Nursing Student Handbook
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Welcome

Welcome to the Vermont Technical College (VTC) nursing department. We are pleased that you are a nursing student in our program. This section of the handbook has been designed to share with you specific nursing department information.

- The faculty’s beliefs about nursing and nursing education
- The framework upon which the program is taught
- The expected outcomes for our students
- The behavioral expectations of our students
- The polices that govern your progression through the program

We look forward to working with you as you progress toward your goal of becoming a nurse.

The VTC nursing faculty and administration

Philosophy

Nursing is a discipline and a profession, a science and art grounded in caring that provides holistic person-centered care with respect and dignity while promoting the health of society. Nursing theoretical perspectives guide the program of study. Individuals possess unique spiritual, social, cultural, intellectual, and physical attributes and have varying capabilities. The nature of our state and demographic trends are important in planning, as nurses’ focus on the health and wellness desires and needs of a dynamic multicultural society, maximizing living quality throughout life.

Collaboration among faculty and students encourages a spirit of inquiry, personal growth, and societal development. The career ladder model offers a smooth transition for the Practical Nurse graduate to advance to the Associate and then to the Bachelor’s level. We believe providing this opportunity is our responsibility as educators. There are different entry levels within nursing. The Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), an integral part of nursing within the health field, utilizes the nursing process under the direction of a Registered Nurse (RN), licensed physician, or dentist. Nurse education prepares the LPN to master competence in basic nursing skills to deliver care for patients whose conditions are relatively stable. LPNs provide teaching, maintain safe practice, and execute leadership within the scope of their practice and are responsible for maintaining and improving their competencies through continuing education.

The Associate of Science Degree Nurse (ADN) represents the entry level for the RN. The ADN collaborates with other health-team members, utilizes the nursing process incorporating evidence from research to establish a plan of care for individuals with complex health problems.
across the life span. The ADN delegates and supervises nursing interventions, maintains safe practice, provides teaching, and advocates for patients. The ADN demonstrates responsibility with complex health problems across the life span. The ADN graduate recognizes the importance of continuing education, research, and professional development, actively participating in committees, and professional and community organizations.

The Bachelor of Science Degree Nurse (BSN) is an evolving scholar striving for excellence as an innovative problem-solver incorporating holistic, multi-cultural, caring principles into practice. The BSN forms collaborative partnerships within organizations and communities, influencing health reform and policy, locally and globally. Utilizing advanced communication techniques, theory, health assessment, management, and leadership skills, the BSN mentors others in planning care, building evidence-based solutions, conducting research that contributes to the discipline, teaching, and advocating for the patient's as well as social and economic events that influence the nursing role, communicating effectively with stakeholders involved in healthcare, utilizing critical thinking skills, and participating with the international or local community. BSNs manage information, incorporate technological developments to provide high-quality care, and provide transformational leadership to guide the direction of nursing and the future of health care.

Nurses are life-long learners who recognize that individuals, families, and communities attain life quality and meaning uniquely. Using the ladder model, nurses can unite to integrate simultaneity and totality paradigm perspectives across borders, with all parts considered meaningful, yet together worth more than a sum of the parts, for the betterment of nursing and humanity.

**Nursing Program Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of the Vermont Technical College nursing programs views each individual as a uniquely functioning human being affected by the environment, the community, the family, and by all significant relationships in a complex and dynamic society. Additionally, the program regards the individual as one who aspires toward a maximum level of self-care in spite of currently existing health deficits. As a result, the curriculum for the preparation of both practical nurses and associate degree registered nurses has been designed utilizing Dorothea Orem’s Theory of Self-Care within the conceptual framework.

The teaching/learning of the nursing student proceeds in a sequential fashion from simple to complex and normal to abnormal. Additionally, students are introduced to the concepts of health promotion as well as health maintenance. The academic program includes a broad range of courses designed to introduce the student to intellectual thought processes. Interwoven throughout the program of learning are the threads of the conceptual framework and critical thinking exercises which demonstrate the decision-making capacity of students as they progress through the program. The threads are: the nursing process, scientific principles, communication theory, ethical/legal principles, an understanding of the nursing role as a member of the interdisciplinary team, an understanding of the role of provider of care, teaching/learning principles, and responsibility for accountability/self-growth.
Nursing Student Outcomes

Graduates of each nursing program are provided learning opportunities which lead to the accomplishment of program specific outcomes.

Practical Nursing Program Outcomes

Each graduate of the practical nursing program, having proceeded in his/her course of study from an understanding of the concepts of normal to abnormal, simple to complex, and utilizing the program’s conceptual framework as a basis, will provide individualized nursing care as follows:

I. Nursing Process
With guidance, employs the nursing process for selected clients to maintain, achieve, or regain their optimal level of self-care.

II. Scientific Principles
Integrates knowledge of scientific, behavioral, and cultural principles in the care of selected clients in a variety of settings.

III. Communication
Establishes collaborative relationships with members of the nursing and health team.

IV. Ethical/Legal
Supports the use of legal and ethical standards at the practical nurse level.

V. Nursing Role
Assumes the role of member of the interdisciplinary team as a graduate practical nurse.

VI. Provider of Care
Provides care which maximizes the self-care potential of individuals across the lifespan in a variety of health care settings.

VII. Teaching/Learning
Contributes to the development of a teaching plan for the client with an alteration in basic self-care needs.

VIII. Accountability/Self-Growth
Assumes responsibility for self-directed, goal-oriented growth.

Associate Degree Nursing Program Outcomes

In addition to the general requirements of all Vermont Tech associate degree programs, as outlined in the Vermont Tech catalogue, the following program outcomes are expected for the Associate in Science degree with a major in Nursing:

I. Nursing Process
Evaluates the plan of care, to assist clients with complex health care needs to maintain, achieve or regain their optimal level of self-care.

II. Scientific Principles
Selects appropriate scientific, behavioral, and cultural principles for the care of clients with complex needs in diverse settings.

III. Communication
Evaluates interpersonal skills in professional practice.
IV. Ethical/Legal
Incorporates into nursing practice legal/ethical standards of professional practice.

V. Nursing Role
Assumes the role of manager of care within the interdisciplinary team as a graduate professional nurse.

VI. Provider of Care
Competently delivers nursing care which maximizes the self-care potential of individuals with complex health needs in diverse settings.

VII. Teaching/Learning
Evaluates a comprehensive teaching plan to meet the physical and emotional needs of individuals and groups with common and complex health care needs.

VIII. Accountability Self-Growth
Is accountable for growth as individuals, as members of society, and as professional nurses.

Bachelor of Science in Nursing Outcomes

Each graduate of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, having progressed from understanding of the concepts of normal to abnormal, simple to complex, and utilizing the program's conceptual framework as a basis, will in addition to the general requirements of all Vermont Tech Bachelor degree programs as outlined in the Vermont Tech catalogue, integrate and synthesize the following program outcomes as follows:

I. Nursing Process
Collaborates with clients, the interdisciplinary team, and multiple care providers when planning care to establish client-centered goals to optimize wellness outcomes, and evaluate care plan effectiveness, for the individual and community.

II. Scientific Principles
Engages applied sciences, including scientific, behavioral, psychological, and cultural principles for the care of complex clients that incorporates global appreciation, understanding and tolerance; additionally, designs evidence-based practice care, incorporating and participating in qualitative research to generate theory, and/or quantitative research to test theory. Distinguishes between experimental positivistic empirical approaches and non-experimental research designs, defining strengths, weaknesses, the importance of rigor and replicable findings, statistical analysis, and threats to validity, such as bias.

III. Communication
Determines utilization of collaborative relationships with the health team and the community to facilitate communication of team members to enhance care, promote mentorship, and strategize utilization of technology, embracing diversity while evolving therapeutic communication techniques of presencing and dialogical exchange.

IV. Ethical/Legal
Integrates legal and ethical standards that encompass consideration of potential ethical dilemmas, promoting self-integrity as well as consideration of benefit to the community.

V. Nursing Role
Coordinates and co-leads the interdisciplinary team, advocates for clients by compassionately caring for people and families using the art and science of nursing in theoretically based practice, helps people flourish/ find optimal meaning in their lived experiences, demonstrates sound nursing judgment, utilizes critical thinking, develops scholarship, and ascertains how to promote the healthiest possible community.

VI. Provider of Care
Maximizes patient-centered care by co-creating health with clients, empowering people, facilitating comfort, and incorporates health promotion, by synthesizing integration of the
simultaneity and totality paradigm.

VII. Teaching/Learning
Designs a holistic teaching plan with understanding of the person, health, environment, and nursing.

VIII. Accountability/Self-Growth
Continually striving for excellence through ongoing engagement in self-directed life-long learning, with participation as an active member of society in their community working with and/or becoming leaders and developing their professional identity, and ability to work with teams to create innovative, or evidence-based solutions to problems.

Ethical Codes of Conduct

VTC nursing students are expected to engage in ethical practice as a nursing student by following the ethical codes of conduct for their level of nursing and by practicing the expected behaviors. Students whose behavior is not consistent with these standards may be subject to dismissal from the program. Any violation of the ethical codes of conduct or violation of municipal, state or federal laws by a student must be reported to the Associate Dean of Nursing immediately. Review of the violation will be made to determine if the student may continue in the nursing program.

Any student who fails to report violations of municipal, state, or federal laws may be dismissed from the nursing program.

Code of Ethics for Practical/Vocational Nurses

The Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Shall:

1. Consider as a basic obligation the conservation of life and the prevention of disease.
2. Promote and protect the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of the patient and his family.
3. Fulfill all duties faithfully and efficiently.
4. Function within established legal guidelines.
5. Accept personal responsibility (for his/her acts) and seek to merit the respect and confidence of all members of the health team.
6. Hold in confidence all matters coming to his/her knowledge, in the practice of his/her profession, and in no way at no time violate this confidence.
7. Give conscientious service and charge just remuneration.
8. Learn and respect the religious and cultural beliefs of his/her patient and of all people.
9. Meet his/her obligation to the patient by keeping abreast of current trends in health care through reading and continuing education; and
10. As a citizen of the United States of America, uphold the laws of the land and seek to promote legislation that will meet the health needs of its people.

(Courtesy of the National Association for Practical Nurse Education and Services, Inc.)

ANA Code for Registered Nurses

Provision 1| The nurse practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person.
Provision 2 | The nurse’s primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, community, or population.

Provision 3 | The nurse promotes, advocates for, and protects the rights, health, and safety of the patient.

Provision 4 | The nurse has authority, accountability, and responsibility for nursing practice; makes decisions; and takes action consistent with the obligation to promote health and to provide optimal care.

Provision 5 | The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, maintain competence, and continue personal and professional growth.

Provision 6 | The nurse, through individual and collective effort, establishes, maintains, and improves the ethical environment of the work setting and conditions of employment that are conducive to safe, quality health care.

Provision 7 | The nurse, in all roles and settings, advances the profession through research and scholarly inquiry, professional standards development, and the generation of both nursing and health policy.

Provision 8 | The nurse collaborates with other health professionals and the public to protect human rights, promote health diplomacy, and reduce health disparities.

Provision 9 | The profession of nursing, collectively through its professional organizations, must articulate nursing values, maintain the integrity of the profession, and integrate principles of social justice into nursing and health policy.


Behavioral Expectations

Behavioral Standards for Nursing Students

The VTC nursing student shall:

General
- converse in an effectively well-modulated voice with peers, faculty, agency personnel, staff, and patients
- advocate for patients, families, visitors, and co-workers
- focus communication on the patient, not on self
- address the patient by their formal name unless the patient requests otherwise
- conduct self in the classroom, in clinical, and in the online learning environment in a professional, respectful manner

Attitude
- accept directions and suggestions from instructor or team member (initiates discussion whenever necessary)
- accept and use constructive criticism from instructor or team member (initiates discussion if not in agreement)
- demonstrate honesty by responsibly completing what they said they would do
- respect property rights of others by not stealing, borrowing without permission, or damaging others’ property
- maintain confidentiality by discrete transfer of information
- deal with stressful situations by obtaining appropriate assistance from instructors and appropriate health team members

Relationships
- maintain a constructive dialogue with staff, instructors, patients, or peers in matters relating to patient care
- share plan of care (verbal or written) with team member
- volunteer assistance without jeopardizing own patient assignments
- maintain appropriate nurse-patient relationship

Dependability
- report on and off clinical practice on time and to the proper individual
- start assignment promptly
- proceed independently with familiar procedures and treatments
- completes assignment in a timely manner
- report any incomplete assignments to the responsible individual allowing time for work completion by appropriate others
- comply with school attendance policies
- notify proper person for unavoidable tardiness/absences according to school attendance policy

Responsibility
- is consistently prepared for clinical practice
- accepts responsibility for adequate preparation for the classroom learning environment, which includes significant study time outside of the classroom
- carry out safe nursing care whether under supervision or not
- seek guidance whenever necessary to carry out safe nursing care
- convey (verbal or written) results to instructor of findings suggested for independent study
- submits written material which is the product of own research
- report errors immediately
- practice within the limits of the Nurse Practice Act
- accept consequences of own actions through the use of “I” statements
- wear uniform according to school policy
- when unable to attend class, obtain any information missed from instructors/peers
- follow the policies (smoking, documentation, etc.) of the various facilities
- take examinations without incorporating the work of others

Classroom Expectations

Class Attendance Policy
See specific course outline.
Students are expected to attend all regularly-scheduled classes.

Classroom Code of Conduct
Students in all Nursing and Allied Health programs will at all times conduct themselves in a manner that serves to maintain, promote and enhance a high quality academic environment. To this end, it is expected that all members of the learning community will adhere to the following guidelines:
1. Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes.
2. Students are expected to arrive prepared for class and on time, and they will remain in class until the class is dismissed.
3. Students will treat all members of the learning community with respect. Toward this end, they will promote academic discourse and the free exchange of ideas by listening with civil attention to comments made by all individuals.
4. Students are to maintain an appropriate academic climate by refraining from all actions that disrupt the learning environment. Cell phones may not be used in class or clinical unless directed by the instructor. Students must follow clinical agency policies, including use of cell phones and social media.

Missed Exam Policy
Ten (10) points (based on 0-100% score) will be deducted from any exam score when the exam is taken after the scheduled exam period. It is the student’s responsibility to schedule the exam make-up time with the instructor. Exams must be made up, at the instructor’s convenience, within seven (7) days of the original exam administration time or the student will earn a score of zero (0) on that exam.

Exceptions to the ten point deduction will be granted for the following circumstances:
1. Death of an immediate family member: the student may decide whether to apply the ten point leniency to visiting the loved one prior to death, being with family immediately following the death or for attending a funeral. Immediate family members will be defined as spouse, children, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, step-children, step-parents and step-siblings, parent in-laws, children in-laws, sibling in-laws.
2. Hospitalization of self or dependent minor at the time of the exam.
3. Birth of the student’s child.
4. Illness for which a MD note states that the student is unable to attend class.
5. Court date that cannot be rescheduled.
7. Other catastrophic event beyond the student’s control, at the discretion of the instructor.

Please note the above exceptions only apply to one exam per event. Students are expected to notify the instructor at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled exam time of anticipated absence. Failure to notify the instructor will nullify the ten point deduction exception. Documentation of the above events must be submitted to the instructor at the time of the make-up exam. The request to take an exam early because of an anticipated schedule conflict is rarely granted and is not sufficient to avoid the ten-point penalty. If a request to take an exam early is granted by the instructor, the exam can only be administered early on the same day of the scheduled exam time.

RN to BSN missed exam policy may vary by course. Please see specific course outline.
Clinical Expectations

Attendance Policy

Clinical practice is an integral part of the VTC nursing program. Absences from the clinical practice may lead to the student’s inability to meet the clinical course requirements. Course requirements must be met in order to pass the clinical course. The following policies govern the attendance for students in the various programs.

PN Students

1. Clinical time is critical to the educational process. Because of limited clinical time, excessive lost time in the clinical area could jeopardize the ability to safely care for clients. All missed clinical time is counted. After a student reaches twelve (12) hours of clinical absences per semester, the student will receive an absent time warning letter sent by the instructor; after eighteen (18) hours of clinical absences per semester, the student will receive an additional absent time warning letter and will be presented to the total faculty for possible dismissal from the program. If the student accrues additional absent time, they will be referred to the Associate Dean of Nursing for a decision regarding continuation in the program.

2. There will be no makeup of missed clinical days.

3. Students are required to come to the clinical area prepared to safely care for assigned patients. They must review appropriate clinical skills as taught in skills laboratories and complete an adequate chart review. Students not adequately prepared will be considered unsafe and asked to leave the clinical area. This absence will be counted as a clinical absence.

ADN Students

1. Due to limited clinical time in the fall term, absences are limited to six (6) hours. After one absence, the student will receive an absent time warning letter. After twelve (12) hours of clinical absences, the student will receive an additional absent time warning letter and will be presented to the total faculty for possible dismissal from the program. During the spring term, clinical absences are limited to twelve (12) hours. After six (6) hours of absent time in the spring, the student will receive an absent time warning letter. After twelve (12) hours of absent time, the student will receive an additional absent time warning letter and will be presented to the total faculty for possible dismissal from the program. If the student accrues additional absent time, they will be referred to the Associate Dean of Nursing for a decision regarding continuation in the program.

2. There will be no makeup of missed clinical days.

3. Students must come to the clinical area prepared to safely care for assigned clients. They must review appropriate clinical skills as taught in skills laboratories and complete an adequate chart review as required by the faculty. Students not adequately prepared will be considered unsafe and asked to leave the clinical area. This absence will be counted as a clinical absence.
Performance Evaluation

Anecdotal Notes
The Anecdotal Note is a tool used to document and provide feedback on the student’s progress in meeting clinical objectives. Students and faculty review Anecdotal Notes on a weekly basis, or more frequently as needed.

Self-Evaluations
As part of clinical experiences, nursing students will be expected to complete self-evaluations at the end of each semester. The criteria addressed on the evaluation are identical to the clinical objectives found on the course syllabus. In completing the self-evaluation form, students are to consider the following:
1. Has the objective been met?
2. How (in what manner) was the objective met?
3. What are your clinical strengths?
4. What areas in your clinical experiences need improvement?
5. How are you meeting clinical objectives as they relate to theory?
Self-evaluations provide an opportunity for the student to analyze individual behaviors and receive feedback and validation from the clinical instructor. Individual communication about clinical objectives is facilitated when the student and the clinical instructor review the student’s progress as the rotation proceeds. Evaluations will reflect clinical expectations at each semester level.

Instructor Evaluations
The clinical instructor will complete clinical evaluations at the end of each semester. Student absences are documented. The student and the clinical instructor will meet privately and discuss evaluations. The evaluation will be signed by the student and the clinical instructor. The student may state disagreement with the clinical instructor’s evaluation, either verbally or in writing, and then sign the form. Signing the evaluation indicates that it has been read.

Satisfactory Behavior Examples
- Utilizes the nursing process in the delivery of client care
- Demonstrates respect for the dignity of self, client, family, and professions in all settings through actions, attitude, and appearance
- Transfers previous and present knowledge of the objectives to the experiences
- Initiates and maintains self-direction
- Applies theory, principles, and skills at expected level
- Demonstrates progressive semester level skill development
- Recognizes own limitations
- Seeks guidance when needed
- Maintains confidentiality in the nurse/client relationship
- Accepts responsibility for own actions
- Demonstrates independent functioning in a progressive manner
- Functions as a member of the health care team

Clinical Progression
A passing grade in clinical must be earned to pass a clinical nursing course.
Unsatisfactory student behavior(s) will be documented on the weekly anecdotal note. At the discretion of the instructor, a Level I Clinical Warning may be issued for a non-starred behavior or a repetitive unsatisfactory behavior. If the unsatisfactory behavior is a starred (*) item, a Level I Clinical Warning will be issued. The Level I Clinical Warning report will state the problem, the discussion, and the subsequent recommendations. If unsatisfactory performance continues, or if improvement does not occur, the student will be counseled, and a Level II Clinical Warning report will be completed. If unsatisfactory performance continues, the student will receive a Clinical Level III Warning report. If, at the conclusion of the semester, the student’s clinical performance does not warrant removal from Level III Warning status, the student has failed the clinical portion of the course. At each warning step, the student has the right to initiate an Appeal which must be submitted within 48 hours in writing to the Associate Dean of Nursing. Students may review this documentation at any time with the Regional Site Director, their faculty advisor, or Associate Dean of Nursing.

Level I, II, and III Clinical Warnings

Level I Clinical Warning
The clinical instructor and the student will have a conference concerning the need for improvement of unsatisfactory or unsafe performance. A written Level I Clinical Warning report along with an Anecdotal Note describing the situation(s) will be placed in the student’s record, and the student will receive a copy of this conference form within one week of the incident. The clinical instructor will provide a copy of this warning to the Site Director. If the unsatisfactory or unsafe performance reappears, or any other pattern of inappropriate behavior occurs, a Level II Clinical Warning will be given.

Level II Clinical Warning
A Level II Clinical Warning may be issued for recurrence of a specific performance for which the student has previously received a Level I Clinical Warning or additional inappropriate performance of a different nature subsequent to the original Level I Clinical Warning. The clinical instructor and the student will have a conference concerning the need for improvement of unsatisfactory or unsafe performance. A written Level II Clinical Warning report clearly describing the situation(s), the specific performance observed, a summary of the discussion of the specific performance, and the rationale and plan for remediation will be placed in the student’s record. The student will receive a copy of this conference form within one week of the incident. The clinical instructor will provide a copy of this Warning to the Site Director.

Level III Final Clinical Warning
If the clinical instructor notes that Level II Clinical Warning performance has continued or that additional unsatisfactory performance occurred, the student will receive a Level III Clinical Warning. This will be discussed at a faculty meeting. The student will be required to meet with faculty to participate in the corrective action plan and goal setting. The student may bring a support person who will be a silent witness. The student may remain on a Level III Clinical Warning, and could receive multiple Level III Clinical Warnings until the end of the semester if performance does not improve. If a student remains on a Level III warning at the end of the semester, the student will receive a failing clinical grade. At the discretion of the clinical instructor, faculty, or Site Director, the student on a Level III warning may be placed in a "one-on-one" clinical experience to determine whether the student can safely be supervised in a clinical group. If during the "one-on-one” experience sufficient improvement is not able to be
demonstrated, the student will have earned a failing clinical grade, will not be allowed to return to the clinical setting, and may be dismissed from the Program.

*Note: If the specific unsatisfactory performance is of grave nature (as judged by the faculty, clinical instructor, Site Director, Associate Dean of Nursing and Dean of Academic Affairs), immediate administrative dismissal may be in order. Performance of a grave nature includes, but is not limited to: serious safety violations; actions inconsistent with scope of practice; and unlawful or unethical acts. Also, at the discretion of the clinical instructor, faculty, or Site Director, a student may be given a Level II or Level III Clinical Warning at any point in time based on the severity of the performance. Prior to an administrative dismissal, the Associate Dean of Nursing will discuss the student’s performance with the Dean of Academic Affairs.

Clinical Warning Appeals
Students have the right to due process. The student should send a written appeal to the Associate Dean of Nursing within 48 hours of receiving a clinical warning that leads to dismissal. While the student is in the appeals process, he/she may remain in the program and participate fully in all course work until a determination on the appeal is made. The only exception is the appeal of a clinical dismissal for patient safety violations. In this case, the student will be suspended from the clinical environment, until a decision regarding the appeal is final. Appeals of clinical warnings will be reviewed by the Associate Dean of Nursing, a designated group of nursing faculty that does not include the student’s evaluating faculty, and the Dean of Academic Affairs. A final decision will be made by the Associate Dean of Nursing in conjunction with the Dean of Academic Affairs. The student will be notified of a final decision within 5 business days of receipt of the written student appeal.

Re-Admission After Clinical Dismissal
Any student, who has been dismissed for clinical failure and would like to request readmission to the VTC nursing programs, will submit this request in writing to the Associate Dean of Nursing. Such a letter should discuss action taken by the student to alleviate or correct the problem which led to the clinical failure. All students’ petitions will be presented to the Faculty for consideration. The Faculty will discuss the issue, and recommend admission or not-readmission to the Associate Dean of Nursing. The student will be notified of this recommendation by letter. Students who have been out of the program for more than one year will have to repeat the entire program. Student who has been out for less than one year will have to write a letter requesting readmission into the program. Students who are eligible to return to the program must pass a Skills Test, administered by a faculty member or designee prior to being readmitted. Additional criteria related to readmission after clinical failure is as follows:

1. No student will be readmitted to the program more than once.
2. No student who has been administratively dismissed from the nursing program for unsafe clinical performance will be readmitted into the nursing program.

Other Clinical Guidelines

1. Students are NOT allowed to witness the signing of consent forms, wills, or other documents.
2. Nurses have a legal and moral obligation to hold in confidence any information pertaining to the client. Violation of the client's right to privacy will result in disciplinary actions by the faculty, and may result in dismissal from program and/or legal action.
3. Vermont Tech nursing students MUST NOT visit friends, relatives, or other patients when they are in the clinical area functioning under the supervision of an instructor. Student visits during visiting hours must conform to behaviors as any other lay visitor. Vermont Tech is NOT responsible for student action or behaviors in these circumstances. Avoid visiting when in uniform.

4. Co-signing charts policy: The patients chart shall be co-signed by the instructor per agency protocol. The nursing instructor's signature means that the information written by the student is truthful and accurate to the best of the instructor's knowledge while supervising up to 10 students in the clinical area.

# Academic Progression

## Nursing Grading System

The Grading System is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Quality Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 94.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84 – 86.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 83.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Minimum Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75 – 76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 – 69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64 – 66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60 – 63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PN and ADN Programs**

PN and ADN students must receive a grade of C+ (77) or more in all NUR courses, and a C (75) in BIO and PSY courses, in order to progress in the program. If a PN or ADN student in the last semester of his/her program does not achieve these grades, he/she will not be allowed to graduate.
Grades lower than the required 75 or 77 will be reflected on the transcript with the corresponding letter grade, so credits may be awarded for any grade above an F, but students will not continue to progress or graduate from Vermont Technical College’s Nursing programs unless their grades conform with the standards stated here.

For all NUR courses and PSY 1050 (taught at Vermont Technical College): Assignments and exam grades will be calculated to the nearest tenth, and the final course grade will be calculated to the nearest tenth and will not be rounded.

BSN Program

BSN students must receive a grade of C (75) in all NUR courses. If a BSN student receives a grade of less than 75, that student will be considered on probation, but can continue to take classes. They may retake the course once within a one-year period and will be removed from probation if they receive a C or greater in that repeated course. Students receiving a grade of C— or less in the same course twice, or once in two separate courses, will be grounds for dismissal from the BSN program. The Associate Dean of Nursing will review such cases for mitigating circumstances and make final decisions regarding dismissal.

Nursing Program Academic Progression

VTC offers students a comprehensive undergraduate nursing education, composed of the Practical Nursing certificate (PN), the Associate Degree Nursing degree (ADN) and the Bachelor’s degree in Nursing (BSN). Students accepted into the Vermont Tech nursing program at any point may request to progress directly through each program toward the bachelor’s degree or may choose to stop out after receiving the PN and/or ADN credentials.

To progress directly from the PN to the ADN level, a student must

- Declare their intent to progress on a Nursing-Direct-Progress form no later than January 31 of the year they wish to progress.
- Maintain a minimum 3.0 grade-point-average (G.P.A.) through each of the three PN semesters
- Obtain the Practical Nursing License (LPN) during the summer between the PN and ADN years
- To progress directly from the ADN to the BSN level, a student must
- Declare their intent to progress on a Nursing-Direct-Progress form no later than March 1 of the year they wish to progress
- Maintain a minimum cumulative 2.5 G.P.A. through the PN and ADN levels
- Obtain the Registered Nurse license during the summer after completing the ADN degree
- Students wishing to take off a semester or more after completing the PN or ADN program may apply for re-admittance to the nursing program through the regular nursing program admissions process, but will not be guaranteed admittance.

While VTC guarantees direct progression from the PN to the ADN program for qualified students, it cannot guarantee direct progression at the same site at which the PN certificate was obtained. Because of the competitive demand for ADN slots and the limitations of clinical ADN placements in some areas of the state, some students may have to continue their nursing
studies at a site other than their first choice or the site at which the PN certificate was obtained. Students progressing directly from the PN to the ADN level must request their first, second and third site preference for the ADN education on their Nursing- Direct-Progress form.

- VTC will assign first priority to students requesting to remain at their PN site—in order of GPA. Once the ADN slots are filled for any site, VTC will try to place students in the ADN site of their next highest stated preferences, if seats are available. Students whose first preference is to attend an ADN site other than that at which they took their PN program will be considered for the preferred site after qualified students attending that site for their PN have been offered a seat in that ADN program.

RN to BSN Online Program

Our BSN program is offered entirely online with additional local precepted experiences.

- The RN to BSN program must be completed within six (6) consecutive years from the date of enrollment to the date of completion, regardless of continuous enrollment and/or leave of absence.
- Students may take an approved leave of absence from the RN to BSN program for a maximum of one (1) calendar year.
- Students wishing to take a leave of absence must submit an “Application for Leave of Absence” form, available at [http://www.vtc.edu/my-vermont-tech/forms](http://www.vtc.edu/my-vermont-tech/forms) and follow the Leave of Absence process as stated in the Vermont Tech Course Catalog at [http://www.vtc.edu/my-vermont-tech/my-vtc-home/course-catalog/academic-a...](http://www.vtc.edu/my-vermont-tech/my-vtc-home/course-catalog/academic-a...)
- If a student wishes to begin a leave of absence after the semester has begun, the one (1) year leave of absence time limit will start at the beginning date of that semester.
- The student must submit written intent to return to the program to the Associate Dean of Nursing, the Academic Dean, and the Registrar’s office the semester immediately preceding the term the student wishes to restart classes.
- If a student is not enrolled in RN to BSN courses for one semester and has not followed the leave of absence process, OR if they are absent from RN to BSN program enrollment for greater than one (1) year, the student must reactivate their file for the RN to BSN program via Admissions.

Policies

Appearance/Uniform Policy

In an effort to inspire patient comfort and confidence in the caregiver, students are expected to appear in complete uniform and exhibit professional demeanor at all times while in their respective clinical areas.

- A school uniform is required.
- Uniforms are to be clean and pressed and must also be in synch with the clinical agency “dress code. Pants must cover the entire leg and be short enough that they do not touch the floor.
- Students may wear a solid white cotton knit shirt underneath their uniform top for warmth.
- A student name pin/badge/photo ID required in the clinical setting per facility policy must be worn any time the student is in the clinical area.
- Hair must be confined off the collar and away from the face at all times. There shall be no ornamentation in the hair. If something is needed to keep the hair confined, it should be non-
ostentatious. Gentlemen are allowed to have a moustache and a beard. The moustache must be neatly trimmed. The beard must also be neatly sculpted to the face. At the discretion of the instructor, the student may be asked to wear a beard bag if there is a concern for infection control. Otherwise, gentlemen must be clean shaven.

- Clean white or black shoes. Socks are to be worn and must match the color of the shoe.
- Bandage scissors, a penlight, stethoscope, a small notebook, a pen with black ink and a watch calibrated to count seconds are required.
- Hand jewelry is limited to a single ring without stones and with a smooth surface. Very small, single, stud-type earrings may be worn in some clinical areas. If the instructor feels the ring or studs are inappropriate, you will be asked to remove them. No other jewelry is permissible.
- Nails must be kept short. Colored nail polish and acrylic nails may not be worn.
- No gum chewing is permitted in clinical areas.
- When in the clinical facility, but not in uniform, students will wear their name pin and a lab coat over their street (business casual) clothes. Some Sites may not require a lab coat; but, only a name pin.
- The odor of cigarettes is not allowed or tolerated.
- Students will refrain from wearing perfume or fragrant lotions or hair products to the clinical area.
- Tattoos deemed offensive by the clinical facility/clinical instructor and/or Site Director will be covered.

Interpretation of this policy will be at the discretion of the clinical instructor. Students will be expected to adhere to this decision. Students who fail to meet these guidelines will be sent home. This absence will be counted as a clinical absence.

Cell Phone Policy
Cell phones may not be used in class or clinical unless directed by the instructor. Students must follow clinical agency policies, including use of cell phones and social media. (See Social Media Policy)

Cheating and Plagiarism
The nursing faculty and staff, in consultation with the Associate Dean of Nursing will enforce and adhere to VTC Policy #107 “Cheating and Plagiarism” and will follow the recommended process as outlined.

Class Organization
Each class shall elect a representative who shall conduct affairs of the class according to Robert’s Rules of Order and with the guidance/approval of the Faculty Advisor. A class leader or leaders shall serve on the committees which have student representation.

Clinical Agency Policy
When students are in the clinical agency, they are expected to abide by agency rules and regulations, as well as the school site regulations.

Closing (School)
Closing and delays stemming from inclement weather have historically been very rare at the nursing programs. Because hospitals do not close, our nursing students must become accustomed to planning ahead for inclement weather. However, if weather is such that closing
or delayed opening is advisable, a decision will be made by 6:00 a.m. and will be carried as
soon as possible in the school delay announcements of the radio stations posted on your school
bulletin board, communicated by telephone tree, or placed on the Moodle web site. Closings
may vary by clinical site and start time; not all sites may be closed on any given day.

**Drug Screening Policy**
When students are going to practice in a clinical agency, they are expected to abide by the
agency contractual requirements and regulations as well as the college regulations. Some
clinical agencies require pre-clinical practice drug screening. To be in compliance with the
college’s contractual agreement with these clinical agencies, students attending clinical practice
at any of these sites must meet this obligation as per the following policy.

**Pre-clinical Drug Screening**
Acceptance into the nursing program is provisional until all pre-clinical practice requirements are
met. Some students will be required to undergo and have a negative drug screening prior to the
beginning their clinical practice experiences. These students will be notified of the drug
screening requirement at the time of admission. Students will be provided instructions on the
procedure for drug screening. The agency conducting the screening will be chosen by the
college and only this agency may be used. There are no exceptions to this policy. Failure to
appear for drug testing is considered a positive screening result. Students are responsible for all
costs associated with the required pre-clinical drug screening.

The agency conducting the drug screening will report either a positive or negative result to the
college. Should a positive report be returned to the college, the student may appeal the report to
the drug screening agency one time. This appeal for a retest and review will be based on the
original sample provided. All decisions made by Vermont Technical College (VTC) related to the
drug screen results will be based on the report from the screening agency. VTC will not consider
any appeals related to decisions based on the drug screen results. A positive drug screen report
will result in the student not being admitted to or allowed to continue in the VTC nursing
program. Students who are delayed in having the results of drug screen reported may attend
class, but may not engage in agency clinical practice activities. Inability to participate in agency
clinical activities will be recorded as a clinical absence. The student with a positive drug screen
may reapply for admission to the VTC nursing program after one year of the positive drug
screen finding.

Drug screen results will be made available by the screening agency to the student’s Site
Director, Associate Dean of Nursing and the Dean of Enrollment and Student Affairs. This
information will be held confidentially on a secured server. Should the student not meet the pre-
clinical requirements due to a positive drug screen, the Associate Dean Admissions and the
appropriate Nursing Faculty Department Chair will be notified. Individual student drug screen
information will be released to clinical agencies only with written student permission.

**Fire/Evacuation Procedure**
Students will be apprised of the procedure for the evacuation of the college or clinical
environments at each agency. This information will be imparted during orientation, in
Fire/Evacuation Procedure: NUR1111, on each clinical unit and on each site bulletin
board.
Simulation Policy
Philosophy – Simulation is used to enhance, reinforce and apply nursing theory in the clinical setting. The simulation lab provides a safe, supportive and positive environment where students develop problem solving skills, enhanced communication skills, teamwork, and the opportunity to experience clinical decision making and critical thinking skills that meet defined learning outcomes. Simulation clinical days have the same requirements as for all clinical days including attendance, preparation and learning outcomes.

Mission – Our mission for the simulation program is to contribute to life-long learning. In the simulation experience, students are active participants in a safe environment that is facilitated by dedicated experience staff. This solid grounding in underlying scientific principles and technical skills helps students translate learning from the lab to the vast variety of our urban and rural clinical settings.

Vision – Striving to meet the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) guidelines, the multidisciplinary lab will provide state-of-the-art simulation experiences that will promote collaborative inter-professional learning that supports and enhances statewide healthcare education and will improve patient care and safety across healthcare.

The benefits of simulation include:

- Enrichment and enhancement of course content
- Ability to creating practice experiences not readily available in the clinical setting
- Emphasize patient safety
- Build effective communication skills with patients and families
- Providing a safe place that allows students to make mistakes and learn from their mistakes while not jeopardizing patient safety
- Builds self-confidence
- Reinforces application of theory into practice in an efficient and focused manner
- Encourages reflective thinking by students in the debriefing process
- Provides “realistic” role playing
- Enhances professional communication and health care team synergy
- Promotes learning through collaboration
- Alignment with the INACSL standards will allow Vermont Technical College to advance to the cutting edge of simulation education

Social Media Policy (SMP)
VTC students have an ethical and legal obligation to maintain patient privacy and confidentiality at all times. This includes upholding the provisions set forth under federal law (HIPPA). The VTC Social Media Policy (SMP) provides guidance to students, faculty, staff and our clinical affiliates and establishes consequences if the SMP has been violated.

Guidelines:

1. Student nurses must adhere to legal and ethical responsibilities and VTC student conduct policies.
2. Student nurses must adhere to clinical agency policies regarding their responsibility to protect patient privacy whether on line or off line. This includes protecting patients’ name and any information that may lead to the identification of a patient.

3. Student nurses must maintain professional boundaries in the use of electronic media. This means establishing, communicating and enforcing professional boundaries with patients in the on-line environment.

4. Student nurses may not share, post or otherwise disseminate any information including images about a patient or information gained in the nurse-patient relationship with anyone unless there is a patient care-related need to disclose the information or other legal obligation to do so.

5. Student nurses are discouraged from interacting with patients using social media.

6. Student nurses should evaluate all their social media postings with the understanding that a patient, colleague, educational institution or employer could potentially view those postings.

7. Student nurses as the patient’s advocate have an ethical obligation to take appropriate action regarding instances of questionable healthcare delivery at an individual or systems level that reflect incompetent, unethical, illegal, or impaired practice. Student nurses who view social media content posted by a colleague that violates ethical or legal standards should bring the questionable content to the attention of the colleague and the VTC nursing faculty/staff so that appropriate action can be taken.

8. A student who uses social media to harass, bully, or violate professional codes of conduct may be dismissed from the program, if the behavior violates VSC Policy 311.

A suspected violation of the SMP will result in the following actions:

1. An investigation of the suspected violation will be conducted by the VTC nursing faculty/staff and a report of findings will be presented to the Associate Dean of Nursing.

2. Consideration will be given to determine the intent of the student nurse. Remediation will be provided consistent with the nature of the violation.

3. If the violation is determined to be of serious nature, consequences will reflect the nature of the violation and may include administrative dismissal from the nursing program.

**Substance Abuse Policy**

In conjunction with the VTC Code of Conduct and Substance Abuse statements, the following Nursing Department policy has been adopted. Students will not report to the classroom, lab, or clinical area while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

1. If a nursing student is suspected of being impaired (i.e. order of alcohol/marijuana, slurred speech, bloodshot eyes, ambulatory problems, inability to comprehend or follow oral or written direction, or other such indications) in a clinical or other college setting, the student’s facultyclinical instructor, or any other instructor or college official, should, whenever possible, seek verification of such suspicion by another college instructor or official or a member of the agency’s nursing staff. If the nursing student is suspected of being impaired, the student shall be approached by the professor or other appropriate college or clinical official. If, after evaluation, the professor or other appropriate official believes the student is impaired, then the student shall be required to safely leave the clinical or academic setting immediately. The faculty member will immediately inform the Site Director or designee when a student has exhibited signs of impairment that warrant dismissal from the class or clinical setting.

Required Documentation:

2. Observed Behavior – Reasonable Cause Tool
   The purpose of this tool is to document faculty or clinical instructor assessments of a student’s appearance, behavior(s), affect, speech, and motor skills that indicate impairment of drugs and/or alcohol.
The faculty member/clinical instructor will document the reason(s) for suspecting that a student is impaired by completing VTC’s Observed Behavior – Reasonable Cause Tool within 24 hours of identifying signs of impairment. This tool will be signed by the faculty or clinical instructor who suspected student impairment, a witness to the student’s behavior at the time, and the student.

3. Return to Class/Clinical Agreement Form
The purpose of this form is to provide support for students suspected of being impaired. This form is an agreement between the student and the college which is intended to ensure that professional standards are upheld. It is a contract that specifies the consequences of reporting to class or clinical while impaired. Prior to returning to the class/clinical setting, the student and Site Director (or designee) will review the Return to Class/Clinical Agreement form. The student will sign and receive a copy of this form which specifies that he or she agrees to meet performance standards regarding professional conduct. By signing the Return to Class/Clinical Agreement form, the student agrees to undergo an alcohol and/or drug assessment, abide by recommendations made by a substance abuse treatment agency regarding return to class/clinical, and not attend learning activities when unfit to work. The student’s failure to comply with the conditions of this document will be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the college.

A student’s failure to adhere to the conditions of the Return to Class/Clinical Agreement form will be reported to the Associate Dean of Nursing and The Dean of Enrollment and Student Affairs for appropriate disciplinary and/or academic process and action.

Until due process is completed, the student will not be allowed to attend clinical. The student may attend if there is no further evidence of impairment.

Student Health Policy
Students are responsible for their own health care and incurred costs. When students become ill or injured while in class or in the clinical area, they are to report to the instructor to assist in arrangements for patient care. The Site Director of the school will always be notified of any illness or injury.

The hospital emergency room is designed to care for true emergencies, NOT colds, sore throats, etc. Students are responsible for their own medical bills. Students will be expected to provide proof of health insurance or carry the VTC student health insurance policy.

The Site Director may request a physical examination or medical clearance from a health care provider if this seems necessary. For the protection of the student, the patients, or other students, any exposure to infectious disease must be reported to the Site Director.

Requirements for Clinical Placement

The following documentation is required by VTC and the contracted clinical agencies prior to clinical placement:

- Health history and physical examination
- Records of specified immunizations/communicable disease
- Background check
- Fingerprint reports
• CPR certification
• Proof of health insurance
• Report of drug screen (selected sites)

ALLIED HEALTH

Appearance/Uniform Policy
In an effort to inspire patient comfort and confidence in the caregiver, students are expected to appear in complete uniform and exhibit professional demeanor at all times while in their respective clinical areas.

• A school uniform is required.
• Uniforms are to be clean and pressed and must also be in synch with the clinical agency “dress code”. Pant length must be short enough that they do not touch the floor. Pants must cover the entire leg and be short enough that they do not touch the floor.
• Students may wear a solid white cotton knit shirt underneath their uniform top for warmth.
• A student name pin/badge/photo ID required in the clinical setting per facility policy must be worn any time the student is in the clinical area.
• Hair must be confined off the collar and away from the face at all times. There shall be no ornamentation in the hair. If something is needed to keep the hair confined, it should be non-ostentatious. Gentlemen are allowed to have a moustache and a beard. The moustache must be neatly trimmed. The beard must also be neatly sculpted to the face. At the discretion of the instructor, the student may be asked to wear a beard bag if there is a concern for infection control. Otherwise, gentlemen must be clean shaven.
• Clean white or black shoes. Socks are to be worn and must match the color of the shoe.
• Bandage scissors, a penlight, stethoscope, a small notebook, a pen with black ink and a watch calibrated to count seconds are required.
• Hand jewelry is limited to a single ring without stones and with a smooth surface. Very small, single, stud-type earrings may be worn in some clinical areas. If the instructor feels the ring or studs are inappropriate, you will be asked to remove them. No other jewelry is permissible.
• Nails must be kept short. Colored nail polish and acrylic nails may not be worn.
• No gum chewing is permitted in clinical areas.
• When in the clinical facility, but not in uniform, students will wear their name pin and a lab coat over their street (business casual) clothes. Some Sites may not require a lab coat; but, only a name pin.
• The odor of cigarettes is not allowed or tolerated.
• Students will refrain from wearing perfume or fragrant lotions or hair products to the clinical area.
• Tattoos deemed offensive by the clinical facility/clinical instructor and/or Site Director will be covered.

Dental Hygiene students must also meet these requirements:
Students are expected to purchase regulation scrubs, over-garments, socks and shoes and an instrument kit prior to the start of the first semester.

Academic Progression- Dental Hygiene and Respiratory
Students must complete each academic course in the foundational areas of their major with a “C” or higher. Any grade that is lower than a 75 will be considered a failing grade in that course.
Students may not progress from one semester to another without successful completion of all preceding courses. For nursing students, courses which are considered foundational are all courses with the prefix NUR or BIO. Courses considered foundational for Dental Hygiene are all courses carrying the prefix DHY or BIO.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**
The allied health faculty and staff, in consultation with the Program Director will enforce and adhere to Vermont Technical College Policy #107 “Cheating and Plagiarism” and will follow the recommended process as outlined.