

Requirements for clinical practice in five areas of motor, sensory, communication, behavior and critical thinking skills

The clinical setting presents unique challenges and responsibilities for nursing students caring for patients in a variety of health care environments. In addition to academic qualifications, UConn nursing students must possess the ability to consistently demonstrate a proficiency in five core areas for nursing students. Specifically: motor, sensory, communication, behavior and critical thinking skills. These areas reflect the reasonable expectations of a nursing student performing the common functions of a registered nurse and/or an advanced practice nurse. In adopting these standards we are mindful of the patient's right to safe and quality health care.

The ability to consistently demonstrate these personal and professional competencies are essential from admittance to graduation. Students must be capable of performing the skills of a nursing student.

Therefore, each nursing student must have the ability to learn and perform the following competencies and skills:

Motor: The student must possess sufficient motor capabilities to execute the movements and skills required to provide safe and effective nursing interventions. These include, but are not limited to:

1. Coordination, speed and agility to assist and safely guard (protect), with safe and proper body mechanics, patients who are ambulating, transferring, or performing other activities.
2. Ability to adjust and position equipment and patients, which involves bending or stooping freely to floor level and reaching above the head.
3. Ability to move throughout the classroom/clinical site, sit and stand for long periods of time to carry out patient care activities.
4. Ability to perform patient care duties for up to 12 hours at a time, day or night;
5. Ability to move or position patients and equipment, which involves lifting, carrying, pulling, up to and including 30 pounds.
6. Ability to guide, resist, and assist patients, or to provide emergency care, which involves the activities of standing, kneeling, sitting, or walking.
7. Ability and dexterity to manipulate the devices used in giving nursing care.
8. Ability to administer CPR without assistance (all students must be fully certified in CPR only through the American Heart Association).

Sensory: The student must possess the ability to obtain information in classroom, laboratory or clinical settings through observation, auscultation, palpation and other measures, including but not limited to:

1. Visual ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and interpret facial expressions and body language, identify normal and abnormal patterns of movement, to read or set parameters on various equipment, to discriminate color changes, and to interpret and assess the environment.

2. Auditory ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and respond to soft voices, auditory timers, equipment alarms, call bells, and to effectively use devices for measurement of blood pressure, breath sounds, etc.
3. Tactile ability to palpate a pulse and to detect changes or abnormalities of surface texture, skin temperature, body contour, muscle tone, and joint movement.
4. Sufficient position, movement and balance sensations to assist and safely guard (protect) patients who are ambulating, transferring or performing other activities.

Communication: The student must be able to utilize effective communication with peers, faculty, patients and their families, and other health care providers. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Ability to read at a competency level that allows one to safely carry out the essential functions of an assignment (examples; handwritten chart data, printed policy and procedure manuals).
2. Ability to effectively interpret and process information.
3. Ability to effectively communicate (verbally and in writing) with patients/families, health care professionals, and others within the community.
4. Ability to access information and to communicate and document effectively via computer.
5. Ability to recognize, interpret, and respond to nonverbal behavior of self and others.

Behavior: The student must be capable of exercising good judgment, developing empathic and therapeutic relationships with patients and others, and tolerating close and direct physical contact with a diverse population. This will include people of all ages, races, socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, as well as individuals with weight disorders, physical disfigurement and medical or mental health problems. This also includes, but is not limited to:

1. Ability to work with multiple patients/families and colleagues at the same time.
2. Ability to work with classmates, instructors, health care providers, patients, families and others under stressful conditions, including but not limited to providing care to medically or emotionally unstable individuals, situations requiring rapid adaptations, the provision of CPR, or other emergency interventions.
3. Ability to foster and maintain cooperative and collegial relationships with classmates, instructors, other health care providers, patients and their families.

Critical Thinking: The student must possess sufficient abilities in the areas of calculation, critical problem solving, reasoning, and judgment to be able to comprehend and process information within a reasonable time frame as determined by the faculty and the profession. The student must be able to prioritize, organize and attend to tasks and responsibilities efficiently. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Ability to collect, interpret and analyze written, verbal and observed data about patients.

2. Ability to prioritize multiple tasks, integrate information and make decisions.
3. Ability to apply knowledge of the principles, indications, and contraindications for nursing interventions.
4. Ability to act safely and ethically in the college clinical lab and in clinical placements within the community.

If a nursing applicant or student is unable to meet one or more of these areas, due to a disability (long or short term), s/he may request consideration for an accommodation through the Center for Students with Disabilities. Prompt notice is essential for full consideration. The statement will be on the website for prospective and current students and shared at open houses and other information sessions. The requirements for clinical practice apply for all programs which include a clinical component.