



Department of Nursing

Policy #009
Professionalism

Status:	Originated 2017-08-13 Revised 2024-04-22, 2019-02-15
Effective:	2024-04-22
Initiated by:	Bylaws, Policies, & Handbooks Committee
WAC:	WAC 246-840-519, WAC 246-840-700, WAC 246-840-710

PURPOSE

The education of students in the Heritage University Nursing Department (HUND) is based on the concept that integrity, sense of responsibility, and self-discipline are inherent to the profession of nursing. The responsibility of individual students to sustain high ethical standards is parallel to the concept that the professional nurse must be accountable for professional standards in the practice of nursing (American Nurses Association, 2015). The continuation and enhancement of professional standards within the academic community and nursing profession are the individual responsibility of each student and faculty member. Mutual respect and trustworthiness between the faculty and students promote optimal learning. The purpose of this policy is to provide the student with information to meet these expectations.

AUDIENCE

This policy applies to all HUND students.

PLAN

Students are expected to exhibit behavior appropriate to the profession of nursing. They must assume personal responsibility for being in physical and mental condition to provide safe nursing care and for the knowledge and skills necessary to give this care.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This policy covers all student academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular activities that may have an adverse impact on Heritage University, the Nursing Department, faculty, staff, students, patients, clinical staff, or impacts fitness for the profession and eligibility for licensure regardless of whether the activity takes place on or off campus.

Students must conduct themselves to conform to the Washington State Board of Nursing (WABON) Washington Administrative Code Standards of Nursing Conduct (WAC 246-840-700), the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics with Interpretive Statements (ANA, 2015); and the National Student Nurses Association Code of Ethics (NSNA, 2022).

Professionalism

Nursing professionalism is comprised of behaviors, practices, and communication styles that demonstrate core values of nurses working to achieve optimal health outcomes in patients, families,

and communities. This includes conduct that applies the principles of altruism, excellence, caring, ethics, respect, communication, and accountability. Students learn these principles through self-assessment, self-reflection, responsible learning, accountability, effective communication, and continuous professional engagement. Unprofessional behavior may be addressed by this policy or through the Heritage University Student Code of Conduct (HU Catalog).

Safety

Safety is inherent in professionalism. The term patient safety means, “the prevention of harm to patients.” It includes human factors, teamwork, communication, patient management, and clinical performance.

Expected Student Behaviors

- 1) **POSITIVE COMMUNICATION**: communication is the exchange of ideas, thoughts, or feelings by verbal, non-verbal, and written actions; positive communication is verbal and written communication that is clear, coherent, timely, honest, concise, and patient-centered. Students are encouraged to develop pronunciation, pitch, and intonation appropriate for the environment. Non-verbal skills include gestures that are appropriate and employ the skill of listening to assimilate information. Cultural awareness builds upon identifying issues to alleviate communication obstacles resulting from health literacy, disparities, authority gradients, cultural differences, and language barriers.
- 2) **SELF-AWARENESS** is the ability to recognize and look at inner thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different feelings, label them appropriately, and then use emotional information to guide behavior. Through self-evaluation and validation of feedback, students will reflect upon experiences summarizing accurately strengths and learning needs to build confidence with realistic perspectives about capabilities. Students are held accountable to defend their perspective, including unpopular or unsafe practices.
- 3) **SELF-CARE** is promoting and maintaining personal well-being. Students enter the HUND knowing they must take responsibility for all aspects of their own health including but not limited to physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health. This includes demonstrating sensory capabilities or appropriate compensation and the ability to perform the physical requirements of clinical practice. It is students' responsibility to acquire adequate rest and nutrition and to manage personal stress. It is also students' responsibility to report to faculty if they are unable to participate in learning due to illness of any kind.
- 4) **RESPONSIBLE LEARNING** is demonstrated by taking control and ownership for learning. This is displayed by being engaged in academic tasks, persistent in self-learning, seeking feedback, and notifying faculty if not achieving course or program objectives. Efforts are made to follow the clinical agencies' clinical policies, procedures, and principles by adhering to submission of clinical requirements. Students must practice within their scope of knowledge and skills and recognize personal limitations while working only under appropriate supervision.
- 5) **PROFESSIONAL IMAGE** is the appearance of an individual or profession outside the discipline. Students are guided to uphold a positive professional image by portraying a compassionate demeanor and demonstrating respect of others with behaviors that are focused on patient care and

learning. Students will be cordial to peers and demonstrate flexibility, professional etiquette, and civility. Students will adhere to standards of professional image in Nursing Policy #039 Dress Code, partner agency's policies, and the HU Student Code of Conduct (HU Catalog).

Students are accountable to explain and justify their intentions, actions, and omissions. Students are guided in their development of professional behaviors yet are responsible to demonstrate the competencies listed above. Demonstrating professional behavior is required for passing in all didactic, laboratory, and clinical settings regardless of performance in other areas or grade in the course.

Definitions of Unacceptable Behavior

The following behaviors are examples of violations of the Professionalism Policy. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive – behaviors that violate cited codes of conduct or other basic ethical or professional standards are also covered by this policy. In addition, attempts at misconduct as well as completed acts of misconduct are violations of this policy.

- 1) **PLAGIARISM**: taking credit for someone else's work or ideas regardless of the media, stealing others' results or methods, copying the writing of others without proper citations, quotation marks, or other forms of proper acknowledgment, or otherwise taking credit falsely.
- 2) **CHEATING**: using or attempting to use unauthorized notes, study aids, technology, and/or information on an examination, report, paper, or other evaluative document; unauthorized altering of a graded work after it has been returned then submitting the work for re-grading; and/or allowing another person to do all or part of one's work and to submit the work under one's own name.
- 3) **FALSIFICATION OF DATA**: dishonesty in reporting results, ranging from sheer 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.
- 4) **FALSIFICATION OF DATA OR INFORMATION TO UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS, FACULTY, STAFF, OR CLINICAL PERSONNEL**: dishonesty in reporting false data or information either verbally or written.
- 5) **AIDING AND ABETTING DISHONESTY**: providing material, information, or assistance to another person with the knowledge or reasonable expectation that the material, information, or assistance will be used to commit an act that would be prohibited by this policy or that is prohibited by law or another applicable code of conduct. Students are responsible for reporting cheating or dishonesty if they observe a breach therein.
- 6) **VIOLATING INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING COMPLETION OF ASSIGNMENTS**: although independent study is recognized as a primary method of effective learning, at times students benefit from studying together and discussing assignments. When any material is to be turned in for inspection, grading, or evaluation, it is the responsibility of the student to ascertain what cooperation between them, if any, is permitted by the instructor.
- 7) **FALSIFICATION OF ACADEMIC RECORDS OR OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS**: without proper authorization, altering documents affecting academic records, forging signatures of authorization, or falsifying information on an official academic document, election form, grade report, letter of permission, petition, clinical record, or any other official university document.

- 8) MISUSE OF TECHNOLOGY: this includes the unauthorized use of electronic instruments, such as computers, tablets, cell phones, or translators to access or share information; use of electronic instruments during a didactic, laboratory, or clinical course that is not related to current course activity; electronic falsification of information or records; posting or blogging Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), or other such protected information on social media or public sites; posting “fake” information on social media or public sites; electronic harassment, cyberbullying, or stalking; and use of or viewing nudity or sexual acts without a person’s knowledge or permission.
- 9) PROVIDING NURSING CARE IN AN UNSAFE OR HARMFUL MANNER: this includes carrying out a procedure without competence or without the guidance of a qualified person; willfully or intentionally doing physical or mental harm to a patient; exhibiting careless or negligent behavior in connection with the care of a patient; and refusing to assume the assigned and necessary care of a patient and failing to inform the instructor and nursing staff with immediacy so that an alternative measure for that care can be found.
- 10) DISRESPECTING THE PRIVACY OF A PATIENT OR FAMILY MEMBER: removing from the clinical site or including in any assignment any identifying patient information (e.g. full name, last name, or position) such that a patient could be identified; discussing confidential patient information in public areas or areas where discussion could be overheard or with third parties who do not have a clear and legitimate need to know; sharing identifying information about patients or family members on social networking sites and devices; and any other violation of HIPAA (USDHSS, 2024).
- 11) FALSIFYING PATIENT RECORDS OR FABRICATING NURSING CARE OR PATIENT EXPERIENCES: this includes fabrication in written materials and verbal reports for the clinical area as well as written material and verbal reports for the department.
- 12) FAILING TO REPORT AN ERROR OF COMMISSION OR OMISSION IN TREATMENT OR MEDICATIONS: failure to report an error of commission or omission to the appropriate people, including clinical staff, clinical administration, and nursing program faculty.
- 13) SUBSTANCE USE: using any substance (over the counter, prescribed, or illicit including alcohol and cannabis) in such a manner as to impair one’s judgment or performance in class, clinical setting, or other HUND sanctioned event; possessing any illicit substance; selling or distributing any substance (including alcohol and cannabis) on HU campus or associated site.
- 14) COMMISSION OF A CRIME: engaging in illegal or criminal activity that would impact the student’s ability to obtain or maintain a professional license or employment in the nursing profession. The results of criminal proceedings will not be determinative of proceedings under this policy.
- 15) DISRESPECTFUL VERBAL OR WRITTEN COMMUNICATION: disrespectful verbal and written communication: students are expected to be respectful and considerate in verbal and written communication with faculty, staff, clinical staff, patients, and other students.
- 16) DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR: obstructing or disrupting classes, team projects, talks or other presentations, or other activities or programs of the school or other parts of the University and

obstructing access to school community assets or to similar resources in other parts of the University.

- 17) **HARASSMENT**: this includes not only sexual harassment, but also hazing, stalking, making phone calls or transmitting documents that are uninvited and unwanted, making threats, and any other wrongful conduct that seriously interferes with the work or study of any member of the school community, guest, or any person with whom the offender is interacting in connection with any school program or activity.
- 18) **OTHER PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT**: violation of the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses (2015) or NSNA Code of Ethics (2022) is unacceptable. Nursing students are expected to, “maintain compassionate and caring relationships with colleagues and others with a commitment to the fair treatment of individuals, to integrity-preserving compromise, and to resolving conflict. This standard of conduct precludes any and all prejudicial actions, any form of harassment or threatening behavior, or disregard for the effect of one’s actions on others” (ANA, 2015, pg. 9).
- 19) **OBSTRUCTING THE INVESTIGATION OF A POSSIBLE VIOLATION OF THIS POLICY**: obstructing the investigation of a possible violation of this policy including making dishonest or misleading statements either verbally or written, including emails; other falsification of information; altering, destroying, or deleting relevant documents, files, or emails; and any other act that hinders an investigation.

Reporting an Alleged Infraction

All members of the HUND community – faculty, administrators, staff, and students – have a responsibility to report any reasonable suspicion that a student has violated this policy.

All faculty members are required to report all incidents of professional misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, falsification of data, and violation of nursing standards) that occur in their course to the Nursing Director. It is important that all faculty report all misconduct so that there can be fairness in the application of this policy.

Any questions regarding the meaning of any provision of this policy will be decided by the Nursing Director. The Director’s decision as to any questions of interpretation is final.

The Director will contact the Washington State Board of Nursing for direction in any case of ethical, legal, or professional policy violation.

CITED AND RELATED POLICIES

Cited

- Nursing Policy #039 Dress Code
- Heritage University Code of Conduct
- Heritage University Student Rights and Responsibilities

Related

- Nursing Policy #008 Progression
- Nursing Policy #029 Attendance
- Nursing Policy #031 Reporting of Errors and Near Misses
- Nursing Policy #033 Student Rights and Responsibilities

WAC

Washington State Legislature. (2016). WAC 246-840-519. *Student requirements in all approved nursing education programs*. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=246-840-519>

Washington State Legislature. (2022). WAC 246-840-700. *Standards of nursing conduct or practice*. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=246-840-700>

Washington State Legislature. (2022). WAC 246-840-710. *Violations of standards of nursing conduct or practice*. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=246-840-710>

REFERENCES

American Nurses Association. (2015). *Code of ethics for nurses with interpretive statements*. American Nurses Association. <http://www.nursingworld.org/Code-of-Ethics>

Heritage University. (n.d.) *Catalog*. <http://catalog.heritage.edu/>

Heritage University Nursing Department. (n.d.) *Nursing Policies*. <https://heritage.edu/academic-paths/undergraduate-degrees/nursing/nursing-department/nursing-policies/>

National Student Nurses Association. (2022). *Code of Ethics*. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/a229ong58d5jx4p/Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf>

US Department of Education. (2011). *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

US Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). *Modifications to the HIPAA Privacy Rule – Final Rule*. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/hipaa-privacy-rule-support-reproductive-health-care-privacy.pdf>

FORMS

No forms are associated with this policy.

POLICY REVIEWERS

Proposed revisions of this policy should be reviewed by:

- 1) Bylaws, Policies, and Handbooks Committee [initiating committee]
- 2) Nursing Faculty Assembly

Nursing Director Signature:

