

# Academic Policies and Procedures

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## Student Responsibility

- It is the student's responsibility to be informed of general and special notices posted in the School of Nursing building and on the listserv.
- The student must make arrangements for the completion of all work, including makeup examinations and requirements for removal of conditional and incomplete grades.
- Because the curriculum is demanding, students are urged to limit work hours while in the program. A student's combined employment and semester-hour load (including clinical laboratory hours) should not exceed 40 hours a week in either a long-session semester or a summer term. During the final month of the last semester of the program, students are enrolled in a full-time preceptorship and are unable to have outside employment.
- Students may be employed in area hospitals and clinics as nursing assistants, performing functions for which they have been trained by the employing institution and for which the institution has a clearly discernible policy, either in writing or by precedent, defining the scope of these functions. It is illegal for unlicensed students to practice as professional nurses.

Students should be aware that (1) the School of Nursing assumes no responsibility for their activities as employees of an agency; (2) they are personally responsible and liable for any activity they participate in while employed; (3) professional liability insurance purchased by students is valid only in their student role, not in their employment role; (4) individuals who practice illegally may jeopardize their future careers, since those who are convicted of violating the Nurse Practice Act may not be eligible to write state board examinations and subsequently to be licensed.

Students employed in an agency are personally and professionally responsible for engaging only in those activities that fall within their job descriptions as non-licensed workers (such as aides). They have a responsibility to refuse to participate in activities that they have not been legally licensed to perform, such as giving medications and assuming total responsibility for a nursing unit.

- Students should be familiar with the Student Standards of Conduct given in subchapter 11, Appendix C, "Student Discipline and Conduct," [General Information](#), as well as the [University Honor Code](#) and the School of Nursing Honor Code. Students are expected to read and sign a pledge to abide by the Code of Honor.

## School of Nursing Honor Code

The profession of nursing has a legacy of public respect and trust. We provide specialized care for the health needs of individuals and the community with integrity, honesty, compassion, and state-of-the-art knowledge and skills. Learning and practicing responsible and ethical professional behavior is a vital part of professional education.

As a student in The University of Texas at Austin's School of Nursing, I pledge myself to be honest in all of my student activities including, but not limited to, all of my scholastic work and interactions with patients, members of the community, faculty, and peers. Furthermore, I will not use any substance prior to or during my interaction with patients that could alter my judgment or ability to render safe care: this includes but is not limited to any use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and prescription or over-the-counter drugs that may impair my mental and/or physical abilities

required to perform safe patient care. I will disclose to my instructor any violations of the above standards of conduct.

## Standards of Nursing Performance and Progress

### Progression Requirements for Nursing Majors Prior to Nursing Clinical or Lab Courses

Students must maintain a University grade point average of at least 2.80 in required nursing degree coursework prior to taking nursing courses with a clinical or lab component. In addition, students must attain a grade of at least C- in each natural science course. Courses in which the student receives a grade of less than C-, Q, or W must be repeated in residence to resume progression toward completing the degree. Students may not enroll more than twice in any one natural science course (including Q or W) and should take a full academic load of at least 12 semester hours of coursework when repeating a course. For the student to continue in the nursing major, no more than two natural science courses may be repeated. A student may not repeat for credit a course in which a grade of C- or better was awarded.

Students must meet all progression requirements prior to taking nursing courses with a clinical or lab component. Students who do not meet these requirements will not be permitted to continue in the nursing major. Students are advised every semester about the coursework needed to complete the degree in four academic years.

Students are placed on academic probation in the School of Nursing if they receive a grade of D+, D, D-, or F in any nursing or natural science course. Students are subject to dismissal from the nursing major if they receive more than one D+, D, D-, or F during a semester or receive a second D+, D, D-, or F while on academic probation.

### Progression Requirements and Performance Standards for Upper Division Nursing Courses

Patient safety is a critical element in every clinical course. Clinical errors related to patient care, including those near-miss incidents intercepted by the faculty, may interfere with a student's progression in the course and in the program. The standards of performance are described in course syllabi and clinical evaluation tools for clinical practicum courses.

A student must earn a grade of at least C in each nursing course for the course to be counted toward degree requirements. Concurrent or sequential enrollment is required as stated in each course description.

If the student is not on scholastic probation at the University, permission may be granted to repeat a required nursing course in which he or she failed to earn a grade of C or better. To receive credit, the student must repeat the course at The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing. The semester in which a course is repeated is at the discretion of the dean and is dependent on the space available.

A student may repeat a nursing course only once. If the student does not earn a grade of at least C upon repeating the course, he or she cannot continue in the School of Nursing. If, while repeating the course, the student drops the course or withdraws from the University at a time when the student's performance in the course is considered to be inferior to that required for a grade of C, he or she may not re-enroll in the course or continue in the School of Nursing.

No more than two nursing courses may be repeated.

A student may not repeat for credit a course in which a grade of C or better was awarded.

As a prerequisite to medication administration in clinical nursing courses, students are required to pass a medications and calculations test with a grade of at least 90.

## Compliance Requirements for Clinical Courses

Students must provide documentation confirming completion of compliance requirements prior to participating in clinical nursing courses. Log in to the School of Nursing [website](#) for more information.

## Medical Clearance Requirements

Clinical experiences for nursing students are provided in hospitals and other health care agencies with which the School of Nursing is affiliated. A number of these facilities require that nursing students assigned to them have evidence of good health and immunity to certain diseases. Students must provide evidence of compliance with immunization requirements before they begin clinical nursing courses. Students must also submit a health certificate completed by a qualified health care provider prior to starting their first clinical rotation.

## Criminal Background Checks

Students are required to submit to the Texas Board of Nursing criminal background checks before beginning the program. Information about the process is available on the School of Nursing Web site. Students with concerns about eligibility are urged to seek official determination from the [Texas Board of Nursing](#). Further, we urge students with concerns to seek the background check six months in advance of enrollment to allow sufficient time for investigation and Texas Board of Nursing approval.

## Employment Background Check

Agencies in which nursing students are placed for clinical work require an employment background check. Directions to complete this requirement are on the School of Nursing [website](#) listed with other compliance requirements.

## Drug Screen

Clinical agencies require that a drug screen be completed prior to participating in patient care. Students are to follow directions for the drug screen shown with the compliance requirements on the School of Nursing website.

## CPR and First Aid Requirements

Current certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid are required for participation in clinical nursing courses. The CPR course must be the Basic Life Support for Healthcare Providers and include Automatic External Defibrillator from the American Heart Association. Online courses for CPR are not acceptable. The basic first aid certification must be acquired from the American Heart Association (Heartsaver First Aid) or from a local emergency medical services agency (National Safety Council First Aid). Students must provide evidence of current certification before they begin clinical courses. Students who are registered nurses, licensed vocational nurses, or emergency medical technicians are not required to provide evidence of first aid certification.

## Professional Liability Insurance

Professional liability insurance is required of all students enrolled in the professional sequence in the School of Nursing. Students will be billed through the "What I Owe" system for liability insurance each semester

they are participating in clinical courses. All student policies expire on the date of graduation.

## Training Modules

All students must complete the following modules on the [School of Nursing Intranet Site](#) before participating in clinical nursing coursework: online orientation, facilities training, and training on the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

## Health and Hospitalization Insurance

Students are required to purchase health insurance. The cost of personal health care, including care required as the result of clinical practicum experiences, is not covered by either the University, the School of Nursing, or clinical agencies. Information about low-cost group health insurance is available through [University Health Services](#). The professional liability insurance students buy as a part of compliance for participating in clinical courses does not cover health care expenses.

## Uniforms and Other Expenses

Students must purchase uniforms, shoes, name badges, and other supplies before taking the first clinical nursing course. Specific requirements and information about suggested equipment are distributed as a part of orientation and will be available in course syllabi.

## Transportation

Upper-division clinical courses require students to go to various clinical facilities and community sites at varied hours. Students must have their own transportation.

## Honors

### University Honors

The designation University Honors, awarded at the end of each long-session semester, gives official recognition and commendation to students whose grades for the semester indicate distinguished academic accomplishment. Both the quality and the quantity of work done are considered. Criteria for University Honors are given in *General Information*.

### Graduation with University Honors

Students who, upon graduation, have demonstrated outstanding academic achievement are eligible to graduate with University Honors. Criteria for graduation with University Honors are given in [General Information](#).

### Nursing Honors Program

The Nursing Honors Program is designed to enhance the educational experience of high-achieving undergraduate nursing majors by focusing on the development of scholarship. Students must apply to this competitive honors program, which begins in the sophomore year. Admission to the program requires approval of the Honors Program Committee.

Students in the program must complete Nursing 321H, 117H, 264H, and 377H. These courses provide students with enhanced mentorship experiences. Students must complete an honors project with a focus on research, ethics, or leadership. Students are also required to take Nursing 337, *Independent Study* with their mentor with the focus on their honors project. The statement "Special Honors in Nursing" appears on the transcript of each student who completes the honors program.

## **Sigma Theta Tau International**

Epsilon Theta Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, was chartered at the University on May 16, 1980. Membership in Sigma Theta Tau is an honor conferred by active chapters on students who demonstrate academic excellence and on nursing leaders who advance the scientific base of the profession. The society recognizes superior achievement in many areas, facilitates the development of leadership qualities, fosters high professional standards, encourages creative work, and strengthens commitment to the ideals of nursing.

Each year qualified students in the undergraduate and graduate programs may apply for consideration for membership. Invitations to membership are extended to students who are in the top 35 percent of their graduating class. Undergraduates must have a grade point average of at least 3.00; graduate students must have a grade point average of at least 3.50. Qualified community nursing leaders may also be invited to membership. Applications for membership in Epsilon Theta Chapter are available from the [Office of Student Services in the School of Nursing](#).

At the induction ceremony each spring, Epsilon Theta Chapter announces its awards, grants, and scholarship recipients. A scholarship is awarded to an upper-division nursing student who has demonstrated leadership potential and outstanding scholastic achievement. The chapter also awards start-up grants annually to Epsilon Theta Chapter members and/or students to fund research projects.

Sigma Theta Tau International, with active chapters on more than four hundred campuses in the United States and in several other countries, offers opportunities for involvement at the chapter, regional, national, and international levels.