Saint Mary's College
Department of Nursing Science
Essential Abilities

The American Nurses Association Code of Ethics calls for competent and ethical care of patients and charges nurse educators to ensure that the skills of the nurse or nursing student are appropriate in order to provide safe nursing care to assigned patients. Patient and student safety is a priority for the faculty of the Department of Nursing Science.

For a student to be admitted to any of the nursing programs at Saint Mary's College, the student must:

1. Meet all prerequisite admission standards as defined by the College and the Department of Nursing Science.
2. Be able to demonstrate the essential abilities for participation in the nursing program with or without reasonable accommodation.

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination of a "qualified individual with a disability." Title III defines disability as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of (an) individual." A qualified individual with a disability is defined as an individual who, with or without reasonable accommodations, meets the essential eligibility requirements for participation in a program.

There are skills and attributes that the faculty of Saint Mary's College Department of Nursing Science have determined as essential to safe nursing care. These Essential Abilities apply to all students in the undergraduate and graduate nursing program.

Attendance:

Regular attendance in all classroom and clinical experiences serves as the foundation for learning to provide safe nursing care.

Essential Physical and Environmental Abilities:

The nursing student:

- Is able to fully and safely function in an environment that may have allergens; infectious and/or communicable diseases; and chemicals.
- Has fine motor control, hand-eye coordination, physical health, and stamina to perform necessary nursing skills consistent with scope of practice. This may include, but is not limited to safely preparing and administering medications; lifting, bending, twisting; pushing and pulling patients and equipment; performing CPR (move patient, perform chest compressions, manually ventilate the patient), walking and standing for prolonged periods; working 8-to-12 hour shifts.

Essential Communication Abilities:

The nursing student:

Has the sensory skills to interact appropriately and communicate effectively with patients from diverse backgrounds. This includes verbal, nonverbal, and written abilities, including the use of computing and information technology. The student must be able to communicate effectively and spontaneously, verbally and in writing, with fellow students, faculty, patients and all members of the health care team.

Essential Intellectual/Cognitive Abilities:

The nursing student:

Must be able to identify, assess, and comprehend conditions surrounding patient situations in such a manner that the student is able to derive appropriate conclusions. Must be able to use subjective and objective data to appropriately problem solve and develop a competent and safe course of action consistent with the student's level of education. This includes having math computational skills, the ability to reason, measure, calculate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate situations to competently engage in safe nursing care.

Essential Sensory Abilities:

The nursing student:

Has the ability to use the senses of vision, touch, hearing, and smell to safely assess and provide care for patients. This includes but is not limited to:

- Vision: Ability to gather visual information about the patient and environment; see well enough to read all materials related to classroom work and patient care.
- Touch: Ability to interpret information gained through touch during a physical assessment which includes but is not limited to differentiation of textures, density, and vibration.
- Hearing: Ability to accurately hear conversation spoken in usual conversational tone and calls for help if not in a patient room; able to engage in telephone conversations; detect normal and abnormal body sounds (including subtle high and low-frequency sounds) through a stethoscope; hear all alarms emitted by monitoring and other equipment.
- Smell: Ability to detect odors exhibited by bodily functions and fluids that may indicate infectious, emergent conditions, or other disease states; and environmental smells such as smoke or natural gas.

Essential Behavioral/Emotional Health Abilities:

The nursing student:

Must possess the emotional health required to make safe and appropriate clinical judgments. Must function effectively in stressful situations and adapt to an environment that changes rapidly and often in unpredictable ways without warning, and respond to emergencies with precise and prompt actions. Students must adhere to the College policy regarding addiction and substance impairment when in the classroom and clinical setting.

Essential Ethical Abilities:

The nursing student:

Must adhere to legal, ethical, and moral standards within the scope of nursing practice; demonstrate honesty and integrity in all interactions within the classroom, clinical, and community settings. Must demonstrate accountability and responsibility in all classroom and clinical situations. Provide care that is compassionate, respectful, non-judgmental, dignified, and altruistic for individuals, families, and communities. Students must be able to reason morally and practice nursing in a legal and ethical manner.

Essential Judgment Abilities:

The nursing student:

Must be able to gather, evaluate, and apply information and engage in critical thinking in the classroom, clinical, and research settings. Students must be able to prioritize workload demands and patient findings in usual and emergent conditions in order to provide safe and effective care.

Essential Abilities Procedure:

1. Essential Abilities criteria will be provided on the Saint Mary's College Department of Nursing Sciences website and to all students.
2. Students admitted to Saint Mary's College nursing programs and applicants who accept an offer of admission to any of the Saint Mary's College nursing programs must sign a letter of agreement that indicates the student has read and understands that the ability to meet the Essential Abilities criteria, with or without reasonable accommodations, is a requirement. Students who question their ability to meet the criteria should contact the Disabilities Resource Office.
3. Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits faculty from asking about disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Disabilities Resource Office for help with accommodations and to comply with the policies and procedures of the Disabilities Resource Office.
4. Accommodations become effective on the date requested by the Disabilities Resource Office and are not retroactive.
5. Accommodations beyond those requested by the Disabilities Resource Office are not permitted.
6. Faculty are responsible to determine whether a student demonstrates the Essential Abilities criteria. Faculty may request consultation from recognized experts as deemed appropriate. Students are responsible for the cost of all consultations.
7. Students who do not meet the Essential Abilities criteria, with or without reasonable accommodations, at any point in their academic program may have their progress interrupted until they have demonstrated their ability to meet Essential Abilities within a specified timeframe.
8. A student who is unable to meet the Essential Ability criteria, with or without reasonable accommodations, shall be dismissed from the program.
9. A student who is dismissed based on the inability to demonstrate these Essential Abilities criteria may appeal the decision in accordance with the Saint Mary's College appeals policy.

I certify that I have read and understand the Saint Mary's College Department of Nursing Science Essential Abilities and I believe I meet these Technical Standards/Essential Abilities with or without reasonable accommodation.

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Signature Date

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Printed Name