

<p><b>MSN PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR POLICY</b></p>	<p><b>SON/PPS No. 02.03.50</b>  <b>Issue No. 1</b>  <b>Revised Dates:</b>  <b>Effective Date: 11/11/2025</b>  <b>Review Cycle: Three Years</b>  <b>Next Review: 11/2028</b>  <b>Reviewer(s): MSN Council</b></p>
--	--

**01.01 Purpose:**

Texas State University St. David’s School of Nursing (SON) Graduate Programs strive to attract, matriculate, and educate students who possess both the intellectual capacity for nursing and who also exhibit a high capacity for ethical and professional behavior in clinical and classroom settings. Professionalism serves as a cornerstone of both academic success and the responsible practice of healthcare. It underpins the ethical conduct of research, the delivery of compassionate and integrity-driven care, and the development of a collegial, conscientious health professions team. Because the development of ethical and professional behavior is a fundamental component of nursing education, students are required to demonstrate these standards consistently throughout their academic program. This policy provides students, faculty, and staff with clearly articulated expectations regarding student ethical and professional behavior, assures professional programs have the authority and responsibility to act on concerns regarding the ethical and professional behavior of students, outlines a description of the procedures for managing and addressing student ethical and professional behavior, and assures standards are implemented consistent with principles of fairness, privacy, and due process.

**02.01 Definitions:**

Fundamental attributes of ethical and professional behavior include but are not limited to:

- **Honesty:** The quality of being truthful, transparent, and trustworthy in one’s words, actions, and intentions. In the context of nursing education and practice, honesty means accurately representing one’s work, acknowledging limitations or errors, giving proper credit to others, and upholding integrity in all academic and clinical responsibilities
- **Integrity:** The steadfast adherence to moral and ethical principles, reflected through consistency between one’s values, words, and actions. In nursing education and practice, integrity means doing what is right even when unobserved, maintaining honesty in academic and clinical settings, and upholding professional and ethical standards in all interactions. It involves accountability, reliability, and a commitment to ethical decision-making that fosters trust, respect, and excellence in patient care and professional relationships.
- **Civility:** The demonstration of respect, courtesy, and professionalism in all interactions. In nursing education and practice, civility involves communicating thoughtfully, listening with empathy, and treating others with dignity, even in times of disagreement or stress. It reflects a commitment to creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where collaboration, learning, and patient care can thrive. Civility is foundational to maintaining trust and fostering positive relationships within academic, clinical, and interprofessional settings.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** The ability to recognize, understand, and manage one’s own

emotions while also perceiving and appropriately responding to the emotions of others. In nursing education and practice, emotional intelligence involves self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and effective interpersonal communication.

- **Commitment to Personal Growth and Learning:** The ongoing dedication to developing one's knowledge, skills, and professional competence throughout an academic and professional career. In nursing education and practice, this commitment involves actively seeking feedback, engaging in reflective practice, pursuing continuing education, and adapting to advances in healthcare science and technology. It reflects a mindset of curiosity, accountability, and lifelong learning that supports excellence in patient care, leadership, and the advancement of the nursing profession.
- **Respect for Others:** The recognition of the inherent worth, dignity, and individuality of every person. In nursing education and practice, it involves treating classmates, faculty, colleagues, patients, and families with courtesy, fairness, and cultural sensitivity. Demonstrating respect means valuing diverse perspectives, maintaining confidentiality, listening without judgment, and engaging in professional communication. This principle fosters trust, collaboration, and a positive learning and healthcare environment where all individuals feel safe, heard, and valued.
- **Administrative Law:** The body of law that governs the actions, decisions, and procedures of government agencies and public institutions. It establishes the legal framework for how agencies create and enforce regulations, issue licenses, make rulings, and handle disputes. In the context of nursing and higher education, administrative law may apply to matters such as licensure actions, regulatory compliance, disciplinary hearings, or violations of institutional or professional standards.
- **Criminal Law:** The body of law that defines conduct considered harmful to individuals or society and establishes penalties for those who engage in such behavior. It governs offenses such as theft, assault, fraud, substance abuse violations, or other actions deemed criminal by statute. In the context of nursing and higher education, criminal law is relevant when a student or professional is charged with or convicted of a criminal offense, as such actions may raise concerns about ethical conduct, professional integrity, and the ability to safely practice within the healthcare profession.

## **02.02 Application:**

The cultivation of ethical and professional behavior is an integral component of nursing education and is designated as a core competency within all SON programs. Accordingly, adherence to ethical and professional standards is a fundamental requirement for maintaining good academic standing. Acceptance of admission into graduate programming within the St. David's School of Nursing constitutes the student's agreement to comply fully with all University and School of Nursing policies, procedures, and expectations governing professional and ethical conduct.

In addition to the academic and practicum-related requirements of each program, this policy and its related procedures govern academic, ethical, and professional behavior of nursing students in all practicum and didactic coursework, as well as interactions with faculty and peers. Circumstances may occur during a student's academic progression that raise concerns regarding the student's capacity or commitment to uphold the academic and professional standards required by the program. The University and the School of Nursing (SON) retain both the

responsibility and the authority to assess a student's fitness to continue in their course of study.

### **03.01 Policy:**

The procedures identify student responsibilities and rights in conjunction with standards of fairness, privacy, and due process. They are derived, in part, from the standards of conduct adopted and published by [national organizations that accredit](#) School of Nursing programs or [license](#) or [credential](#) Professional Graduates and the standards of ethical and professional behavior adopted by national and local professional organizations ([American Academy of Nurse Practitioners](#), [American Nurses Association](#), [ANA Code of Ethics](#)).

Students are also expected to comply with federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and University policies and procedures. Failure to meet ethical and professional behavior standards may result in action up to and possibly including program dismissal. A student who violates this policy jeopardizes their academic standing within the School of Nursing and may place their continued progression in the program—and ultimately, their eligibility for graduation—at risk.

### **03.02 Applicable Settings**

All nursing students are expected to demonstrate high standards of ethical and professional behavior in all educational and clinical settings including, but not limited to:

- Classroom/online-based milieu
- Professional and clinical sites that are part of the learning program; and
- Other settings not part of the formal learning program but which contribute to the learning process including but not limited to:
  - student-run special interest group meetings and activities
  - clubs and governance structures
  - professional meetings, and
  - interactions with other administrators, faculty and staff of the University, or any other member of the campus community.

### **03.03 Conduct Outside of the Academic Setting**

This Policy is designed to guide the ethical and professional behavior of students enrolled in the School of Nursing (SON). While it is not intended to regulate or address conduct that occurs solely within a student's private life, certain behaviors outside the academic setting may nonetheless come to the attention of the University and warrant review or investigation under this policy.

#### **Clinical Conduct:**

Reports of student conduct may be submitted to faculty or administrators from various sources, including but not limited to clinical preceptors. Such reports may raise concerns regarding a student's capacity to continue in their program of study or to provide safe and competent nursing care. If the reported conduct suggests a potential risk to the safety of the student, patients, or others with whom the student interacts—or reflects questionable judgment, moral character, ethical standards, or personal values inconsistent with the expectations of the nursing profession—the SON may initiate an appropriate review or investigation.

#### **Violations of Administrative or Criminal Law:**

If a student is charged with an offense under administrative or criminal law, the student must report this to

the MSN Program Director and the School of Nursing Director. Likewise, if a matriculating student has been charged with a criminal offense at any time prior to or during the application process, the student must disclose this information to the Program Director and School of Nursing Director immediately, and whenever possible, before the first day of classes.

If faculty become aware of undisclosed conduct through a reliable, verified source—the matter shall be referred to the MSN Program Director and the School of Nursing Director for review. Failure to disclose criminal charges, or the discovery that a student has intentionally withheld such information, may result in immediate dismissal from the program by the MSN Program Director and/or the School of Nursing Director.

### **03.04 Unprofessional Conduct**

Nursing students are expected to consistently uphold the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. As emerging members of the nursing profession, they are responsible for modeling the behaviors and values that will guide their practice throughout their careers. While the following list is not exhaustive, examples of conduct inconsistent with these standards include, but are not limited to:

- Lack of integrity and honesty
- Failure to demonstrate a professional demeanor or concern for patient safety, such as:
  - Failure to maintain and safeguard the confidentiality of patient and research participant information, including paper and electronic records, verbal communications, and social networking and electronic media sites
  - Failure to comply with university, school, and/or program requirements such as
    - Educational requirements
    - Immunization compliance
    - FERPA
  - being under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the educational or clinic setting.
- Failure to demonstrate accountability, such as
  - poor attendance
  - consistent failure to complete required deliverables in a timely manner
  - failure to respond to written, verbal, email, telephone or other requests in a timely manner in accordance with course syllabi
  - Exhibiting disruptive or uncivil behavior, such as
    - assault or threat of assault
    - throwing things
    - making inappropriate gestures, threats or verbal intimidation
    - language that belittles or demeans
    - negative comments with racial, ethnic, religious, age, gender, or sexual overtones
    - making impertinent or inappropriate written entries in the medical record
    - making statements attacking students, faculty, or staff.
  - Lack of effort toward self-improvement and adaptability, including
    - resistance or defensiveness in accepting constructive criticism to improve learning, behavior, or performance
    - not accepting responsibility for errors or failure
- Discriminatory behavior with respect to age, culture, race, religion, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation.
  - Discrimination will be reported to the MSN Program Director and the SON

#### Director

- Exhibiting poor relationships with:
  - members of the health care team
    - inability to collaborate with fellow students and staff
  - patients and families
    - insensitive to the patient's or family's needs
    - inappropriate personal relationships with patients or members of their families
    - lack of empathy

### **04.01 Procedures for Handling Breaches of Ethical and Professional Behavior Standards**

#### **04.02 Reporting Complaints**

- Complaints regarding suspected breaches of ethical and professional behavior may be initiated by faculty, administrators, or students within the University, College of Health Professions (CHP), SON or by external sources (e.g., patients, families, visitors, extramural rotation sites, or other agencies with which a student has had contact).
- If in the absence of a specific complaint, the University, CHP or SON become aware of conduct of an egregious or serious nature, it will be investigated in lieu of a formal complaint and will take all appropriate actions in compliance with the procedure outlined in this Policy. The initial complaint should be promptly forwarded to the MSN Program Director. If the Program Director is not available or the circumstances of the complaint prevent notification of the Program Director, the SON Director should be notified. If neither the Program Director nor the SON Director can be notified, the CHP Dean should be notified promptly.
- The formal complaint must be in writing, with a brief description of the evidence, and submitted within ten (10) University business days of the discovery of the incident, exclusive of university breaks and academic intercessions.
  - Note: Complaints brought forward after the 10-day deadline may be reviewed but must be presented with an explanation of why the deadline was not met.
  - Prior to proceeding with the complaint review and investigation, the Program Director or other receiving administrator will evaluate the nature and acceptability of the delay.
- The University is legally required to investigate all alleged acts of the following:
  - [Sexual harassment and other sexual misconduct](#). These concerns will be referred to the Director of Title IX. The University reserves the right to investigate, with or without a formal written complaint, when the University determines it is in the best interest of the University or the community.
  - [Discrimination](#). Employees of the university are required to comply with policies that prohibit discrimination and retaliation. Administrators and supervisors who, in good faith, become aware of or suspect violations of the discrimination, harassment or retaliation policies are responsible for reporting them immediately to their supervisors and to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX.

#### **04.03 Complaint Categories and Procedures**

There are four (4) categories of complaints and associated procedures outlined below. The

complaints are categorized by severity of behavior and whether immediate punitive action is warranted.

**Level 1- Teaching Opportunity:**

Behavior is of concern but that may be improved through remediation via a single discussion. This process is an Informal Resolution.

- Faculty will use their discretion to address concerns including:
  - verbal discussion
  - clinical performance grading
  - written feedback
- In such cases, the faculty member will contact the student directly to discuss the issue, provide feedback, and make suggestions for how the behavioral issue can be mitigated.
- The incident shall be documented on the Professional Concerns Report (PCR) (see Appendix A), See the documentation timelines in section 04.02 of this policy. The PCR will be forwarded to the MSN Program Director.
  - The student will be provided with a copy.
- The PCR will be retained in the student's file in the Graduate Nursing Program Administration files on Teams. The student will be apprised of this record retention in writing by the involved faculty member or Program Director.
- If the faculty member or Program Director believes an effective resolution resulted from meeting with the student, no further action is required.

**Level 2- Formal Remediation:**

Behavior that requires a formal process for remediation, for example, situations in which a student has exhibited significant and/or serious behavior problems that do not warrant suspension or dismissal but need immediate correction.

- In the event the faculty member or Program Director/SON Director determines the feedback given to the student regarding the issues of concern was not successful in resolving the issue or if the behavior is of a significant or serious nature (but not warranting immediate suspension or dismissal), the PCR will be completed for formal remediation and resolution by the faculty member involved.
- The incident shall be documented on the Professional Concerns Report (PCR) (see Appendix A), See the documentation timelines in section 04.02 of this policy. The PCR will be forwarded to the MSN Program Director.
  - The student will be provided with a copy.
  - The student will be encouraged to respond within three (3) University business days to the PCR, in writing discussing the circumstances that led up to the complaint and the nature of the complaint itself.
    - The student's response to the PCR must be submitted to the MSN Program Director prior to any meeting.
- Within three (3) days of receipt of the PCR and with the purpose of understanding the circumstances of the complaint, the Program Director will:
  - interview witnesses to the event that led up to the complaint
  - review any pertinent documents, and
  - take any other action deemed necessary to understand the circumstances that brought on the complaint.

- o conduct an interview with the student
- Based on the outcome of the full review, the MSN Program Director may decide that the PCR is unwarranted or may provide the student with strategies to mitigate the identified unprofessional behavior.
- The MSN Program Director will again meet with the student to discuss the findings of the review.
  - o The student will be provided with an opportunity for reflection on appropriate behavioral changes.
  - o The student will be asked to sign the PCR acknowledging the PCR has been reviewed.
  - o The Program Director may require remedial action, such as a corrective action plan or mandated counseling, which shall be noted on the PCR.
    - If a corrective action plan or other remediation is required by the PCR, the plan shall include a timeline for remediation.
    - At the conclusion of this timeline, the Program Director will meet with the student to review the outcome of the remediation process.
- The Program Director will place a concluding written comment in the PCR discussing the level of success of the remediation.
- The PCR and all relevant documentation will be retained in the student's file in the Graduate Nursing Program Administration files on Teams. The student will be apprised of this record retention in writing by the involved faculty member or Program Director.

**Level 3- Multiple Professional Concerns/Reports:**

In the event that a student fails on more than one occasion to meet the expected standards of ethical and professional conduct as documented by the PCRS or receive multiple PCRs on similar or differing incidents documented in the student's file, the MSN Program Director may exercise the option to recommend deferred expulsion of the student. The MSN Program Director has the authority to take the immediate action of suspending or dismissing a student from a clinical setting or didactic class, and/ suspend programming pending an investigation.

Any disciplinary issues with the potential of resulting in a suspension or expulsion should be referred to the Dean of Students Office (Student Conduct) for review. Please refer to [The Student Handbook: Code of Student Conduct, Section 3.02](#)

- The incident shall be documented on the Professional Concerns Report (PCR) (see Appendix A), See the documentation timelines in section 04.02 of this policy. The PCR will be forwarded to the MSN Program Director.
  - o The student will be provided with a copy.
  - o The MSN Program Director will encourage the student to submit in writing (by email) to the Program Director within two (2) University business days, their description of the events that led up to the punitive action.
    - The student's response to the PCR must be submitted to the MSN Program Director prior to any meeting.
- Within three (3) days of receipt of the PCR and with the purpose of understanding the circumstances of the complaint, the Program Director will:

- o interview witnesses to the event that led up to the complaint
- o review any pertinent documents, and
- o take any other action deemed necessary to understand the circumstances that brought on the complaint.
- The MSN Program Director will meet with the student within two (2) University Business Days to discuss the findings of the review and the decision to recommend deferred expulsion of the student.
  - o The student will be asked to sign the PCR acknowledging the PCR has been reviewed.
  - o The MSN Program Director will brief the SON Director.
  - o The SON Director will review of the complaint and affirmation of the action.
  - o Upon affirmation by the SON Director, the SON Director will report the alleged violation of the Code of Student Conduct by [completing the referral form](#).
- The Program Director will place a concluding written comment in the PCR discussing the level of success of the remediation.
- The PCR and all relevant documentation will be retained in the student's file in the Graduate Nursing Program Administration files on Teams. The student will be apprised of this record retention in writing by the involved faculty member or Program Director.

**Level 4- Egregious, Unethical, or Unprofessional Behavior:**

Behavior requiring immediate action by the MSN Program Director or SON Director through immediate expulsion. Complaints or accusations of egregious, unethical, or unprofessional behavior will be considered serious and necessitate that the Program Director take immediate action to prevent any continuation of the behavior and potential harm to self, patients, or members of the community. Examples of egregious misconduct include, but are not limited to, patient endangerment, unacceptable patient management, inappropriate alteration of patient records, behavior posing a danger to persons or property, an ongoing threat of or disruption of the academic process, or certain acts of sexual misconduct. The MSN Program Director has the authority to take the immediate action of suspending or dismissing a student from a clinical setting or didactic class, and/ suspend programming pending an investigation.

If the Program Director is not available or the circumstances of the complaint prevent notification of the MSN Program Director, the School Director should be notified. If neither the Program Director nor the School Director can be notified, the CHP Dean should be notified promptly. Any disciplinary issues with the potential of resulting in a suspension or expulsion should be referred to the Dean of Students Office (Student Conduct) for review. Please refer to [The Student Handbook: Code of Student Conduct, Section 3.02](#)

- The incident shall be documented on the Professional Concerns Report (PCR) (see Appendix A), See the documentation timelines in section 04.02 of this policy. The PCR will be forwarded to the MSN Program Director.
  - o The student will be provided with a copy.
- Within 24 hours of receipt of the PCR and with the purpose of understanding the

circumstances of the complaint, the Program Director will:

- o interview witnesses to the event that led up to the complaint
- o review any pertinent documents, and
- o take any other action deemed necessary to understand the circumstances that brought on the complaint.
- o The MSN Program Director will encourage the student to submit in writing (by email) to the Program Director within two (2) University business days, their description of the events that led up to the punitive action.
- The MSN Program Director will meet with the student within two (2) University Business Days to discuss the findings of the review and the decision to recommend deferred expulsion of the student.
  - o The student will be asked to sign the PCR acknowledging the PCR has been reviewed.
  - o The MSN Program Director will brief the SON Director.
  - o Upon affirmation by the SON Director, the SON Director will report the alleged violation of the Code of Student Conduct by [completing the referral form](#).
- The Program Director will place a concluding written comment in the PCR discussing the level of success of the remediation.
- The PCR and all relevant documentation will be retained in the student's file in the Graduate Nursing Program Administration files on Teams. The student will be apprised of this record

#### 04.04 Appeal Process

Section 04.01 of the [The Student Handbook: Code of Student Conduct](#) details the appeals process. Only in cases in which the sanction assessed is beyond a warning or probation, an appeal may be requested to the Vice President for Student Success (VPSS) based on:

- Whether or not a fair hearing was afforded (A fair hearing includes notice of the alleged misconduct and an opportunity to present evidence.)
- Whether or not the sanctions levied were appropriate to the offense
- Whether or not the finding was supported by the evidence
- Whether or not new evidence is introduced that was not available at the time of the hearing

An appeal is not a rehearing of the original case; the VPSS's review will focus on arguments addressing the basis, listed above, of the appeal.

Written notice must be given to the VPSS no later than five (5) business days after the hearing panel's decision. All supporting documentation, including written arguments, when appropriate or requested, shall be filed with the VPSS no later than five (5) business days after notice of appeal is given. The parties, at the discretion of the VPSS, may submit oral or written arguments to support their positions. For questions regarding the Code of Student Conduct, contact [Student Conduct and Community Standards](#) in the [Dean of Students Office](#):

**Appendix A**  
**Professional Concerns Report (PCR) Form Texas State St. David's School of Nursing**

**PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS REPORT**

<b>Student Name:</b>	<b>Date of Incident:</b>
<b>Course Number:</b>	<b>Course Name:</b>
<b>Name of Reporting Faculty:</b>	<b>Title:</b>

This report is completed when a student demonstrates behavior that is inconsistent with the expectations outlined in the Professional Behavior Policy. Its purpose is to support the student in achieving the standards of professionalism required in academic, clinical, and administrative settings. Improvement in the area(s) identified below is necessary to meet the professional standards expected of a healthcare provider. Explanatory comments are required.

**Check the appropriate categories. Comments are required.**

**Patient-Centered Care:**

- The student did not act in the best interest of the patient.
- The student did not demonstrate sensitivity to the needs, values or perspectives of patients, family members or caregivers.
- The student did not establish appropriate rapport with patients, family members or caregivers.
- The student did not demonstrate openness/responsiveness to the patient's ethnic and cultural background.
- The student did not respond to patient needs in a timely, safe or effective manner.
- Other unprofessional behavior related to Patient Centered Care (enumerate below):

<b>Comments: Describe the specifics of the incident- who, what, when, where</b>
---

**Respect:**

- The student did not demonstrate respect for the rights of others in academic or professional settings.
- The student did not demonstrate respect in interactions with others.
- The student did not establish or maintain appropriate boundaries with patients, family members, fellow students, faculty or staff.
- Regardless of intent, the student's behavior failed to demonstrate respect for all individuals, as evidenced by the recipient's response, and did not reflect sensitivity to differences in race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, gender identity, genetic identity, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.
- The student did not demonstrate respect for the confidentiality rights of patients or others.
- Other behavior that demonstrated lack of respect (enumerate below):

Comments: Describe the specifics of the incident- who, what, when, where

**Integrity:**

- The student provided false or incomplete information in an academic, professional or administrative setting.
- The student acted outside the scope of his/her role in an academic, professional or administrative setting.
- The student presented the work of others as his/her own.
- The student used his/her professional position for personal advantage.
- The student used the physical or intellectual property of others without permission or attribution.
- Other behavior that demonstrated lack of integrity (enumerate below):

Comments: Describe the specifics of the incident- who, what, when, where

**Complaint Level:**

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Level 4

**Complaint Level Summary and Rationale: *Describe below***

Comments:

**Remediation Goals:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Remediation Strategies: *Check all that apply***

- Reflection Essay with Self-Assessment
- Ethics Professionalism Paper
- Professional or Ethics Workshop
- Simulation/Role-Play Exercises
- Faculty Mentorship/Coaching
- Written Behavioral Contract
- Conflict Resolution Training
- Mediation Sessions
- Counseling Services
- Anger Management Course
- Clinical Site Reassignment
- Clinical Suspension
- Didactic Suspension
- Deferred Expulsion
- Expulsion

Progress Review Meetings

Timeframe to Complete: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Signature/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Track Coordinator Signature/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

MSN Program Director/Designee Signature/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Outcome:**

- Met
- Not Met