Introduction

A clinical preceptorship/fellowship is a supervised clinical experience that allows students to apply knowledge and skills in a practice setting. Each student enters a preceptorship experience with a varied amount of knowledge, clinical experience and technical competence depending on past experience and education. Clinical learning opportunities that enhance the student's individual learning needs are determined with input from the student, the faculty and the preceptor. The purpose of the Preceptor Guidelines is to provide UTHealth SON graduate preceptors with information to optimize student learning.

School of Nursing Mission

As part of a comprehensive health science university, the mission of the School of Nursing (SON) is to educate nurse clinicians and scientists, discover and translate advances in the biomedical and social sciences, and model best practices and innovation in clinical care regionally, nationally and globally. We pursue this mission in order to improve quality of care and the health and well-being of individuals, groups and communities.

Philosophy

Our philosophy reflects the beliefs of the faculty and supports the mission of the SON. Faculty members contribute to the University's mission of education, research, and practice which includes care of individuals, groups and communities. The faculty believes that people, health, and nursing are interrelated and exist in a dynamic global environment.

People are viewed as holistic beings with inherent dignity and worth who participate in decisions that affect their health across the lifespan. Health decisions are influenced by values, beliefs, and perceptions, as well as ethical, legal, cultural, spiritual, social, political and economic forces.

Health is viewed as a dynamic continuum of wellness and illness in individuals, groups and communities. Health care is an interdisciplinary effort focused on health promotion, disease prevention, illness-care, rehabilitation and palliative activities through partnerships between clients and health care providers.

Nursing as a health profession contributes to the management of health issues of individuals, groups and communities in diverse environmental settings. Nurses are prepared as members of an interdisciplinary team to work with others to deliver safe client-centered care emphasizing evidence-based practice, quality improvement approaches and emerging technology.

Education for nurses supports learning as a lifelong process. Undergraduate education prepares entry level generalists to provide safe and quality care to diverse client populations in a variety of settings. Graduate education at the master's level prepares specialists in advanced clinical practice roles. Doctoral education prepares clinical practice and research scholars who function at the highest level of professional practice and contribute to the body of scientific knowledge. Continuing education promotes learning experiences for nurses to update and advance knowledge and skills, thus fostering professional development and improvement of health care.

Research supports and advances nursing science, the evolving body of knowledge that serves as the basis of the profession. The School of Nursing fosters an environment that promotes research that includes, but is not limited to, biobehavioral, clinical and translational research.
Practice is viewed as the dynamic interaction between the profession of nursing and communities relative to the health care needs of its constituents. Community based-practice and service contribute to health promotion, disease prevention, and the well-being of individuals, groups and communities.

**Vision**

We are pacesetters in education, research, and clinical practice. We educate nurse clinicians and scientists within a diverse interdisciplinary environment to meet the dynamic work force and health care needs of our national and global societies. We contribute to nursing knowledge via biobehavioral, clinical and translational research. We are national leaders in clinical practice with innovative models of clinical excellence. We provide a creative environment that fosters scholars and visionaries for the health care system.

**DNP Program Objectives**

Graduates of the Doctor of Nursing (DNP) program will be able to:

1. **Critically evaluate and translate evidence into practice to support high quality outcomes.**
   a. Practice at the highest level of advanced practice nursing or nursing administration providing expanded health care access to individuals, groups, populations, and communities to address complex healthcare needs.
   b. Critically evaluate and translate evidence into practice to ensure patient safety and achieve high quality outcomes.
   c. Utilize evidence-based knowledge, research, ethical standards, technology, and high level clinical judgment to advance quality of care and health outcomes for individuals and populations.

2. **Use leadership and interprofessional collaboration (IP) skills to deliver safe, effective, comprehensive, seamless, and cost-effective care.**
   a. Assume high level clinical and executive leadership roles in nursing, health care organizations, and other health related settings.
   b. Demonstrate achievement of all DNP competencies as published by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

3. **Evaluate and influence health-care policies, organizations, and systems.**
   a. Utilize evidence-based knowledge, research, ethical standards, technology, and high level clinical judgment to advance quality of care and health outcomes for individuals and populations.
   b. Design and evaluate innovative programs and models of care for individuals and populations based on best science and evidence, which address prevention, health promotion, treatment, and management of health needs.
   c. Integrate quality improvement and translational science and strategies to create and sustain change at the population, organization, and policy levels.

**DNP Faculty Responsibilities**

1. Prior to the initiation of the clinical preceptorship/fellowship, The DNP faculty or designee will:
   A. Communicate with the clinical site and request clinical placements for a student(s) for the upcoming semester. Faculty members are responsible for approval of clinical sites and preceptors.
   B. When indicated, send a verification letter/form to the preceptor and clinical site with the name of the student and contact faculty member and the dates in which the student will be completing a rotation at the clinical site. Comply with any requirements required by the clinical agency.
   C. Provide a copy of the course syllabi which includes the course objectives and the appropriate
evaluation form to the preceptor and clinical site.

D. Ensure that a current contract/letter of agreement exists between the clinical agency and the School of Nursing (SON).

II. The SON faculty member and all preceptors will jointly evaluate the DNP student’s performance in the clinical setting, but the faculty member is ultimately responsible for student evaluation and grade assignment. Evaluation/Documentation forms to be used throughout and upon completion of the clinical preceptorship will be provided by students in the setting.

III. The SON Faculty will be available for consultation as requested to the student, preceptor, and clinical site.

IV. The SON Faculty will retain final authority for determining when the graduate student has successfully met requirements for satisfactory completion of the clinical experience and course requirements.

V. Clinical sites and preceptors are evaluated periodically by DNP Program Faculty. For advanced practice nurses, advanced practice status and current nursing licensure will be verified by the SON prior to initiating a contract.

VI. The DNP Faculty member will be responsible to the student for:

A. Assistance in scheduling clinical experiences to meet the course and student objectives.
B. Periodic evaluations as determined by the faculty and student.
C. Consultation at the clinical site as requested by the student and/or preceptor.

Clinical Site Selection Criteria and Responsibilities

I. Clinical Site Selection Criteria

A. The clinical settings chosen shall provide experiences appropriate to the DNP student’s educational needs and goals.

B. The clinical settings chosen shall have mechanisms in place which provide medical authority for Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) practice or nurse administration, as appropriate. Such mechanisms may include, but are not limited to, protocols, policies, practice guidelines, or other orders. When these mechanisms are used to provide such authorization, they should be jointly developed by the advanced practice nurse and appropriate physician(s) and signed by both the nurse and the physician(s). These protocols/policies/practice guidelines shall be reviewed and signed at least biennially and maintained in the practice setting of the advanced practice nurse (Texas Board of Nursing, 2010).

II. Clinical Site Responsibilities

The clinical site is responsible for:

A. Access to space in which to practice (examination room, classroom, and/or office work space, conference room).
B. Orientation to utilized electronic health record system, as appropriate.
C. Adequate resources for diagnostic services and appropriate resources for referral.
D. Adequate resources for educational instruction, communication, and documentation.
E. Provision of policies, procedures, and/or advanced practice protocols specific to the setting and role.
F. Mentoring the student in the performance of the required activities appropriate to their clinical specialty and role.

1. Nurse Practitioner (NP) and Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS): The clinical settings chosen for the NP student shall provide an environment which permits both observation and active participation of the student in the delivery of care. The site shall provide activities which include, but are not limited to:
   a. Opportunities to practice primary, secondary, and/or tertiary care.
b. Reasonable time for student learning.
c. A variety of learning experiences in relation to age (as appropriate), clinical complexity and diagnoses.
d. Opportunity to formulate differential diagnoses, and management plans.
e. Opportunity to implement and evaluate management plans.

2. Nurse Executive students will perform management activities based on their objectives for their specific role. These activities include, but are not limited to:
   a. Participation in the administration of selected aspects of a health care agency/system.
   b. Analysis of the responsibility and accountability of administrators of selected departments functioning in a health care agency/system.
   c. Evaluation of the role of nurses and other health care providers in the administration of a health care agency/system.
   d. Analysis of current issues in health care systems with emphasis on the role of nurse administrators in developing creative solutions.

3. Nurse informatics students upon completion of the preceptorship experience in informatics, the student should be able to:
   a. Apply knowledge of nursing science and informatics to provide information to support and improve outcomes for individuals, populations, and organizations.
   b. Contribute to selection of information systems/technology to evaluate programs of care, outcomes of care, and care systems.
   c. Utilize information systems/technology to support best practice for health care delivery.
   d. Apply best practices to manage individual and aggregate levels of information.

4. Fellowship experiences are planned to provide opportunities for all students in indirect care activities to meet the DNP competences. Upon completion of the fellowship experience all students regardless of option followed in the DNP program should be able to:
   a. Participate in a mentored fellowship experience to expand competency in DNP Essentials.
   b. Evaluate the DNP leadership role in translational science, innovation, and transformation within the context of clinical practice and healthcare delivery.
   c. Analyze opportunities for innovation in health care delivery and practice related to health policy.
   d. Evaluate the presence/extent of inter-professional collaborative practice within healthcare organizations

Preceptor Selection Criteria and Responsibilities
I. Selection Criteria
   Preceptor selection criteria shall include:
   A. Current license to practice as a Registered Nurse and Advanced Practice Nurse (as appropriate) in The State of Texas.
   B. Terminal degrees such as PhD, DNP, and MD are preferred, but other categories of people with or without doctoral education with special expertise may serve as preceptors.
   C. Appropriately credentialed (i.e., national certification as appropriate).
   D. Minimum of one year practice experience, in clinical specialty and role.
   E. Functioning within the scope of the Texas Nurse Practice Act or legal parameters for professional practice acts for other health professionals, as appropriate.
   F. Willingness to participate actively in the education and evaluation process of the graduate student.
II. Preceptor Responsibilities
Preceptor responsibilities shall include the orientation, supervision, teaching, and evaluation student’s performance in the clinical setting. The DNP preceptor is responsible for:

A. Orientation

1. The DNP student should arrange to meet with the identified preceptor for orientation at the initiation of the actual clinical experience.

2. During orientation to the clinical setting, the graduate preceptor(s) should:
   a. Communicate general guidelines to be used for preceptor/student interactions and for review and feedback of student performance.
   b. Review policies, procedures, and advanced practice management protocols specific to the setting and role as appropriate.
   c. Review expectations for documentation as available.
   d. Discuss overall plan for student progression.
   e. Review student's previous learning experiences and clinical objectives to be accomplished.
   f. Complete Clinical Learning Contract with the student.
   g. Encourage student to identify strengths and areas for continued professional growth.
   h. Perform initial assessment of student’s current level of proficiency through observation of student performance and through directed, guided questioning.
   i. Involve student in assessment/validation/decisions about learning strategies employed by the preceptor.
   j. Review clinical site educational and licensure documentation, parking, dress code, etc.
   k. Negotiate a clinical schedule with the graduate student. In order to ensure an optimal clinical experience; all graduate students are required to arrange their clinical schedules to assure continuity clinical experiences as applicable to the specific clinical specialty and role. If the student will be absent on a scheduled clinical day, the student is responsible for notifying the graduate preceptor and the faculty prior to the clinical day or in the case of illness before the start of the clinical day.

B. Clinical Supervision and Teaching

The DNP preceptor should:

1. Provide timely and necessary input to student regarding student’s ability to meet course objectives throughout the clinical practicum.

2. Assess the competence of the graduate student in providing role responsibilities to clients and populations.

3. Ensure that the graduate student’s performance is consistent with standards set forth in clinical site policies, procedures, and advanced practice protocols for patient care, education, and administration duties.

4. Direct the progression of student assignments based on both the preceptor’s and graduate student’s evaluation of readiness, knowledge, and skill competencies.

5. Directly mentor the graduate student in the performance of role responsibilities. The graduate preceptor should remember, however, that she/he is ultimately responsible for the client, and thus should remain available to the student for consultation and ongoing evaluation throughout the entire preceptorship.

6. Provide feedback on the accuracy and completeness of the student’s documentation.

7. Review the DNP student's documentation and make constructive suggestions for improvement. Graduate students will sign all paper notations with their first name, last name, title, and school. All documentation must be co-signed by the preceptor in accordance with clinical site policies. The preceptor is responsible for signing any electronic entries in compliance with clinical site policies.

8. Schedule regular meetings with the DNP student to discuss specific learning
objectives and experiences. These meetings should review:

a. The student's role responsibilities and ability to accurately document clinical findings.

b. Ability to complete advanced practice skills/activities.

c. The student's ability to develop client-focused intervention strategies, including rationales for clinical decisions.

d. The student's ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with preceptors, clients, families, nursing staff, and other health care professionals.

e. Professional issues related to advanced practice role implementation.

C. Evaluation of DNP Student Performance

1. Assess DNP student’s progress through a formal, written evaluation at the completion of the clinical experience. The preceptor evaluation is a component of the student's grade (as specified on the student's clinical evaluation form).

2. Inform the supervising faculty of any concerns related to:
   a. Unsafe clinical practice by the student.
   b. Student difficulties in meeting the requirements of the clinical experience.

DNP Student Responsibilities

The student is responsible for being self-directed in identifying initial and ongoing learning needs, for seeking learning opportunities to meet identified needs, and for being accountable for their performance in the selected role. The student will:

A. Discuss specific clinical objectives and negotiate a mutually agreeable schedule with the preceptor prior to the actual preceptorship.

B. Mutually negotiate Clinical/Practicum Learning Contract with Preceptor and Faculty.

C. Provide the clinical site with the necessary licensure, educational, and/or immunization information as requested.

D. Complete orientation and forms as required by the clinical agency.

E. Demonstrate professional behaviors at all times.

F. Demonstrate accountability for thoroughness and timeliness in completing assigned responsibilities.

G. Maintain a log of experiences attended throughout the duration of the clinical experience.

H. Demonstrate progressive independence and competency in the chosen role and specialty area.

I. Actively seek input into evaluation process and participate in self-evaluation of strengths and identified areas for professional growth with Faculty member and preceptor(s).

J. Complete clinical preceptor and site evaluations and provide feedback to preceptor.

K. Maintain personal records of all evaluation forms.

References


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