

# College of Nursing and Health Innovation

<b>Title of Policy/Procedure:</b> Honor Code for University of Texas at Arlington Department of Undergraduate Nursing	<b>Approval Responsibility (Title &amp; Name):</b> UG Chair, Jeanean Boyd
<b>Approved by (Title &amp; Name):</b> Jeanean Boyd, UG Chair	<b>Last Date of Approval:</b> April 2023
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The faculty believes that the foundation of the nursing profession is honesty and integrity, and that these characteristics are essential for members of the profession. Therefore, all students associated with the UTA CON are expected to behave ethically, in compliance with the standards of professional conduct set forth by the American Nurses Association and the Texas Nurses Association. Any student action indicating dishonesty or breach of professional integrity is considered a violation of professional ethics.

Nursing Student Conduct is evaluated under two general categories: Scholastic and Professional. Misconduct involves violation of scholastic or professional standards. Every violation will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Consequences may include reduction in assignment/quiz/exam grade, course failure, or removal from program. These consequences may impact course progression as well as progression in the nursing program. Scholastic and professional misconduct and any related disciplinary actions remain in students' records at the Office of Student Conduct for up to seven (7) years. The discoveries of disciplinary actions are reportable to agencies and academic institutions requesting such disclosure in the course of pre-employment background checks or academic records of candidates in pursuit of advanced degrees.

## Scholastic Misconduct

As stated on the University of Texas Arlington Student Conduct website, *Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism and collusion on an examination or an assignment being offered for credit. Each student is accountable for work submitted for credit including group projects. In alignment with this the University has adopted the Academic HonorCode which is incorporated into all coursework.* (<https://www.uta.edu/conduct/academic-integrity/index.php>)

**Scholastic Dishonesty** includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Seeking, acquiring, receiving, or providing unauthorized information or assistance regarding an exam, quiz, or assignment (such as purchasing, using, or distributing any unauthorized course materials in order to gain academic advantage)
- Resubmission of work which has previously been submitted for course credit at any educational institution, unless prior approval is received from both faculty
- Intentionally giving any false or misleading information to, or withholding information from faculty or instructors related to any exam, quiz, or assignment for the purpose of gaining scholastic advantage (including withholding information from faculty regarding unauthorized procurement of course related materials by another individual or individuals)
- Falsifying any documents related to clinical hours or patient/client care activities (including

- documenting as fact, information not obtained through one's own direct assessment and examination of a patient; falsely recording clinical hours)
- e. Intentionally giving any false or misleading information or evidence to UTA Office of Judicial Affairs personnel investigating misconduct
  - f. Full list at: <https://www.uta.edu/policy/hop/9?hl=dishonesty>

## Code of Professional Conduct

Nursing students in the UTA CON are considered to be part of the nursing profession. As members of the profession, students are expected to commit to and maintain high ethical standards. Students are responsible and accountable for their own academic and professional behaviors and the resulting consequences.

Students will demonstrate self-discipline throughout all aspects of their nursing education, including meeting academic responsibilities and exhibiting professional conduct in the classroom and in the community, as outlined in the Texas Nurse Practice Act and Texas State Board of Nursing Policies.

It is each student's responsibility to promote scholastic honesty and professional ethics by actively participating with faculty in maintaining a quality academic environment. Students are expected to guard public safety by immediately reporting to faculty, any incident they observe or are aware of which would allow incompetent, unethical, or illegal practice by another individual. Having knowledge of and failing to report such behaviors constitutes a breach of both academic and professional responsibilities.

The Texas Board of Nursing (Board), in keeping with its mission to protect the public health, safety, and welfare, believes it is important to take a strong position regarding the licensure of individuals who have engaged in deception in the provision of health care. This deception includes falsifying documents related to patient care, falsifying documents related to employment, and falsifying documents related to licensure. The Board is also concerned about persons who have been convicted of a crime involving deception to the extent that such conduct may affect the ability to safely care for patients.

The Board's position applies to all nurse license holders and applicants for licensure (excerpts).

"Nurses are frequently in situations where they must report patient condition, record subjective and objective information, provide patients with information, and report errors in the nurse's own practice or conduct."

"Honesty, accuracy, and integrity are personal traits valued by the nursing profession, and considered imperative for the provision of safe and effective nursing care."

"Patients have the right to expect that the nurse will always accurately report patient conditions, signs and symptoms, and the care the nurse provided."

The Texas Board of Nursing has developed Disciplinary Sanction Policies pertaining to lying and falsification, and other issues. The policies address issues that arise in eligibility and disciplinary matters under Texas Occupations Code §301.452(b) and rules 213.27, 213.28, and 213.29 and attempt to clarify the Board's reasoning and the application and logic underlying the existing rules.

The following **excerpts** pertain to honesty in documentation v. falsification.

### **Lying/Falsification to an Employer, Nursing Education Program, or other Nursing Training Program:**

The Board believes that falsification of an application to an employer, school of nursing, or other nursing training program is generally the responsibility of the employer, school, or training program to

resolve, unless the falsification involves misrepresentation of credentials, competencies or work experience. Misrepresentation of credentials to an employer will be investigated and viewed by the Board in the same way that lying or falsification within the practice is viewed. **A student nurse who falsifies patient records or engages in other dishonesty in patient care gives the Board reason to suspect that he or she will continue the same dishonest acts after licensure. If the Board is made aware of acts committed as a student, an investigation will be conducted once the student makes application for licensure. The Board will consider the same factors as described above for lying and falsification within the practice of nursing.**

The Board considers the following behaviors important in evaluating whether an individual possesses the integrity and honesty to practice nursing (excerpts)

“Falsification of documents regarding patient care, incomplete or inaccurate documentation of patient care, failure to provide the care documented, or other acts of deception raise serious concerns whether the nurse will continue such behavior and jeopardize the effectiveness of patient care in the future.”

#### **Lying and Falsification within the Practice of Nursing (excerpts):**

The safe and effective practice of nursing as a licensed vocational nurse, registered nurse, or advanced practice nurse requires integrity, accuracy, and honesty in the provision of nursing care, including:

- performing nursing assessments;
- applying the nursing process;
- reporting changes in patient condition;
- acknowledging errors in practice and reporting them promptly;
- accurate charting and reporting, whether verbal or written;
- implementing care as ordered;
- compliance with all laws and rules affecting the practice of nursing; and
- compliance with minimum nursing standards.

#### **Texas Board of Nursing-Reporting (excerpts):**

Subchapter I. Reporting Violations and Patient Care ConcernsSec.

301.401. Definitions.

(1) “Conduct subject to reporting” means conduct by a nurse that:

(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.

Subchapter J. Prohibited Practices and Disciplinary ActionsSec.

301.451. Certain Prohibited Practices.

A person may not:

- (1) sell, fraudulently obtain, or fraudulently furnish a nursing diploma, license, renewal license, or record;
- (2) assist another person in selling, fraudulently obtaining, or fraudulently furnishing a nursing diploma, license, renewal license, or record

## 15.29 Use of Social Media

With the rapidly growing use of social media sites and applications such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and blogs, professional obligations to patients, peers, and employers may be unclear. While the Board recognizes that the use of social media can be a valuable tool in healthcare, there are potential serious consequences if used inappropriately. Online postings may harm patients if protected health information is disclosed. These types of postings may reflect negatively on individual nurses, the nursing profession, the public's trust of our profession, as well as jeopardize careers.

Both the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) and the American Nurses Association (ANA) endorse each other's guidelines and principles on the use of social media in order for it to be used appropriately and without harm to patients. The benefits of social media are many, and include:

- "Networking and nurturing relationships
- Exchange of knowledge and forum for collegial interchange
- Dissemination and discussion of nursing and health related education, research, best practices
- Educating the public on nursing and health related matters" (ANA, 2012, para. 4).

However, if used indiscriminately, the risks are great, and include:

- "Information taking on a life of its own where inaccuracies become fact
- Patient privacy being breached
- The public's trust of nurses being compromised
- Individual nursing careers being undermined" (ANA, 2012, para. 5).

In a recent survey by the NCSBN, many of the responding boards reported that they had received complaints about nurses inappropriately using social media sites. Nurses have been disciplined by boards, fired by employers, and criminally charged for the inappropriate or unprofessional use of social media (NCSBN, 2012).

To ensure the mission to protect and promote the welfare of the people of Texas, the Texas Board of Nursing supports both the guidelines and principles of social media use by the NCSBN and ANA. In keeping with the NCSBN guidelines, it is the Board's position that:

*Nurses must recognize that they have an ethical & legal obligation to maintain patient privacy and confidentiality at all times.*

Texas Board of Nursing (2013). Board Position Statements.

<http://www.bon.texas.gov/practice/pdfs/position.pdf>

Texas Board of Nursing (2009). Nursing Practice Act.

<http://www.bon.texas.gov/nursinglaw/pdfs/npa2009.pdf>

Texas Board of Nursing (2008). Disciplinary sanctions for lying and falsification.

<http://www.bon.texas.gov/disciplinaryaction/pdfs/lying.pdf>

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