TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, AND GRADUATION

I. Introduction

In spring 2008, the University of Colorado, College of Nursing adopted the following technical standards for admission, progression and graduation of College of Nursing students in the Bachelor of Science (BS) and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs. These standards also apply for Masters of Science (MS), Post-Master’s, PhD and special graduate students taking clinical courses involving direct client care. Candidates for these degrees must be able to meet these minimum standards with or without a reasonable accommodation for successful completion of degree requirements. In graduate courses or programs without clinical components, or those involving no direct patient care, the standards may be modified by the program council governing the specific degree program (MS or PhD).

The following technical standards explain attributes necessary to complete the educational programs in nursing. The College will consider any applicant who demonstrates the ability to perform, or to learn to perform, the skills listed here. An applicant with concerns about these technical standards is strongly encouraged to discuss the issue with the director of the particular program. An applicant is not required to disclose the nature of any disability. If appropriate, and upon request from the applicant, reasonable accommodations for a disability may be provided.

II. Standards

A. Observation

1. The student must be able to observe and participate in lectures, demonstrations, research and practice situations in nursing.

2. She/he must be able to observe health assessments and interventions, diagnostic procedures and waveform readings to determine a client’s condition and the effect of therapy.

3. Observation necessitates the functional use of vision, hearing, tactile and somatic senses.

B. Communication

1. A student must be able to communicate clearly and effectively in English with clients, teachers and all members of the health care team. Written and oral communication must use standard, professional medical terminology.

2. He/she must communicate with clients clearly and effectively in English to elicit information regarding history, emotional status and activity, and to perceive nonverbal communications.

3. Communication includes speech, hearing, reading, writing and computer literacy.

4. A student must be able to clearly and effectively report in English to members of the health care team. Additionally, students must be able to relay appropriate information to clients, as well as teach, explain, direct and counsel a wide variety of individuals.
5. In some instances the student will be required to provide clear, direct communication in English during highly stressful, crisis situations. These skills necessitate a strong command of the English language and prompt, timely interpretation of pertinent patient data.

6. Students must be able to communicate online in a timely, professional manner, e.g., enter an electronic medical record immediately after the patient visit.

C. Violation of the Communications Standard

It is the current policy of the faculty of the College of Nursing to require all applicants to the College whose self-declared primary spoken language is not English to submit Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores as part of the application process. (All international applicants to the College of Nursing must submit a TOEFL score.) Effective July 1, 2009, a total score of at least 550 on the paper-based TOEFL and 50 or above on the Test of Spoken English (TSE), 213 on the computer-based TOEFL and 50 or above on the TSE, or 80 on the Internet-based TOEFL with 26 or above on the Spoken portion is required. For students who fail to disclose that their primary spoken language is a language other than English, that failure will be viewed as a lack of integrity on the admission application and may be a matter that is referred to the Honor and Conduct Committee.

For students admitted prior to the implementation of current admissions standards including the TOEFL and TSE requirements mentioned above, and for all students at the College, patient safety is of paramount concern. Despite these admissions policies, safety concerns are occasionally raised by clinical or other instructors regarding student English skills and concerns of potential risks to student and patient safety. Consequently all students, regardless of the requirements in effect at the date of their admission, who are observed to be unsafe in a clinical or simulation environment by qualified nursing or other health care personnel, are to be identified and reported to their respective Assistant Dean and may be removed from clinical settings.

The academic assistant dean will ask the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs to arrange for the respective evaluation(s) as deemed necessary. The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs will arrange for the appropriate evaluation or ongoing evaluations and forward the evaluation reports to the academic assistant deans as appropriate.

In the case of English communication, an English as a Second Language (ESL) evaluation (Oral Proficiency Interview or OPI) is to be conducted by a certified ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) instructor to assess and rate oral proficiency levels of speakers in English, according to guidelines and standards formulated by ACTFL. These standards include categories such as:

Superior, Advanced High, Advanced Mid, Advanced Low, Intermediate High, Intermediate Mid, and Intermediate Low. Those applicants rated as Superior, Advanced High, or even Advanced Mid are determined to meet the College of Nursing Technical Standard for communication in English.

Students that evaluate at Advanced Low or below are determined to be unsafe for the clinical environment and will be addressed by the academic assistant dean using measures noted above. Appropriate action will be taken regardless of previous courses completed satisfactorily,
GPA, or proximity to graduation. Two consecutive OPI evaluations in which the student receives a rating of Advanced Low or lower will result in the student’s administrative withdrawal from the College.

D. **Motor Abilities**

1. A student must have sufficient gross and fine motor skills, physical endurance, physical strength, mobility, vision, tactile abilities and sense of smell to carry out nursing procedures and to operate equipment safely.

2. He/she must have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by:
   - tactile palpation
   - auscultation using a stethoscope
   - direct hand percussion
   - indirect percussion using a percussion hammer
   - other diagnostic maneuvers

3. A student must possess sufficient fine motor skills to be able to perform basic laboratory tests (e.g. using a glucometer, slide preparation) and perform basic patient care procedures (e.g. tracheostomy care, urinary catheterization, insertion of intravenous catheters, giving intramuscular and subcutaneous injections and using oxygen/respiratory equipment).

4. He/she must be able to execute motor movements reasonably required in a prompt, timely fashion in order to provide routine and emergency care to patients.
   
a. **Examples of emergency treatments** required of student nurses to be done in a prompt, timely fashion include but are not limited to:
      - cardiopulmonary resuscitation
      - administration of intravenous medications
      - application of pressure to stop bleeding
      - obtainment & interpretation of vital signs
      - opening of obstructed airways
      - notification of a change in patient status to the appropriate provider

   b. **Examples of routine treatments** required of student nurses to be done in a reasonable, timely fashion include but are not limited to:
      - administration of scheduled and as needed medications
      - obtainment of vital signs
      - performing a basic head-to-toe physical assessment
      - performing and assisting with activities of daily living

E. **Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities**

1. The student must be able to read and understand written documents in English and to solve problems involving measurement, calculation, reasoning, memory, analysis and synthesis.
2. **He/she must be able to synthesize knowledge, integrate and prioritize all aspects of patient care in a prompt, timely fashion.** This includes synthesis of objective and subjective findings and diagnostic studies in order to formulate and initiate a plan of care integrating the gender, age, religious, physical and patient preferences.

3. **The student must be able to integrate concepts of pathophysiology, pharmacology and fundamentals of nursing care in order to formulate a cohesive, multidisciplinary plan of care for desired patient outcomes appropriate to each clinical setting.**

4. **The student must be able to use this information to identify and develop a diagnosis, establish priorities and monitor treatment plans and care modalities.**

5. **The student must be able comprehend three dimensional and spatial relationships.**

6. **The student must be able to incorporate data from multiple patient sources (e.g. physical assessment, vital signs, lab values, interdisciplinary documentation) in a prompt manner in order to provide appropriate, safe patient care.**

7. **He/she must be able to recognize and respond rapidly and safely to changes in a patient’s status based on a variety of sources such as physical assessment and pertinent laboratory findings. The student must be able to revise care to promote appropriate patient outcomes.**

**F. Behavioral and Social Abilities**

1. A student must have the capacity to demonstrate full utilization of his/her intellectual abilities, emotional stability, exercise good judgment under stressful, crisis and non-crisis situations and promptly complete all responsibilities pertinent to the diagnosis and care of clients in a variety of settings.

2. The student must have the capacity to develop mature, sensitive and effective therapeutic relationships with clients in a variety of settings and from different cultures. Individual patient care must be performed regardless of the patient’s race, ethnic group, age, gender, religious or political preference, ability to pay, gender or sexual orientation.

3. **The student will be required to perform nursing care in many settings including acute care inpatient settings (e.g. medical surgical, obstetrics, psychiatric, pediatric) as well as outpatient settings (e.g. public health, outpatient clinics, long term care facilities, schools and homes). The student must have the ability to perform nursing care that may be outside their own personal level of comfort in these settings so that the patient’s needs are a top priority.**

4. **He/she must be able to tolerate physically and mentally taxing workloads and function effectively under stress.**
5. The student must be able to exhibit a level of consciousness and attentiveness that guarantees patient safety. Examples of unacceptable compromise include excessive somnolence, memory impairment, or an inability to retain pertinent details of a patient’s situation.

6. As a component of nursing education, a student must demonstrate ethical behavior, including adherence to the professional nursing and student honor codes.

7. Students are not required to be involved with medical procedures that are in disagreement with individual attitudes and values. Nevertheless, students are required to learn about these procedures and participate in the professional care of the patient before and after such procedures.

8. Although student safety is of utmost importance, students will be exposed to a variety of communicable pathogens and are expected to care for patients with communicable diseases using appropriate standard precautions and/or guidelines.

G. Health and Related Requirements

1. Students are required, according to agency and university policy, to provide current proof of having met all health related requirements prior to participating in any clinical activities. Students are responsible for maintaining all personal health records including current immunizations, CPR (American Heart Association BLS for Health Care Providers), OSHA and HIPAA documentation.

2. All entering students are required to complete a background check prior to entering the College of Nursing in compliance with the affiliation agreement for the clinical agency and community standards for disqualifying offenses. This may include a drug screen to comply with a clinical agency requirement.

3. Students may be required to complete a physical exam in compliance with clinical agency affiliation agreement.

4. For RN-BS or graduate students, the student must have evidence of an unencumbered Colorado nursing license (this includes evidence of having an unencumbered license from a compact state).

5. Certain chronic or recurrent illnesses and problems that could interfere with patient care or safety may be incompatible with nursing education or practice. Some illnesses may lead to a higher likelihood of student absences and should carefully be considered. Deficiencies in knowledge, judgment, integrity or professional attitude may jeopardize patient care, and as a result could become grounds for course failure and possible dismissal from a nursing program.
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