



School of Nursing Professional Student Policy

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The School of Nursing at Queen's University holds the values of *professionalism* as core obligations to patients, students, the health care community, and society at large. The achievement of the professionalism competencies found in the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) Entry-to-Practice Competencies are a necessary requirement for the granting of a Queen's Bachelor of Nursing Science (BNSc) degree. It is recognized, in rare circumstances an individual's behavior may be considered incompatible with continued education toward a future career in nursing and thereby prohibits the granting of a BNSc Degree.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all students upon acceptance to the School of Nursing at Queen's University and includes:
- 2.1.1 All educational settings, including classrooms, field placements and examinations.
 - 2.1.2 All clinical settings that are part of the learning program including, but not limited to, hospitals, clinics, community health centres and ambulatory settings.
 - 2.1.3 Conduct that has a real and substantial connection to the legitimate interests of the School of Nursing and or the members of the School of Nursing. These interests may include, but are not limited to, the operation, administration and reputation of the School of Nursing and its members.
 - 2.1.4 Electronic communication.
 - 2.1.5 Social Media Platforms: (including but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, Course Hero, blogs, online forums) as well as university-managed platforms.
 - 2.1.6 Any time a student can be identified as a Queen's University nursing student.

2.2 Guiding Principles

- 2.2.1 This student professionalism policy is based on the following definition of a profession:

"An occupation whose core element is work based upon the mastery of a complex body of knowledge and skills. It is a vocation in which knowledge of some department of science or learning or the practice of an art founded upon it is used in the service of others. Its members are governed by codes of ethics and profess a commitment to competence, integrity and morality, altruism, and the promotion of the public good within their domain. These commitments form the basis of a social contract between a profession and society, which in return grants the profession a monopoly over the use of

its knowledge base, the right to considerable autonomy in practice and the privilege of self-regulation. Professions and their members are accountable to those served and to society.” (Cruess et al., 2004, p. 74)

2.2.2 Professionalism Online:

Nursing students must always maintain a level of professionalism consistent with the university’s code of conduct and the ethical standards of the nursing profession.

Social media accounts (both personal and public) should reflect honesty, respect, accountability, and empathy.

2.2.3 Separation of Personal and Professional Content:

Students are encouraged to clearly separate their professional identity from their private social media presence. However, when associating themselves publicly with nursing (e.g., using a degree or nursing title), they must do so responsibly.

2.3 Relevant Standards of Conduct

In evaluating the behavior of students who are studying to enter the nursing profession, this policy will be guided by the most recent version of the standards of conduct expected of the profession including, but not limited to, the following:

2.3.1 The College of Nurses of Ontario

- Entry-to-Practice Competencies for Registered Nurses
- Code of Conduct
- Confidentiality and Privacy-Personal Health Information
- Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship
- Professional Misconduct

2.3.2 The Canadian Nurses Association

- Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses

2.3.3 The Queen’s University Student Code of Conduct

2.3.4 The Codes of Conduct of the Queen’s University Teaching Hospitals

2.3.5 Queen’s University Policies on Academic Integrity (including the six fundamental values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage [International Center for Academic Integrity]).

3.0 Confidentiality and HIPAA Compliance

3.1 Patient Confidentiality

3.1.1 At no time shall any nursing student disclose patient-specific information, photographs, or any content that might indirectly or directly identify a patient or their health status on any social media platform.

3.1.2 Avoid discussing clinical cases or experiences in a way that could breach

confidentiality or violate HIPAA guidelines when in private or public settings. When discussing case studies for educational purposes, ensure that all information is fully de-identified.

3.2 Institutional and Faculty Confidentiality

- 3.2.1 Do not share sensitive or proprietary information related to the university's clinical operations, course content, or faculty communications.
- 3.2.2 Refrain from discussing internal policies, upcoming changes, or personnel information on public platforms.

4.0 Content Standards and Posting Guidelines

4.1 Appropriate Content

- 4.1.1 Posts should be respectful and professional. Avoid use of profanity, offensive language, or content that could be considered discriminatory, harassing, or defamatory.
- 4.1.2 Students must express opinions clearly as their own and include proper disclaimers if they discuss controversial or politically charged topics.

4.2 Accuracy and Integrity

- 4.2.1 Ensure all shared information is accurate, evidence-based, and aligns with professional nursing standards.
- 4.2.2 If sharing news or external content, verify the source's credibility and provide proper credit.

4.3 Visual Content

- 4.3.1 When posting images or videos, ensure that no patient, colleague, or sensitive data is recognizable unless explicit written consent has been obtained.

4.4 Intellectual Property

- 4.4.1 Respect copyright and intellectual property rights. Do not post materials or resources without proper permission or citation.

5.0 Personal vs. Professional Liability

5.1 Personal Responsibility

- 5.1.1 Students must understand that they are solely responsible for the content they post. Mistakes or unprofessional posts may have significant consequences, including disciplinary action from the university and potential ramifications for their future career.

5.2 Legal Compliance

- 5.2.1 Students must comply with all relevant laws, regulations, and institutional

policies when using social media. Violations may result in legal consequences or university sanctions.

6.0 Classification of Professional Behavior

6.1 Exemplary Professional Behavior

Exemplary professional behavior is about exhibiting exceptional commitment to the principles of nursing professionalism, above and beyond standard expectations, that is recognized by peers, patients, family members, instructors, health care team members, members of the wider university community or a member of the public.

6.2 Concerning Professional Behavior

Incidents that raise concern about professional behavior will be classified into the following levels of increasing severity. In assessing harm, consideration will be given to all forms of potential or actual harm, including harm to reputation [reference [Section 2.3](#) for standards].

Level I

- a. The first professionalism concern and
- b. There is no or very minor direct or indirect past or ongoing harm to others (faculty, other students, patients, the public or institutions) and
- c. The student acknowledges and accepts responsibility for their role in the incident and
- d. The potential to be addressed with, but not limited to, education, apology and or reflection.

Level II

- a. A previous Level I concern and or
- b. A minor direct or indirect past or ongoing harm to others (faculty, other students, patients, the public or institutions). Includes reputational harm and
- c. The student has insight into the concerns raised by the incident and
- d. The potential to be addressed through, but not limited to, education, apology, reflection, and/or formal course of study.

Level III

- a. A previous Level I or II concern(s) and or
- b. There is significant, or potential for significant, direct or indirect past or ongoing harm to others (faculty, other students, patients, the public or institutions) and or
- c. The student may show limited insight into the concerns raised by the incident and
- d. The potential to be addressed through a formal program and reassessment.

Level IV

Any of the following:

- a. Previous professionalism concerns raised and or
- b. Egregious, or potential for egregious harm to others (e.g., faculty, other students, patients, the public or institutions) and or
- c. Professional behavior inconsistent with a future career in nursing (refer to [Section 2.3](#) on standards).

7.0 Procedures

7.1 Reporting Exemplary Behavior

7.1.1 Incidents of exemplary student professional behavior will be submitted in writing to the Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs.

7.2 Reporting Concerning Professional Behavior

7.2.1 Reports on professionalism concerns will be received by the Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs, by way of:

- A report from a Course Professor/Course Coordinator/Clinical Lead/Clinical Instructor, Preceptor or other applicable individual.
- A communication by faculty or other students.
- A report from the community, a hospital or other agency.
- Any other means.

7.2.2 Information about the concern is then gathered by the Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs, for review and determination if additional information is needed.

7.2.3 If additional information is needed from the individual(s) involved, the Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs, may elect to meet with the individual(s) or obtain additional information.

7.3 Disposition

7.3.1 Exemplary Behavior

Incidents of exemplary student professional behavior will be documented in the student's file.

7.3.2 Concerning Professional Behavior

The Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs, will determine the level of finding the matter/incident is classified.

7.3.2.1 If the Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs, determines there are no grounds to continue, then the matter is closed and there is no documentation on the student's file.

7.3.2.2 Incidents that are resolved as Level I concerns will be documented and communicated to the student involved but are

not noted on the student file and carry no burden of disclosure by the student unless new issues (i.e., either different concerns and or additional information about the initial concern) arise during the student's time in the nursing program. They are documented in the Undergraduate Nursing Student Professionalism Policy folder solely for reference in the event further concerns and or additional information comes to light.

- 7.3.2.3 Level II, III and IV findings will be communicated to the student and will be noted in the student's file.

7.4 Outcomes

- 7.4.1 The outcomes regarding professionalism concerns will consider the following and will align with:
- The level at which the lapse is classified;
 - The history of previous concerns of professional behavior by the student;
 - The level of responsibility shown by the student; and
 - Any extenuating and mitigating circumstances (including restrictions applied by partnering agencies).
- 7.4.2 Level I to III professionalism concerns are viewed first as an opportunity for education and remediation. The intent is to provide opportunities for students to become conscious of their professional obligations and learn how to alter their behavior accordingly. Whenever possible, consequences should reflect this intent.
- 7.4.3 The Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs, will determine the classification and outcomes of professionalism concerns to the student. Further, at their discretion, they may establish an ad hoc time-limited committee, with appropriate representation, for additional guidance and support in managing professional behavior concerns Levels II-IV.
- 7.4.4 Level IV concerns will result in the student being required to withdraw from the Queen's nursing program. The determination of the Level IV concern will be made by the Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs, in consultation with the Director, School of Nursing.
- 7.4.5 The recommendation(s) of the Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs, will be communicated to the student in writing. The student will be informed of their option to appeal to the School of Nursing Undergraduate Academic Progress and Graduation Committee based on procedural and or extenuating circumstances.