
Professional Nurse Conduct Expectations

A. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define principles of ethical conduct, the expectations from each student and the outcomes when breached.

B. Persons Affected

1. Undergraduate Students
2. Graduate Students

C. Definitions

1. We are honest:
“We do our own work and are honest with one another in all matters. We understand how any act of dishonesty conflicts as much with academic achievement as with the values of honesty and integrity” (Vaquero Honor Code, 2025).
2. We have integrity:
“We will make personal and academic integrity fundamental in all of our endeavors” (Vaquero Honor Code, 2025).
3. We are respectful:
“We act civilly and cooperate with one another for the common good. We will strive to create an environment and a culture in which people respect and listen to one another. We recognize a university is, above all, a place for the exchange of ideas, popular and unpopular. It is the one institution in society that encourages challenges to conventional wisdom. Consequently, we pledge to encourage the exchange of ideas and to allow others to participate and express their views openly” (Vaquero Honor Code, 2025).
4. Professional nursing:
“Professional nursing means the performance of an act that requires substantial specialized judgment and skill, the proper performance of which is based on knowledge and application of the principles of biological, physical, and social science as acquired by a completed course in an approved school of professional nursing” (TBON, 2025).
5. Unprofessional conduct:
“Unprofessional conduct and/or criminal conduct such as fraud, theft, patient abuse, exploitation, or falsification. The evidence must be documented in writing and relegated to a nursing peer review committee” (TBON, 2025).

6. Behavioral misconduct:
Conduct that threatens or endangers the health or safety of self or others, including, but not limited to, acts such as physical abuse, verbal abuse, threats, or breach of the standards cited in this policy.

7. Reportable conduct:

TBON Statute

Sec. 301.401. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

- (1) "Conduct subject to reporting" means conduct by a nurse that:
- (A) violates this chapter or a board rule and contributed to the death or serious injury of a patient;
 - (B) causes a person to suspect that the nurse's practice is impaired by chemical dependency or drug or alcohol abuse;
 - (C) constitutes abuse, exploitation, fraud, or a violation of professional boundaries; or
 - (D) indicates that the nurse lacks knowledge, skill, judgment, or conscientiousness to such an extent that the nurse's continued practice of nursing could reasonably be expected to pose a risk of harm to a patient or another person, regardless of whether the conduct consists of a single incident or a pattern of behavior.
- (2) "Minor incident" means conduct by a nurse that does not indicate that the nurse's continued practice poses a risk of harm to a patient or another person. This term is synonymous with "minor error" or "minor violation of this chapter or board rule" (Prohibited Practices and Disciplinary Actions, 2003).

8. Academic dishonesty:
"Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, facilitating academic dishonesty, fabrication, failure to contribute to a collaborative project, and sabotage". All violations of Academic Integrity will be reported to Student Rights and Responsibilities through [Vaqueros Report It.](#) "

9. HIPPA:
Federal legislation directing healthcare providers, employees, consultants, and venders of the legal requirement to preserve confidentiality of all information whether electronic, verbal, or written. Students are required to attend this. Commitment by signing a document at the clinical practice sites. A sample document is attached. Usage of social media: electronic (selfies, phone, images, information)/ verbal (include not limited friends , family, and patients).

10. American Nurses Association *Code of Ethics for Nurses (Code)* and Interpretive Statements:

"The Code of Ethics for Nurses (Code) establishes the ethical standard for the profession and provides a guide for nurses to use in ethical practice and decision-making without dictation a specific framework or method. The Code is a nonnegotiable moral standard of nursing practice for all settings" (American Nurses Association, 2025, p. 1-4).

- a. Provision 1: *"The nurse practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person."*
- b. Provision 2: *"The nurse's primary commitment is to the recipients of nursing care, whether an individual, family, group, community, or population."*
- c. Provision 3: *The nurse establishes a trusting relationship and advocates for the rights, health, and safety of the recipients of nursing care."*
- d. Provision 4: *"Nurses have authority over nursing practice and are accountable for their nursing practice consistent with their obligations to promote health, prevent illness, and practice optimal care."*
- e. Provision 5: *"The nurse has moral duties to self as a person of inherent dignity and worth including an expectation of a safe place to work those fosters flourishing, authenticity of self at work, and self-respect through integrity and professional competence."*
- f. Provision 6: *"Nurse, through individual and collective effort, establish, maintain, and improve the ethical environment of the work setting that affects nursing and the well-being of nurses."*
- g. Provision 7: *"Nurses advance the profession through multiple approaches to knowledge development, professional standards, and the generation of policies for nursing, health, and social concerns."*
- h. Provision 8: *"Nurses build collaborative relationships and networks with nurses, other healthcare and non-healthcare disciplines, and the public to achieve greater ends."*
- i. Provision 9: *"Nurses and their professional organizations work to enact and resource practices, policies, and legislation to promote social justice, eliminate health inequities, and facilitate human flourishing."*
- j. Provision 10: *Nursing, through organizations and associations, participates in the global nursing and health community to promote human and environmental health, well-being, and flourishing."*

D. Policy

It is the policy of the UTRGV School of Nursing (SON) to inform all students of the Vaquero Honor Code, the Texas Board of Nursing legislative definition of professional nursing and the rules of conduct, and the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics. Furthermore, it is the policy of the UTRGV SON to inform all students of the outcomes when breach of these professional and legislative requirements is breached.

Note: "A person, including an employee, volunteer, or other person associated with an inpatient mental health facility, a treatment facility, or a hospital that provides comprehensive medical rehabilitation services, who reasonably believes or who knows of information that would reasonably cause a person to believe that the physical or mental health or welfare of a patient or client of the facility who is receiving chemical dependency, mental health, or rehabilitation services has been, is, or will be adversely affected by abuse or neglect caused by any person shall as soon as possible report the information supporting the belief to the agency that licenses the facility or to the appropriate state health care regulatory agency." (Reports of Abuse and Neglect or of Illegal, Unprofessional, or Unethical Conduct, 2024)

Note: "A physician or other person who reports an overdose of a controlled substance under this section shall include in the report information regarding the date of the overdose, the type of controlled substance used, the sex and approximate age of the person attended or treated for the overdose or for whom treatment was sought, the symptoms associated with the overdose, the extent of treatment made necessary by the overdose, and the patient outcome. The physician or other person making the report may provide other demographic information concerning the person attended or treated or for whom treatment was sought but may not disclose the person's name or address or any other information concerning the person's identity." (Reports of Abuse and Neglect or of Illegal, Unprofessional, or Unethical Conduct, 2024)

E. Procedures

1. The policy will be presented at Student Orientation.
2. The policy will be presented on the first day of class along with the syllabus review.
3. The policy will be presented on the first day of clinical practice.
4. The student will sign an attestation form on the first day of clinical practice.
5. The student will sign an attestation to comply with HIPPA federal regulations on the first day of clinical practice.
6. The assigned clinical faculty will create a link for students to upload the signed attestation form.
7. The pre-licensure student will comply with the SON and UTRGV policies and procedures.

The licensed student will comply with all SON and UTRGV policies and procedures as well as Texas statutes (see below).

Retrieved February 12, 2025, from

[www.bon.texas.gov/pdfs/law_rules_pdfs/rules_regulations_pdfs/April 2022 Rules and Regulations.pdf](http://www.bon.texas.gov/pdfs/law_rules_pdfs/rules_regulations_pdfs/April_2022_Rules_and_Regulations.pdf)

Reports of Abuse and Neglect or of Illegal, Unprofessional, or Unethical

Conduct, <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/HS/htm/HS.161.htm#161.132> (accessed Jun. 5, 2024).

- F. Breach of code of ethics, code of honor and legislative requirements:
1. Individual reporting the alleged academic dishonesty, and/or violations of the Student Code of Conduct, will be guided to file a report to [Vaqueros Report It](#).
 2. Upon receiving a report of alleged academic dishonesty, and/or violations of the Student Code of Conduct, an official investigation will proceed.
 3. Students (Graduate and Undergraduate) enrolled in the SON will comply with SON and UTRGV policies and Sanctioning Guidelines. *Sanctions*. Retrieved February 12, 2024 from https://www.utrgv.edu/files/documents/student-experience/report-it/utrgv_sanctioning_guidelines.pdf
 4. Consequences resulting from confirmed unacceptable conduct, and/or academic dishonesty, will result in disciplinary action or dismissal from the program.
 5. Students (Graduate and Undergraduate) enrolled in the SON who violate policies and Sanctioning Guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action and may be dismissed from the program by the Dean of the SON.
 6. The UTRGV SON policy and any dismissal do not preclude any processes under the UTRGV Student Code of Conduct or Honor Code.
 7. Allegations of misconduct or violation of not adhering to the SON, UTRGV, or Texas Statutes will be investigated as appointed by the Dean.
 8. If academic dishonesty is confirmed, the student will be dismissed from the program.
 9. Report of the conduct other than academic dishonesty (Breach of Texas Statutes by licensed students) to the instructor of record, will result in an official investigation as appointed by the Dean.
 10. Students who are dismissed from the program are not eligible to reapply or be readmitted to any other UTRGV nursing program for readmission.
 11. Dismissal from the program is final.

G. Related Statutes or Regulations, Rules, Policies, or Standards

Code of Ethics for Nurses (2025). American Nurses Association.
<https://codeofethics.ana.org/home>

Prohibited Practices and Disciplinary Actions (September 1, 2003).
<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/OC/htm/OC.301.htm#301.452>

Retrieved February 12, 2025, from https://www.utrgv.edu/files/documents/student-experience/report-it/utrgv_sanctioning_guidelines.pdf

Retrieved February 11, 2025, from <https://www.nursingworld.org/nurses-books/Code-of-ethics-2025/>

Retrieved February 11, 2025, from
<https://www.utrgv.edu/studentlife/resources/vaquero-honor-code/>

Retrieved February 11, 2025, from
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2155825616310730>

Texas Board of Nursing - Practice FAQ www.bon.texas.gov/npa1.asp.html

Retrieved February 12, 2025, from
[www.bon.texas.gov/pdfs/law_rules_pdfs/rules_regulations_pdfs/April 2022 Rules and Regulations.pdf](http://www.bon.texas.gov/pdfs/law_rules_pdfs/rules_regulations_pdfs/April_2022_Rules_and_Regulations.pdf)

Reports of Abuse and Neglect or of Illegal, Unprofessional, or Unethical Conduct, <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/HS/htm/HS.161.htm#161.132> (accessed Jun. 5, 2024).

Sanctions. Retrieved February 12, 2024 from
https://www.utrgv.edu/files/documents/student-experience/report-it/utrgv_sanctioning_guidelines.pdf

H. Attachments

SON HIPPA Confidentiality Form

Vaqueros Report It

I. Dates Reviewed or Amended

Dates: Feb 12, 2025

Sent to SONFO Mar 27, 2025

Task force referred to SONFO chair on March 27, 2025

Policy approved by SONFO: Kochurani Joseph on March 31, 2025

Policy approved by SON Dean, Dr. Lilia Fuentes on April 17, 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lilia Fuentes", is written over the end of the third line of text.

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MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION:
Information Security Agreement

The UTRGV School of Nursing and _____ (Print Student Name) are committed to maintaining the highest standards of confidentiality. The responsibility to preserve the confidentiality of all information (electronic, verbal, or written) rests with each employee, staff member, and participant in the health care process. In the performance of their duties, employees, physicians, consultants, and vendors may at some time be required to operate computer equipment or have access to software systems; this information is also confidential.

All persons are surrounded by confidential and sensitive information and must understand their personal responsibility to comply with security policies.

I AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING:

- I agree that all sources of patient-related information shall be held to the highest level of confidentiality. That means that I agree not to release or discuss, without express prior written consent, any information except with those individuals directly responsible for the care of the patient in question.
- I agree not to disclose any confidential information obtained during the course of my responsibilities. This includes, but is not limited to, patient, employee, financial, physician, or medical information (electronic, verbal, or written), as well as the design, programming, techniques, flowcharts, source codes, screens, policy and procedure manuals, client lists and directories, business plans, and documentation created by the company employees or outside sources.
- I agree to access only information sources, specifically computer systems, as required for the performance of my direct responsibilities.
- I agree to maintain my assigned passwords that allow my access to computer systems and equipment in the strictest confidence and not to disclose my (or anyone else's) password to anyone, at any time, for any reason. I understand that my access is my legal signature, and that giving my password to another makes me responsible for their actions. If accidental disclosure should result in inappropriate access, I can be held responsible.
- I agree not to operate or attempt to operate computer equipment without documented formal training from a designated hospital agent. I agree not to demonstrate the operation of computer equipment to anyone without specific authorization.
- I agree that no software or disks brought from home or any source outside the facility is to be used or loaded on to the facility's equipment without the direct approval of the facility's Information Services Director.

- I agree to report any and all activity that is contrary to the issue in this agreement to my supervisor, department director, facility Information Services Director, or the Risk Manager.
- I agree that upon termination of my employment or student contract, I will not thereafter, for any purpose, use, appropriate, or reproduce such information or disclose such information to any third party.

I understand that this form will become an official part of my student/employee/medical staff/contractor file and that failure to comply with the above policies will result in formal disciplinary action, up to and possibly including:

- termination from the “Hospital” or its subsidiaries in the case of employees or agents, or
- the termination, voiding, cancellation of agreements, contracts, etc. with physicians, consultants, or vendors, etc.
- that the “Hospital reserves the right to pursue any legal or equitable remedies available to it, including, but not limited to, an action for monetary and/or for injunctive relief.

UTRGV Student 's Signature

Print Name (Student)

Date