SON Technical Standards

Technical standards
According to the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing — the U.S. Department of Education-recognized accrediting body for programs leading to Nursing degrees in the United States — Geisinger must develop and publish technical standards for the admission, retention and graduation of applicants or nursing students in accordance with legal standards.

The Geisinger College of Health Sciences, School of Nursing (GCHS SON) educates aspiring nurses through a community-based, patient-centered, interprofessional and evidence-based model that is committed to excellence, promotes discovery, and utilizes innovative techniques. The SON's mission is to graduate students fully prepared to serve the people and communities of northeast Pennsylvania and beyond. Our educational approach emphasizes reducing disparities in patient outcomes and optimizing care for all patient populations. Fostering a learning environment grounded in the core values of kindness, excellence, safety, learning and innovation is essential to developing nurses who are capable of delivering compassionate, high-quality care using the latest technology and evidence-based practices.

GCHS SON's technical standards have been developed in accordance with applicable laws, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Section 504 and ADA ensure that applicants and enrolled medical students with disabilities are not discriminated against on the basis of disability and are provided an equal, effective, and meaningful opportunity to enjoy the benefits, privileges, and advantages of a nursing education at GCHS SON. Equal opportunity and nondiscrimination include providing reasonable accommodations that enable individuals with disabilities to meet the technical standards, unless such accommodations would fundamentally alter the nature of GCHS SON's education program, impose an undue burden, or pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be mitigated.

Essential functions of a nursing student are as follows:

Cognitive Abilities (including intellectual-conceptual, integrative and quantitative abilities): Candidates must have sufficient cognitive abilities, including intellectual-conceptual and integrative and quantitative, to acquire foundational knowledge and apply, calculate, analyze, reason, interpret, integrate, and synthesize knowledge and information in a manner that leads to prioritization of patient care, formulation and implementation of treatment plans. The candidate must possess critical thinking ability sufficient for clinical judgment.

Examples of intellectual-conceptual abilities include:

- Acquiring foundational knowledge through memorization, calculation, organization, comprehension, and assimilation of detailed and complex information present in the nursing student curriculum
- Discerning and comprehending dimensional and spatial relationships of structures
- Effectively participating in learning modalities, such as individual, small group, and lecture formats in the classroom, clinical settings, and other venues in which the curriculum or required activities are delivered

- Effectively learning, participating and contributing as a part of a healthcare team

Examples of integrative and quantitative capacity include:

- Formulating a hypothesis, investigating the potential answers and outcomes, analyzing data and problem solving to formulate appropriate and accurate conclusions
- Interpreting causal connections and making accurate, fact-based conclusions based on available data and information to develop patient-centered nursing care plans
- Synthesizing information effectively in person, via remote technology and in other venues and modalities
- Making concise, cogent and thorough presentations based on various kinds of data collection, including web-based research
- Organizing information, materials and tasks in order to perform efficiently and effectively

Observational Skills: Candidates must be able to use observational skills to acquire, assimilate, and apply information that may lead to conclusions or perceptions about physical, cognitive, social, cultural, and intellectual environments that are gleaned from:

- Demonstrations in simulation and laboratory scenarios
- Written and audiovisual material
- Patient encounters and one-on-one interactions
- Students should be able to assess a patient and evaluate findings. These skills require the use of vision, hearing, and touch, or the functional equivalent.

Examples of knowledge acquisition through observation include:

- Detecting changes in mood, activity and verbal or nonverbal cues
- Performing physical examinations, including examinations using an array of equipment, such as a stethoscope, to integrate findings based on this information
- Acquiring information, including but not limited to direct interaction with patients, direct or recorded lab simulations, virtual clinical cases or results of computer-based searches
- Interpreting diagnostic findings and graphic images, such as EKGs and blood lab testing

Communication Skills: Candidates must be able to effectively and sensitively communicate information, including eliciting, conveying, clarifying and acting on the information, and creating rapport by multiple modalities with:

- Patients and designated representatives of patients (including family members)
- Faculty, colleagues, members of the healthcare team, support staff and others with whom the candidate interacts

Candidates must be able to:

- Use interpersonal skills to establish responsive, empathetic and respectful communication and rapport, and therapeutic relationships with patients in a way that promotes openness on issues of concern and sensitivity, including potential cultural differences and the use of an interpreter
- Record information accurately, timely and clearly

- Recognize urgent situations in which timely supervision, assistance and consultation must be sought
- Communicate effectively and efficiently in verbal and written English

Examples of areas in which skillful communication is required include:

- Participating as an individual and as a member of a group in learning activities
- Answering oral and written exam questions
- Presenting information in oral and written form to patients, staff, faculty, colleagues, the healthcare team and others
- Taking medical histories and performing physical examinations, which include ability to interact with patients
- Participating in clinical rounds and conferences
- Interacting with and responding to faculty and the interdisciplinary healthcare team
- Completing and navigating electronic medical record entries and documentation of patient assessments, treatment plans and medication administrations in a timely and accurate way

Physical abilities and motor functioning: Candidates must possess physical stamina sufficient to tolerate the demands of clinical experiences. Candidates must also have sufficient physical and fine and gross motor function to:

- Elicit information from patients by performing appropriate physical examinations using diagnostic maneuvers and procedures
- Function in outpatient, inpatient and surgical venues
- Ensure that general nursing care and emergency treatment is provided to patients in a timely manner
- Provide or direct the provision of holistic nursing care and perform, assist with or direct procedures, treatments and medication administration
- Students should be able to execute motor movements required to provide general care to patients and provide or direct the provision of emergency treatment of patients. Such actions require some coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, balance and equilibrium.

Behavioral and social attributes: Candidates must possess the following behavioral and social attributes:

- Work and learn independently and collaboratively
- Exercise good judgement
- Develop mature, sensitive, safe and effective relationships with patients, staff, faculty, colleagues, the healthcare team and others
- Express compassion, integrity and concern for others

Emotional stability: Candidates must possess the emotional stability and resilience to:

- Remain patient, calm and react appropriately in high stress situations
- Engage in self-reflection
- Accept and give constructive feedback

- Possess self-awareness and self-analysis of emotional state and reactions
- Function in the face of the uncertainties inherent in the clinical presentation of many patients
- Interact with patients including those who are seriously ill, transitioning to end of life or who have clinically definable psychiatric issues, and with spouses, siblings, children and close relatives of patients
- Adapt to changing environments and display flexibility

Ethics and professionalism: Candidates must exercise the appropriate ethical and professional conduct and personal attributes that are critical to the nursing profession, including the ability to:

- Understand, distinguish and apply the legal, moral and ethical conduct and values of nursing practice and function within both the law and ethical standards of the profession
- Construct frames of reference consistent with appropriate professional, ethical and moral behavior and values
- Accept responsibility, accountability, and ownership of one's actions.
- Maintain appropriate professional relationships and boundaries with patients, family, staff, faculty, colleagues, the healthcare team and others
- Engage willingly and respectfully interact with all members of the healthcare team, faculty, staff, patients, and families demonstrating professionalism and courtesy in all interactions; this includes providing care to any patient without discrimination based upon age, disability, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, veteran status or political beliefs
- Maintain patient privacy and confidentiality
- Advocate for patients
- Abide by all state, federal and local laws, as well as GCHS policies and procedures, related to the use of alcohol and drugs
- As part of the School of Nursing's commitment to ethical conduct and professionalism, we strictly prohibit discrimination in all educational and clinical settings. Consistent with Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act and other applicable laws, all members of our community are expected to respect the dignity and rights of every individual, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

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Reasonable accommodations include, but are not limited to, modifying academic requirements and providing auxiliary aids and services. Academic requirements that are essential to the educational objectives of the program or directly related to licensing standards are not considered

discriminatory when applied consistently. If GCHS SON determines that a requested academic accommodation would result in a fundamental alteration, undue burden, or direct threat to the health or safety of others, it will consider whether effective alternatives to the requirement exist which would allow medical students to participate in its academic program without waiving or lowering essential requirements (fundamentally altering the nature of GCHS SON's nursing education program), or resulting in undue burden or direct threat to the health or safety of others. All progression decisions are based on merit and made without discrimination in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

Requests for GCHS SON-provided reasonable accommodations will be granted in accordance with the policies and procedures described in the Policy and Procedures for Disability Services. We are committed to ensuring equal access to our educational programs, providing reasonable accommodations in accordance with applicable law, and fostering a professional environment that is respectful, welcoming, and ethically grounded.