

TEMPLATE

POLICY/PROCEDURES TO ADDRESS BULLYING WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED BY NURSING STUDENTS

- The purpose of this document is to articulate the procedures available for [insert name of institution] School of Nursing students if they witness, or experience, bullying during their educational program.
- These procedures are geared specifically towards mechanisms that provide direction for reporting bullying.
- Students' accountability for their own behaviours are covered elsewhere (e.g. [Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses¹](#)).
- The contexts in which bullying occur include - but are not limited to - clinical practice settings as well as classroom, online, and clinical skills lab learning environments
- This document does not provide procedures for issues related to [insert institution] *Discrimination and Harassment* policy which refers to 'discrimination and harassment that is related on one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination as set out in the BC Human Rights Code.' This category of human rights harassment is handled at [insert office]. If the bullying you witnessed or experienced is related to one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination as set out in the BC Human Rights Code, please contact the Human Rights Advisor, [insert name] at [insert office] for informal or formal consultation.
- If the bullying you witnessed or experienced is sexual in nature, for instance, unwanted sexual touch or any other form of sexual assault, please contact the Sexual Violence Prevention and Responsibility Office (SVPRO) [insert phone #] or [insert email] for free and confidential supports and services.

As a first step in recommending procedures for nursing students who witness or experience bullying, it is crucial to have a guiding definition of the issue at hand. In this context, WorksafeBC (2013)² defines Bullying and Harassment as:

“a) any inappropriate conduct or comment by a person towards a worker that the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that worker to be humiliated or intimidated but b) excludes any reasonable action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and direction of workers or the place of employment”

Thus, bullying *excludes* the provision of constructive feedback to students unless it is given in a way that “the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that [student] to be humiliated or intimidated”.

Template for Procedures and Processes when Students Witness or Experience Bullying, The CRAB Project Team, 2022. <https://letsact.ca/>

GUIDING PRINCIPLES ^{4,5}

All parties have the responsibility to be self-reflective about the role(s) they may play in bullying and all parties have the right to confidentiality to the extent possible.

Responding to bullying that is witnessed or experienced by nursing students requires:

- Clearly articulated roles and responsibilities for students, faculty members, Clinical Instructors, and leadership team;
- A respectful, professional, supportive, fair, and ethical environment in which students may report concerns;
- Reporting mechanisms and implementation guidelines that are accessible and communicated widely to all relevant parties;
- Reporting mechanisms that fall within a continuum of informal discussion to formal complaint/processes;
- Supportive resources, or referrals, for students during, and following, a report;
- Follow up by the leadership team. In the [insert program name] Program, this may include the relevant Clinical Instructor or Course Leader, Student Advisor, Program Coordinator, Associate Director of the BSN [or relevant degree] Program, or Director/Dean of the School of Nursing. Closing the loop and follow-up are important to consider in the context of confidentiality;
- Confidentiality is of utmost importance and it will be maintained unless there are risks of harm to the student or others.
- Education for students and faculty members, including Clinical Instructors, about the nature of bullying, its prevalence in nursing education, and ways to address it; and
- Regular evaluation of the procedures within the School of Nursing to ensure they meet the needs of all concerned.

PROCEDURES FOR NURSING STUDENTS ^{4,5}

- Record what happened in writing, including as much detail as possible
- Students who witness or experience bullying are encouraged to approach the individual(s) engaging in bullying behaviour(s) IF they feel comfortable to do so.
- Students who witness or experience bullying *within* a specific course context should contact the Clinical Instructor or Course Leader for the relevant theory, practice or clinical skills course.
- Students who witness or experience bullying in *any* context are invited to contact the [insert name or role] to discuss their experiences, to reflect on what resolution might look like and to consider options.
- Depending on the nature or context of the situation, support for students may range from an initial meeting with the first point-of-contact faculty member with no required follow-up to a formal complaint that is written and signed by the student.
- Where there is concern about conflict of interest, including where a student feels bullied by a faculty member, Clinical Instructor, or Course Leader, students should contact the

Associate Director of the [insert program name] Program, or Director/Dean of the School of Nursing [insert directory link].

- Students may contact the Human Rights Advisor, [insert name], at [insert link] at the [insert office] if they experience ‘discrimination and harassment that is related on one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination as set out in the BC Human Rights Code.’
- Students may contact the Sexual Violence Prevention and Responsibility Office (SVPRO) (or equivalent) if the bullying they witnessed or experienced is sexual in nature. Call [insert phone #] or email [insert email]. Students do not have to go to the hospital or make a police report to use these services

PROCEDURES FOR FACULTY MEMBERS ^{4,5}

Faculty members receiving a complaint should support the student by listening to their story with compassion, openness, and curiosity. Maintain confidentiality unless there is a risk of harm to the student or others. Clarify any ambiguities with the student as well as asking about their preferences for moving forward. Write a summary during or after the meeting. Ensure the student has the supports and resources they need.

Discuss guidelines for moving forward in these procedures. Faculty members have a responsibility to follow up directly, consult with, or refer to, appropriate colleagues. Depending on the nature of the issue, one or more of the following procedures may be discussed. **Please note that options do not indicate progression or sequence.**

- **OPTION 1: INFORMAL DISCUSSION.** Student discusses the situation with one of the ‘Go To’ [insert flow chart link] faculty or staff and feels supported through the initial discussion. No further complaint action required. Student can remain anonymous.
- **OPTION 2:** Student discusses the situation with one of the ‘Go To’ faculty or staff. No further complaint action required but student needs further support from individual(s) with whom they have consulted or referral for support within the School of Nursing [insert link for Student Advisor] or University Wellness [insert Counselling link]. Student can remain anonymous.
- **OPTION 3:** Student wishes to bring a complaint forward within the School of Nursing. Where there is concern about conflict of interest, including where a student may feel bullied by a faculty member, Clinical Instructor, or Course Leader, students should contact the Associate Director of the BSN [or relevant degree] Program, or Director of the School of Nursing [Insert Directory link]. Student can no longer remain anonymous and must put their complaint in writing to the [insert relevant leadership links].
 - Depending on the situation, the [insert leader name or role] responsibilities will include the facilitation of two interviews: one with the student and one with the reported individual if they are a university member.
 - Once the situation has been explored from both perspectives, decisions will be made regarding how to proceed. Of particular importance is the development and implementation of corrective actions to prevent future incidents. Closing the loop and follow-up should occur in the context of confidentiality.

- If the reported individual is employed by a partner organization (e.g., health authority) the [insert leadership] will follow up on an individual basis.
 - Student may need further support from individual(s) with whom they have the consulted or referral for support within the School of Nursing [e.g., Student Advisor] or University Counselling [insert link].
- **OPTION 4:** Where the issue remains unresolved at the School of Nursing, the student may seek advice from the [insert link for ombudsperson] whose office [insert role of ombudsperson at your institution]. Student may continue to need support within the School of Nursing [insert link for student advisor] or University Counselling [insert link].
 - **OPTION 5:** Student may contact the University Human Rights Advisor, [insert name], at [insert contact info] in the Equity and Inclusion Office [or equivalent office] if they experience ‘discrimination and harassment that is related on one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination as set out in the BC Human Rights Code.’ Student may continue to need support within the School of Nursing [insert link] or University Counselling [insert link].
 - **OPTION 6:** Students may contact the University Sexual Violence Prevention and Responsibility Office if the bullying they witnessed or experienced is sexual in nature. Call [insert phone #] or [insert email]. Students do not have to go to the hospital or make a police report to use these services. Student may continue to need support within the School of Nursing [insert link] or University Counselling [insert link].

PLEASE NOTE: As employees of the Ministry of Advanced Education, “students completing the practicum portion of their studies are eligible for workers’ compensation if they experience work-related illness or injury [for example, psychological harm caused by workplace bullying or harassment] while doing their practicum”³

DOCUMENTATION

LEVEL 1 & 2:	No formal documentation required.
LEVEL 3:	All Level 3 complaints must be documented and stored in an encrypted file in the School of Nursing’s <i>Addressing Bullying</i> file held by the [insert name of appropriate office]. Restricted access on ‘a need to know’ basis only.
LEVEL 4, 5, 6:	External to the School of Nursing

“Be gentle on the person but hard on the behavior” (Original author unknown)

REFERENCES

¹Canadian Nurses Association (2017). Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses. Available at: <https://cna-aiic.ca/~media/cna/page-content/pdf-en/code-of-ethics-2017-edition-secure-interactive.pdf?la=en>

²WorkSafe BC (The Workers' Compensation Board of BC), (2013). Policies for the Workers Compensation Act: sections relating to bullying and harassment. Available at: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/law->

policy/occupational-health-safety/ searchable-ohs-regulation/ohs-policies/policies-for-the-workers-compensation-act# Section Number: D3-115-2

³WorkSafe BC. (2013). *Did You Know? Unpaid practicum students are eligible for workers' compensation coverage*. Vancouver, BC: Author. Available at: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/did-you-know-unpaid-practicum-students-are-eligible-for-workers-compensation-coverage?lang=en>

⁴University of British Columbia (UBC, nd.). Working together to prevent bullying and harassment. <https://bullyingandharassment.ubc.ca/>

⁵University of British Columbia Executive (2014). UBC Statement on Respectful Environment for Students, Faculty and Staff. <https://hr.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/wp-content/blogs.dir/14/files/UBC-Statement-on-Respectful-Environment-2014.pdf>

These set of procedures are informed by numerous literature sources, nursing and other health care professional (HCP) educational institutions and professional organizations' public websites, BCCNM (2022) Professional Standards, C.N.A. (2017) Code of Ethics, and a qualitative study conducted by UBC faculty and students (O'Flynn-Magee et al. 2020) entitled: *Educational Institutions' Processes and Resources addressing Bullying experienced by Nursing and Health Care Professional Students*

RELATED POLICIES

[Insert policies from member institution]