



## UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA FACULTY OF NURSING

### FITNESS TO PRACTICE: IMPLICATIONS FOR UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS

#### CONTEXT

Nursing is an exciting profession filled with many diverse opportunities and challenges, all of which we hope will prepare you during your nursing education journey with us. As part of that preparation, we are required through our program approval, to prepare you for eligibility to register in the profession, which you can pursue after completing your educational requirements.

The Faculty of Nursing is committed to equitable opportunity and values the perspectives brought from individuals with different life experiences. We encourage qualified applicants from a wide cross-section of society, including persons with a disability and those requiring accommodations for learning.

#### PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Nursing programs require students to participate in classroom, laboratory and clinical practice settings in order to achieve the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to obtain a baccalaureate degree in nursing and to be eligible to register to practice as a registered nurse (RN) upon graduation. Varied learning environments have been carefully selected to ensure students meet graduate outcomes associated with our nursing education program approval. Learning activities have specific requirements associated with them that are connected with students' achievement of program outcomes.

The terminal outcomes of our program include preparation to meet the College and Association of Registered Nurses (CARNA's) [Entry Level Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses](#).

Nursing students, graduate nurses and RNs are required to be able to:

- Establish effective and therapeutic relationships with clients while being sensitive to their health preferences and needs. This includes therapeutic use of touch.

- Use various forms of technology to complete both academic and clinical requirements.
- Communicate and document clearly and comprehensively.
- Work collaboratively within an interprofessional healthcare team.
- Collaborate in the care of individuals, which may require the ability to stand, lift, bend and safely transfer clients from one position to another in some clinical practice contexts.
- Demonstrate manual dexterity, precision and hand-eye coordination for some psychomotor skills.

Clinical experiences involve placements in acute care, community, and other clinical related settings, some of which may be virtual clinical experiences. These experiences are bound by the placement agreements with specific clinical agencies to ensure an excellent and safe learning experience for you and the agencies, as well as the patients/clients and families and communities associated with our clinical partners.

During a nursing program, students are asked to complete physically, cognitively and emotionally challenging clinical learning activities similar to those required of a practicing RN. These are outlined in the document entitled [Requisite Skills and Abilities for Becoming a Registered Nurse in Alberta](#) (CARNA, 2021).

The demands of clinical experiences in nursing education include shift work that may span 8 or 12 hours of work at a time. Student placements may require working the same varied shifts as nurses as well as completing clinical preparation outside of clinical time. RNs commonly work different day, evening and night shifts, as well as weekends. Placements outside of acute care may vary according to public hours of operation. Additionally, students will be expected to arrive on the units prior to the start of their shifts to review client charts and prepare to commence work. In addition to shift work, students are required to travel to clinical sites, which may be up to 150 km outside of the City of Edmonton.

Nursing students and graduates of the nursing programs must be knowledgeable about the requisite skills and abilities and able to meet [Fitness to Practice](#) requirements while completing clinical experiences as outlined by CARNA and clinical placement agreements between our educational institution and various clinical agencies.

Graduates of the nursing program are eligible to write a licensing exam ([NCLEX-RN exam](#)) and register with the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) (or the equivalent in another jurisdiction) if they wish to practice as a registered nurse.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT**

There are available supports that can be arranged to assist with certain elements of the program that do not compromise student, client, patient or clinical agency safety. Resources to support and enhance accessibility are explained further below.

If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation, you are required to register with the University of Alberta [Accessibility Resources](#) well in advance of learning experiences so that individual circumstances and possible accommodations can be assessed and arranged.

Students who require assistive technologies for learning will be encouraged to use them in the clinical setting as long as they do not compromise client safety, comfort, and confidentiality. The use of assistive technology in a clinical setting always requires the prior approval of the relevant clinical agency.

The Faculty of Nursing has incorporated universal design principles by providing all students with up to 1.5 times the required time for midterm and final exams only. Class activities designed to facilitate learning and/or exposure to exam type questions that are worth up to and including 10% of the total grade are exempt from the 1.5 multiplier. Additional accommodations will be arranged on an individual basis.

### ***Time Accommodations for Clinically Based Learning Assessments***

Clinically based learning assessments align with authentic activities that occur in the clinical setting (e.g. medication calculation and certain psychomotor skill demonstrations). The Faculty of Nursing uses learning assessments that prepare students to practice safely and meet the [Entry Level Competencies for the Practice of Registered Nurses](#). In order to effectively, promptly, consistently, and correctly demonstrate knowledge, skills, and judgement that meet nursing practice standards, students cannot be granted extra time in some circumstances where clinically based learning assessments rely on time as a demonstrated competency. This includes assessments related to implementing the nursing process in the practice setting, demonstrating physical skills in a laboratory or clinical context, adapting to evolving situations, and performing in physically and emotionally stressful situations (Adapted from University of British Columbia School of Nursing, Guidelines for Differentiated Time Accommodation for Assessment in the School of Nursing, 2010, para 3-with permission). Additional accommodations may be arranged on an individual basis.

### ***Field and Practicum (Clinical) Accommodations***

Accommodations are possible in situations where identified adaptations to learning do not decrease patient safety or jeopardize the wellness of others in the specific health care setting. There are some circumstances where accommodation may not be possible. Specific

accommodations may take time to arrange and must be deemed a possible accommodation by the clinical agency at which the student is placed.

If you require [accommodations in the practice setting](#), you are encouraged to contact an Accessibility Advisor as soon as possible to explore accommodations that will optimize your success in the applicable experiential learning environments. Clinical accommodations may take time to arrange; therefore, it is important to forward a request well in advance of the clinical course. The Faculty of Nursing requests 3-4 months lead time in arranging clinical accommodations.

There are some circumstances where accommodation may not be possible. Please refer to the University of Alberta Policy on [Discrimination, Harassment, and Duty to Accommodate](#), which outlines further parameters.

### *Accessing Resources and Processes*

Students are responsible for completing an ongoing self-assessment to ensure they are meeting fitness to practice standards specific to each learning environment (Lecture, Lab or Clinical). Students who require additional support to facilitate fitness to practice, are encouraged to meet with the Faculty of Nursing Student Advisor and/or with the Accessibility Resources Office.

## **CONCLUSION**

Becoming a nurse is a rewarding experience and we look forward to working with you to ensure your experience is positive, safe and effective in developing the required knowledge, skills and abilities that will serve as the foundation for a meaningful nursing career. Many resources and supports are available to assist you in your learning. Before applying to the program, students should review the [Requisite Skills and Abilities for Becoming a Registered Nurse in Alberta](#) (CARNA, 2021).

Approved:

Undergraduate Curriculum Committee May 2021

Executive Committee July 2021

## References

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