

Nursing Program Technical Standards

Introduction

Technical standards are all of the nonacademic functional abilities essential for the delivery of safe, effective nursing care. These basic abilities make up the core components of nursing practice, and there is a high probability that untoward consequences may result for clients cared for by nurses who fail to demonstrate these abilities. In compliance with state and federal laws, nursing education programs must attend to these essential functional abilities in the teaching and evaluation of students preparing for the practice of nursing.

This statement of technical standards identifies the functional abilities deemed by the Nursing Faculty at the University of New England to be essential to the practice of nursing, and as such are reflected in satisfactory progression through the nursing program and in the performance-based outcomes which are the basis for teaching and evaluating all nursing students.

Students with disabilities who believe they may require accommodation in meeting the technical standards of the Nursing Program should contact Disability Services (DS) as soon as possible to determine if the student is legally disabled and to discuss the process of identifying to what extent reasonable accommodations may or may not exist. It is recommended that students seek DS advisement as soon as possible after admission to the Nursing Program to facilitate the timely development of a plan for accommodation, which would ideally be in place at the beginning of the Program. Applicants seeking admission into the Nursing Program who may have questions about the technical standards and appropriate reasonable accommodations are invited to discuss their questions with Disability Services. Reasonable accommodation will be directed toward providing an equal educational opportunity for students with disabilities while adhering to the standards of nursing practice for all students. As stated in the syllabus of each nursing course, any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the professor within the first two weeks of class. Registration with DS is required before any accommodation requests can be granted. Under no circumstances will the Department of Nursing and Health Management waive any essential course requirements or technical standards for any student, with or without a disability.

Standards

The practice of Nursing requires the following functional abilities with or without reasonable accommodations:

Visual acuity must be adequate to assess patients and their environments, as well as to implement the nursing care plans that are developed from such assessments. Examples of relevant activities (nonexclusive):

- Detect changes in skin color or condition
- Collect data from recording equipment and measurement devices used in patient care
- Detect a fire in a patient area and initiate emergency action
- Draw up the correct quantity of medication into a syringe

Hearing ability must be of sufficient acuity to assess patients and their environments and to implement the nursing care plans that are developed from such assessments. Examples of relevant activities (nonexclusive):

- Detect sounds related to bodily functions using a stethoscope
- Detect audible signals generated by mechanical systems that monitor bodily functions
- Communicate clearly in telephone conversations
- Communicate effectively with patients and with other members of the healthcare team

Olfactory ability must be adequate to assess patients and to implement the nursing care plans that are developed from such assessments. Examples of relevant activities (nonexclusive):

- Detect foul odors of bodily fluids or spoiled foods
- Detect smoke from burning materials
- Detect ketones on a client's breath

Tactile ability must be sufficient to assess patients and to implement the nursing care plans that are developed from such assessments. Examples of relevant activities (nonexclusive):

- Detect changes in skin temperature
- Detect unsafe temperature levels in heat-producing devices used in patient care
- Detect anatomical abnormalities, such as subcutaneous crepitus, edema, or infiltrated intravenous fluid
- Perform techniques such as the insertion of urinary catheters

Strength and mobility must be sufficient to perform patient care activities and emergency procedures. Examples of relevant activities (nonexclusive):

- Safely transfer patients in and out of bed and assist them with ambulation using appropriate assistive devices
- Safely control the fall of a patient, by slowly lowering the patient
- Turn and position patients as needed to prevent complications due to bed rest
- Hang intravenous bags at the appropriate level
- Accurately read the volumes in body fluid collection devices hung below bed level
- Perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation

Fine motor skills must be sufficient to perform psychomotor skills integral to patient care. Examples of relevant activities (nonexclusive):

- Safely dispose of needles in sharps containers
- Accurately place and maintain position of stethoscope for detecting sounds of bodily functions
- Manipulate small equipment and containers, such as syringes, vials, ampules, and medication packages, to administer medications

Physical endurance sufficient to complete assigned periods of clinical practice and to function effectively under stress in acute health care situations.

Ability to speak, comprehend, read, and write English at a level that meets the need for accurate, clear, and effective communication.

Emotional stability to function effectively under stress, to work as a part of a team and to respond appropriately to supervision; to adapt to changing situations, to respond appropriately to patients and families under stress, and to follow through on assigned patient care responsibilities.

Cognitive ability to collect, analyze, and integrate information and knowledge to make clinical judgments and management decisions that promote positive patient outcomes.

Other abilities sufficient to demonstrate competencies such as the ability to arrive to a clinic on a timely basis; to meet the demands for timely performance of duties; to meet the organizational requirements to perform these duties in a professional and competent manner.