The Essential Functions for Nursing Practice

The programs of study leading to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) require students to engage in diverse, complex, and specific experiences essential to the acquisition and practice of essential nursing skills and functions. Unique combinations of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, physical and social abilities are required to satisfactorily perform these functions. In addition to being essential to the successful completion of the degree requirements, these functions are necessary to ensure the health and safety of patients, fellow students, faculty, and other health care providers.

In keeping with its mission and goals and compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Widener University School of Nursing promotes an environment of respect for and support of persons with disabilities. The ADA defines disability as “…a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual: a record of such an impairment: or being regarded as having such an impairment” Physical or mental impairment is broadly defined and includes “…any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more …body systems … [and]…any mental or psychological disorder such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities…”

Essential functions are defined as those skills and competencies that all BSN and MSN students at Widener University must have the capacity to demonstrate, with or without reasonable accommodations. Students are not required to be competent in all of these skills at the time of admission, but must have the physical and mental capacity to perform the tasks in clinical practice. If a student is unable, or suspects s/he may be unable, to complete any of the essential functions outlined in this document, with or without reasonable accommodations, the student is strongly encouraged to consult with the Director of Disability Services as soon as possible. Essential functions include but are not limited to the following:

**Competency 1: The ability to see, hear, touch, smell and distinguish colors**

Compliance with this competency requires that the student be able to:

- See objects up to 20 inches away.
- See objects up to 20 feet away.
- See objects more than 20 feet away.
- Use depth perception.
- Use peripheral vision or compensate with central vision.
- Hear normal speaking level sounds.
- Hear faint voices
- Hear faint body sounds such as auscultated blood pressure, heart sounds, lung sounds, and bowel sounds.
- Hear in situations when unable to see lips move, such as when masks are used.
- Hear auditory alarms.
- Demonstrate tactile ability sufficient for physical assessment (e.g., palpation, auscultation, percussion, and functions of physical assessment) and skills related to therapeutic intervention.
- Feel vibrations such as a pulse.
- Detect temperature.
- Feel differences in surface characteristics such as with skin turgor.
- Feel differences in sizes and shapes.
- Detect environmental temperature.
- Detect odors from clients and others.
- Detect smoke.
- Detect gases or noxious smells.
- Distinguish color.
- Distinguish color intensity.
Competency 2: Oral and writing ability with accuracy, clarity and efficiency

- Communicate effectively and sensitively with other students, faculty, staff, patients, family, other professionals, and the public.
- Express ideas and feelings clearly.
- Demonstrate a willingness and ability to give and receive feedback.
- Explain treatment procedures.
- Provide effective health teaching to individuals and groups.
- Interpret and document nursing actions and patient/client and family responses.
- Give oral and written reports to faculty and other members of the health care team.

Competency 3: Manual dexterity, gross and fine movements

- Sufficiently and safely move from room to room and maneuver in small places.
- Perform gross and fine motor skills to provide safe and effective nursing care.
  Gross motor skills include but are not limited to the ability to:
  - move quickly
  - move within confined spaces
  - sit and maintain balance
  - stand and maintain balance
  - walk
  - climb
  - twist, bend, stoop, squat
  - reach above shoulders to manage IVs or monitors
  - reach below waist to manage plug-ins or equipment
  - push, pull, lift, support at least 25 pounds in order to position, transfer, and ambulate patients/clients
  - move light objects up to 10 pounds
  - move heavy objects weighing from 10-50 pounds
  - defend self against a combative patient/client
  - carry equipment or supplies
  - use upper body strength
  - squeeze with hands
  - administer cardio-pulmonary resuscitation to adults, children, and infants
  - stand at patient/client side during a procedure
  - sustain repetitive movements
  - maintain physical tolerance
  - Fine motor skills include but are not limited to:
    - pick up objects with hands
    - grasp small objects with hands
    - write with pen, pencil, or accommodating device
    - key/type using a computer or master an accommodating device
    - pinch/pick up work with fingers
    - twist or turn items with hands
    - squeeze with finger

Competency 4: Ability to learn, think critically, analyze, assess, solve problems, reach judgment

- Read and comprehend extensive written material pertinent to nursing science and effective/safe clinical nursing care
- Effectively use short term and long term memory abilities
- Solve problems using a logical, systematic process
- Apply relevant nursing principles in solving problems pertinent to professional nursing practice
• Synthesize nursing knowledge and skills in planning and providing effective/safe nursing care
• Identify cause and effect relationships
• Establish priorities among several tasks or pieces of data
• Transfer knowledge and skills from one clinical nursing situation to another
• Distinguish facts from assumptions, personal opinions, and personal beliefs
• Distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts, and important from trivial facts
• Use logical reasoning to make plausible inferences about clinical nursing situations
• Distinguish conclusions from the reasoning that supports them
• Make judgments based on factual evidence
• Suspend making judgments when lacking sufficient evidence
• Express ideas in an organized way, both verbally and in writing
• Analyze nursing assessment data to accurately identify client problems
• Develop realistic written nursing care plans for clients that aid in solving client problems
• Verbalize reasoning used in planning and providing nursing care
• Develop fair and accurate criteria for evaluating nursing care provided
• Accurately evaluate nursing care in relation to stated criteria
• Modify nursing care in relation to evaluation process and changes in client condition or situation
• Accurately evaluate own performance in relation to written standards
• Accurately identify areas for continued learning and performance improvement
• Develop realistic plans for continued learning and performance improvement

Competency 5: Emotional stability and ability to accept responsibility and accountability

Emotional abilities required in the program include but are not limited to the ability to:
• Complete all responsibilities in the assessment and implementation of nursing care for patients/clients and families
• Establish therapeutic boundaries
• Demonstrate good judgment
• Be accountable for own behaviors
• Maintain a calm demeanor in stressful or emotionally provocative situations
• Use sensory and motor skills accurately without becoming overwhelmed
• Promote mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, students, faculty, staff, and other professionals
• Respect differences in patients/clients and families
• Provide patient/client, families with emotional support
• Focus attention on task
• Illustrate insight and an awareness of self
• Adapt to changing environment or stress
• Deal with crisis situations appropriately