and are guided by the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta *Professional Boundaries: Guidelines for the Nurse-Client Relationship* (2023).

POLICY SCOPE:

This Professional Conduct Policy applies to all students in the BN Programs.

POLICY STATEMENT(S):

1. Professional Responsibilities

Students in the BN Programs will:

- a) Demonstrate respect and uphold the professional values/ethics of registered nursing in all interactions with colleagues, patients, instructors, and other members of the healthcare and academic community.
- b) Demonstrate commitment to scholarly work and ongoing learning.
- c) Preserve and protect the confidentiality of patients, peers, and colleagues.
- d) Maintain professional boundaries between self and others, including peers, instructors, preceptors, and patients.

2. Professional Communication

- a) All communications within the BN Programs or with other professional contacts must be respectful and professional in tone and content.
- b) Institutional email accounts (LP or UL) must be used for official communications.
- c) Provide feedback through appropriate channels in a constructive and professional manner.
- d) Students are not required to respond to communications during evenings, weekends, or statutory holidays unless these occur on assigned learning days. Students are expected to be available, monitor communications, and respond in a timely manner on all assigned learning days and to address urgent or time-sensitive matters promptly.
- e) Students are responsible for regularly checking messages/emails and remaining informed about course or program information.

3. Media and Social Media Use

- a) Students must demonstrate professional conduct in all forms of media, including social media, digital platforms, messaging applications, and online forums.
- b) Professional standards apply equally in digital environments as in in-person interactions. Online behavior must reflect the values of respect, integrity, accountability, and professionalism expected within the BN Programs and the nursing profession.
- c) Confidentiality must be strictly maintained at all times in the clinical care area. Posting, sharing, recording, photographing, or transmitting any information, images, audio, video, or other media that could directly or indirectly identify patients, staff, or clinical care areas is strictly prohibited, regardless of platform or privacy settings. Exceptions may be permitted within NURS 3022 (Praxis in Health Promotion) when activities involving photographs, media, or public dissemination are explicitly required as part of an instructor-directed course activity and all appropriate consents and permissions have been obtained in accordance with agency, professional, and university policies. In all instances, students must adhere to confidentiality requirements. Breaches of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action and/or progression consequences within the BN Programs.
- d) Students must not engage in online behavior that could harm the reputation of patients, colleagues, instructors, practice partners, the BN Programs, or the nursing profession.
- e) The use of personal devices in clinical, lab, or classroom settings must align with course expectations and institutional policies, and must not interfere with learning, professional responsibilities, or patient care.
- f) The creation, sharing, or distribution of course materials (e.g., lectures, slides, exams, simulations) without explicit permission from faculty is prohibited.
- g) Use of digital tools, including artificial intelligence platforms, must comply with academic integrity policies and must not compromise confidentiality, professional judgment, or independent learning.
- h) Students must adhere to relevant professional standards, including guidance from the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta and the Canadian Nurses Association regarding ethical and professional conduct in digital spaces.

4. Unprofessional Conduct and Accountability

Unprofessional conduct is behavior that conflicts with the values of the nursing profession, compromises safe and ethical practice, or negatively impacts the learning environment. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated unexcused absences or lateness.
- Breach of confidentiality of patients, peers, faculty, or program information.
- Failure to maintain professional boundaries.
- Unsafe practice or behaviors that jeopardize the safety of patients, peers, faculty, preceptors, other health care professionals, or members of the community.
- Dishonesty, academic misconduct, or falsification of records.
- Disrespectful, discriminatory, or harassing behavior.
- Inappropriate digital unprofessionalism, such as inappropriate use of social media or electronic communications.

The BN Programs reserves the right to establish consequences for unprofessional conduct, which may include required withdrawal from a course or the program depending on the nature of the conduct.

Appeals

Students have the right to appeal according to Institutional Policy.

APPENDIX:

N/A

RELATED POLICIES/ASSOCIATED GUIDELINES:

REFERENCES:

College of Registered Nurses of Alberta. (2023). *Professional Boundaries for Registered Nurses: Guidelines for the Nurse-Client Relationship*. Retrieved from www.nurses.ab.ca/media/xkiay5ul/professional-boundaries-guidelines-for-the-nurse-client-relationship-2022.pdf

Canadian Nurses Association. (2025). *Code of ethics for nurses*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Nurses Association. <https://www.cna-aiic.ca/en/nursing/regulated-nursing-in-canada/nursing-ethics/2025-coe>

For the most current policy information, always refer to the official NESAs BN Program Guidelines and Forms Website: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/healthsciences/policies>

Approved by/date: NESAs Joint Faculty Council; May 11, 2026