

TOWSON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SCIENCE
PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR POLICY

Introduction and Rationale

The Department of Health Science has a responsibility to ensure that our students are well prepared and highly qualified to join the health professions. Health Science, Health Care Management and Gerontology require strong academic preparation for and mastery of professional competencies. These professions also require non-academic professional behaviors, such as interpersonal skills, which are as critical to success as those in the academic domain. The goal of this Professional Behavior Policy is to help students demonstrate professional behaviors in class and in internship placements. This document, which is adapted from the Towson University Education Program Professional Behavior Policy, sets forth those essential professional behaviors for the Department of Health Science.

A professional behavior policy serves several important functions, including, but not limited to: (a) providing information to those considering health careers to help students in their career decision-making; (b) serving as one of the key areas for advising and feedback to students as part of their professional development; and (c) serving as a basis for the final assessment of attainment of graduation requirements and recommendation for certification.

All students in the Department of Health Science are expected to demonstrate they are prepared to work as professionals. These professional behaviors are outlined below.

Department Expectations of Behavior

The Department of Health Science's Expectations of Professional Behavior are grouped into three categories: Communication/Interpersonal Skills, Emotional and Physical Abilities, and Personal and Professional Behavior.

Students enrolled in the Department of Health Science must:

Communication/Interpersonal Skills

- express themselves effectively in standard written and oral English in order to communicate with students, faculty, staff, and professionals.**
 - write clearly and use correct grammar and spelling. They demonstrate sufficient skills in written Standard English to establish their grasp of content presented in the program and to adequately complete all written assignments, including email communications*, as specified by faculty and field placements.
 - communicate appropriately with other students, faculty, staff, and professionals. They express ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrate a willingness and an ability to listen to others.
 - demonstrate sufficient skills in spoken Standard English to establish their grasp of content presented in the program, to adequately complete all oral assignments, and to meet the objectives of field placement experiences, as specified by faculty and as required by the placement.

**See E-Mail Etiquette Do's and Don'ts Addendum to this document.*

- demonstrate communication skills that are responsive to a variety of perspectives represented in diverse professional environments**

- appreciate the value of diversity and look beyond self in interactions with others. They must not impose personal, religious, sexual, and/or cultural values on others.
- demonstrate their awareness of appropriate social boundaries and their readiness as well as ability to observe those boundaries.

□ demonstrate necessary interpersonal competencies to function effectively with instructors, peers, students, faculty, staff, and professionals and to function collaboratively as part of a professional team

- demonstrate appropriate social skills in professional and social interactions with instructors, students, peers, faculty, staff, and professionals.
- demonstrate the ability to express their viewpoints and negotiate difficulties appropriately, without behaving unprofessionally with instructors, peers, students, faculty, staff, and professionals.

Emotional and Physical Abilities

□ be able to work appropriately with time constraints and deadlines and to concentrate in distracting situations.

- demonstrate the ability to work with frequent interruptions, to respond appropriately to unexpected situations, and to cope with variations in workload and stress levels.
- demonstrate the ability to multi-task and to adapt to and display flexibility in changing situations.
- possess the ability to make and execute quick, appropriate, and accurate decisions in a complex, stressful environment.

- maintain composure and continue to function well in situations entailing diverse workloads, stress levels and interpersonal demands.

- have the physical stamina to work a contractual day and perform extended and additional duties expected of a working professional, such as conferences, events, and other assigned duties**

- exhibit motor and sensory abilities to attend and participate fully as required in class and field placement placements.

- tolerate physical demands consistent with class and field placement placements.

Personal and Professional Behavior

- prepared as appropriate and arrive on time for professional commitments, including classes and field placement placements**

- meet deadlines for course assignments, program requirements, and field placement responsibilities.

- plan for obstacles (e.g., traffic, security, parking) that might make it more difficult to arrive on time to class or field placement placements

- seek assistance, follow supervision, and respond appropriately to constructive reviews of their work from peers, faculty and supervisors.**

- reflect on their practice and accept constructive feedback in a professional manner.

- demonstrate the ability to act upon appropriate suggestions and reasonable criticism.

- are flexible, open to new ideas and willing to modify their beliefs and practices to best serve their field placement.

- **demonstrate attitudes of integrity, responsibility, and tolerance**

- demonstrate honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences, and qualifications; doing their own work; giving credit for the ideas of others; and providing proper citation of source materials.

- interact courteously, fairly, and professionally with all people, including those from diverse racial, cultural, and social backgrounds and of different genders or sexual preferences.

- must not make verbal or physical threats; engage in sexual harassment; become involved in sexual relationships with their clients, patients, residents, supervisors, or faculty; or abuse others in physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual ways.

- demonstrate the ability to understand the perspectives of others and the ability to separate personal and professional issues.

- protect the confidentiality of information unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.

- **show respect for self and others**

- exhibit respect for all Towson University instructors, peers, students, faculty, staff, and professionals and community members.

- know cell phone use and texting is prohibited during meetings, class and field placements.

- know use of iPods, radios, and ear buds is prohibited during class and field placements.

- are free of the influence of illegal drugs and alcoholic beverages on university premises and field placements.
- are expected to abide by the Towson University Code of Student Behavior at all times both on campus and in field placements.
- demonstrate the ability to deal with personal and professional stressors through the use of appropriate coping mechanisms.
- use sound judgment.
- seek and effectively use help for medical and emotional problems that may interfere with scholastic and/or professional performance.
- realize their representations on the internet will be considered within the scope of their professional demeanor. They avoid photographs, comments and other online representations of self that reflect poorly on them as individuals and on Towson University as a whole.

□ **project an image of professionalism.**

- demonstrate appropriate personal hygiene. **
- dress appropriately for their professional contexts. **
- possess maturity, self-discipline, and appropriate professional judgment.
- demonstrate good attendance, integrity, honesty, conscientiousness in work, and teamwork.

***See Professional Appearance Do's and Don'ts Addendum to this Document.*

Implementation and Review Procedures

Students will receive a copy of the *Department of Health Science's Professional Behavior Policy* and sign a *Professional Behavior Policy Acknowledgement Form* at pre-

advising sessions in the Department of Health Science and renew this commitment at the time of entry to the field placements. At various points (e.g., in class and in field experiences) students will be notified of *Professional Behavior* inadequacies that may prevent them from progressing through their program. Students who experience deficiencies in any areas of professional behavior will be referred to appropriate resources and encouraged to seek appropriate professional help from Towson University or other sources. Failure to address or to remediate the problem may jeopardize continuation in professional programs, graduation, or recommendation for certification may be denied.

Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities

Professional behavior may be met with or without accommodations. The University complies with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Therefore, Towson University will endeavor to make reasonable accommodations with respect to its behavior standards for an applicant with a disability who is otherwise qualified. "Disability" shall mean, with respect to an individual, (1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life functions of such individual; (2) a record of such an impairment; or (3) being regarded as having such an impairment. The University reserves the right to reject any requests for accommodations that are unreasonable, including those that would involve the use of an intermediary that would require a student to rely on someone else's power of selection and observation, fundamentally alter the nature of the University's educational program, lower academic standards, cause an undue hardship on the University, or endanger the safety of students or others.

For all requests for accommodations, students should contact Towson University's Disability Support Services (410-704-2638) and follow established university policy and procedures. Unless a student has expressly waived his or her privilege to confidentiality of medical records provided to substantiate either a disability or a recommendation for an accommodation, program administrators to which such information has been communicated shall maintain such information in a manner that preserves its confidentiality. Under no circumstances shall such information become part of a student's academic records.

**TOWSON UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SCIENCE
PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR POLICY
STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

Within the professional context to which student aspires, all students in the Department of Health Science must:

Communication/Interpersonal Skills

- be able to express themselves effectively in standard written and oral English in order to communicate concepts, assignments, evaluations, and expectations with members of the learning community such as University faculty, students, parents, administrators, and other staff
- have communication skills that are responsive to different perspectives represented in diverse classrooms and/or other professional environments
- have the necessary interpersonal competencies to function effectively with instructors, peers, students, faculty, staff, and professionals and community members, and to function collaboratively as part of a professional team

Emotional and Physical Abilities

- be able to work under time constraints, concentrate in distracting situations, make subjective judgments, and ensure safety in emergencies
- have the physical stamina to work a contractual day and perform extended and additional duties of a school professional such as conferences, events, and other assigned duties

Personal and Professional Requirements

- arrive (and be on time) for professional commitments, including classes and field experiences
- seek assistance and follow supervision in a timely manner, and accept and respond appropriately to constructive review of their work from supervisors
- demonstrate attitudes of integrity, responsibility, and tolerance
- show respect for self and others
- project an image of professionalism

I have read and acknowledge receipt of the **Department of Health Science Professional Behavior Policy**. I understand that if the criteria listed above are not met satisfactorily, I may be recommended for dismissal from my major program and/or denied the opportunity to complete the internship component of the curriculum.

Student Signature

PRINTED Name

Date

NOTE: The University has a legal obligation to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Documented disability students seeking accommodations, should register with the University's Office of Disability Support Services and notify your course instructor, and/or academic advisor prior to the start of classes and/or field experience.

Copy to: Student, Department Chair, Student's Major Advisor

Approved by the Department Health Science October 2, 2009

**POLICY REGARDING CONTINUANCE OR REMOVAL
FROM FIELD PLACEMENTS**

As well as academic preparation and skills, the health professions and gerontology also require non-academic professional behaviors, such as interpersonal skills, which are as critical to success as those in the academic domain. The “Department of Health Science Professional Behavior Policy” describes the professional behavior expected of students. Students who fail to demonstrate appropriate professional behavior or mastery of content may be removed from the field placement after other options may be explored.

Should a field placement supervisor, preceptor, or school official request the removal of an intern from a placement, the placement at that site shall be ended immediately. The intern will proceed to step five of this policy if a school requests that the intern be removed from the setting. If a student’s actions are considered illegal activities, there is an automatic referral to step five of this policy. If a student fails to demonstrate competence in one or more expectations in the field placement, the following policy shall be implemented.

Procedure for Removing Students from Field Experiences and Concurrent Courses

1. The university supervisor ensures that the field placement placement’s supervisor has provided appropriate guidance and has involved the intern in a gradual progression of appropriate professional experiences with appropriate direction and feedback. The University supervisor is responsible for observing the intern and providing both oral and written feedback, as well as ideas for troubleshooting problems at the field placement. The field placement supervisor should give written feedback to any intern who is having difficulty after formative verbal discussions with the intern have occurred.

2. When an on-site supervisor, university supervisor or others have identified a problem intern in the field placement setting, it is the university supervisor's responsibility to inform the student, in writing, that he/she is not meeting expectations and to specify the behaviors, dispositions, knowledge, and/or skills that need remediation. Once informed of the area(s) requiring remediation, the student is responsible for developing/proposing an Assistance Plan (in response to the area(s) requiring remediation) with the university supervisor. After review, discussion, and revision (as needed) of the proposed plan, the university supervisor, along with the field placement supervisor and the student, will finalize and sign an Assistance Plan that includes the areas of weakness and the steps the intern must follow to remediate those weaknesses. The plan will include a timeline that specifies how and when the intern will be expected to address the identified weaknesses, benchmarks, criteria, and the steps that will follow if the weaknesses are not remediated within the time frame. Each time the university supervisor and the field placement supervisor observe the intern, written notes will be provided regarding the progress being made on the Assistance Plan. The university supervisor will give a copy of the Assistance Plan to the Chair of the Department of Health Science as a way to alert her/him that the student is experiencing difficulty. Should the student refuse to sign or fail to implement the Assistance Plan, the student will be removed from the placement and will proceed to step five of this policy.

3. At the end of the time frame set forth in the Assistance Plan, the student is either allowed to proceed in the field placement as long as he/she is able to maintain all of the responsibilities expected of the experience, or he/she is removed from the field placement due to lack of progress on the Assistance Plan. This decision will be made by the university supervisor in collaboration

with the field placement supervisor and the Chair of the Department of Health Science. If it is a school health education placement, the director of the Center of Professional Practice (CPP) will be notified in writing of the decision that is made.

4. If an intern is removed from a field placement, he/she will receive a grade of U for the internship course. If the withdrawal occurs before the deadline for officially withdrawing from courses, the intern may be allowed to withdraw from the internship and receive a grade of W for the course. School Health Education students taking concurrent courses will be allowed to finish those courses if the courses do not require continuing work with children/students in the field placement. During the semester in which the student is removed from the field placement, the student may not work outside of the given placement to fulfill the field placement components of the internship and concurrent courses.

5. Students may appeal the removal from field placement to the Dean of the College of Health Professions within 48 hours of being removed from the placement. The Dean will make a decision on the appeal based on university policy as stated in the appropriate catalog. If the Dean rules in favor of the intern, the intern will be placed back in an appropriate setting. The intern will not return to the original placement, but may be reinstated in an internship in a different field placement placement or in a future semester.

6. To be reinstated in a field placement and/or the concurrent courses in a subsequent semester, the intern must make a written request to the Chair of the Department of Health Science at least 90 days before the beginning of the semester in which the placement is sought. The Chair of the

Department of Health Science will confer with the Department of Health Science Appeals Committee. If the Committee recommends denial of the request and the Chair concurs with the Committee, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Dean of the College of Health Professions.

ADDENDUM 1

EMAIL ETIQUETTE: DO'S and DON'TS FROM THE TOWSON UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTER

DO include a heading in the subject line. With the number of e-mails and viruses that populate inboxes, realize the significance of the subject line. A subject header is essential if you want someone to read your message any time soon.

DO make the subject line meaningful. A “Hi” or “Hello” won’t do. The recipient decides in what order to read your message — or whether to read it all — based on who sent it and what it’s about.

DO personalize your message to the recipient. Although e-mail is informal, it still requires a personal greeting, such as, “Dear Ms. Jones,” or “Hi, Jack.” Failure to include a greeting can make your message seem cold.

DO account for tone. When you communicate in person, more than 90% of your message is non-verbal. E-mail has no tell-tale body language! The reader cannot see your face or hear the tone of your voice, so choose your words carefully and thoughtfully. Think about how your words will come across in cyberspace.

DO look at your e-mail address and determine how it represents you. Names such as “looselips” don’t sound professional. Students sometimes embarrass themselves by communicating with an employer using an inappropriate address.

DO include your name or a signature. The recipient may want to communicate by means other than e-mail.

DON'T forget to check for spelling and grammar. If you think this form of communication does not have to be letter perfect, think again! It represents you. Poorly written messages may indicate a poor caliber of work in other ways. Use proper capitalization, punctuation and usage, and always check your spelling.

DON'T write the great American novel. E-mail is intended to be a brief communication. Keep the message short and concise. Use only a few, brief paragraphs.

DON'T forward e-mail without permission. Why take responsibility for passing along something that was addressed only to you? Often, confidential information becomes global because of someone’s lack of judgment. Unless you were asked to forward something, don’t do so without permission!

DON'T “reply to all” unless you are sending a response appropriate for group viewing.

DON'T fill in the “TO” line until you’ve written and proofed/edited your message. Is the information accurate? Grammatically correct? Appropriate tone? If you enter the “TO” information first, a slip of the finger can send a message before its time!

DON'T think that no one but the intended recipient will see your e-mail. After a message leaves your mailbox, you have no idea where it may go. Don’t use the Internet to send anything that you wouldn’t want to see in public or hear about at the office.

ADDENDUM 2
DRESS FOR SUCCESS: DO'S and DON'TS
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SCIENCE
and
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS' ADVISORY BOARDS

Do

- *Practice appropriate personal and oral hygiene.* Nails, hair and facial hair should be clean and well-groomed. In most organizations with client/patient contact, employees must keep fingernails short (no longer than 1/4 inch in length) and clean. No artificial fingernails or extenders can be worn by those providing "hands-on" care. In addition, acrylic overlay is not permitted to be worn by those providing "hands-on" care. Where required for patient safety and health requirements, long hair should be worn up, tied back or placed in a hair net.
- *Dress the part for the job you want.* Generally speaking, health professionals work in conservative organizations. Before you go out for an interview, take a look at the way people are dressed on websites that are representative of the organizations where you want to be employed. Most likely, you will not see men in baseball caps, jeans, tee-shirts, and flip-flops. Nor will you see women with exposed cleavage, uncovered belly buttons, or low-rider jeans with exposed skin. You will see people dressed in clean, pressed dresses, skirts, slacks, and dress blouses and shirts, and ties for men.
- *Be consistent with standards of safety and good taste.* Attire should be clean, neat, pressed, in good repair, modest and fit properly. No logos or representations of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol should be worn. Low necklines and hemlines shorter than three inches above the knees are not considered to be in good taste. Discretion should be used

regarding fabric sheerness and the type of undergarments worn. Underwear should not be visible through clothing.

- The following are examples of clothing that are not permitted by many organizations while employees are on duty:
 - -Casual, beach wear, overalls, ragged pants, shorts, lycra pants, capri pants, harem style pants, leggings, excessively tight or form fitting garments.
 - -Tube, tank, crop, midriff or halter tops, muscle shirts, tee shirts (except as undergarments)
 - -Sundresses without jackets. Sleeveless tops should cover the distance between the shoulder and the neck, in other words, no spaghetti straps or other thin straps should be worn without a jacket or sweater to cover.
 - Garments of jean or dungaree style material, i.e., designs incorporating denim and designs using heavy over stitching of seams or rivets.
 - -Sweat pants or garments of fleece material, sweat shirts and tee shirts.
 - -Hats or head coverings, unless required to meet health regulation guidelines, as a religious accommodation, or designated as part of a uniform.

Don'ts

- *Chew gum, wear excessive make-up, perfume, after-shave or jewelry.* The simpler the better. Do shower the day of the interview and do use a good deodorant. Many people have allergies to fragrances, and some organizations have declared themselves “Fragrance Free Zones.” Likewise, excessive make-up calls up concerns about your expectations of the work environment. You don't want your prospective employer to

think that you plan to go out and party every night. With respect to jewelry, a watch (for a man) and a watch, a pearl necklace and earrings (for women) are elegant, understated and professional. Wearing many rings can make hand washing less effective for infection control. Long earrings can be grabbed and ripped out by disoriented patients, clients or residents. Be mindful of your work environment and the people you serve.

- *Expose body art (tattoos) or multiple body piercings.* Although it is widely recognized that the Generation X and beyond have more body art and piercings than their parents, and these choices are acceptable among their peers, the person who is supervising you and providing job references is more likely to be older than you. The rule of tattoos is if you plan to get a job and advance in healthcare and you want body art, then you should keep it all above your wrists and below your shirt collar. Likewise, tongue piercings, especially ones that cause speech problems are extremely distracting and will not endear you to the interviewer. While multiple ear piercings are more acceptable now, the rule of thumb for women is not to exceed two per earlobe. For men, ear piercings are strongly discouraged at job interviews. Ditto eyebrow, nose, and lip piercings for men and women. Piercings will rarely “grow over” in the course of a day. If you are very concerned, there are retainers you can purchase and insert to prevent the piercings from growing over.

Approved by the Department Health Science October 2, 2009