

Towson University Department of Nursing

Policy: Standards and Functional Abilities for Nursing Students

The Towson University Department of Nursing undergraduate education major is a rigorous and intense program that will require both mental and physical functional ability as the student accepts responsibility and accountability for the care of clients in a variety of health care settings. The nursing major prepares graduates to function as clinicians at the bedside and in beginning leadership roles. It also provides the foundation for graduate education. The functional standards set forth are the essential standards considered necessary for the student to attain the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for the entry-level nurse.

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCBSN) has identified functional abilities required for nursing students and professionals. The Department of Nursing has adopted these basic standards as requirements for all nursing students. Students admitted into the nursing major must be able to meet the expectations of the program and clinical sites. Students are required to perform activities with or without reasonable accommodations in the classroom, lab, and clinical settings. In order to be considered for accommodations, the student must submit appropriate documentation of their disability to the Office of Accessibility & Disability Services (ADS) at Towson University. Accessibility & Disability Services will engage in an interactive process with the student, the Department of Nursing, and the College of Health Professions to determine eligibility and reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

The standards and functional abilities are expectations of the nursing major; they are not requirements for admission into the nursing program. Individuals applying for admission to the nursing program should review these functional standards to better understand how they may address any disability or limitation through reasonable accommodation. It is recommended that students consult with the Office of Accessibility & Disability Services as they consider what reasonable accommodation may be appropriate to mitigate the impact of a disability (e.g., amplified stethoscope, writing aids/software, stand-up wheelchair).

Table of Standards & Functional Abilities

Ability Group	Standards	Functional Abilities
Critical Thinking	Ability sufficient for clinical judgment	Identify cause and effect relationship. Problem solving. Predict and evaluation outcomes. Sequence information.
Reading	Ability to comprehend English language via written word and computerized English language skills	Read documents including, but not limited to, protocols, policies, graphs, computer screens and bedside monitors.
Arithmetic	Ability to perform mathematical computations in order to safely calculate and convert medication dosages, weight, and other forms of measurements	Add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers. Compute fractions and decimals. Measure time, calculate medication dosage and count rates.

Ability Group	Standards	Functional Abilities
Hearing	Ability to clearly receive and interpret sounds	Auscultate and interpret sound from within the organ systems of the body. Physically respond to voices, alarms, and emergency signals.
Visual	Ability to clearly visual the client, equipment, and environment.	Observe and inspect client visible appearance. Observe client response or condition. Distinguish color and intensity. Prepare medications, visualize measuring increments, read monitors and computer screens
Smell	Ability sufficient to detect environmental odors	Detect foul smelling odors. Detect smoke and gases.
Physical Strength & Endurance	Ability to perform full range of patient care activities	Perform nursing duties for long periods of time at client bedside. Push, pull, and support light and heavy objects. Carry equipment. Support clients in ambulation, positioning, and standing.
Motor Skills	Ability to provide safe and effective nursing care	Position clients. Obtain specimens. Calibrate instruments and equipment. Prepare and administer medications. Reach, bend, and grasp with ease. Use fine motor skills.
Mobility	Ability sufficient to move within confined space	Move adequately in confined patient care areas. Move quickly. Grasp with ease. Administer repetitive movements (e.g., CPR).
Tactile	Ability to touch and feel	Perform hands-on physical assessment.
Communication	Ability for interaction with others using verbal, written and computerized English language skills	Convey accurate information through speech and writing. Teach and explain procedures. Document and interpret nursing action and client response.
Interpersonal Skills	Ability to appropriately interact with others in a respectful manner	Establish rapport with client, family, staff, and colleagues. Respect differences. Negotiate interpersonal conflicts.

References

- Adapted from: Good Samaritan College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Standards and Functional Abilities for Nursing Students.
- Adapted from: South Arkansas College (SEARK College). Functional Ability Requirements for Nursing and Allied Health Students.
- Adapted from: Winona State University Graduate Programs in Nursing, Functional Abilities Statement by Health Care Provider 11.04.10.
- Adapted from: Lakeshore Technical College Nursing Assistant Program, Functional Abilities for Nursing Assistant Program.
- Adapted from: Towson University Department of Kinesiology Athletic Training Major, Technical Standards for Admission.
- Adapted from "A Validation Study: Functional Abilities Essential for Nursing Practices" by Carolyn J. Yocum, National Council of State Boards of Nursing. 1996.
- National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (1999). Guidelines for using results of functional abilities studies and other resources. Chicago, IL.