

POLICY: Client Safety and Clinical/Practicum/Practice Experience/Field Education Courses

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to the Faculty of Health and Human Services regarding the management of risk and protection of the safety of Clients who receive services from Students in the Placement setting.

2 Scope

This policy applies to Clinical/Practicum/Practice Experience/Field Education courses in programs in the Faculty of Health & Human Services.

3 Definitions

Client	The recipient(s) of service. Depending upon context, the Client may be an individual, a family, a community, or a population.
Faculty Member	VIU Faculty Member responsible for assigning the course grade. May also be the Onsite Supervisor.
Onsite Supervisor	An individual who has onsite supervisory responsibility for the Student in the Placement setting. This may be an employee of the Placement agency/organization and/or the Faculty Member.
Placement	An experiential education opportunity required as part of a program of study, in which the Student works in a practice setting under supervision. This includes Clinical / Practicum / Practice Experience / Field Education courses. The Placement provides an opportunity for the Student to apply, develop, integrate, and demonstrate skills and knowledge in practical settings.
Scope of Practice	The range of responsibilities (e.g. types of Clients, activities, tasks/duties, procedures) and boundaries within which the Student is

authorized to practice under supervision. Scope of Practice is set by legislated regulation, professional association and/or established occupational competencies. The Student's Scope of Practice will also be determined by the development of their learning and competencies as they progress through the Program.

Student

A VIU student enrolled in a Clinical / Practicum / Practice Experience / Field Education course in a Faculty of Health and Human Services program.

Unsafe Practice

Behaviour or incident that places the Client in jeopardy and/or at an unacceptable level of risk for physical, psychosocial, or emotional harm. This may include a behaviour which constitutes practice outside the Student's current Scope of Practice (i.e. not currently authorized or educated to perform at the time).

Refer to Faculty of Health and Human Services Policy: *Client Safety and Clinical/Practicum/Practice Experience/Field Education Courses*.

Also refer to VIU's *Student Conduct Code (Policy 32.05)* regarding Unsafe Practice situations involving violation of the Student Conduct Code (e.g. endangering the safety of any individual, violence or threats of violence, personal harassment, disruption of the learning/working environment, alcohol or drug related offences).

4 Principles

- 4.1 The needs, interests, and safety of Clients are always the first priority in the Placement setting.
- 4.2 The Student is a learner in the Placement setting, and mistakes are possible as part of the learning experience.
- 4.3 As a professional practitioner, the Faculty Member has an obligation regarding the protection and safety of Clients in the Placement setting.
- 4.4 The Faculty Member has a responsibility to continually assess the safe practice of the Student in the Placement setting.
- 4.5 Students are required to abide by professional/occupational regulations and standards of practice, and practice within the scope of their current learning.

5 Policy Statement

- 5.1 Protecting Client safety and managing risk in the Placement setting
 - 5.1.1 The Faculty Member, Student, and Onsite Supervisor have joint responsibility to manage risk and ensure safe practice in the Placement setting.
 - 5.1.2 Students must work within their current Scope of Practice and level of competence.

5.2 Continuum of Unsafe Practice

5.2.1 Areas of Unsafe Practice include, but are not limited to:

- Accountability, professional behaviour, and respect (e.g. failure to accept responsibility for one's own actions, dishonesty, breach of confidentiality, performing outside his/her Scope of Practice).
- Judgement (e.g. impaired judgement due to drugs, alcohol, lack of sleep; poor clinical decision-making)
- Patterns of behaviour (e.g. failure to change behaviours based on feedback)
- Competencies (failure to perform skills competently)
- Communication (e.g. ineffective communication with Clients and/or coworkers).

5.2.2 Unsafe Practice occurrences or behavior can pose differing levels or degrees of risk and/or harm to the Client that can be presented along a continuum from minimal risk (level 1) to unacceptable risk (level 2) to high risk or actual harm (level 3), as described below.

It is recognized that safety of Student practice is a dynamic situation, and the degree of risk may escalate at any time.

5.3 Levels of Unsafe Practice

5.3.1 Level 1 Unsafe Practice is a demonstration of, or potential for, Unsafe Practice where an occurrence/behavior/attitude presents minimal risk for Client harm (Examples: single minor incident demonstrating poor judgement; inadequate preparation posing minimal risk to Clients.)

5.3.2 Level 2 Unsafe Practice is an occurrence, event, attitude, behaviour, or pattern of behaviour that places the Client or others at an unacceptable risk for harm (physical, emotional, psychosocial). (Examples: repeated medication errors, pattern of inadequate knowledge and/or lack of preparation for Client care, demonstrating a lack of empathic response to challenging Client conditions.)

5.3.3 The Program Team Leader and/or Chair will be informed about a Level 2 intervention. (Refer to *Procedure: Client Safety and Clinical/Practicum/Practice Experience/Field Education Courses*, Section 2.)

5.3.4 Level 3 Unsafe Practice is an occurrence, behaviour, or pattern of behaviour that compromises Client safety and results in high risk for harm, or actually harms the Client or others. (Examples: breach of Client confidentiality/privacy; violent / angry/emotional behaviour; practice error or adverse event; consistent display of inappropriate/unacceptable level of knowledge/skill impacting the ability to plan and deliver safe Client care.)

5.3.5 The Chair will be informed about a Level 3 intervention. (Refer to *Procedure: Client Safety and Clinical/Practicum/Practice Experience/Field Education Courses*, Section 2.) The Chair may inform others at her/his discretion.

5.4 Responsibilities in Responding to Unsafe Practice

5.4.1 The Faculty Member is responsible for determining the appropriate response and intervention to address issues of Unsafe Practice, as outlined in *Procedure: Client Safety and Clinical/Practicum/Practice Experience/Field Education Courses*.

The Faculty Member may select any level of intervention, and may progress to any other level of intervention, based on assessment of the situation and degree of risk; no sequential progression is implied.

- 5.4.2 The Onsite Supervisor will intervene in situations he/she deems to pose imminent and substantive risk to Client safety. Such situations must be reported to the Faculty Member as soon as possible.
 - 5.4.3 In the event that a Student is permanently removed from a Placement, the Faculty/University is not obligated to find an alternative Placement.
 - 5.4.4 A Student may be told to leave the Placement site by the Onsite Supervisor and/or Faculty Member to ensure appropriate service to Clients, and to support the Student's learning and success. Examples include: Student illness, Student being overwhelmed, inadequate preparation for practice situation. The Student may then be permitted to return to the Placement site as determined by the Faculty Member.
- 5.5 Student right to appeal
- 5.5.1 The Student has the right to appeal any decision arising from this policy, following the relevant VIU appeal processes for Student Conduct Appeals and/or Academic Appeals, dependent upon the basis for the appeal. (Refer to Policy 32.06 and Procedure 32.06.001: *Student Conduct Appeals* and Policy 96.02 and Procedure 96.02.001: *Academic Appeals*).

6 Related Policies & References

- VIU incident reporting procedures:
 - Health and Safety Services website: Reporting Injuries/Incidents
<http://sites.viu.ca/healthandsafety/reporting-injuries-incident/>
- VIU policies and procedures regarding Student conduct and performance:
 - Policy 32.05 and Procedure 32.05.001: *Student Conduct Code*
 - Policy 32.06 and Procedure 32.06.001: *Student Conduct Appeals*
 - Policy 96.01 and Procedure 96.01.001: *Student Academic Code of Conduct*
 - Policy 96.02 and Procedure 96.02.001: *Academic Appeals*
 - Policy 96.03 and Procedure 96.03.001: *Academic Probation*
- Faculty of Health & Human Services Policy: *Student Progress in Clinical/Practicum/Practice Experience/Field Education Courses*
- Student Handbooks for specific programs, which provide program-specific information about Clinical/Practicum/Practice Experience/Field Education courses, expectations of professional conduct, and Student performance.