

**TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING**  
**3.7.2.a. Education Guideline**  
**Meeting Program of Study Objectives through Clinical Learning Experiences**  
Revised 02/1/2018

The definition of clinical learning experiences for both vocational and professional nursing education programs guides nursing programs to understand that the clinical learning experiences are:

- **faculty-planned and guided** learning activities;
- designed to assist students to **meet** the stated **program and course outcomes**;
- designed to assist students to **safely apply knowledge and skills** to clients across the life span; and
- appropriate to the expectations of the graduates (according to program type).

Clinical learning experiences may occur in:

- **actual patient care** clinical learning situations;
- associated **clinical conferences**;
- nursing skills and computer **laboratories**;
- **simulated clinical settings**, including high-fidelity where planned objectives are guided by trained faculty in a realistic patient scenario and following by a debriefing and evaluation of student performance.

The clinical settings for faculty supervised hands-on patient care include:

- **acute care** and **rehabilitation** facilities;
- **primary care** settings;
- **extended care** facilities (long-term care and nursing homes);
- **residential care** settings,
- **respite** or **day care** facilities;
- **community** or public health agencies, and
- other settings where **actual patients** receive nursing care.

Rule 214.9(c)(3) for vocational nursing education and Rule 215.9(c)(4) for professional nursing education state that hours in clinical learning experiences shall be sufficient to meet program of study requirements with a rationale for the ratio of contact hours assigned to classroom and clinical learning experiences. The suggested ratio is one (1) contact hour of didactic to three (3) contact hours of related clinical learning experiences.

When determining the required clinical assignments and clinical hours, it is important to ensure that students achieve the clinical objectives and demonstrate the essential competencies for each clinical course. Clinical practice settings are a scarce and valuable commodity, a fact that validates the need for a focus on quality clinical time and experiences in all settings. The highest-rated skills needed by new nurses are clinical judgment, communication, and active listening and these qualities may be best practiced in hands-on patient care areas.

Factors to be considered by nursing education programs in planning the most effective use of clinical learning experiences to fulfill program objectives and to prepare students to demonstrate the *Differentiated Essential Competencies of Graduates of Texas Nursing Programs (DECs)* include:

- Practice in the nursing skills laboratory is a beginning arena to learn and to perfect skills and procedures through repetitive demonstration. However, practice in the nursing skills laboratory is an ongoing activity where students can work on advancing their skill repertoire as well as reviewing skills previously learned. It also provides a setting for remediation when students need additional assistance with nursing skills.
- Participation in simulation experiences allows students the opportunity to experience patient scenarios, implement nursing skills, and make nursing decisions. The high-fidelity simulation laboratory allows the student a safe environment in which to experience the consequences of nursing actions without posing harm to patients. Though simulation experiences can vary in level of sophistication, it is essential that they are faculty-planned and directed, and that valuable feedback is provided to the students. Simulation also offers opportunities for students to practice handling patient situations they may not otherwise encounter in their student role.
- Faculty-supervised hands-on patient care is the most valuable clinical experience for nursing students, but the value is enhanced by practice in the skills lab and simulation experiences. Students entering the patient care setting having a skills set learned in the nursing skills lab and decision-making abilities enhanced by the simulation experience will be more confident and ready to provide safe nursing care to their patients. Faculty may continue to find new learning experiences for the students as the clinical day progresses.
- Pre- and post-conferences offer an opportunity for students to reflect on their own and their peers' nursing care experiences. Through discussions in the clinical group, students' learning will advance as they apply current didactic content to the clinical setting.
- Computer-driven clinical learning may provide another avenue for applying nursing knowledge to a patient situation. However, these seem less effective modes of learning about clinical practice unless they have faculty involvement.
- All clinical assignments and activities should be planned to meet the clinical objectives.