Policy on Professionalism and Professional Conduct

In addition to meeting the academic standards of Missouri State University and the School of Nursing, students enrolled in nursing courses that are part of the BSN or MSN programs of study must demonstrate professionalism in clinical and classroom experiences. Professionalism is defined as behaviors and attitudes congruent with the ANA (2015) Code of Ethics for Nurses, and the ANA (2015) Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, the State of Missouri Nurse Practice Act (2014), socio-cultural expectations, and policies and expectations of the academic institution. Inherent within the concept of professionalism is the development of those behaviors by the student during the program that demonstrates increasing maturity, competence, integrity, regard for human dignity, respect for social justice, accountability, responsibility, and caring as they progress through the program. Therefore, students within the BSN program are to be professional at all times and to have behaviors consistent with professional conduct.

Clinical performance is evaluated during each clinical course by the course faculty and preceptors. Achievement of a minimum of a “C” or better in the didactic portion and a grade of “Pass” in the clinical portion is required. Clinical evaluation tools are designed specifically for each course to address the course expectations and objectives. Typical clinical expectations are safe, effective, the ethical performance of nursing tasks; problem-solving; use of appropriate judgment; appropriate communication and interaction with others; and the ability to apply knowledge. Acts of dishonesty, failure to provide safe care, lack of professional accountability or maturity, and any acts that could be detrimental to one’s self or others are considered unprofessional behavior. Professionalism includes but is not limited to satisfactory clinical performance and behaviors consistent with professional conduct.

A student who demonstrates unprofessional behavior will be notified by the faculty at the time of the misconduct or discovery of the misconduct that disciplinary action may be taken. Depending on the nature of the unprofessional behavior, the faculty may enforce, but is not limited to, the following sanctions on the student:

- Repeat the course assignment
- Give no credit for the course assignment
- Lower the student’s final didactic course grade
- Give a grade of “F” or “XF” for the course/clinical
- Give the student an unsatisfactory evaluation
- Remove from the clinical experience
- Place on probation
- Recommend dismissal of the student from the Nursing Program or denial of enrollment in the Nursing Program.

Academic Warning
After the midterm exam, or during the ninth week of a 16-week course, students who are at or below 76% in either exam average or overall course average will be warned of their at-risk status in the course. A warning email will be sent to the student’s MSU email address. The email will include the exam average and the overall average in the course, any suggestions for success, and an invitation to contact the instructor for help. This communication will be copied to the program director. A copy of the warning will be placed in the student’s file. Accumulation of two warnings (academic, program, and/or clinical) may result in program probation.

**Program Warning**

A student that is not meeting the expected behaviors of the BSN nursing program may receive a program warning. A program warning is specific to the expectations of the program according to specific program objectives, expected behaviors, and attitudes consistent with those of a professional nurse. The purpose of the program warning is to bring attention to the expected behavior and provide an avenue of communication to improve the behavior. Failure to demonstrate improvement in areas of weakness as outlined in program warning will result in program probation. Accumulation of two warnings (academic, program, and/or clinical) may result in program probation.

**Program Probation**

Students who do not demonstrate professional behaviors such as integrity issues will be placed on program probation. Program probation is based on the performance of the student in relationship to program objectives and expected behaviors and attitudes consistent with those of a professional nurse. The purpose of the program probation is to correct the unprofessional action. Failure to demonstrate improvement in the behavior will result in dismissal from the BSN program.

**Clinical Warning**

Students who is not meeting the expected behaviors of the clinical/lab may receive a clinical warning. A clinical warning is specific to the expectations of the course according to course specific objectives, expected behaviors, and attitudes consistent with those of a professional nurse as outlined in the course syllabus. The purpose of the clinical warning is to bring attention to the expected behavior and provide an avenue of communication to improve the behavior. Failure to demonstrate improvement in areas of weakness as outlined in clinical warning will result in clinical probation. Accumulation of two warnings (academic, program, and/or clinical) may result in program probation.

**Clinical Probation**

Students who do not demonstrate professional or safe behavior will be placed on clinical probation. Clinical probation is based on the performance of the student in relationship to course objectives and expected behaviors and attitudes consistent with those of a professional nurse. The purpose of the clinical probation is to bring attention to A student in the School of Nursing may be placed on clinical probation by the faculty for a particular clinical/course, or by the Admission, Progression, and Graduation (APG) Committee for one or more of the following:
1. Failure to demonstrate professional behaviors and attitudes consistent with those of a professional nurse.
2. Failure to demonstrate consistent improvement in clinical performance as identified in course objectives.
3. Failure to demonstrate improvement in areas documented by faculty to be areas of weakness.
4. A pattern of actions inconsistent with University, School of Nursing, or course policies, which include, but are not limited to (a) initiating clinical experiences without a contract, (b) initiating interventions or actions without appropriate supervision or approval of the preceptor, (c) consistent difficulties applying theory to the clinical setting, and/or (d) inconsistently completing clinical assignments or logs.

Within five (5) business days of the decision, a student on clinical probation will receive a written statement of the probation from the faculty, the APG Committee, or designated representative indicating areas of weakness. The student is expected to complete the requirements of the probation by the designated timeframe as outlined in the conditions of probation. If the student demonstrates satisfactory progress in improving performance and meets the course or program objectives, the faculty or APG Committee will remove the probationary status. Failure to meet the requirements of the probation will result in clinical failure for the course(s) specified in the probation and/or may result in dismissal from the nursing program. A student who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action may appeal following the Grievance Policy in this Handbook.

**Clinical Failure**

Clinical failure is based on the performance of the student in relationship to the course objectives, expected behaviors, and attitudes that are consistent with those of a professional nurse. A student enrolled in a clinical nursing course may receive a clinical failure for one or more of the following:

- Failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress after being placed on clinical warning or probation.
- Recurring absenteeism or tardiness in the clinical site.
- Recurring failure to follow clinical course policies, policies of the clinical agency, or recommendations of the preceptor or faculty.
- Acts of dishonesty.
- Repeated lack of preparation for clinical experiences.
- Demonstrating behaviors that, in the judgment of the faculty, constitute unsafe or potentially unsafe practices or practices inconsistent with professional standards or laws.
- Unsatisfactory final clinical evaluation.

The faculty will place a copy of the letter sent to the student indicating a clinical warning, probation, failure, or a change in the clinical status in the student’s academic file. A student who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action may appeal following the Grievance Policy in this Handbook.
The School of Nursing reserves the right to interpret, maintain, and enforce the standards of conduct and professional performance for nursing. The School also reserves the right to recommend dismissal or refuse enrollment in the program to any student who, in the judgment of the APG Committee, by a majority vote, has violated the standards of professional conduct or demonstrates a lack of professional development.

Professional standards are expected of all students in the nursing program. In addition to professional behaviors discussed previously, the student is expected to maintain a professional appearance in the clinical setting. The student’s appearance communicates the values and attitudes of the individual, and thus reflects either positively or negatively on the profession and the University. The student should adhere to the dress code of the clinical agency he or she is attending. When functioning as a student in an area that has no dress code, such as home care, the student should wear attire that reflects positively on the University, the School of Nursing, and the Nursing Profession.

**Grievance and Appeal Policy and Procedure**

The following policy is provided for a student who wishes to appeal a decision made by a School of Nursing faculty member or the School of Nursing’s Admission, Progression, and Graduation (APG) Committee. The decision being appealed should be one that adversely affects the student’s academic standing, such as a course grade or a sanction for unprofessional behavior.

**Process**

Upon discovery of misconduct:

1. The faculty will document the unprofessional behavior in writing and counsel the student within 5 business days to discuss any disciplinary action that may be taken. Written documentation of the unprofessional behavior and any disciplinary decision will be placed in the student’s permanent file.
2. The student may respond in writing within 5 business days to the faculty’s findings and/or submit written documentation relevant to the behavior.
3. The student may appeal the sanction to the BSN program director by following the “Appeal Policy” for detailed procedures.

A student who demonstrates unprofessional behavior that places him or herself or others at risk for harm, such as dishonesty, drug use, or alcohol use (see Impairment Policy), will receive the most stringent sanctions. Acts of dishonesty also will be reported to the University Academic Integrity Council. Please refer to “Academic Integrity: Policies and Procedures” in the current Missouri State University Undergraduate Catalog (http://www.missouristate.edu/registrar/catalog/academicintegrity.htm) and on the Missouri State University website at http://www.missouristate.edu/assets/policy/Op3_01_Academic-Integrity-Policies-and-Procedures-07-28-2014.pdf for policies and procedures related to academic dishonesty and to retention and enrollment criteria for the nursing program. A student who is not satisfied with the disciplinary action may appeal following the Grievance and Appeal Policy in this Handbook.
**Student Notification**

A student who wishes to appeal a decision made by a School of Nursing faculty member will be notified (verbally by the faculty at the time of the misconduct or in writing within 3 business days of discovery of the misconduct) that disciplinary action may be taken. The faculty member and student will meet (within 3 business days of the notification) to discuss the incident and the disciplinary action that may be taken.

A student who earns a course grade that precludes further progression in or completion of the program of study will be notified in writing by the course faculty within 3 days of assignment of the course grade. Please note that a course grade may not be changed from an “F” grade to a “W” grade in any case in which the student did not follow the proper procedure for dropping the course. Requests to appeal a course grade or to appeal any disciplinary action should be submitted as outlined in the Appeal Policy.

**Appeal Policy**

**Steps**

1. If the student wishes to initiate a formal appeal to refute any decision, the student must submit a letter of appeal to the faculty member within 3 business days of receiving the decision.
   
   **Response:** Upon receipt of the student’s letter of appeal, the faculty member will review all available information relevant to the situation and provide the student with a written decision within 3 business days.

2. If the resolution of the grievance is not achieved, the student should contact the Program Director (or appointed representative) within 3 business days following receipt of the faculty member’s written decision. A meeting between the Program Director or representative and the student should be held within 3 business days of the student’s request for a meeting. The student will receive written notification of the Program Director’s decision within 3 business days.

3. If the resolution of the grievance is not achieved with the Program Director, the student may continue the appeal process by submitting a letter of appeal to the School of Nursing’s Undergraduate Admission, Progression, and Graduation (APG) Committee within 5 business days. The APG Committee will schedule a meeting within 5 business days of receiving the letter of appeal. The APG Committee will review all available information relevant to the decision and the appeal. Student attendance at the APG Committee meeting is at the request of either party. The APG Committee will have 5 business days to deliver a written decision to the student.

4. If the student wishes to appeal the APG Committee decision, the student should contact the School Director (or appointed representative) within 3 business days following receipt of the Program Director’s written decision. A meeting between the School Director or representative and the student should be held within 3 business days of the student’s request for a meeting. The student will receive written notification of the School Director’s decision within 3 business days.

5. If the student wishes to continue the appeal process beyond the School Director, the student should make an appointment with the Dean of the College of Health and Human Services (or designated representative) within 3 business days.
6. After this point of the appeal procedure, Office of Provost Student Grievance Policies will be followed as outlined:  http://www.missouristate.edu/registrar/catalog/graderev.html.

7. The instructor must allow a student involved in an appeal to continue attending class until all appeals are resolved.

8. In the case of unsafe practices by the student in a clinical area, the student will not be allowed to continue at a clinical site until all appeals are resolved.

The Letter of Appeal

- The letter of appeal should clearly state the grounds for the appeal by the student and should provide evidence/rationale for the appeal. The letter should include the student’s full name, student ID number (M#), course title, semester enrolled, section number, and the name of the faculty, or faculty members, involved.

- If the faculty is on leave or is no longer employed at Missouri State University, the letter of appeal should be sent to the Program Director or the School Director.

Note.

- Flexibility may be needed when scheduling meetings to accommodate the student’s schedule, as well as the teaching and administrative schedules of faculty and administrators.

- The student may elect to withdraw the appeal at any time, in which case the initial decision will stand. Documentation of the decision and appeal processes will be retained in the student’s permanent School file.

- If at any point in the appeal process the appeal is granted, the student’s academic record will be amended as necessary to reflect the decision.

- The student is required to follow the appeal process as outlined. It is unacceptable for students to deviate from the policy. For instance, do not contact the Dean or Provost without speaking with the faculty member or Program Director first.