

Students in Clinical Practice Settings

Rankin School of Nursing

Academic Regulation



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Table of Contents

PURPOSE	3
SCOPE.....	3
ACADEMIC REGULATION.....	3
PROCEDURE	4
RELATED MATERIALS.....	9

PURPOSE

This document outlines the expectations of students in clinical practice settings (direct/indirect supervision or preceptored practice) and the formal responsibilities of all nurse educators and/or nursing faculty to support students in meeting practice standards in clinical settings, and to outline the procedures to be followed when students do not meet the expectations.

At StFX, the Rankin School of Nursing (SON) is guided by adult learning principles that support learner success. Additionally, the SON is obligated to follow the CNA Code of Ethics (2017, p. 41), which states “Nursing faculty, preceptors, and nursing students place the safety and wellbeing of the [persons in care] above all other objectives, including education obligations”.

SCOPE

These procedures apply to all nursing students, all nurse educators and/or nursing faculty who supervise student learning in nursing clinical practice, the course professor (if applicable), the Associate Director, and the Director of the SON.

ACADEMIC REGULATION

Students who are minimally meeting or not meeting Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics will be required to undergo further assessment and participate in additional learning as per the procedures detailed below to complete their clinical practice successfully.

PROCEDURE

Actions

Responsibility

Students participating in practica are engaged directly in clinical practice involving Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics of the Nova Scotia College of Nursing (NSCN) and Canadian Nurses Association (CAN), as outlined in the [Registered Nurses Act of the province of Nova Scotia](#). Students must provide safe, quality care to vulnerable populations (such as the very young, the infirmed elderly, and the ill) within the context of a highly complex health system. As such, students are expected to adhere to the NSCN [Standards of Practice for Registered Nurses](#) and the [Canadian Nursing Association's Code of Ethics](#) as well as Rankin School of Nursing Policies and relevant agency policies (such as policies particular to their clinical placement environment). The legislation, standards, codes, and policies referred to in this paragraph are collectively referred to as 'Standards of Professional Ethics or Practice'. Students participating in practica act as ambassadors of the Rankin School of Nursing and StFX.

Failure to meet expected Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics includes insurances when a student:

- Fails to check patients' armbands despite reminders
- Prepares to administer a medication without evident knowledge of the medication
- Does not recognize or fails to communicate significant changes in patient condition to their nurse educator and/or nursing faculty and their clinical unit nurse supervisors
- Breaches professional boundaries by sharing personal information inappropriately
- Bases care on myth and misinformation rather than best evidence reasonably available

The above are common examples of a breach of standards of professional ethics or practice. The list is representative and, therefore, not exhaustive of behaviour that may constitute a breach. It is the student's responsibility to read and understand all Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics applicable to his or her practicum context.

In any instance where student conduct in a practicum presents a breach of the standards of professional ethics or practice, the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty must identify the standard in question, in context with the situation, on the day that the event occurred, or when the breach becomes known to the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty (continue with Step 1.).

In any instance when student conduct includes:

- Physical, verbal, and/or emotional violence to patients, other students, StFX staff or staff of the agency
- Significant patient neglect
- Dangerous or neglectful practice
- Breach of federal narcotics control regulation
- Theft
- Conduct that causes or contributes to sentinel event
- Use or impairment by alcohol, cannabis or other substance while providing patient care
- Repeated unexcused absences from clinicals
- Lying about conduct during clinical practice or covering up any misconduct

The nurse educator and/or nursing faculty is to report the incident to the Associate Director immediately (continue to Step 3 and 4).

The nurse educator and/or nursing faculty is to report concerns at any step of the intervention process to the Associate Director.

Breaches are cumulative throughout the program. For example, if a student breaches the Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics in year 3 of the program, a breach in year 4 in a different practicum setting is a second infraction. For this reason, a note of each breach shall be recorded on the student's electronic file for future reference.

Students are entitled to bring a support person when attending meetings concerning a possible breach of Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics. A support person may be anyone from the University Community that the student chooses to assist them in the process. The support person must respect the confidentiality of all persons involved in the case. If a student wishes to be accompanied by a support person, the student must notify the Associate Director, 24 hours before the meeting, so that arrangements can be made.

1. Corrective Feedback and Learning Plans for Practice Improvement

When student conduct in clinical practice breaches professional standards of practice or code of ethics, the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty is to verify the student's electronic file to determine whether this consists of the student's first, continued, or second infraction.

1.1 First Infraction: When student conduct in a clinical practicum breaches standards of professional ethics or practice, the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty will engage in a confidential verbal consultation with the student outlining the correction to be made as well as steps for improvement. This consultation will be based on principles of adult learning and respect and explore the student's perspective on what occurred with the overall intent of finding a way to improve the student's practice. The nurse educator and/or nursing faculty will document the **verbal feedback** in his or her own records and place a copy of the documentation in the student's electronic file. If the student is receptive to feedback and implements as directed, the corrective process is concluded.

Student, Nurse Educator, and/or Nursing Faculty

If the student fails to adequately implement the verbal feedback, proceed to Step 1.2.

1.2 Second or Continued Infraction: If the student fails to implement the verbal feedback, Steps 1.2 to 1.6 apply. If the student breaches the Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics again, Steps 1.2 to 1.6 apply. The nurse educator and or nursing faculty will meet with the student as per Item 1.1 and must document the circumstances of the meeting. Within three working days, using university email, the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty will provide the student with **written recommendations** citing the NSCN Standards of Practice, the CNA Code of Ethics, and/or other relevant agency or SON policies. Students are responsible for regularly checking their university email.

Student, Nurse Educator and/or Nursing Faculty

1.3 Before being permitted to continue in the practice setting, the student must submit a Learning Plan to the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty. In the Learning Plan, the student must address the identified shortcomings relating to the Standards of Practice and the Code of Ethics that were identified in the recommendations by the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty as well as outline steps to improve future practice. The student and the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty are to meet to discuss the Learning Plan and amend it, as necessary. The meeting must take place virtually through the Teams Platform or in person before the student assumes responsibility for patient care. The nurse educator and/or nursing faculty

Student, Nurse Educator and/or Nursing Faculty, Associate Director

and student are to sign the Learning Plan. If the infraction occurs at a moment in clinical practice when there is insufficient remaining time/opportunity to create and implement a learning plan, the student and the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty will be required to submit an alternative improvement plan in consultation with the Associate Director.

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| 1.4 | The student must then demonstrate adherence to the Learning Plan. A student is successful in demonstrating adherence to the Learning Plan by completing the recommendations identified in the plan and completing the clinical practicum with no further violations of standards of professional ethics or practice. Improvement will be documented in the student evaluation form. If the recommendations in the Learning Plan are not completed or if the student breaches the Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics again, continue with Step 2. | Student, Nurse Educator and/or Nursing Faculty |
| 1.5 | The nurse educator and/or nursing faculty is to place of copy of the written recommendations for practice improvement, the student's Learning Plan, and relevant follow-up evaluation in the student's electronic file. | Nurse Educator and/or Nursing Faculty |
| 1.6 | The nurse educator and/or nursing faculty will report concerns to the Associate Director. | Nurse Educator and/or Nursing Faculty, Associate Director |
| 2 Continuing Concerns within the Same or a Subsequent Nursing Practice Experience | | |
| 2.1 | The nurse educator and/or nursing faculty is to consult with the Associate Director to confirm whether the student failed to adequately implement the Learning Plan from Step 1.3, or has had another breach of the Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics after completing their Learning Plan. If so, the student will be placed on clinical practice probation. In instances where the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty and Associate Director reach conflicting decisions regarding whether or not to place the student on clinical practice probation, the final decision is to be made by the Director of the Rankin School of Nursing. | Nurse Educator and/or Nursing Faculty, Associate Director, Director |
| 2.2 | Once a final decision has been rendered, the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty is to provide the student with formal documentation outlining whether or not the student is placed on clinical practice probation and any additional relevant information within three (3) working days of reaching the decision. The documentation is to be provided during an in-person meeting with the student, or by university e-mail if the student is unavailable for a meeting. Students are entitled to bring a support person when attending this meeting. If a student wishes to be accompanied by a support person, the student must notify the Associate Director, 24 hours before the respective meeting, so that arrangements can be made. | Nurse Educator and/or Nursing Faculty, Associate Director, Director |
| 2.3 | Following the receipt of the documentation of clinical practice probation, the student must submit a written self-remediation plan to the responsible nurse educator and/or nursing faculty within three (3) working days and before continuing with any practice placements. The student will subsequently meet with the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty to review the plan and amend, as necessary. All related documentation, including the student's self-remediation plan, is to be placed in the students' electronic file. | Student, Nurse Educator and/or Nursing Faculty |
| 2.4 | A student placed on probation continues to be on probation for two semesters. If the student has another breach of the Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics while on clinical practice probation, the student is to undergo the formal assessment outlined in Step 3. | |

3 Challenges in Meeting Nursing Practice Competencies: Severe misconduct or subsequent incidents

3.1 In instances where a student's infraction (whether this is the student's first violation or not) includes:

- Physical, verbal, and/or emotional violence to patients, other students, StFX staff or staff of the agency
- Significant patient neglect
- Dangerous or neglectful practice
- Breach of federal narcotics control regulations
- Theft
- Conduct that causes or contributes to a sentinel event
- Use or impairment by alcohol, cannabis or other substances while providing patient care
- Lying about conduct during clinical practice or covering up any misconduct

Associate Director,
Nurse Educator
and/or Nursing
Faculty

When the student has another breach of the Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics while on their first clinical practice probation, the student is to undergo a formal assessment evaluating their competency in nursing practice. This formal assessment is to include a review of the student's file completed by the nurse educator and/or nursing faculty and Associate Director. The Associate Director may consult with relevant others, such as course professor and/or other involved individuals, depending on the situation. The formal assessment will determine the student's ability to continue in the program.

The formal assessment is to conclude whether the student is put on clinical practice probation or is to be dismissed from the program due to clinical failure. The student will be notified of this formal assessment, verbally (face to face or via Teams platform) or in writing via university e-mail, within 24 hours of the infraction.

3.2 The Associate Director is to discuss and inform the Director of the review results. In the case of a first breach, if the student is in violation of the Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics but is not dismissed from the program as a result of the formal assessment, the student is to be put on a clinical practice probation. The Associate Director and Director are to meet with the student to discuss the review results. Students are entitled to bring a support person when attending this meeting. If a student wishes to be accompanied by a support person, the student must notify the Associate Director, 24 hours before the meeting, so that arrangements can be made.

Associate Director,
Director

If this is the first instance in which the student is put on clinical practice probation, Steps 1.2 to 1.6 will be followed, and a note is placed in the student's electronic file by the Associate Director. Additionally, before each of the student's subsequent clinical practice placement, the Associate Director is to inform the responsible nurse educator and/or nursing faculty for that student's upcoming clinical about the nature of the incident that resulted in the clinical practice probation for that student.

3.3 Through the formal assessment it will be determined if the student who has a breach of Standards of Practice or Code of Ethics while on clinical practice probation will be dismissed from the program due to a clinical practice failure.

Associate Director,
Nurse Educator
and/or Nursing
Faculty

3.4 Written documentation of the formal assessment is the responsibility of the Associate Director

Associate Director

in consultation with relevant others and must be placed in the student's electronic file.

4 Student Appeal of Clinical Practice Probation or Program Dismissal Due to Clinical Practice Failure

Students placed on clinical practice probation or who have been dismissed from the program due to clinical practice failure have recourse to an appeal process. For clinical practice probation, proceed to Step 4.1. For dismissal due to clinical practice failure, proceed directly to Step 4.3.

4.1 Appeal of Clinical Practice Probation

To appeal a clinical practice probation, the student must write a letter to the Dean of Science. The letter must state the grounds for the appeal. The Dean will request the formal assessment from the Associate Director before rendering a decision.

Dean of Science,
Director

While the appeal of a clinical practice probation is under review by the Dean, the Dean will also determine whether the student is permitted to participate in any clinical practice.

4.2 Appeal of the Dean of Science Decision

Students can appeal in writing the decision made by the Dean of Science to Committee on Studies Science. To appeal to Committee on Studies, students must complete the appeal form found in their mesAmis account.

Associate Dean –
Academic, Director

If the Director deems necessary, the Director will appoint a nurse educator and/or nursing faculty to attend the meeting of the Committee on Studies as an independent assessor when the student's appeal is heard. The appointment will be a nurse educator and/or nursing faculty who is familiar with the field of practice and has not been involved in the case but cannot be the nursing professor associated with the clinical practicum. If a nurse educator and/or nursing faculty attends, the student must be informed of what the instructor said and given an opportunity to respond in writing to the Committee on Studies.

The committee will review the appeal letter and all relevant documentation and render a decision. Committee on Studies meetings concerning a student's appeal of the Dean of Science's decision are to be chaired by the Associate Dean – Academic. The Associate Dean – Academic is to notify the Director, the Dean of Science, and the student of the committee's decision in writing.

While the Committee on Studies reviews the appeal, the student is not to participate in any clinical practice.

4.3 Appeal of Program Dismissal due to Clinical Practice Failure

Students who have been dismissed from the program must appeal directly to Committee on Studies Science. To appeal to the Committee on Studies, students must complete the appeal form found in their mesAmis account.

If the Director deems necessary, the Director will appoint a nurse educator and/or nursing faculty to attend the meeting of the Committee on Studies as an independent assessor when the student's appeal is heard. The appointment will be a nurse educator and/or nursing faculty who is familiar with the field of practice and has not been involved in the case but cannot be the course professor associated with the clinical practicum. If a nurse educator

and/or nursing faculty attends, the student has to be informed of what the instructor has said and given the opportunity to respond in writing to the Committee on Studies.

The committee will review the appeal letter and all relevant documentation and render a decision. The Chair of the Committee on Studies is to notify the Director and the student of the committee's decision.

While the Committee on Studies reviews the appeal, the student is not to participate in any clinical practice.

4.4 All appeals rendered by the Committee on Studies Science are final.

RELATED MATERIALS

Canadian Nurses Association [CNA]. (2017). Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses. Ottawa, ON: CNA.

<https://www.cna-aiic.ca/~media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/code-of-ethics-2017-edition-secure-interactive>

Canadian Patient Safety Institute [CPSI] & Canadian Institute for Health Information [CIHI]. (2016).

Measuring patient harm in Canadian hospitals.

https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/hospital_harm_summary_en.pdf

Nova Scotia College of Nurses. (2020). Standards for Nursing Practice for Registered Nurses 2017. Halifax, NS: NSCN.

<https://cdn1.nscn.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resources/RN%20Standards%20of%20Practice.pdf>