

Policy: Fitness to Practice

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing (BN) Programs, as developing professionals, are fit to engage safely, competently, and ethically in academic and clinical learning activities. This policy outlines expectations and procedures for identifying, supporting, and addressing situations where a student's fitness to practice may be in question, and includes the following aspects:

- Understanding what *Fitness to Practice* means and its relevance to their practice as students
- Awareness of the resources available to maintain their *Fitness to Practice*
- Awareness of the process and need to initiate a *Fitness to Practice* occupational health assessment if their fitness to practice is compromised.

All nurses (including student nurses) are responsible and accountable to maintain and ensure their own fitness to practice. If they are aware that they do not have the necessary physical, mental, or emotional capacity to practice safely and competently, nurses have the responsibility and ethical duty to withdraw from the provision of care and to take the necessary steps to regain their fitness to practice (CNA, 2025).

The BN Programs require students to participate in classroom, laboratory, and clinical practice settings to develop the knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes necessary to earn a baccalaureate degree in nursing and to be eligible for registration as a Registered Nurse (RN) upon graduation. These varied learning environments are intentionally selected to support students in achieving the graduate outcomes of the nursing program.

Each learning activity has specific requirements that are directly linked to students' achievement of program outcomes. The terminal outcomes of the program are aligned with the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CRNA) Entry-Level Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses.

DEFINITIONS:

Fitness to Practice (FTP): Is the capacity to meet the CRNA Practice Standards and the Canadian Nurses Association Code of Ethics for Nurses, through professional conduct, clinical competence and the ability to provide safe and effective care. Being fit to practice includes having the physical and psychological (emotional, behavioural and cognitive) capacity to fulfill all aspects of nursing practice.

Incapacity: A physical, mental or emotional condition or disorder, or an addiction to alcohol and/or drugs as defined in the Pharmacy and Drug Act or other chemicals that impairs the ability to provide professional services in a safe and competent manner (Health Professions Act, 2026).

FTP Occupational Health Assessment (FTP-OHA): an assessment actioned by a qualified, regulated health care professional to determine the presence of any limitations or restrictions to practice, as well as the need for any practice accommodation, based on the specific FTP concern. The FTP assessment will also consider any occupational health requirements, the specific characteristics of the practice environment, the safety of all individuals in the practice setting, and the academic requirements of the placement (Alberta Health Services, 2015).

Accommodation: “Accommodation is the process of making alterations to the delivery of services so that those services become accessible to more people, including persons with disabilities. Accommodation has allowed many talented persons with disabilities to make major contributions to life in Canada and around the world.” (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2021; University of Lethbridge, 2026).

Duty to Accommodate: “accommodation must be provided in a manner that most respects the dignity of the person, if to do so does not create undue hardship. Dignity includes consideration of how accommodation is provided and the individual’s own participation in the process.” (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2021; University of Lethbridge, 2026).

Undue Hardship: “occurs if accommodation would create significantly onerous conditions for an employer or service provider, for example, intolerable financial costs or serious disruption to business. An employer or service provider must make every effort to make reasonable accommodation for an employee or client/customer. Some hardship may be necessary in making an accommodation; only when the point of undue hardship is reached is the employer’s or service provider’s duty to accommodate fulfilled” (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2021).

Self-Care: The practice of taking an active role in protecting one’s own health and well-being, particularly during periods of stress (Oxford Living Dictionary, 2025).

POLICY SCOPE:

This policy applies to all students in the BN Programs engaged in teaching and learning activities *in all practice environments*. During their program, students are asked to complete physically, cognitively, and emotionally challenging clinical learning activities like those required of a practicing Registered Nurse. Students in the BN Programs are expected to be aware of the *CRNA Requisite Skills and Abilities for Becoming a Registered Nurse in Alberta* (2023), which outlines the general demands and performance expectations of registered nurses (RNs) upon initial entry to practice in Alberta.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Accommodations may be available to support students in meeting program requirements, provided that essential learning outcomes and the safety of students, clients, patients, and clinical partners are not compromised.

Students requiring accommodation due to a documented disability or medical condition must register with the Accessible Learning Centre (ALC) at Lethbridge Polytechnic and/or the University of Lethbridge as early as possible. Early registration ensures that accommodation requests are reviewed and implemented in accordance with institutional policies, applicable legislation, and required deadlines.

Accommodations in clinical or experiential learning settings may be provided when they do not compromise program requirements or the safety and well-being of any individuals involved. In some cases, accommodation may not be feasible due to the nature of the clinical environment, placement requirements, essential program requirements, or requirements established by relevant professional or regulatory bodies, such as the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta.

The BN Programs are committed to making reasonable efforts to accommodate students, in collaboration with clinical practice sites, and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Lethbridge Polytechnic and/or the University of Lethbridge. These efforts are guided by the following principles:

- Accommodations must ensure the safety of patients/clients, students, and others in the practice setting.
- Accommodations must be acceptable to the clinical practice site.
- Accommodations must not create undue hardship for the institution or the practice site.
- Accommodations are intended to support student success by removing barriers; however, they do not alter required performance standards or exempt students from achieving essential competencies.
- Due to the involvement of external clinical partners, some accommodations require advance coordination and approval. Students must submit accommodation requests at least one month prior to the start of the clinical course.

SPECIFICS OF THE POLICY:

1. As students are still learning and developing as emerging professionals, faculty members and/or practice instructors may need to assist students in recognizing, reporting, and addressing their fitness-to-practice issues or concerns. This requires careful, context-sensitive judgment and fairness when helping students be accountable to FTP requirements.
2. Students are expected to take the necessary steps to maintain their own FTP. Numerous resources are available on both campuses to assist students in developing appropriate and effective self-care strategies to maintain their own FTP. For more information, follow the

links found on these webpages:

- a. University of Lethbridge (UL) Services for Students –
<https://www.uleth.ca/services-for-students>
 - b. Lethbridge Polytechnic (LP) Student Supports –
<https://lethpolytech.ca/departments/accessibility-services/student-supports>
3. An FTP issue or concern may be identified by any one of the following:
 - a. Self-identified
 - b. Identified by theory or practice instructor
 - c. Identified by peer, colleague, or practice partner
 - d. Identified by someone else (Ex: healthcare provider, employer, patient etc.)
4. When an FTP issue or concern about a student is identified, the Practice Coordinator (PC) at LP, or the Assistant Dean-Nursing (AD) at UL, as appropriate, must be notified immediately. It is the role of the PC or AD to guide the student through the approved BN Programs process of assessing and navigating the FTP issue or concern.
5. After meeting with the PC or AD, an FTP-OHA will be initiated if appropriate. During this process, the student is not permitted to return to the practice site. As the process may take time, students must notify the PC or AD promptly to allow for timely assessment and potential return. Any practice time missed during the FTP process will be recorded as absences and may affect the student's ability to meet course outcomes and successfully complete the practice course. Once an FTP-OHA has been completed, the PC or AD will review the results of the assessment and determine the next steps. The assessment will determine if any restrictions or limitations apply to the students' practice, and the duration of those restrictions or limitations. The assessment will also specify what, if any, accommodation is required. These accommodations will be evaluated by the PC or AD, in collaboration with the practice site representative, and the institutional Accessible Learning Centre, for feasibility. Accommodation decisions are guided by Lethbridge Polytechnic/University of Lethbridge Duty to Accommodate, institutional policies and procedures, and Alberta Human Rights policies, which recognize both the right to reasonable accommodation and the limits of accommodation where safety, essential program requirements, or undue hardship apply.
6. If, in consultation with the practice instructor, it is determined that the restrictions or limitations imposed by the FTP-OHA will prevent the student from meeting the course/ learning outcomes of the practice course, the student will be required to withdraw from the practice course and meet with an Academic Advisor for follow-up.

APPENDIX:

N/A

RELATED POLICIES/ASSOCIATED GUIDELINES:

- BN Programs Policy: Professional Conduct
- BN Programs Policy: Progression in Praxis
- Lethbridge Polytechnic Policy: Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Lethbridge Polytechnic Policy: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Policy
- University of Lethbridge Policy: Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Policy
- University of Lethbridge Policy: Assessment of Student Learning Policy and Procedures (Undergraduate Students)
- University of Lethbridge Policy: Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- University of Lethbridge Undergraduate Calendar

REFERENCES:

- Alberta Health Services. (2015). *Fitness to practice: Student placements*. Practice Support Document (Guideline) # 1165: Alberta Health Services.
- Alberta Human Rights Commission. (2021). *Duty to accommodate*.
<https://albertahumanrights.ab.ca/media/pgrdfmor/duty-to-accommodate-2021.pdf>
- Alberta Human Rights Commission. (2021). *Duty to accommodate students with disabilities in post-secondary educational institutions*. <https://albertahumanrights.ab.ca/media/cumfooet/duty-to-accommodate-students-with-disabilities.pdf>
- Canadian Nurses Association. (2025). *Code of ethics for nurses*. <https://www.cna-aiic.ca/en/nursing/regulated-nursing-in-canada/nursing-ethics/2025-coe>
- College of Registered Nurses of Alberta. (2019). *Entry-level competencies for the practice of registered nurses*. <https://cms.nurses.ab.ca/media/p4nel3mq/9-entry-level-competencies-for-the-practice-of-registered-nurses-mar-2019.pdf>
- College of Registered Nurses of Alberta. (2023). *Requisite skills and abilities for becoming a registered nurse in Alberta*. <https://www.nurses.ab.ca/media/bhvmngcz/requisite-skills-and-abilities-for-becoming-a-registered-nurse-in-alberta-2022.pdf>
- Oxford English Dictionary (2025). *Self-care*.
<https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=self+care>
- Province of Alberta. (2026). *Health professions act*. <https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/H07.pdf>

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; September 2, 2026

Appendix A



Fitness to Practice Occupational Health Assessment Request Letter

DATE:

Dear {name}:

This letter is being provided to you to assist you in receiving a Fitness to Practice Occupational Health Assessment (FTP-OHA) from an appropriately regulated healthcare professional. An FTP-OHA is required due to the following issues or concerns related to your fitness to practice (FTP):

You are currently enrolled in **NSG/NURS** _____ for the _____ semester and are assigned to clinical practice shifts at _____. You will not be permitted to return to practice until the assessment is complete, your signed Fitness to Practice Occupational Health Assessment and Recommendations Form has been submitted to your Practice or Program Coordinator, and a determination has been made.

It is recommended that you meet with the following type(s) of healthcare professional/s to have your FTP issues and concerns assessed:

You must have your healthcare professional complete the Fitness to Practice Occupational Health Assessment and Recommendations Form in response to these questions. Any costs associated with filling out the form will be your responsibility. To assist the healthcare professional in their assessment, please share all relevant documents provided to you.

Please address the following questions:

- Are there any limitations or restrictions to mobility (lifting, standing, sitting, moving)?
- Are there any limitations or restrictions to the length of time the individual can practice?
- Are there any limitations or restrictions of a mental or emotional nature?
- Are there additional limitations or restrictions?
- What is the anticipated duration of the identified limitation or restriction?
- Are there any recommended accommodations for the identified limitation or restriction?
- What is the recommended follow up?

Thank you.

Practice Coordinator (LP)/Assistant Dean-Nursing (UL)
Bachelor of Nursing (BN) Programs

Appendix B



Fitness to Practice Occupational Health Assessment and Recommendation Form

Healthcare Provider Information:

Assessed By: _____

Professional Designation: _____

Clinic Name and Contact Number: _____

Assessment Information:

Person Assessed: _____

Date Assessed: _____

Reason(s) for Assessment (Injury/Illness/Concern): List all that apply.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Restrictions or Limitations (Please list and indicate expected duration):

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

Recommended Accommodations (Please list and indicate recommended duration):

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

Recommended Follow up (Please list and indicate date):

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

☐

Based on my assessment, the student is medically fit to participate in clinical practice and meets the physical, cognitive, and emotional demands required for safe practice.

☐

Based on my assessment, the student is **not** currently medically fit to participate in clinical practice and does **not** meet the physical, cognitive, and emotional demands required for safe practice.

Signature of Healthcare Provider: _____

STUDENT CONSENT TO SHARE FTP INFORMATION (Student to Complete):

I, _____, consent to the sharing of this information with the practice site representative in the relevant practice setting as well as my practice instructor(s). I understand that this sharing of information is for the purposes of facilitating potential re-entry to that practice setting.

Signature _____ Date: _____