

Guideline: Supporting Competence in Medication Administration

PURPOSE:

To assess, prepare, and support students in safe medication administration.

BACKGROUND:

Nurses play an essential role in performing medication reconciliation, preparing, and administering medications, teaching clients about medications, as well as monitoring, evaluating, and documenting the client's response to medications (Gregory et al., 2020). Safe medication management includes the knowledge of medication safety, human factors that may impact medication safety, limitations of medication systems, and best practices to reduce medication errors.

DEFINITIONS:

N/A

GUIDELINE SCOPE*:

This guideline applies to all students enrolled in the NESAs BN Program.

SPECIFICS OF THE GUIDELINE:

1. Students will be required to complete and pass Connect Care training as per agency policy prior to medication administration.
2. All medications must be prepared and administered under the direct/indirect supervision of a qualified regulated health care professional based on the assessed competence of a student by the practice instructor, as outlined in the *Supervision Standards* of the College of Registered Nursing of Alberta (CRNA) (CRNA, 2023). Assessment of competence is based on the correct application of the rights of medication administration, according to the *Medication Management Standards* of CRNA (CRNA, 2022). Instructors are only **required** to co-sign for medications on the Medication Administration Record (MAR) if one or more of the following apply:
 - a. The medication is a restricted or controlled medication.
 - b. Administration of the medication is considered a restricted activity according to the Health Professions Act (HPA) of Alberta (Province of Alberta, 2019).
 - c. Agency policy requires a co-signature. In this case, a third signature from a regulated health care provider (HCP) may be required in addition to that of the student and the instructor.In these specific cases, the instructor's co-signature signifies **direct** supervision of the preparation and administration of the medication in question. Instructors may co-sign other medications at their discretion.

3. A safe medication administration quiz (“the quiz”) assists in assessing the student’s competence regarding calculations related to safe and correct medication dosages, calculations related to correctly preparing and administering medications, and safety principles related to medication management. The quiz will be administered and evaluated as part of each practice course within the NESAs BN programs.
 - a. Each practice course may utilize a unique quiz that has been tailored to the education level and specific needs of that practice course.
 - b. A simplified basic math quiz will be administered and evaluated as part of the first LTC practice course in each of the NESAs BN programs, as students are not expected to administer medications during this practice experience. The simplified basic math exam assesses basic math skills.
 - c. Additional exams or assessments related to medication administration principles and pharmacological theory may be included as part of nursing theory courses throughout the NESAs BN Programs, as applicable to each particular course.
4. The quiz is administered, evaluated and followed-up by the practice coordinator, or designate, at Lethbridge Polytechnic (LP), or the practice instructor, or designate, at the University of Lethbridge (U of L). Students are required to achieve a mastery score of 90% on the exam. Students can re-write the exam, as needed, until they achieve mastery. However, if students continue to demonstrate an inability to achieve mastery (more than 2 failed attempts), they may be required to receive remedial education and an Enhancement Plan may be initiated.
5. Students are not prohibited from participating in their practice experience based on their performance on the quiz. However, students will not be eligible to administer medications during their practice experience until they have achieved the required mastery score on the quiz. Successful completion of the quiz is only one aspect of demonstrating competence in medication administration. Therefore, all students require the same level of supervision and support until all aspects of competence are assessed, and the student deemed capable of safe independent medication administration.
 - a. Some practice agencies may require students to complete additional agency-specific training and/or assessments successfully prior to students being eligible to administer medications at that practice site. Students are expected to comply with these additional requirements, as applicable.
6. If a student demonstrates difficulty meeting any of the expected requirements of safe medication administration, an Enhancement Plan will be initiated, and additional supports will be identified collaboratively between the practice instructor and student to ensure competence and safety during medication administration. This process may require support from the Practice Coordinator (LP) or the Assistant Dean – Nursing (U of L).
7. The specifics of how the process of preparation, assessment, support, and evaluation of competence in medication administration is administered may differ on the two campuses. However, in all cases, quiz integrity and academic honesty will be safeguarded.
8. Student medication errors will be immediately reported to the agency/unit manager or designate. Practice instructors will adhere to agency policy for reporting and documenting medication errors.

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

Students demonstrate confidence and competence in practice when administering medications, following the rights of safe medication administration. Patient safety is the priority and will be maintained.

RELATED POLICIES/ASSOCIATED GUIDELINES:

N/A

REFERENCES:

College of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CRNA). (2018). *Guidelines for Medication and Vaccine Injection Safety*. Retrieved from: [guidelines-for-medication-and-vaccine-injection-safety-acp-crna-cpsa-2018.pdf \(nurses.ab.ca\)](https://nurses.ab.ca/guidelines-for-medication-and-vaccine-injection-safety-acp-crna-cpsa-2018.pdf)

College of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CRNA). (2022). *Medication Management Standards*. Retrieved from: [medication-management-standards-2022.pdf \(nurses.ab.ca\)](https://nurses.ab.ca/medication-management-standards-2022.pdf)

College of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CRNA). (2023). *Supervision Standards*. Retrieved from: <https://nurses.ab.ca/media/ci5m4flw/supervision-standards-apr-2019.pdf>

Gregory, D., Raymond, C., Patrick, L., & Stephen, T. (2020). *Fundamentals: Perspectives on the Art and Science of Canadian Nursing (2nd ed.)*. Wolters Kluwer.

Province of Alberta. (2019). *Health Professions Act: Registered Nurses Profession Regulation*. Retrieved from: https://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2005_232.pdf

***NOTE: NESAs Policies exist within organizational frameworks of policy for Lethbridge Polytechnic and the University of Lethbridge, and within agreements established with practice partner organizations. If and when NESAs policies are found to differ from such policies and agreements, it is important to note that such policies/agreements will take precedence over NESAs program policies.**

Revised By/date:	Approved by/date:
Policy Review Committee: April 2016	Not Required: no change
Policy Review Committee: April 2017	Not Required: no change
Policy Review Committee: April 2018	Not Required: editorial changes
Policy Review Committee: January 2019	Not Required: no change
Policy Review Committee: February 2020	Not Required: link update
Policy Review Committee: November 2020	Updated Links/Resources only
Policy Review Committee: April 2021	NESA Joint Faculty Council: May 10, 2021
Policy Review Committee: April 2022	NESA Joint Faculty Council: May 2022
Policy Review Committee: March 2024	NESA Joint Faculty Council: April 2024