

Technical Abilities and Skills

Abilities and Skills for the Undergraduate Nursing Major

The professional nurse must possess the knowledge and ability to effectively assess clients' biophysical, psychological, social, cultural, and intellectual domains. Further, the professional nurse must competently analyze the assessment data through intellectual processing to arrive at a definition of the client's status or problem, plan independently or collaboratively for full range of therapeutic interventions, execute all or part of the plans through nursing acts, and evaluate the care delivered and the client's responses to it. A candidate for professional nursing must have the abilities and skills necessary for use of the nursing process. These skills and abilities include observations; communication, motor ability, conceptualization, integration and quantification, and behavioral/social acceptability.

Standards and Functional Abilities for the Undergraduate Nursing Major

The School of Nursing affirms that all students enrolled in a nursing program must possess those intellectual, ethical, physical, and emotional capabilities required to undertake the full curriculum and to achieve the levels of competence required by the faculty for safe professional practice.

Technological compensation can be made for some handicaps in certain areas, but a candidate should be able to perform in a reasonably independent manner. The use of a trained intermediary is not acceptable, in that a candidate's judgment must be mediated by someone else's power of observation and selection.

Standards	Functional Abilities
Critical Thinking: ability sufficient for clinical judgment	Identify cause-effect relationship; problem-solve; predict/evaluate outcomes; sequence information.
Reading: ability sufficient to comprehend the written word.	Read written documents, graphs, policies, protocols, etc.
Mathematics: ability sufficient to perform computations at least at the tenth-grade level.	Measure time; compute medication dosage; count rates; use measuring tools; add, subtract, multiply, divide whole numbers; compute fractions.
Hearing: ability sufficient for physical and environmental monitoring	Auscultate faint body sounds, voices; hear monitor alarms, emergency signals.
Visual: ability sufficient for accurate observation and assessment	Observe patient response/condition: distinguish color and color intensity; prepare medication; see graphs, and computer screens.

Smell: ability sufficient to detect environmental and client odors.	Detect foul-smelling odors; detect smoke/gases.
Physical strength/endurance: ability sufficient to perform full range of patient care activities.	Stand for long periods of time at bedside; perform nursing care duties for entire shift; push/pull/support light and heavy objects; carry equipment; support patients in ambulation, turning, standing.
Motor Skills: ability sufficient to provide safe and effective nursing care.	Position patients; obtain specimens; calibrate instruments/equipment; prepare and administer medication; reach and bend with ease; grasp small objects, write, fine motor skills.
Mobility: ability sufficient to move from room to room and within confined space.	Move about in populated areas; twist, stoop, squat; move quickly, administer repetitive movements (CPR).
Tactile: ability sufficient for physical monitoring and assessment.	Perform palpation; detect hot/cold; detect differences in skin surface; shapes and sizes.
Communication: ability sufficient for interaction with others, in both the verbal and written English language.	Teach; explain procedures; give oral report; speak on the telephone; document and interpret nursing actions and patient responses and convey information through writing.
Interpersonal skills: ability sufficient to interact with others.	Establish rapport with patient, family and coworkers; respect differences, negotiate interpersonal conflict, remain calm in crisis situations.
Behavioral and Social Attributes: ability sufficient to possess emotional health required for full utilization of his/her intellectual abilities.	Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interests, and motivations are all personal qualities necessary for professional nursing.

The following abilities and skills are necessary to meet the requirements of the curriculum:

Observations: The candidate must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand. Observation necessitates the functional use of the sense of vision and tactile sensation. It is enhanced by the functional sense of smell.

Communication: The candidate must be able to speak, hear, and to observe patients in order to elicit information; describe changes in mood, activity, and posture; and perceive nonverbal communications. A candidate must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients. Communication includes not only speech but reading and writing. The candidate must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written form with all members of the health care team.

Motor: Candidates should have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other assessment maneuvers. A candidate must have sufficient motor skills to gain access to clients in a variety of care settings and to manipulate the equipment central to the treatment of patients receiving professional nursing care. Such actions require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of touch and vision. Examples of required fine motor skills would include, but are not limited to, preparation and administration of oral and injectable medications, assessment of vital

signs, application of dressings, and insertion of drainage catheters. Examples of required gross motor skills would include, but are not limited to, positioning clients in bed, assisting with ambulation, transferring clients and maneuvering in confined spaces. In addition, the candidate should be able to lift and carry a minimum of 35% of his or her own body weight. Also, the candidate should be able to sit, bend, reach and/or walk and stand for most of the day.

Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities: These abilities include measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, and synthesis. Problem solving, the critical skill demanded of nurses, requires all of these intellectual abilities. In addition, the candidate should be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures.

Behavioral and Social Attributes: A candidate must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the care of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients. Candidates must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and function effectively under stress for extended periods of time during a clinical day. The candidate must be able to adapt to noisy, stressful situations and rapidly changing environments, to display flexibility, and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients.

The citations for these guidelines are as follows:

Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act and 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq., the American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Bower, D., Line, L., & Denega, D. (1988). Evaluation instruments in nursing (pp. 71). New York: National League for Nursing

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