

<b>Title of Policy/Procedure:</b> Substance Abuse	<b>Approval Responsibility (Title &amp; Name):</b> Interim UG Chair, Jessica Smith, PhD, RN
<b>Approved by (Title &amp; Name):</b> Interim UG Chair, Jessica Smith	<b>Last Date of Approval:</b> April 2025
<b>Communication Requirement and Date:</b> <b>Posted in BSN Handbook and all syllabi</b>	<b>Date for Next Review:</b> April 2028
<b>Official SharePoint Location Name and Path:</b> UG SharePoint, Policies and Procedures	<b>Comments:</b> Reviewed by Legal. Any change must be approved through UEPC.

The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) College of Nursing & Health Innovation (CONHI) is committed to maintaining a safe, healthy, and productive learning environment for students, faculty, staff, clients, and visitors. In order to provide a safe learning environment, students must be able to perform with reasonable skill in a safe, secure, productive, and effective manner, and remain able to do so through the entire time they are a student at UTA.

All students are expected to be in good academic standing throughout the program. Good academic standing standards for nursing students include maintaining professional behavior, personal accountability, academic integrity and upholding the [Code of Ethics for Nursing Students](#). Failure to meet these expectations may result in course failure or dismissal from the program. Good academic standing extends beyond the classroom and is an expectation during clinical labs, healthcare facilities and in the community.

In the clinical setting, students must be fit for duty and are expected to perform in a safe manner without signs of impairment. Students exhibiting one or more signs of impairment directly before or during a clinical rotation shift must be addressed immediately. (See Impaired Observation Checklist [IOC]\*). Impaired students (including pre-licensure nursing students and registered nurses) are not fit for participating in a Program and may pose significant health and safety risks to themselves and others. Impaired students must be evaluated by a qualified healthcare professional, follow the recommendation for treatment if applicable, receive the recommendation from the healthcare provider to return to the program, and provide documentation they are able to safely return to the program. Specific instructions are provided in the procedure section of this document.

### **Pre-licensure Nursing Students**

All pre-licensure nursing students must complete and pay for a urine drug screen before attending/participating in clinical. Students out of clinical setting for a semester must repeat and pay for the urine drug screen.

The urine drug screen must be **completed within thirty days prior to the start of clinical** at an approved screening center ([UTA Health Services](#) or [approved vendors](#)). Results related to the drug screen are confidential and are only disclosed to the Dean (or designee)

and Clinical Compliance nurse. Students with positive results will be required to provide documentation of prescription medication(s).

- **Nursing students, who have a positive urine screen, without prescription documentation, will not be allowed to participate in clinical and will need to drop clinical course(s). The student is strongly encouraged to seek evaluation to determine if s/he is safe to be in the clinical setting.**
  - **At the discretion of the Director of UTA Health Services, students with an initial positive result may be allowed to retest.**
- Accepted upper division nursing students with a drug or alcohol related finding on their Group One CBC (Criminal Background Check) are required to petition the BON (Board of Nursing) for a Declaratory Order. These students must receive the BON issued NCLEX-RN® eligibility letter before the program-assigned deadline or their acceptance to the program will be withdrawn.
- Any CONHI student who exhibits impaired behavior, based on the IOC, in the clinical setting, will be required to submit a drug screen. The required testis based on the suspected substance and may include blood or urine sample(s).
  - Student who refuses or does not show up for the screening test for cause/impaired behavior will not be allowed to return to ANY clinical setting and will earn a failing grade.
  - Student must complete the testing on the day of referral.
  - Student tested for cause cannot return to clinical until results are returned.
  - **Student is solely responsibility for substance abuse testing, evaluation, and treatment.**
- If positive results are due to alcohol or substance abuse, the student must be evaluated by a qualified healthcare professional, follow the recommendation for treatment if applicable, receive the recommendation from the healthcare provider to return to the program, and provide documentation they are able to safely return to the program.

## **Registered Nurses**

If a student is a registered nurse and has a positive drug screen, the student will be referred to the state BON where the student is licensed. Student must comply with the BON requirements prior to returning to clinical courses. Failure to complete a BON requirement will result in dismissal from the CONHI. Students who refuse to participate in a BON Program will be ineligible to continue at UTA and will be dismissed from the CONHI.

## **Procedure**

When a faculty member or preceptor personally observes or receives reliable information that a student may be impaired, the faculty member or preceptor will assess the student using the Impaired Observation Checklist (IOC) [Checklist provided below].

If IOC results confirm impairment, the student will be removed immediately from the clinical setting and will be required to submit to the appropriate screening test (blood alcohol level when alcohol is suspected and 13 panel urine screen for other substances).

Student may **not** drive to the testing/screening center. Student may call someone to transport to the testing/screening or use a transportation system, such as taxi, etc.

Depending to the level of impairment, student may be referred to the facility emergency department for evaluation and care. All screening tests, evaluations, and treatments costs are the responsibility of the student.

The **screening lab must adhere** to the following:

- Maintain chain of custody,
- Confirmation GCMS (gas chromatography and mass spectrometry). This is where they break down your sample and analyze it chemically to determine what is in there (confirmation of presumptive positive urine specimens)
- Initial screen must include split sampling method
- Blood alcohol level must be drawn, if alcohol involvement is suspected.

If a student exhibits behavior of impairment, based on the Impaired Observation Checklist, and refuses to complete the drug screen, the student will be ineligible to return to clinical setting and will fail the course.

Student may not return to the clinical facility until results are received.

- Student with negative screening results may return to the clinical setting.
- Student with positive results must be evaluated by a qualified healthcare professional (psychiatric mental health provider or substance abuse provider), follow the recommendation for treatment if applicable, receive the recommendation from the healthcare provider to return to the program, and provide documentation they are able to safely return to the program. Upon return to clinical courses, random drug screens will be conducted each semester.

Students must sign an attestation with each clinical course verifying they will adhere to the substance abuse policy. Student cannot sign a consent document, when impaired.

If impairment is suspected the preceptor should contact the faculty immediately. The faculty member, with input from the preceptor, will assess the student using the IOC. Any student suspected of impairment and supported by the IOC will be required to submit a screening test. All expenses, testing, evaluations, and treatments will be the responsibility of the student.

### **Refusal to Test**

In the event that an individual is unable to provide an adequate urine sample (~45 mL) during their initial attempt, their time of arrival will be recorded. The individual will then be required to remain in the testing area and make a subsequent attempt to provide an adequate specimen within three hours. Failure to comply with either of these requirements, including leaving the testing site prior to the completion of the testing process or refusal to cooperate during the testing process, will be considered a refusal to test. It is important to note that a student's refusal to undergo testing will be treated as a positive test result.

If a student leaves the collection facility prior to the testing process being completed, the collector must inform the Clinical Compliance Nurse as required. The Clinical Compliance Nurse will

determine whether the student's actions constitute a refusal to test. To make this determination, the Clinical Compliance Nurse will consider the information documented on the chain of custody and the advice and information received from the collector and service agents, as well as any supporting information provided by the student (i.e., in the event of a medical emergency, copies of hospital admission records/EMS records/police records, etc)

University of Texas at Arlington College  
of Nursing and Health Innovation

Impaired Observation Checklist (IOC)\*

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

Observations/Assessment	Y es	No
<b>Smell</b> of alcohol or marijuana on breath or person		
<b>Speech:</b> Slurred, confused, fragmented, rapid, slow, unusually loud, or soft (circle all that apply)		
<b>Disorientation:</b> Is the student confused about where she/he is, what day it is, what time it is? Is the student forgetful? Decreased alertness? (circle all that apply)		
<b>Personality:</b> Significant change in personality such as mood swings; euphoria, depression. abusive behavior, violence, secretiveness, insolence, insubordination, irritability, moodiness. tendency to isolate self (circle all that apply)		
<b>Social Changes:</b> Avoids social gatherings, eats alone (describe)		
<b>Apparent inability to focus on work:</b> (describe)		
<b>Shaking or trembling of hands</b>		
<b>Skin:</b> Pale, flushed. excessive perspiration (circle all that apply)		
<b>Needle marks on arms, unusual sneezing, or nasal congestion:</b> (circle all that apply)		
<b>Eyes:</b> Bloodshot, dilated pupils, pinpoint pupils (circle all that apply)		
<b>Blank stare on expression</b>		
<b>Physical Appearance:</b> Deteriorating and/or changes in appearance such as change in dress, unkempt appearance, flushed complexion (describe)		
<b>Energy:</b> Displays weariness, fatigue, exhaustion, excessive yawning, sudden or unpredictable change in energy level, unusually energetic (circle all that apply)		

<b>Class/Lab/Clinical Time:</b> A pattern of tardiness, prolonged breaks, unexplained departures from class, lab or clinical, disappearance from class, lab or clinical, excessive absenteeism, late assignments with elaborate excuses for not meeting deadlines, avoiding group work, unsafe clinical performance/placing clients at risk, impaired judgment in the clinical area, deteriorating productivity (Circle all that apply)		
<b>Student states consumption of alcohol or ingesting drugs,</b> including (over-the counter or prescription) that adversely affects the student's ability to practice nursing or perform classroom and clinical duties with reasonable skill and safety		
<b>Careless performance</b> of work (describe)		
Additional Comments:		

Based on my observations, I have a reasonable suspicion that \_\_\_\_\_ (student) may be impaired and could be a danger to self or others. I request further assessment and evaluation to determine the cause of the suspected impairment.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty/Preceptor name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

**To be completed by the student** to be referred (optional). Are you taking any medications, or is there any other information you believe might explain your behavior?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\*Used with permission from SUNY Canton  
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