

Policy A-22
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
COLLEGE OF NURSING

TITLE: **PROFESSIONALISM POLICY AND STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS**

POLICY: Demonstrating professionalism is a fundamental and essential academic aspect of the College of Nursing’s curriculum for every student. The College will uphold the UF Professional Standards for Students as presented below. The student is responsible for meeting the professional standards outlined in this policy. Faculty and administrators are responsible for ensuring that all students meet the professional standards and for taking appropriate action if standards are not met.

RATIONALE: The College administration and faculty wish to foster professional standards associated with the nursing profession to ensure the safety and health of all parties involved in teaching, research or practice activities of the College of Nursing.

Review or Approval Authority	Responsible Party	Initial Approval / Review	Most Recent Approval / Review Of Changes	Editorial Changes	Policy A-01 Review
Review	Faculty Executive Committee	7/12/24			
Approval	Dean	8/14/24			

- **Bold indicates committee with A-01 responsibilities.**

PROCEDURE:

1. OVERVIEW

Professionalism is fundamental to academic promotion at the University of Florida College of Nursing (the “College”). Demonstrating professionalism is essential (1) to the academic instruction pursued by each student at the College and (2) to the student’s future licensing requirements, if applicable.¹ Because the College confers undergraduate and graduate degrees, it serves a gate-keeping function to graduate only those students who will make competent, professional practitioners. The College’s curriculum includes a professionalism component as a part of its academic performance requirements to further this function.

In conferring a degree from the College, the College certifies that the student has achieved competency in knowledge and skill. Additionally, the College’s faculty and administrators agree that the graduating student possesses the personal traits and communication abilities essential to

¹ Complying with applicable licensure requirements is a technical standard which every student at the College must meet.

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the profession. These traits include, but are not limited to, respect, honesty, empathy, humility, conscientiousness, courtesy, civility, and decency in their interactions with others. Professionalism also requires that students appropriately manage mental and physical health-related issues, including any involving alcohol or drug use, and that they are fit for duty in their respective professions.

Demonstrating professionalism is, therefore, a fundamental and essential academic aspect of the College's curriculum for every student. A student's behavior while enrolled in the College (1) will demonstrate the student's ability to become a competent professional, and (2) will be evaluated in all applicable settings.

The College reserves the right to dismiss a student, at any time in accordance with its prescribed due process procedures, from its program if the College determines the student lacks the professionalism required for their field of practice.

2. PROFESSIONALISM AS A TECHNICAL STANDARD

At the College, professionalism standards are included in the College's technical standards that every student must meet,² with or without reasonable accommodations,³ to progress academically and graduate on time. Embedded in the professionalism requirement is a student's fitness for duty. If a student fails to meet professionalism standards and the College reasonably suspects the failure is related to a substance abuse or mental or physical health-related issue, the College may determine the student is not fit for duty and then move towards an academic dismissal. The College is responsible to the public to ensure a student is fit for duty in their chosen profession and ready for professional licensure, if applicable.

2a. Fitness for Duty

If the College has a reasonable suspicion that a student is not fit for duty, the student will not be permitted to attend classes in-person or attend any labs or clinics unless and until the College has cleared the student to return. The College may move towards an academic dismissal for the student's failure to meet the professionalism standards. Once the College questions a student's fitness for duty, the burden shifts to the student to demonstrate they are fit for duty. To assist the student in resolving the underlying issue causing them to become unfit, the College may request that the student submit to a drug or alcohol test, self-refer to the Intervention Project for Nurses ("IPN"), accept a referral to the IPN, or be evaluated by a medical provider approved by the

² Having a disability does not excuse a student from meeting professionalism standards.

³ A student with a disability who seeks reasonable academic accommodations must register with the University of Florida's Disability Resource Center ("DRC") @ <https://disability.ufl.edu/>. The DRC will engage in an interactive process with the student and the College when accommodations are requested by a student. The DRC makes all final decisions regarding the provision of reasonable accommodations by the College for the benefit of the student.

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College. All costs associated with evaluation and treatment shall be solely the student's responsibility. If the student agrees to submit to the requested test or evaluation and comply with any recommended treatment, the College may pause the academic dismissal process to afford the student time to become fit for duty and comply with the professionalism standards.⁴ In certain circumstances, the student may be afforded a medical leave to receive care.

2b. Intervention Project for Nurses (IPN)

The IPN (<https://www.ipnfl.org/>) will provide evaluations upon self-referral by the student or referral by the College and, if warranted, a treatment plan to address substance abuse and mental health-related issues. The student is solely responsible for any cost associated with the IPN.

For a student to demonstrate they are fit for duty, that student must comply with all IPN recommendations and, upon request, provide unabridged and unredacted documentation of compliance to the College. The IPN treatment plan recommendations may include participation in medical treatment programs, periodic drug screen testing, and/or professional counseling. Participation in IPN does not guarantee continued enrollment (or re-enrollment). It may not necessarily prevent adverse academic action, including dismissal or disciplinary action for violating University of Florida Regulations or Policies. Whether to allow the student to continue (or re-enroll) in their program at the College shall, in all cases, remain at the sole discretion of the College and be decided on a case-by-case basis.

3. PROFESSIONALISM IN THE CLASSROOM

A student's behavior in the classroom, whether online, on campus, or off-campus, directly reflects that student's professionalism toward their peers, faculty, staff and visitors as well as the profession of Nursing. The College expects and requires every student to demonstrate professionalism in the classroom which includes, but is not limited to:

- Adhering to the College's attendance policy and any other applicable rules or policies
- Communicating in a civil, respectful and courteous manner
- Refraining from any classroom disruptions

The College always supports and encourages civil academic debate and discourse, but personal attacks have no place in the classroom.

3a. Class attendance for in-person classes

Attendance is expected for all in-person classes, labs, and clinicals. Attendance in class is not necessarily part of an assigned grade; however, lecture and/or active learning in the classroom are integral to learning and the ability to demonstrate competence. Therefore, excessive absenteeism (3 or more unexcused missed classes) will result in a non-passing grade in any face-to-face course.

⁴ A student's participation in the requested test or evaluation and subsequent recommended treatment may not prevent an academic dismissal.

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3b. Clinical tardiness and attendance

Tardiness

It is expected that students will arrive at assigned clinical locations on time. Tardiness is a disruption to the flow of the clinical experience. The student will receive a verbal warning the first time the student is late. The second time the student is late, the student will receive an improvement plan for course progression (IPCP). This is a written communication for a plan to improve the issue and is a contractual agreement between the student and the instructor signed by both parties. The third tardy will be considered unprofessional behavior and may result in an unsatisfactory grade in the clinical rotation, requiring the course to be repeated. *This applies across all clinical settings, including skills lab, simulation, community, and inpatient assignment. For example, tardiness for skills lab on Monday and for simulation on Tuesday is considered two accounts of tardiness.*

Attendance

Clinical placement is made in collaboration with our clinical partners. It is imperative that students communicate with their supervisor **prior to** missing clinical. Undergraduate students must contact their clinical faculty member; doctoral students must contact their clinical preceptor and their supervising faculty member. In the event of an emergency, the student must contact their supervisors as soon as reasonably possible.

Undergraduate students: Regardless of the reason for missing a clinical experience, it may not be possible to find a time and place for a make-up clinical experience. All attempts will be made to find a make-up in the clinical setting or an alternative assignment. Up to two clinical shifts may be considered for an alternate assignment unless extenuating circumstances (e.g., natural or manmade disaster); otherwise, the clinical experience must match the experience missed. If a placement cannot be found, a student may receive an incomplete in the course, which may delay progression. An unexcused absence in the clinical setting, other than for an emergency, will be considered unprofessional behavior and may result in an unsatisfactory grade in the clinical rotation, requiring the course to be repeated. *This applies across all clinical settings, including skills lab, simulation, community, and inpatient assignment. For example, an unexcused absence for skills lab on Monday and for inpatient clinical on Tuesday is considered two unexcused absences.*

Graduate students: An unexcused absence, other than for an emergency, will be considered unprofessional behavior and may result in an unsatisfactory grade in the clinical course, requiring the course to be repeated. *This applies across all clinical settings, including lab and simulation.*

3c. Exams

Students are expected to take exams as scheduled. Missing an exam without prior notification other than for an emergency will be considered unexcused and will likely result in a zero grade for the exam.

4. PROFESSIONALISM IN CLINICAL SETTINGS

A student is expected to meet the College professionalism standards and act appropriately and professionally in all clinical settings. Clinical practice is an essential part of the academic

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instruction that a student receives from the College. Moreover, the clinical setting demands professional behavior and directly reflects a student's ability to become a competent professional. Therefore, the College expects and requires every student to demonstrate professionalism in all clinical settings and during all clinical activities, which includes, but is not limited to all professionalism expectations for the classroom setting as noted above, and all clinical site rules and policies.

5. PROFESSIONALISM OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM AND CLINICAL SETTINGS

While not all aspects of a student's life are academic in nature, professionalism extends well beyond the classroom and into other College-related activities. These include activities like participating in internships and externships, joining study groups, visiting faculty office hours, corresponding with other students and faculty, as well as participating in student organizations. The College expects and requires a student to demonstrate professionalism in these and all other College-related activities which includes, but is not limited to, the professionalism expectations for the classroom setting as noted above.

6. PROFESSIONALISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The College recognizes that social media (such as Facebook, GroupMe, Instagram, Threads, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, etc.) can be an important and timely means of communication and expression. However, a student who uses social media must be aware that posting certain information may be unprofessional and, in some rare instances, a violation of this Professionalism Policy or University Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. Individuals are encouraged to present themselves in a mature, responsible, and professional manner, adhering to all applicable codes, rules, policies, laws and regulations governing the academic program and the profession. *Nothing contained within this Policy shall be interpreted to limit the constitutional or statutory rights of any student, including but not limited to expressive rights protected by the First Amendment.*

7. THREAT OF HARM TO OTHERS

In some circumstances, a student may pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others. The University may, at its sole discretion, invoke [UF Regulation 4.036](#) for Involuntary Medical Withdrawal. Under UF Regulation 4.036, a student who poses a significant danger of serious harm to the health or safety of others at the University will be involuntarily withdrawn from the University by the Dean of Students or designee. Such action will be taken only after appropriate consultation with the Director of the University Counseling Center, in accordance with said Regulation.