



Department of Nursing

Policy #026

Consent for Physical Examination

Status:	Originated 2024-04-12 Revised NA
Effective:	2024-04-12
Initiated by:	Bylaws, Policies, & Handbooks Committee
WAC:	246-840-519

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide specific procedures to support safe physical examination for students and instructors including the procedures for requesting student consent to participate in physical examination.

AUDIENCE

This policy applies to all Heritage University Nursing Department (HUND) students and instructors.

PLAN

Use of human subjects to develop physical examination skills is foundational to nursing practice. When possible, the Department of Nursing arranges real or simulated patients for students to practice their physical examination skills. Additionally, experiential learning through peer physical examination is utilized for development of assessment skills since research shows it is particularly beneficial at developing comfort, confidence, and empathy in a safe environment prior to practicing or utilizing assessment skills in the clinical setting (Adefuye et al., 2022; Hattingh & Labuschagne, 2019; Wearn et al., 2013). For students to have the opportunity to practice multiple repetitions of physical examination and get focused feedback, this policy outlines procedures for safe and supportive implementation of physical examination based on a student-centered framework, and with respect and adherence to student privacy and confidentiality principles.

Any concerns regarding this policy or its procedures, or the process of consenting to physical examination, should be discussed with the Nursing Director and/or the Office of Student Affairs (Nursing Policy #033 Student Rights and Responsibilities; Heritage University Student Rights and Responsibilities).

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following procedures cover physical assessment of students by peers or instructors in all sanctioned HUND environments and contexts including but not limited to classes, open labs, and clinicals.

PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Though all students are required to demonstrate proficiency in physical examination skills, no student is required to consent to be a recipient of examination. Declining participation in physical examination by either peer or instructor will have no impact on a student's grade, progression, or evaluation of competencies (Nursing Policy #018 Grading and Evaluation of Student Performance).

BODILY AREAS OF EXAMINATION

Students and instructors may examine students' head, neck, and limbs as typically exposed by t-shirts and shorts. The abdomen and thorax, exposed by lifting or removal of a shirt or use of a gown, may also be examined.

Students and instructors will not examine students' breasts, genitals, perineal, inguinal, or rectal areas for any reason in any sanctioned HUND context.

Children of students will not be used for practice of physical examination for any reason in any sanctioned HUND context.

CONSENT

A student's explicit signed consent must be completed prior to any peer or instructor physical examination (see attached), including:

- Acknowledgement of review and understanding of this policy and the consent form
- Specification of full consent, no consent, or partial consent

Verbal consent must be obtained by students and instructors before each instance of physical examination (Nursing Policy #009 Professionalism).

Students may decline to give consent to be examined by instructors and peers. Students are not required to disclose their reasons for refusing consent.

Students may withdraw verbal consent to be examined at any time. Students are not required to disclose their reasons for withdrawing consent.

If peer participation for physical examination is not possible within the student's group, other avenues to ensure that student learning is not compromised will be implemented.

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Prior to demonstrating physical examination with students or observing students peer examination, instructors must complete a signed acknowledgement of review of this policy.

Instructors must not coerce students into consenting to be examined. They should only invite students for demonstration purposes from those who have previously given consent for physical examination.

ADVERSE EVENTS

Discovery of a Suspicious Finding

It is possible that a new suspicious finding may be discovered during physical examination students, for example, discovery of a mass, a heart murmur, elevated blood pressure, etc. In this instance, the following steps will be taken:

- 1) The examining student confidentially informs the student model of the suspicious finding.
- 2) The examining student determines whether the student model is already aware of the suspicious finding.
- 3) Both students confidentially inform their instructor.
- 4) The instructor asks permission to perform the same physical examination.
- 5) If the instructor confirms the suspicious finding, the instructor recommends that the student seeks medical advice.

- 6) The instructor reminds both students of the duty of the examining student to maintain confidentiality regarding the incident.

Breach of Confidentiality

Confidential information about a student may be revealed during history taking or physical examination. Students may preemptively reveal a history of medical issues or known abnormalities, or physical examination may reveal suspicious findings. A breach of confidentiality would be a student or faculty sharing this information with anyone else without the explicit consent of the student.

The following steps will be taken in the case of a breach in confidentiality by a student:

- 1) The instructor speaks privately with the student(s) who breached confidentiality.
- 2) The instructor informs the student(s) that sharing confidential information without consent is an unacceptable breach of policy and standards.
- 3) The instructor contacts the Course Head and Nursing Director regarding the incident.
- 4) The Nursing Director takes appropriate actions reflective of guidelines in Nursing Policy #009 Professionalism.
- 5) The instructor ensures the student whose confidentiality was breached is informed of actions taken and, if required, seeks appropriate support (e.g. referral to the Office of Student Affairs).

Breach of student confidentiality by an instructor should be reported as soon as possible to the course head and Nursing Director, and/or Office of Student Affairs.

NOTE: students may offer or willingly provide explicit verbal consent to have their physical examination findings used for the instruction of others, which would not breach confidentiality.

Inappropriate Behavior

Inappropriate behavior may occur during physical examination of students by peers and instructors. If a student experiences or an instructor witnesses any instance of:

- perceived coercion
- nonconsensual examination
- breach of confidentiality
- other suspected inappropriate behavior

by either peer or instructor, they should report it as soon as possible to the course head, Nursing Director, Department Chair, and/or Office of Student Affairs. Students and faculty may also consider filing a complaint (Nursing Policy #041 Formal and Informal Complaints).

CITED AND RELATED POLICIES

Cited

- Nursing Policy #009 Professionalism
- Nursing Policy #018 Grading and Evaluation of Student Performance
- Nursing Policy #033 Student Rights and Responsibilities
- Nursing Policy #039 Dress Code
- Nursing Policy #041 Formal and Informal Complaints
- Heritage University Code of Conduct
- Heritage University Student Rights and Responsibilities

Related

- Nursing Policy #007 Faculty Responsibilities in the Clinical Setting

POLICY REVIEWERS

Proposed revisions of this policy should be reviewed by:

- 1) Bylaws, Policies, & Handbooks Committee [initiating committee]
- 2) Nursing Faculty Assembly
- 3) Office of Student Affairs

FORMS

- Consent to Participate in Peer and Instructor Physical Examination (attached)

WAC

Washington State Legislature. (2016). WAC 246-840-519. Student requirements in all approved nursing education programs. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=246-840-519>

REFERENCES

- Adefuye, A., Hattingh, M., Labuschagne, M., & Busari, J. (2022). The use of peer physical examination in undergraduate health professions education: Exploring the perceptions of students and educators in a multicultural, multiracial institution. *African Journal of Health Professional Education*, 14(4), 182-186. <https://doi.org/10.7196/AJHPE.2022.v14i4.1544>
- Chinnah, T.I., De Bere, S.R., & Collett, T. (2011). Students' views on the impact of peer physical examination and palpation as a pedagogic tool for teaching and learning living human anatomy. *Medical Teacher*, 33(1), e27-e36. <https://doi.org/10.3109/0142159X.2011.530313>
- Hattingh, M. & Labuschagne, M. (2019). Health Sciences Lecturers and Students' Perspectives on the Ethical Aspects of Peer Physical Examination (PPE). *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 17(7). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-019-09334-4>
- Wearn, A.M., Bhoopatkar, H., Mathew, T.K., Stewart, L. (2013). Exploration of the attitudes of nursing students to peer physical examination and physical examination of patients. *Nurse Education Today*, 33(8), 884-888. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2012.08.012>

Nursing Director Signature:





Department of Nursing

Consent to Participate in Peer and Instructor Physical Examination

Use of human subjects for physical examination skills are foundational to nursing practice. When possible, the Department of Nursing tries to arrange real or simulated patients for students to practice their physical examination skills. Additionally, peer physical examination is utilized for students to have the opportunity to practice multiple repetitions of physical examination and get focused feedback.

Prior to engaging in any physical examination by a peer or instructor, we want to ensure that you have the opportunity to provide consent to allow others to practice or demonstrate physical exams on you. Though all students are required to demonstrate proficiency in physical examination skills, it is important for you to know that no student is required to consent to be a recipient of examination. Declining participation in physical examination by either peer or instructor will have no impact on a student's grade, progression, or evaluation of competencies.

If you have any additional specific concerns or needs related to participating or not participating in physical examination by peers or instructors, you may confidentially contact the course head, Nursing Director, and/or the Office of Student Affairs or Disability Services to help address any specific needs or concerns.

Please indicate your consent from the following options:

***Students and instructors will NEVER examine students' breasts, genitals, perineal, inguinal, or rectal areas for any reason in any context.*

- 1) **Consent** I give consent to ALL physical examination activities.

- 2) **No Consent** I do NOT give consent for ANY physical examination activities.

- 3) **Partial Consent** I give consent to SOME examination, but the below bodily areas are those that I **DO NOT give consent for** (check any that you **do NOT** consent to):
 - Head and Neck (Eyes, Ears, Nose, Mouth/Throat, hair/scalp, nodes)
 - Chest (cardio/respiratory examination)
 - Back (respiratory examination)
 - Abdomen
 - Upper Limb(s)
 - Lower Limb(s)

I have read the Consent for Physical Examination policy, understand its content, and have had all my questions answered, and I have noted my consent for level of physical examination participation above.

Printed Name:

Signature:

Date:

I understand that checking this box constitutes a digital legal signature of name above.

