

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES



COLLEGE OF NURSING

PRECEPTOR HANDBOOK

**MASTER OF NURSING SCIENCE (MNSC)
AND
DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE (DNP)
PROGRAMS**

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INTRODUCTION

In advanced practice professions, the attainment of certain cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills is crucial for the development of advanced clinical competencies. Working with preceptors within the clinical setting enhances graduate student development of these competencies, demonstrating the application of knowledge, skills, and abilities in the clinical setting. Clinical preceptors provide students with the requisite supervised experiences for advanced-practice skill development and mentorship for role acquisition.

Successful preceptorship is the shared responsibility of faculty, preceptors, and students. This handbook provides one mechanism for orienting individuals to the role of preceptor as delineated by the faculty of the UAMS College of Nursing. It provides students with an overview of the preceptor role and their own responsibilities within the student-preceptor relationship. This handbook is designed to reflect how faculty, preceptors, and students are expected to interact to facilitate graduate student achievement of course objectives to the mutual satisfaction of all involved.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Master of Nursing Science (MNSc) and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs are designed to develop nurses as advanced clinicians, scholars, and leaders in their chosen specialty. Specialty tracks within the graduate nursing program include nurse practitioner (adult-gerontology acute and primary care, family, pediatric acute and primary care, and psychiatric mental health), nursing administration, case management, and nurse educator. In addition, the nurse anesthesia track has a separate clinical handbook.

COURSES REQUIRING PRECEPTORSHIP

Preceptorships occur toward the end of each student's program of study. Nurse practitioner students complete foundational coursework, including advanced pharmacology, pathophysiology, and health assessment, prior to entering their first specialty didactic and practicum. Students in the nursing administration, case management, and nurse educator tracks complete specialty coursework before entering preceptorships. There are numerous courses within the Master of Nursing Science and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs that require preceptorships. The course objectives will be provided to the preceptor for each particular course. The student is expected to discuss the course objectives with the preceptor, in addition to their personal goals for the preceptorship.

ROLE OF THE PRECEPTOR

Criteria for Selection of a Preceptor

Preceptors are selected for their ability to contribute to the learning experiences necessary for graduate nursing students.

A preceptor is defined as a healthcare provider with a minimum of a Master's degree, or an individual who is a highly qualified professional with specific clinical, teaching, or administrative expertise as well as knowledge of the teaching/learning process. The preceptor is not paid by the College of Nursing. The preceptor agrees to serve as a role model and resource person, and to provide support, for the graduate nursing student while supervising the student's clinical, administrative, or teaching experiences. Ideally, the preceptor-student relationship is a one-to-one experience. The preceptor's ability to create and maintain an atmosphere that allows and encourages independent self-directed learning is crucial for the graduate nursing student to develop and demonstrate competencies in their specialty practice.

Preceptor Orientation

A faculty member will confirm placement with the student and the preceptor on an individual or group basis, and provide details regarding the preceptorship as is appropriate to the situation.

Preceptors have access to a recorded orientation that includes:

1. an overview of the preceptor relationship, including the respective roles and responsibilities of the preceptor, faculty, and student; and
2. available methods of communication with the faculty regarding student performance, questions, or concerns.

Functions of the Preceptor

The functions of the preceptor include supervision, teaching, and providing feedback to the student and faculty regarding student performance. The preceptor serves as a resource, consultant, role model, and facilitator. The preceptor also provides the student with exposure to clients and clinical, administrative, or teaching experiences that will assist the student in meeting course and personal objectives.

Preceptor/Student Relationship

The preceptor/student relationship progresses through phases. During the first stage, the student requires significant supervision and direction by the preceptor. As the student becomes more competent and confident, the preceptor shifts from directing student activities to assisting the student as needed. By the end of the clinical, administrative, or educational preceptorship, the student assumes an active role in patient care, administration, teaching, or other areas identified by the student; however, the preceptor has final approval of and responsibility for the care provided. The preceptorship is a mutually beneficial experience for preceptor and student in which the student gains in knowledge and experience while sharing enthusiasm and new ideas with the preceptor. Preceptors and students may share articles, research, new practice guidelines, and networking opportunities, etc., as is appropriate in the situation.

Communication and Feedback to Student and Faculty

In the preceptor's role, it is important to provide the student with both formal and informal feedback. Faculty will also meet or contact preceptors to discuss student progress.

Beginning needs. The student and preceptor should discuss the course objectives and schedule for the practicum experience. It is helpful for the preceptor to inform the student of expectations and give frequent feedback about the student's performance. The faculty will have conferences with the student and preceptor as needed, with at least one clinical evaluation visit each semester to assess the student's progress. If significant problems are noted, the preceptor should contact the faculty member and/or discuss at the clinical evaluation visit.

Mid-point needs. As the rapport between student and preceptor develops and the student becomes more confident, the student should give the preceptor feedback as to which learning experiences are the most helpful and request other experiences as appropriate. It is helpful for the preceptor to assist the student in problem solving and decision making, progressively allowing more autonomy and encouraging increasing responsibility for client care, administration, or teaching. Faculty will continue to review the student's clinical documentation, meet with the student and/or preceptor as needed, and evaluate progress throughout the semester. The faculty is available throughout the preceptorship by email or telephone if any questions or problems arise. Faculty can be contacted through the UAMS College of Nursing Practice Department (501-686-5452).

Termination needs. At the end of the practicum experience, preceptors should have a final conference with the student. The preceptor and the student can share views on what experiences were beneficial, as well as the student's progress towards personal learning objectives. Either the preceptor or the student may have suggestions for changes in future student experiences.

It is extremely important for faculty to receive feedback on the student's knowledge and skills, as well as professional traits. An evaluation is completed by the preceptor at the completion of the student's experience to discuss the practicum activities relative to the completion of the student's course and personal objectives. Preceptors should provide feedback on the student's performance and their relationships with clients and peers.

ROLE OF THE FACULTY

The role of the faculty is to provide direction and support to assist students in meeting the course objectives, to support and assist the preceptor as needed, to evaluate the student's progress towards meeting course objectives, and finally to assign a grade to the student.

The faculty facilitates the preparation of the graduate student for advanced nursing practice by:

1. Evaluating the practicum site for review of facilities and meeting with the preceptor.
2. Reviewing with the preceptor:
 - a. Course objectives
 - b. Student performance expectations
 - c. Practicum evaluation/feedback format
3. Assisting the preceptor and student in identifying learning needs and areas of concern, and providing additional instruction when indicated.
4. Being available for consultation and/or collaboration.
5. Conferring with preceptor and student to determine student progress.
6. Evaluating student practicum performance and determining whether the student is meeting goals and objectives.

At the conclusion of the practicum, the faculty member evaluates the student's performance based on data provided by the student and the preceptor and/or faculty on site, and through the use of clinical documentation and logs. The faculty member is responsible for securing preceptor input on the student's progress, as well as student input on the practicum experience. Faculty then evaluates the student's achievement of course objectives based on the data collected, and assigns a grade.

In addition to those noted above, faculty responsibilities include:

1. Ultimate responsibility for the course grade with input from the preceptor.
2. Evaluation of clinical sites and preceptors.

ROLE OF THE STUDENT

The student comes with a unique combination of education and experiences in nursing. The student, in conjunction with the faculty member, is responsible for planning and negotiating his/her own learning experiences to meet course and personal objectives and carrying out what he/she has agreed to do.

Both faculty and preceptor are committed to assisting the student in meeting these objectives. However, the ultimate responsibility for learning rests with the student.

Qualities which are important for the graduate student to succeed include initiative, assertiveness, good communication skills, critical thinking skills, and the ability to analyze personal strengths and weaknesses. The student's role is that of a learner, but increasingly, the student takes a more active role in providing and/or managing client care through clinical, administrative, or educational activities, as well as directing his/her own learning. The student must assume responsibility for asking faculty and preceptor for direction when help is needed. The student also assumes responsibility for negotiating for more autonomy or different learning experiences as appropriate.

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS

The graduate student is evaluated on the achievement of the course objectives. These objectives are incorporated into the clinical evaluation tool. In addition to the clinical evaluation tool, each course coordinator will determine his/her appropriate evaluation activities related to the completion of the course objectives.

Although the faculty member is responsible for assigning the student's grade, preceptors are asked for feedback relative to the student's practicum performance. Anecdotal information that might be pertinent would be appreciated.

SERVICES AT UAMS FOR PRECEPTORS

Preceptors who volunteer at least 100 hours in a calendar year may apply for adjunct faculty status. Adjunct faculty are not paid, but receive access to UAMS Library services including online resources, such as Up-to-Date.

UAMS College of Nursing is working to provide additional services for preceptors, such as participation in guest lectures, research, continuing education, newsletter, and other incentives.

Preceptors interested in these opportunities should contact the appropriate specialty coordinator, Program Director, or Associate Dean for Academic Programs.

Specialty Coordinators:

Adult-Gerontology Acute Care NP
Adult-Gerontology Primary Care NP
Family NP
Pediatric Acute Care NP

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