

 <b>School of PA Medicine</b>  Northwest University College of Health Sciences School of PA Medicine	<b>School of PA Medicine Professional Conduct Policy Student Handbook</b>	<b>Policy #</b> PP005
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	<b>ARC-PA 5<sup>TH</sup> Edition</b>	<b>Revision Date</b> 9/23/2025

Item	Previous	Change	Date of Notification
Updated policy	PP005 09/2024	Updated the tattoo policy to require adherence to clinical sites	09/24/2024

## Professional Conduct & Academic Integrity

Northwest University School of PA Medicine, a graduate program in the health sciences, has the responsibility to educate practitioners responsible for the health and welfare of the public. The program has the obligation to graduate only those students who demonstrate clinical competence and professional integrity. Students in the program must, therefore, meet rigorous clinical and professional standards in addition to the program's academic standards. Students are subject to expulsion if they fail to meet the professional standards, and each PA student has the responsibility to report alleged academic dishonesty or unprofessional behavior exhibited by another student to either the appropriate faculty member or to the dean.

Unprofessional conduct is defined as any action to, or against, a fellow student, faculty, staff, or patient that is generally deemed professionally inappropriate or which is not in keeping with the expectations as delineated for students in the [NU Graduate and Online Student Handbook](#), which can be found on the Eagle website

It is not possible to quantify all forms of misconduct that can arise in a health professional education environment. However, some examples of unprofessional conduct that would be highly unacceptable in an academic or clinical setting include:

- Illegal acts or actions
- Unethical acts or actions
- Immoral acts or actions
- Failure to follow the Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for the PA Profession established by the American Academy of Physician Assistants
- Falsifying clinic data or records
- Lying
- Excessive unexcused absences
- Excessive unexcused tardiness
- Sexual harassment
- Disrespectful behavior
- Improper demeanor or attire
- Inappropriate hygiene standards

<sup>1</sup> ARC-PA 5<sup>th</sup> Edition Standard A3.06

- Failure in a clinical setting to identify self as a student PA
- Disregard for patient welfare
- Failure to follow clinic guidelines as specified in the Clinical Education Handbook
- Unauthorized entrance to clinic or other restricted areas
- Any conduct for which a reasonable person in the same or similar circumstances would recognize as dishonest or improper in an academic or patient care setting.
- Excessive noise and vulgar or crude language
- Undue familiarity with patients, faculty, other students, or staff
- Smoking in clinical areas
- Abuse of equipment
- Failure to comply by course syllabus policy requirements
- Recording (audio or video) of instructor without their express consent
- Distributing lecture materials outside of the classroom or cohort
- Failure to fill out the requested course evaluations to provide feedback to the program

Everyone whom the student encounters should be treated with respect and concern. Clinical students are not to lounge or congregate for discussion in hallways or work areas (e.g., the receptionist's office of the clinic). No PA student should be in the reception area or file room unless specifically directed to do so by the clinical faculty, staff, or preceptor.

Students alleged to have violated recognized ethical or professional behavior standards of the program, the university, or the profession will be referred to the Student Progress Committee (SPC).

Faculty are responsible for ensuring that graduates of the program can provide quality health care to the public. At all times, faculty are responsible for the decisions related to patient care and student education. Students and faculty members are expected to exhibit professional behavior based on integrity, ethical principles, and honor. This includes the expectations of class attendance, being on time to classes and clinics, and not leaving class or clinic unless dismissed. Attention to on-going class proceedings and courtesy in class are expected. Each student is responsible for his or her own education. It is the role of the faculty member to facilitate the learning process through teaching.

## Attire

A professional appearance is required of all students enrolled in the PA program while on campus and during SCPE experiences. Students will be expected to adhere to the program's dress code. Additionally, students will abide by the policy expectations of the clinical site/agency/institution in which they are participating in a SCPE. Any violation of the dress code will result in the student being sent home from class and/or clinic. Continued violation of the dress code may result in a review by the Student Progress Committee and could result in disciplinary action per university policy.

**Uniforms** – The PA program will purchase two pairs of NU branded scrubs for each student. Students will have the option to purchase additional sets as needed to ensure the scrubs maintain a clean and neat appearance. The NU approved scrubs will be allowable attire for classroom attendance. Only approved colors (black, navy & royal blue) and styles will be authorized to be worn in the appropriate settings.

During regular class hours and any time that the student is on campus, the student will be expected to wear business casual attire or NU approved scrubs. **Some classes will invite guest speakers to lecture; the student will present to class with professional business attire on those days.**

- Students must present with a clean, professional appearance and be well-groomed.
- Some clinical rotation sites require students to cover tattoos. Therefore, when a student attends a clinical experience, the student must cover tattoos according to the clinical site's policy. If any tattoo contains potentially offensive language or art, the student must always cover that tattoo, both during didactic and clinical classes.
- One pair of small earrings may be worn. Other piercings (nose, tongue, eyebrow, or any other visible piercings) must be removed prior to any practical exams, such as OSCE or skills exams, or prior to any clinical experience.
- Clothing and/or scrubs must be modest, non-revealing, well-fitting, sized appropriate, clean and in good repair (no holes, rips, stains, or tears, no tight-fitting clothing).
- Blouses should not be more than three fingerbreadths below the sternal notch.
- Heels should be no taller than two inches.
- Undergarments must not be visible through or underneath clothing, visible above waistline or openly visible.
- Hair, nails, beard, and/or mustache must be neatly groomed. No artificial nails may be worn at any time during enrollment in the program. Hair must be of a natural color (no pink, blue, purple, green, etc.).

#### *Professional Business Attire*

- Professional attire is required during all guest didactic lectures that come to campus for instruction. If a student does not participate in appropriate attire, their attendance will not be allowed for that lecture. If students have financial difficulties with purchasing a professional outfit to meet this requirement, please contact faculty, staff, or the dean for assistance.
- Well-pressed dress slacks or suit. Pants must not be long enough to touch the floor.
- Skirt or dress with a length that falls just below the knee to just above the floor (should not touch the floor)
- Well-pressed shirt, blouse, or sweater. For male students, dress shirt must be tucked in and worn with a tie.
- Closed-toe, closed-heel dress shoes.

#### *Lecture Attire*

- Lecture attire is the expected dress code for all classroom activities during the didactic phase and during clinical Callback Days when on-campus attendance is required. No shorts, No tank tops, No tight-fitting clothes.
- NU approved scrubs. (\*\*Not applicable for guest lectures\*\*)
- Blouses, sweaters, vests, light jackets.
- Dress or skirt (not shorter than just below knee length).
- Pants, jeans, or denim that are in good repair with no holes, rips, stains, or tears.
- No yoga pants, no tight-fitting exercise type pants, no shorts, no pajamas or sleeping attire.

### Lab Attire

- Lab attire will be expected to be worn during cadaver lab dissection and virtual lab classroom activities. Additionally, if a course director requests lab attire, students will be expected to accommodate this dress code.
- No open-toed shoes are allowed.
- Scrubs required.
- Lab coat (optional).

### Clinical Attire

- Professional Business Attire with white lab coat and student ID badge for clinic settings.
- NU scrubs with white lab coat and student ID badge– only if allowed by the clinical location site.
- Clean, maintained tennis shoes and institution-issued scrubs may be worn for some SCPE experiences if allowed by the clinical site location.

As medical professionals, students should ask themselves if they are dressed in a manner that warrants professionalism and respect from patients and other health care providers. It is expected that students attending SCPEs will always dress in a professional manner. Specific clothing choices for the clinical phase will be included in the Clinical Education Handbook.

### Picture Identification

- An identification badge bearing the student's photograph will be created for each student upon matriculation into the PA program.
- The student ID badge must be worn to every clinical experience and the picture, name, and title of physician assistant student are to be clearly visible. In addition, some clinical sites/agencies/institutions may issue temporary student identification cards to be worn in accordance with their policy. The student will be responsible for adhering to each site/agency/institution policy.<sup>1</sup>

### Class Schedule

The class schedule will routinely be planned every day from Monday to Friday, and students should reserve all hours on those days for PA program classes and activities from 8AM until 5PM. Schedules might change with 24 hours' notice; therefore students should check their calendars and emails daily. Students are not allowed to request class schedule changes.

### Classroom Etiquette

In consideration of other students and faculty, students should avoid coming in late (see PP0004 for additional information), leaving early, and allowing cell phones to ring during class. While in the classroom, students are expected to act respectfully towards classmates and the professor by focusing on the lecture or task at hand. If a student wants to chat, read, surf the Internet, text message, or nap, it must be done outside of class. Utilizing electronics for anything other than lecture notes is considered unprofessional behavior and may result in disciplinary action. Instructors reserve the right to ask anyone who is disruptive to leave.

The student must adhere to professional standards for behavior when communicating with faculty, staff, and fellow students in the classroom:

<sup>1</sup> ARC-PA 5<sup>th</sup> Edition Standard A3.06

- Address the faculty member by title: “Professor” or “Doctor” in all school related activities both on and off-campus.
- Address the staff member with their appropriate title: “Mrs.” or “Mr.”
- Be respectful in all communications with everyone.
- Arrive on time (10 minutes prior to start of class to allow time to prepare for class).
- Students may eat or drink in class at the discretion of the instructor.
- Students may not bring in guests, pets, or children to the classroom unless approved by the instructor.

## Student Use of Classroom/Lab Space and Equipment

Students will have 24/7 badge access to 6710 and the Argue Health Science Center lab areas. Students may use classroom and lab spaces for study and practice when no class is scheduled.

Students will have access to equipment for learning purposes. Students may not access or practice on any piece of equipment unless they have been instructed in its use by a faculty member. Students are expected to return all equipment to storage and clean up the space used before leaving. Students may not remove any university/department equipment, supplies or learning models without written permission from a faculty member. If equipment or models are checked out, they must be returned at the designated time and in the same condition; otherwise, the student is responsible for the cost of that equipment.

Students are responsible for maintaining a clean and orderly space in the classrooms and labs. Students should leave the classroom or lab ready for use by the next group of students. Faculty members will provide specific information for classrooms and labs regarding the placement of chairs, tables, stools, equipment, and other lab or classroom items.

Beverages may be consumed in class but must be in a spill-proof container. Students are not to eat/drink/chew gum while in clinical or laboratory settings.

Authorization by the university or by the clinical facility housing the gross anatomy lab, a NU student badge is required to enter the gross anatomy lab. Unauthorized visitors are not allowed. No individual (faculty, student, lab assistant) will provide access to the lab to any unauthorized individual, including but not limited to high school students, undergraduate students, graduate students in other programs, and relatives or friends of students.

Students must observe all signage in classrooms, labs, or clinical settings, with emphasis on signage that pertains to safety, chemicals, radiation, and other warnings.

Students are not permitted in any faculty office or faculty designated space without a faculty member being present. Students that are meeting with a faculty or student of the opposite gender, will be required to meet in a room with an unshaded window or have the door open or an additional faculty/staff member must be present. Students are required to schedule faculty meetings during normal business hours and only during that faculty’s designated office hours.

## General Housekeeping

We strive to maintain a clean and safe environment in our shared facilities. To ensure the well-being and satisfaction of all users, we have established the following housekeeping policies. Any violation of these policies will be a violation of the professional conduct standard and can be subject to SPC review for disciplinary actions. No exceptions.

## *Classrooms*

**Leave the Room as Students Found It:** Before leaving, students should return furniture to its original arrangement, erase whiteboards, and ensure that any equipment or materials used during the session are properly stored away to prepare for the next class.

**Cleanliness Standards:** Students are expected to maintain cleanliness in the classroom by cleaning up after themselves. This includes disposing of trash, wiping down desks, and keeping the space tidy.

**Respect for Equipment:** All classroom equipment should be handled with care. Students must report any damage or malfunction to the appropriate university staff immediately.

**Personal Belongings:** Personal belongings should be kept tidy and stored in designated areas. Students are responsible for taking their belongings with them when leaving the classroom.

**Food and Drinks:** Consumption of food and drinks may be permitted based on university guidelines. Students should be mindful of spills and clean up any messes promptly.

**Noise Level:** Students must maintain an appropriate noise level during class sessions to minimize disruptions for fellow students and instructors. Please be mindful of noise levels and considerate of other classes in session as you enter or exit your classroom.

**Respectful Behavior:** Respectful behavior towards others is essential. Students should refrain from engaging in disruptive behavior and contribute to a positive learning environment.

**Reporting Issues:** Any maintenance issues or concerns regarding the classroom space should be reported promptly via a maintenance request on Eagle for resolution.

**Communication:** Open communication channels are encouraged for students to provide feedback, suggestions, and reminders about classroom cleanliness and etiquette.

## *Kitchen*

**Cleanliness Standards:** All students are expected to uphold high standards of cleanliness in the kitchen. This includes promptly cleaning up spills, wiping down surfaces, and washing dishes after use.

**Shared Responsibility:** Keeping the kitchen clean is a shared responsibility. Every student is accountable for their actions and is encouraged to contribute to the cleanliness of the space.

**Labeling and Storage:** Students must label their food items and belongings clearly. Additionally, all food items should be stored properly to prevent contamination and maintain hygiene standards.

**Refrigerator Etiquette:** The student refrigerator is a limited shared space. Therefore, all students are responsible for removing any stored food items at the end of each day. Any items left will be discarded to include any Tupperware or re-usable cartons.

**Respect Others' Space:** Students should respect others' space by not leaving personal items or food out for extended periods. This helps to maintain order and cleanliness in the kitchen.

**Reporting Issues:** If any maintenance issues or concerns arise, students should report the problem immediately via a maintenance request on Eagle. This includes broken appliances, plumbing issues, or any other problems that affect the functionality or cleanliness of the kitchen.

**Communication:** Open communication is key to maintaining a clean and functional kitchen. Students are expected to communicate with each other respectfully regarding any issues or concerns related to kitchen cleanliness and etiquette.

## Drugs, Tobacco, and Alcohol

Use of illegal drugs, and the illegal use of alcoholic beverages, is identified as “conduct which adversely affects the university community.” University regulations prohibit any unlawful possession, use, distribution, or sale of alcohol and other drugs by university students, faculty, staff, or guests to the university, on university-owned property and at all University sponsored activities. NU students are also prohibited from the illegal use of drugs and alcohol whether on or off campus.

The legal age for the consumption of alcohol is 21 years of age. Any underage student consuming alcohol is violating standards for student conduct. Additionally, excessive alcohol use can lead to additional violations, such as driving while intoxicated or public intoxication. NU is a dry campus, meaning any alcohol is prohibited on campus.

NU is designated as a tobacco-free environment. Smoking and the use of all tobacco products are prohibited.

While many states have legalized the use of marijuana, NU continues to prohibit marijuana use among students. See policy document here: [Graduate/Online Students – Student Handbook](#).

Local, state, and federal laws provide for a variety of legal sanctions and penalties for the unlawful possession or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol. These sanctions include, but are not limited to, incarceration and monetary fines. Furthermore, a charge or conviction of a drug or alcohol related offense may prohibit the PA graduate from obtaining licensure.

The NU School of PA Medicine reserves the right to require random drug screens throughout a PA student's enrollment in the university. Should a NU PA student be removed from a SCPE or the classroom due to impairment with illicit drugs or alcohol or found to have illegal substances on a drug screen (routine or random), the student will be referred to the Student Progression Committee (SPC) for review of their academic standing, to include consideration for dismissal.

### *Drug screen*

Hospitals, clinics, or other facilities used by the PA program as clinical education sites may require students to undergo a drug screen prior to the start date of the clinical rotation or randomly as requested. The cost of drug screening will be the responsibility of the student. If a student is unable to provide a negative drug screen to the satisfaction of clinical sites, the student will be referred to the Student Progress Committee for consideration of dismissal.

## Social Media

Use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter have become a part of everyday life. While this technology allows for instant widespread sharing of information, basic privacy, and information security requirements applicable to NU confidential information apply. Sharing confidential NU, HIPAA, or other SCPE site information, including protected health information on personal social networking websites is **strictly prohibited**. Examples of prohibited disclosure include:

- Any reference to a patient or patient care event, even if the patient's name is not included. Under HIPAA, such information is still considered protected health information.
- Photographs of patients at NU or any clinical site attended while enrolled as a student at NU, even if the patient or his/her legal guardian gives a copy of the picture to a staff member. Patient photographs are also protected health information under HIPAA and signed written HIPAA authorization is required before disclosing them.
- Sharing any confidential NU business with others who do not have a need to know to perform their assigned duties on behalf of NU.
- Under HIPAA, NU students can be determined to be liable, in either a criminal or civil manner, for privacy and information security violations. All monetary damages incurred as a result of a violation of HIPAA is the sole responsibility of the student. Any student found violating confidentiality will be subject to corrective action up to and including dismissal as determined by the Student Progress Committee.
- Due to the professional nature of this career, it is the program's recommendation to limit any personal pictures or posts that could be considered inappropriate to the public.
- Any posts that violate these policies and are obtained and identified as originating from a PA student(s) may result in the student(s) being dismissed from the program and being required to reapply in order to be admitted.

## Criticism of Colleagues

Professional relations among all members of the medical community should be marked with civility. Thus, scholarly contributions should be acknowledged, slanderous comments and acts avoided, and each person should recognize and facilitate the contributions of others to the community. The PA student will deal with all members of the health care team in a cooperative and considerate manner.

## Academic Honesty

Northwest University has intentionally developed a learning community that includes Academic Honesty as a foundational value and expects honesty from faculty and students in all areas, including academic lives.

Northwest University considers dishonest academic conduct by students to include any activity that allows a student to take an unfair advantage of fellow students. Examples of academic dishonesty by students include the following:

- Cheating on assignments or examinations.
- Submitting material that has been prepared by someone else or failure to give full credit to material prepared by someone else (plagiarism). Plagiarism is defined as "using someone else's ideas or phrasing and representing those ideas or phrasing as our own, either on purpose or through carelessness" (MLA).
- Arranging for another person to serve as a test-taker.
- Seeking help from another person or source during a test in which collaboration is not permitted.
- Submitting the same (or essentially the same) paper in more than one course without prior consent of the current assigning professor(s).

- Making false statements in order to acquire special consideration from an instructor.
- Sabotaging another student's work.

Additionally for faculty, academic dishonesty includes altering a student's grade or awarding points when not earned.

The Academic Honesty policy functions at Northwest University on an honor basis so faculty and staff agree to academic integrity standards upon hire and acknowledge willingness to enforce the policy and report misconduct. Academic dishonesty may result in the student failing the assignment, receiving an "F" in the course, or possibly being dismissed from the University. Instances of academic dishonesty are typically reported to the Provost's Office. Any student disciplined by a faculty member for alleged academic dishonesty has the right to appeal the disciplinary action. The student should initiate their appeal according to procedures outlined in the Northwest University Student Academic Appeals Policy, which is available in the Provost's Office or the Student Development Office.

Refer to [NU policy](#).

## Disciplinary Actions – Professional Conduct

If a student is found to have violated a policy not related to academic success, the dean may determine an appropriate course of action to promote early notification and provide the students with communication of concern. The following violations are examples and will involve a notification by the dean:

1. Excessive tardies
2. Any violation of professional conduct
3. Disruptive behavior
4. Excessive/unexcused absences
5. Dress Code violation

Students that receive a communication of concern will be notified in written notification and will meet with the dean to discuss the issue. All communication will be referred to the SPC for formal review. A communication concern will include the following levels:

1. Verbal warning of concern – conversation will be documented, no formal written letter generated, no immediate referral to SPC.
2. Written warning of concern – formal letter sent to student and referral to SPC.
3. Final written notice of concern – formal letter sent to student, SPC and office of the provost. SPC will make a final determination.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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