

INTRODUCTION

A clinical preceptorship can be defined as a supervised clinical experience which allows students to apply knowledge gained in the didactic portion of a program to clinical practice. Because each student enters the clinical preceptorship with a varied amount of past experience and technical competence, providing clinical learning opportunities which support the student's individual learning needs may be challenging. Therefore, the purpose of these Preceptor Guidelines is to provide The University of Texas-Houston Graduate Program preceptors with helpful information and effective teaching strategies to optimize student learning.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE SCHOOL OF NURSING

The philosophy of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Nursing reflects the beliefs of the faculty and provides the foundation for the curriculum. The philosophy and purpose of the nursing programs complement the philosophy of The University of Texas System and support the mission and goals of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston to be a world health science university in the 21st Century committed to improving the health of people. The coordinated efforts of the undergraduate and graduate programs contribute to the education, research, patient care, community service and development purposes of the university and to advancement in professional nursing.

The faculty believes that human beings, health, and nursing are interrelated and exist in a dynamic environment. Humans are viewed as holistic beings. The inherent dignity and worth of humans gives them the right and responsibility to participate as actively as they are able in decisions which affect their state of health. These decisions are influenced by individual values, beliefs and perceptions as well as ethical, legal, cultural, social, political, and economic forces.

Health is a dynamic condition which incorporates all related events of human life and encompasses the states of wellness and illness. The faculty believes in health care that focuses on promotion, maintenance, illness care and rehabilitation activities and reflects comprehensive humanitarian, altruistic and inter-professional values.

Human beings are in constant interaction with a dynamic internal and external environment. The health care system is the environmental component through which most nursing care is delivered. The goal of nursing is to help human beings make maximum use of resources to manage internal and external factors to attain and maintain health. Nursing as a health profession uses the nursing process to manage the real and potential health problems of patients/clients in a variety of environmental settings.

The faculty believes that:

Education supports learning as a lifelong process that results in a change in thinking, valuing, and behaving. The teaching-learning process includes teacher-learner interaction in setting goals, assessing and selecting learning experiences: determining instructional methods, and evaluating the learner's progress. Each student is a unique human being possessing dignity, worth, and the right to accessible educational opportunity.

Undergraduate and graduate educational programs of study leading respectively to generalists and advanced degrees should be futuristic and designed to provide qualified applicants with educational alternatives for entry, progression and graduation. The rich and varied experiential and educational backgrounds of the learners are validated and incorporated as they progress toward their educational goals.

Baccalaureate education in nursing is based upon a study of the sciences and humanities/arts and provides a foundation for continuing personal, professional, and educational development. The curriculum is designed to allow the student the opportunity to become a competent, self-directed nursing generalist who is able to critically think and function in a variety of settings with culturally diverse populations.

Graduate education in nursing at the master's level is designed to provide the opportunity for students to become leaders. Graduates make significant contributions to the improvement of health care and influence health care policy through advanced clinical practice and research in order to meet the current and emerging health needs of society.

Research in nursing and health care supports nursing science, the evolving body of knowledge that serves as the basis of the profession. Various nursing theories provide a framework to guide practice, education, research, and in combination, offer a multitheoretical approach to nursing.

Patient care and professional nursing practice reflect the caring commitment of nursing to the promotion of health, prevention of illness, restoration of wellness, rehabilitation and supportive care of culturally diverse populations throughout the life span. Professional nurses are accountable to society for the effects of nursing practice based on standards of care.

Community service involves participation in volunteer and professional organizations as well as interaction with health care and lay groups and is necessary for advancing professional development and improving the health care system as we move toward the 21st century.

Institutional and personal development is a shared responsibility of faculty, students, and staff for developing an environment that reflects democratic values, fosters intellectual inquiry, critical thinking, and creativity throughout life, and encourages leadership within the school and institution at large.

Outreach and Continuing Education promote accessible learning experiences for nurses to update and advance knowledge and skills thus fostering professional development and improvement of health care.

GRADUATE FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

- I. Prior to the initiation of the clinical preceptorship, The Graduate Faculty or designee will:
 - A. Communicate with the clinical site and request clinical placements for a designated number of students for the upcoming semester. Graduate faculty is responsible for selection of clinical sites and preceptors.
 - B. When indicated, send a verification letter to the preceptor and clinical site with names of the student and contact Faculty member and the dates in which the student will be completing a rotation at the clinical site.
 - C. Provide a copy of the course syllabi which includes the course objectives and the appropriate evaluation form to the preceptor and clinical site.
 - D. Ensure that a current contract/letter of agreement exists between the clinical agency and the School of Nursing.
- II. The School of Nursing faculty member and all preceptors shall jointly evaluate the graduate student's performance in the clinical setting. See Appendices for designated Evaluation/Documentation forms to be used throughout and upon completion of the clinical preceptorship.
- III. The University of Texas-Houston School of Nursing Faculty will provide periodic on-site clinical visits and will be available for consultation as requested to the student, preceptor and clinical site.
- IV. The University of Texas-Houston School of Nursing Faculty will retain final authority for determining when the graduate student has successfully met requirements for satisfactory completion of the preceptorship and course requirements.
- V. Clinical sites and preceptors are evaluated periodically by Graduate Program Faculty using a standard Program form (See Appendix ____).
- VI. The Graduate Faculty member will be responsible to the student for
 - A. Assistance in scheduling clinical experiences to meet the course and student objectives.
 - B. Periodic on site clinical visits as determined by the faculty and student.
 - C. Consultation at the clinical site as requested by the student.
 - D. Ongoing support and guidance.

CLINICAL SITE SELECTION CRITERIA AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I. Clinical Site Selection Criteria

- A. The clinical settings chosen for the preceptorship shall provide experiences appropriate to the graduate student's educational needs.
- B. The clinical settings chosen for the preceptor shall have mechanisms in place which provide medical authority for Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) practice, as appropriate. Such mechanisms may include, but are not limited to, protocols, policies, practice guidelines, or other orders. When these mechanisms are used to provide such authorization, they should be jointly developed by the advanced practice nurse and appropriate physician(s) and signed by both the nurse and the physician(s). These protocols/policies/practice guidelines shall be reviewed and signed at least biennially and maintained in the practice setting of the advanced practice nurse (Board of Nurse Examiners for The State of Texas, 2005).

II. Clinical Site Responsibilities

The clinical site is responsible for:

- A. Access to space in which to practice (exam room, classroom, and office work space, conference room).
- B. Adequate resources for diagnostic services and appropriate resources for referral.
- C. Adequate resources for educational instruction, communication, and documentation.
- D. Provision of policies, procedures, and/or advanced practice protocols specific to the setting and role.
- E. Mentoring the student in the performance of the required activities appropriate to their clinical specialty and role.
 - 1. Nurse Practitioner (NP): The clinical settings chosen for the NP student shall provide an environment which permits both observation and active participation of the student in the delivery of care. The site shall provide activities which include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Opportunities to practice primary, secondary, and/or tertiary care.
 - b. Reasonable time for learning for the student and for the practice site.

- c. A variety of learning experiences in relation to age, clinical complexity and diagnoses.
 - d. Opportunity to formulate differential diagnoses, and management plans.
 - e. Opportunity to implement and evaluate management plans.
2. The Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) student should be allowed to perform all the required education, leadership, research, and patient management activities for their specific role. These activities include, but are not limited to:
- a. Analysis of the basic concepts of the role in the specific clinical setting and its place in the present health care environment.
 - b. Implementation of the major functions of the CNS in a multicultural environment.
 - c. Participation interactions, transactions, and goal development between clients, families, nurses and other health care professionals.
 - d. Participation the examination or development of ethical, legal, economical and professional issues that influence the CNS role.
 - e. Identification and implementation of a project for the application of change theory.
 - f. Participation as case manager for assigned clients, development of plans for continuity of care and service delivery.
3. The Education student should be allowed to perform all the required student/staff development activities for their specific role. These activities include, but are not limited to:
- a. Critical analysis of the nursing curriculum in the clinical site.
 - b. Implementation of instructions specific to the needs of the clinical site.
4. The student enrolled in the Nursing Leadership and Administration in Health Systems program, will be facilitated in performing management activities based on their objectives for their specific role. These activities include, but are not limited to:
- a. Participation in the administration of selected aspects of a health

care agency/system.

- b. Analysis of the responsibility and accountability of administrators of selected departments in the functioning of a health care agency/system.
- c. Evaluation of the role of nurses and other health care providers in the administration of a health care agency/system.
- d. Analysis of current issues in health care systems with emphasis on the role of nurse administrators in developing creative solutions.

PRECEPTOR SELECTION CRITERIA & RESPONSIBILITIES

I. Selection Criteria

Preceptor selection criteria shall include:

- A. Current license to practice as a Registered Nurse in The State of Texas.
- B. Master's Degree in Nursing (preferred), licensed physician, physician assistant, licensed nursing home administrator, health care administrator, licensed professional counselor or psychologist.
- C. Appropriately credentialed.
- D. Minimum of one year practice experience, in clinical specialty and role.
- E. Functioning within the scope of the Texas Nurse Practice Act
- F. Willingness to participate actively in the education and evaluation process of the graduate student.

II. Preceptor Responsibilities

Preceptor responsibilities shall include the orientation, supervision, teaching, and evaluation student's performance in the clinical setting. The graduate preceptor is responsible for:

A. Orientation

- 1. The graduate student should arrange to meet with the identified clinical site preceptor for orientation prior to the initiation of the actual clinical experience.
- 2. During orientation to the clinical setting, the graduate preceptor(s) should:
 - a. Communicate general guidelines to be used for preceptor/student interactions and for review and feedback of student performance.
 - b. Review policies, procedures, and advanced practice management protocols specific to the setting and role.
 - c. Review expectations for documentation.
 - d. Discuss overall plan for progression of student assignments.

- e. Review student's previous learning experiences and clinical objectives to be accomplished.
- f. Complete Clinical Contract with student (Appendix ___)
- g. Encourage student to identify strengths and areas for continued professional growth
- h. Perform initial assessment of student's current level of proficiency through observation of student performance and through directed, guided questioning
- i. Involve student in assessment/validation/decisions about learning strategies employed by the preceptor.
- j. Review clinical site educational and licensure documentation, parking, dress code, etc.
- k. Negotiate a clinical schedule with the graduate student. In order to ensure an optimal clinical experience; all graduate students are required to arrange their clinical schedules to assure continuity clinical experiences as applicable to the specific clinical specialty and role. If the student will be absent on a scheduled clinical day, the student is responsible for notifying the graduate preceptor and the faculty prior to the clinical day.
- l. Review other clinical site specific operational issues involved in the performance of advanced practice role responsibilities

B. Clinical Supervision and Teaching

The graduate preceptor should:

1. Provide timely and necessary input to student regarding student's ability to meet course objectives throughout the clinical practicum.
2. Assess the competence of the graduate student in providing role responsibilities to clients and populations
3. Ensure that the graduate student's performance is consistent with standards set forth in clinical site policies, procedures, and advanced practice protocols for patient care, education, and administration duties.
4. Direct the progression of student assignments based on both the preceptor's and graduate student's evaluation of readiness, knowledge and skill competencies.

5. Upon completion of 75% of each clinical experience, it is expected that the graduate student will be able to perform role responsibilities consistent with the course objectives.
6. Directly mentor the graduate student in the performance of role responsibilities. The graduate preceptor should remember, however, that she/he is ultimately responsible for the client, and thus should remain available to the student for consultation and ongoing evaluation throughout the entire preceptorship.
7. Provide feedback on the accuracy and completeness of the student's documentation of clinical findings. Review the graduate student's documentation and make constructive suggestions for improvement. Graduate students will sign all notations with their first name, last name, title, and school. All documentation must be co-signed by the preceptor in accordance with clinical site policies.
8. Schedule regular meetings with the graduate student to discuss specific learning objectives and experiences. These meetings should review:
 - a. The student's role responsibilities and ability to accurately document clinical findings.
 - b. Ability to complete advanced practice skills/activities
 - c. The student's comprehension of pathophysiology and theory as it relates to their clinical specialty and role
 - d. The student's ability to develop client-focused intervention strategies, including rationales for decisions
 - f. The student's ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with preceptors, clients, families, nursing staff, and other health care professionals
 - g. Professional issues related to advanced practice role implementation
 - h. Plans for future learning experiences based on an assessment of the student's strengths and areas for continued professional growth

C. Evaluation of Graduate Student Performance

1. Assess graduate student progress through a formal, written evaluation at the completion of the clinical preceptorship. The preceptor evaluation is a component of the graduate student's grade (as specified on the student's

clinical evaluation form).

2. Inform The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Graduate Program Faculty of concerns related to:
 - a. Unsafe clinical practice by the student
 - b. Student difficulties in meeting the requirements of the preceptorship experience.
3. Consult with Graduate Faculty regarding any concerns about the student's ability or clinical performance.

GRADUATE STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The student is responsible for being self-directed in identifying initial and ongoing learning needs, for seeking learning opportunities to meet identified needs, and for being accountable for their performance in the selected role. The student will:

- A. Discuss specific clinical objectives and negotiate a mutually agreeable schedule with the preceptor prior to the actual preceptorship
- B. Mutually negotiate Clinical/Practicum Contract with Preceptor and Faculty.
- C. Provide the clinical site with the necessary licensure or educational information as requested.
- D. Demonstrate professional behaviors at all times.
- F. Demonstrate accountability for thoroughness and timeliness in completing assigned responsibilities.
- E. Maintain a log of clinical skills, activities, clients, teaching-learning modules and educational experiences attended throughout the duration of the preceptorship.
- F. Demonstrate progressive independence and competency in the chosen role and specialty area.
- G. Actively seek input into evaluation process and participate in self-evaluation of strengths and identified areas for professional growth with Faculty member and preceptor(s).
- H. Complete clinical preceptor evaluation and provide feedback to preceptor.

REFERENCES

Board of Nurse Examiners For the State of Texas, (2005). Rules and Regulations Relating to Professional Nurse Education, Licensure, and Practice.

Additional Readings to be added by Faculty