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## Welcome to the Medical Assistant Program!

It is a pleasure to welcome you to Berkeley College. We are glad that you have chosen us to assist you in attaining your educational goals. Everyone at the College wishes you an enjoyable and productive academic year.

This Medical Assistant Student Handbook Supplement is intended to clarify policies and procedures specific to the Medical Assistant program. The policies in this Handbook Supplement supersede any conflicting statements made by faculty, administrators, the general Berkeley College Student Handbook, and the Undergraduate Catalog. The Medical Assistant Student Handbook Supplement is updated regularly. You are urged to provide us with recommendations and suggestions for future revisions by communicating your ideas to Student Development and Campus Life.

The faculty of the School of Health Studies are committed to guiding and assisting you in your academic career. You, in turn, have a responsibility to familiarize yourself with the policies and procedures of the College.

Once again, let me extend my sincerest welcome from the entire Berkeley College community. We look forward to assisting you in reaching your goals!

Gabriel Holder, M.D., RMA, CCMA, CBCS  
Department Chair, Medical Assistant Program

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## Overview

The policies and procedures outlined in this Medical Assistant Student Handbook Supplement are specific to the Medical Assistant program. By participating in the Medical Assistant program you are agreeing to abide by the policies and procedures outlined in the Medical Assistant Student Handbook Supplement. These program-specific policies and procedures supersede any statements made by faculty, administrators, the general Berkeley College Student Handbook, and the Undergraduate Catalog. Students should refer to the Undergraduate Catalog and the general Berkeley College Student Handbook for all other College policies.

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## Medical Assistant Program Goals and Objectives

### Program Goals

Berkeley College's Medical Assistant Associate in Applied Science degree and certificate programs prepare students to enter the high-demand field of healthcare and to work in a variety of settings, including physicians' offices, hospitals, and other professional healthcare facilities. Graduates are prepared to meet both the clinical and administrative challenges of today's rapidly changing healthcare environment.

The program is designed to prepare competent entry-level medical assistants in the cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills), and affective (behavior) learning domains. This is accomplished by providing curriculum relating to patient care skills, general study, and administrative/business skills.

The goals for completion of the medical assisting program are:

- To prepare students as multi-skilled healthcare practitioners who perform a wide range of roles in physicians' offices and other healthcare settings
- To prepare students who are professional and proficient in such administrative and clinical tasks as patient communication and clinical skills (EKG, venipuncture, vital signs, physical exam, CPR, etc.)
- To prepare students in infection control procedures and OSHA training
- To prepare students for such administrative routines such as medical record keeping and documentation
- To prepare students to become nationally credentialed healthcare practitioners who will be viewed by doctors as vital partners in providing medical care

### Program Objectives

The objective of the Medical Assistant program is to train students in the skills and competencies required to perform the clinical and administrative duties of a medical assistant. The program objectives are based on the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domain competencies established by the Commission of Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) as outlined in the **2015 Standards and Guidelines for Medical Assisting Educational Programs**.

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## Accreditation

The Medical Assistant Certificate program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), the largest programmatic accreditor in the health sciences field. CAAHEP accredits medical assisting programs based on the recommendation of the Medical Assistant Education Review Board.

The Associate in Applied Science degree program is an extension of the career-track certificate program. Graduates of the Associate in Applied Science degree program are also issued a diploma in Medical Assisting.

Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs  
25400 U.S. Highway 19 North, Suite 158  
Clearwater, FL 33763  
727-210-2350  
**[www.caahep.org](http://www.caahep.org)**

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## Technical Standards

The Medical Assistant program prepares students to be entry-level medical assistants in a clinical setting. The profession's scope of practice requires demonstration of responsibilities and accountability within the role and the competencies expected of a medical assistant. It is important to note that the medical assistant profession is physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding.

Some chronic or recurrent illnesses and problems could interfere with patient care and safety, and may be incompatible with a career as a medical assistant. Students in the Medical Assistant program are not required to disclose any chronic or recurrent illness and/or disability; however, those with concerns about meeting any technical standards are strongly encouraged to discuss the issues with the Department Chair.

Indicated below are several examples of the scope of practice, roles, and competencies that will be encountered:

### Motor-Based Standards

- Able to stand, bend, and/or sit for long periods of time in one location with minimum/no breaks
- Work standing on his/her feet 80 percent of the time
- Demonstrate sufficient visual ability to load a fine (10-0) suture onto needles and needle holders with/without corrective lenses and while wearing eye protection
- Demonstrate sufficient peripheral vision to anticipate and function while in the sterile surgical environment
- Hear activation/warning signals on equipment. Able to detect odors sufficient to maintain environmental safety and patient needs
- Have full use of hands, wrists, and shoulders involving the coordination of muscular movements, equilibrium, and sensation
- Manipulate mechanical and patient care equipment
- Manipulate instruments, supplies, and equipment with speed, dexterity, and good eye-hand coordination
- Apply general care and emergency treatment to patients
- Ambulate/move around without assistive devices
- Able to assist with and/or lift, move, position, and manipulate the patient who is unconscious with or without assistive devices
- Help lift patients who may be unable to move themselves to and from the examination table
- Lift and move objects routinely (50 pounds or more)

### Cognitive-Based Standards

- Read and comprehend written instructions, patients' charts, and other written material
- Perform basic arithmetic calculations
- Demonstrate sufficient analytical and critical thinking skills to provide quality patient care in keeping with professional standards of the medical assistant profession
- Function safely, responsibly, and effectively under stressful situations including medical emergencies
- Able to make appropriate judgment decisions

### Communication-Based Standards

- Able to effectively communicate with others in English, both verbally and in writing
- Possess sufficient communication skills (verbal, non-verbal, and written) to interact with others

- Be able to hear and observe clinical staff and patients in order to accurately assess vital signs; elicit information; perceive nonverbal communications; describe changes in mood, activity, and posture; and recognize and respond to an emergency situation
- Possess appropriate interpersonal communication skills to interact positively with all persons, regardless of race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation
- Apply the principles of confidentiality, respect, and discretion

### **Affective-Based Standards**

- Demonstrate professional attributes, including accepting responsibility and accountability for actions in the medical office setting, a positive work ethic that includes showing up to class and clinic on time, and being emotionally and academically prepared to carry out the day's assignments in a professional manner
- Possess qualities of adaptability, flexibility, and be able to function as a team member in the delivery of patient care. Have a high level of compassion for others, motivation to serve, integrity, and a consciousness of social values
- Demonstrate the use of positive coping skills under stress
- Demonstrate calm and effective responses, especially in emergency situations
- Exhibit positive interpersonal skills during patient, staff, and faculty interactions

It is the student's responsibility to understand the duties, responsibilities, skills, and abilities required to be a medical assistant. In addition to the technical standards described above, students are encouraged to review the information regarding medical assisting at the **O\*NET website**.

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## Add/Drop Policy

Students interested in adding a course or courses to their schedule must meet with the Academic Advisement Department to obtain approval prior to the start of the second week of the term. Requests will be considered only if appropriate arrangements can be made to make up missed class time. Clinical courses cannot be added to a student's schedule after the start of the term.



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## Attendance

Students enrolled in the Medical Assistant program are expected to demonstrate a commitment and dedication to the healthcare profession through professional conduct that is consistent with the requirements needed to be successful in the industry. Healthcare is a profession that demands attention to detail and commitment to caring for others who are in need of assistance and who are vulnerable without it. For this reason, students are expected to exemplify this level of professionalism in their school attendance and participation.

### Excused Absences

Excused absences can only be granted by the Department Chair or the Practicum Coordinator and may, at the discretion of the Department Chair, require proper documentation (e.g., a physician's letter).

### Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences will result in a reduction in the student's final course grade, which could lead to course failure.

### Make-up Work

Make-up days are not available at clinical sites. Since clinical hours are tallied in accordance to eligibility rules for certification, absences may adversely affect a student's eligibility to take the national certification exam and endanger a student's ability to successfully complete the course. Students should refer to the Medical Assistant Practicum Handbook for more specific attendance policies related to the practicum component of the program.

*\*Students are reminded of the mandatory C (70 percent) grade requirement for all MED courses.*

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## Certification Exam Requirements

The American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) guidelines require students to meet certain criteria in order to participate in the CMA (AAMA) exam. A full explanation of these guidelines can be found on the AAMA website (<http://www.aama-ntl.org/cma-aama-exam/application-steps/eligibility>).

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## Class Hours

Generally, classes are in session from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM Monday through Saturday. Clinical practicums are typically scheduled from 7:00 AM until 6:00 PM Monday through Friday.

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## Course Withdrawal

Students who wish to drop a course must do so in writing and must have the approval of the Academic Advisement Department. Courses dropped during the first two weeks of classes do not appear on the student's transcript. Withdrawal from a 15-week course between weeks three and 12 will result in a grade of WP or WF, which indicates whether the student was passing or failing the course at the time it was dropped. A grade of W will be assigned to students who enrolled in but did not participate in a course. Students who do not officially drop a course will receive a letter grade that reflects their achievement.

Medical Assistant students are only eligible to take the Practicum course twice throughout the Medical Assistant program. Medical Assistant students who receive a grade of D or below in the Practicum course, or who withdraw from the course, may repeat that course. Students who receive a grade of D or below in the repeated course, or who withdraw for a second time, will be dismissed automatically from the Medical Assistant program.

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## Credit for Prior Learning

Students enrolled in the Medical Assistant program who possess active, current healthcare certifications may be eligible to receive credit for prior learning for some MED courses. Students requesting credit for prior learning must provide evidence of their active certification(s) to the Department Chair for review.

Medical Assistant students may test out of Human Biology, Medical Terminology, and/or Human Relations by taking a formal Challenge Examination for credit. Challenge Examinations may only be attempted once for each course and may not be taken for any courses in which the student received a failing grade in a previous term. Students may not attempt to test out of courses in which they are currently enrolled.

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## Graduation Requirements

To qualify for graduation, students in the Medical Assistant program must fulfill the following requirements:

- Pass each MED course with a minimum grade of C
- Successfully complete the prescribed course of study with a minimum average of 2.00 (C)
- Successfully complete the prescribed number of practicum hours
- Meet the credit-hour requirements for the major
- Discharge all financial obligations to the College
- Participate in a National Commission for Certifying Agencies credentialing examination for Medical Assisting

Students must meet all the requirements listed above in order to participate in the formal graduation ceremony.

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## Practicum Requirements

To pass the practicum course, students must remain at the site for the duration of their scheduled assignment, accumulate the total number of prescribed hours as outlined in the Medical Assistant Practicum Handbook, and successfully complete all course requirements. If, for some reason, a student is unable to remain at the practicum site for the duration of his/her assignment, the student must contact the instructor and the practicum coordinator immediately.

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## Passing Grade

The minimum passing grade required for a Medical Assistant (MED) course is a C (70 percent). Any grade below a C (70 percent) is a failing grade. Therefore, only a MED course in which students receive at least a C (70 percent) will satisfy the course requirements for the Medical Assistant program. A failure in the lecture, laboratory, or practicum portion of a MED course will result in a failing grade for the entire course.

**Repeating a Medical Course**

Students enrolled in the Medical Assistant program who receive a grade of D or below in any medical assistant (MED) course must repeat that course in order to progress in the program. The minimum passing grade required for a repeated course is a C.

Note that failed courses may lead to repeat charges and may also delay graduation.

**Medical Assistant Competencies**

Students enrolled in the Medical Assistant program must pass 100 percent of all program competencies in order to graduate. The minimum passing score for each competency is 85 percent.



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## **Repeating the Practicum Course and Automatic Dismissal**

Medical Assistant students are only eligible to take the Practicum course twice throughout the Medical Assistant program. Medical Assistant students who receive a grade of D or below in the Practicum course, or who withdraw from the course, may repeat that course. Students who receive a grade of D or below in the repeated course, or who withdraw for a second time, will be dismissed automatically from the Medical Assistant program.

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## Transfer Credit

In addition to the transfer credit guidelines outlined in the Berkeley College **2017-2018 Undergraduate Catalog**, students enrolled in the Medical Assistant program who wish to have credits considered for transfer must note the following:

- A grade of C or higher is required for all MED transfer credits.
- Courses that contain clinical or laboratory credits are not eligible for transfer credit due to the affective and psychomotor learning domains covered in clinical and laboratory experiences.



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## Confidentiality

Berkeley College students are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of all patient information encountered at any clinical internship and/or practicum site. While the requirements of patient confidentiality are emphasized throughout the student's coursework, all students are encouraged to visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website (<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy>) to review the entire Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) policy before beginning the clinical component of the program. In addition to complying with all federal regulations, Berkeley College students must comply with any specific confidentiality requirements, policies, and/or procedures established by the assigned internship and/or clinical site.

A patient's right to confidentiality regarding his or her medical information, which includes confidentiality of personal and social information, is a fundamental healthcare tenet. Accordingly, students must remain mindful of the following basic requirements:

- Patients must not be described in any identifiable way for purposes other than the provision of direct patient care. When discussing experiences involving patients with third parties for legitimate educational purposes, using patient initials, exact descriptions, or locations of patients - either on paper or online - is strictly prohibited. Students are to use generalities only, so that no patient can be clearly recognized.
- While participating in clinical rotation(s) students shall not videotape, photograph, or make audio recordings of themselves, their fellow students, their instructors, or their patients for any reason.
- The public discussion of any patient who is identified by name or whose identity can be derived from other circumstances (or the condition of such patient) without consent violates patient confidentiality and ethical principles. This includes any discussion held in public areas such as elevators, hallways, and cafeterias. It also includes any discussion held in any media forum (such as print media) or any virtual forum (such as websites or social networking sites). Classrooms, pre- and post-conferences, and/or laboratory settings may be used for such discussions, but only for legitimate educational purposes.
- Students should only obtain information about those patients who are assigned to their care for that clinical day. At no time should students use their position in the clinical setting to seek information about a patient other than the patient(s) to whom they have been assigned.
- Copying, scanning, and/or removing any portion of a patient's medical record or printed patient information from the healthcare facility is strictly prohibited.

Social networking has become one of the main sources of communicating in today's world. However, its use can have major legal and ethical implications for healthcare workers with regard to patient privacy and confidentiality. Students must comply at all times with the requirements of HIPAA and must be especially mindful of patients when using social media. For instance:

- References to patients, patient data, or clinical experiences involving patients or their family members are not to be included in any part of the social networking environment. Social media breaches include, but are not limited to, tweeting confidential or proprietary information about clinical facilities and/or rotations and taking 'selfies' while participating in clinical rotations and posting them on social media sites.
- Students are strictly prohibited from posting any information pertaining to or descriptive of a clinical site, instructor/preceptor, patient, employee, fellow student, or procedure. This includes revealing the location of a clinical site either by posting or by providing content with GPS locator evidence (such as digital photographs).

Students who disclose restricted patient information may face serious consequences. For example, federal law provides for fines up to \$250,000 and imprisonment up to 10 years for misusing protected patient information for commercial advantage or malicious harm. Students found in violation of the Berkeley College Confidentiality Policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate suspension or dismissal from the College.

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## Criminal Background Check and Drug Screening

All students in the Medical Assistant program are obligated to meet the requirements of their assigned practicum site. Some sites require students to pass a criminal background check and a drug screening. Therefore, all students must be prepared to pass a criminal background check and a drug screen prior to participating in the practicum course. Criminal background checks may be conducted annually or at the discretion of clinical affiliates.

If a charge, arrest, and/or conviction occurs while a student is enrolled in the Medical Assistant program, it is the student's responsibility to inform the Department Chair. This notification must be in writing and must occur within two days after the event occurs. The required notification must include a description of the circumstances surrounding the charge, arrest, and/or conviction. Subsequent to this notification, the student should make an appointment with the Department Chair to discuss options. Failure to notify the Department Chair of a charge, arrest, and/or conviction may result in the student being removed from the Medical Assistant program.

The American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) guidelines require students to meet certain criteria in order to participate in the CMA (AAMA) exam. A full explanation of these guidelines can be found on the AAMA website (<http://www.aama-ntl.org/cma-aama-exam/application-steps/eligibility>). According to the AAMA, students who have been found guilty of a felony or pleaded guilty to a felony are not eligible to participate in the CMA exam. In some instances, the Certifying Board may grant a waiver based upon mitigating circumstances. Students who are in need of submitting a Request for Waiver should discuss this option with the Department Chair.

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## Dress Code

All students in the Medical Assistant program are required to follow the professional appearance code while attending on-campus laboratory classes as well as while at a clinical site participating in the practicum component of the program. A neat, clean, and professional appearance is expected at all times. Working closely with medical equipment, as well as with other staff members, requires that students maintain strict personal hygiene standards. Students will be working on making a lasting impression at the clinical site, and maintaining a professional appearance is an important part of making a good impression.

Failure to adhere to the professional appearance code will result in a warning, and if not corrected, can result in dismissal from the clinical site and possibly the program.

The following are the guidelines of the professional appearance code:

- Hair must be clean. Long hair must be pulled back and cannot fall forward in front of shoulders while providing patient care. Hair accessories must maintain a professional appearance, safety, and hygiene. Hair of an unnatural color or fad designs is not permitted. Avoid highly colored sprays and maintain only natural-looking hair color. Male students must be neatly shaven and well groomed. Facial hair should be kept trimmed and neat.
- No hats or head coverings are permitted; however, exceptions for religious requirements will be made.
- Fingernails must be kept short, clean, and filed. Artificial nails, nail polish, and added stick-on jewels are not permitted as they harbor microorganisms.
- Dangle earrings or other visible body jewelry (nose rings, lip rings, tongue piercing, bracelets, necklaces which can become entangled in equipment) are not permitted.
- Cosmetics should be worn in moderation. Students are not permitted to wear fragrant products (cologne, perfume, aftershave, lotion, etc.) in clinical settings due to potential patient allergic response. Strong odors, including the odor of a smoker, can be apparent and offensive to patients who are ill.
- Wedding rings may be worn. Avoid large stone rings. Rings can cause injury to patients and can also harbor microorganisms. Earrings (one pair) must be small, whether posts or hoop earrings. No other body piercing jewelry is permitted. If a large medal or chain is worn it should be tucked inside the uniform. Students are required to wear a watch with a sweep second hand.
- Consumption of food, candy, and gum is prohibited while working in any laboratory or clinical setting.
- Unless other facility-specific guidelines are provided, students are required to wear a clean and pressed medical assistant uniform with the Berkeley College insignia. Appropriate undergarments are to be worn and be undetectable through the uniform.
- Shoes must be professional in nature; solid black or white sneakers are permitted. No sandals, clogs, open-toed, or slingback shoes are permitted.
- Students are required to wear their Berkeley College IDs at all times while on campus and at the clinical sites. If a student is employed at the same facility, the employment name badge may not be worn during clinical assignments.

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## Health Requirements

In addition to adhering to all Berkeley College policies regarding health and safety, students enrolled in the Medical Assistant program are encouraged to be immunized against hepatitis B and tetanus. Students are required to comply with all health and safety related requirements established by their assigned practicum site. Necessary immunizations can be obtained from the local public health department at a nominal cost. The cost associated with these immunizations will be borne by the student.

Berkeley College's Medical Assistant program is physically and mentally challenging. During the clinical and laboratory portions of the program, students will be exposed to healthcare situations where there is an increased risk of exposure to strenuous activity, communicable diseases, radiation, and toxic substances.

Due to the increased risk of exposure to a variety of situations and substances that could potentially affect a developing fetus, any student who believes she may be pregnant, has recently given birth, or has recently terminated a pregnancy is strongly encouraged to speak with her healthcare provider immediately to determine whether she is physically capable of remaining in the program and meeting all relevant technical standards outlined in this Handbook. Neither Berkeley College nor its affiliating clinical agencies shall be held responsible for any harm that might occur to a fetus or pregnant student.

Any student who is unable to continue in clinical courses based on the recommendation of her/his healthcare provider will be afforded the opportunity, once medically cleared, to return to the program pending course availability.



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## Informed Consent

Students will be learning and practicing direct patient care throughout the Medical Assistant program. Students will also be involved in procedures such as venipuncture. Since these procedures are invasive, there is the potential risk of exposure to hepatitis, HIV, and other diseases. Students will be introduced to the Universal Precautions recommended by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Students are expected to follow these recommendations in their contact with all clients/patients in a clinical setting. It is very important that students follow all established rules and procedures for their protection and the protection of others.

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## Practicum Overview

While in school, students will gain knowledge and skills that will prepare them for their new career. The practicum is designed to provide students with the opportunity to utilize this newfound knowledge under the supervision of medical professionals. Through this system of performance and feedback, students will acquire confidence and viable experience to complement their classroom training.

The practicum will consist of training, usually completed within an academic term. In addition to the off-site practicum hours, students are required to attend weekly on-campus seminars. Each student is expected to accommodate the regular hours of the practicum site, including Saturdays, Sundays, and/or evenings. If a student holds a job and his/her scheduled work schedule conflicts with the practicum hours, then the student's College program must take precedence. A student in a practicum observes the regularly scheduled office hours of the site assigned, rather than the College's vacation, holiday, or snow hours. Since a prescribed number of hours is required for practicum, the student is responsible for making up all hours missed due to hours cancelled by the office. Students must remain at the site for the duration of their scheduled practicum.

Since the practicum period is a culmination of the student's program and permits the student to practice in a realistic work setting prior to graduation, it is a prerequisite for a student to satisfactorily complete most courses within the program prior to enrolling in the practicum course.

Students will not receive compensation/payment, monetary or otherwise, for the practicum experience. Although practicum sites may hire a student, under no circumstances are they ever obligated to do so.

It is unrealistic for a student to expect that the practicum site will be in his/her neighborhood setting. Practicum sites may be anywhere within a 30-mile radius of the student's home campus.

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## Professionalism

Students are expected to present themselves in a professional manner at all times by demonstrating integrity, respect, and compassion. While participating in the practicum portion of the program, students should realize that their behavior may positively and/or negatively affect the reputation of Berkeley College. Students are expected to be thoughtful and professional when interacting with faculty, patients and their families, nurses, attending physicians, preceptors, affiliated institutional staff, other students, other members of the healthcare team, and the general public.

Professional demeanor is also required while students are in virtual sites, such as online social networking sites. Students are required to comply with the Berkeley College Social Media Policy, which governs the use of College and personal social media sites with respect to matters related to the College.

Under no circumstances are students permitted to engage in personal phone conversations or text messaging while participating in the practicum portion of their program. Students are preparing for membership in a profession that serves the public – a public that expects a high standard of professionalism.

If, while enrolled in the practicum course, a student's level of professionalism and/or performance presents a potential harm to the welfare of clients, the faculty will determine, based on written and/or oral documentation, whether or not the student will be permitted to continue in the course. If a student's performance presents an immediate potential harm to either the student or his/her clients, the program faculty and/or preceptors have the responsibility to remove the student immediately from the practicum.