



SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY  
RN TO BSN COMPLETION PROGRAM  
**NURS 4303 – LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN HEALTH CARE**

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**SEMESTER HOURS:** Three (3)

**PREREQUISITES:** Admission to the RN to BSN Completion Program

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course addresses the role of legal and ethical guidelines to clinical situations pertaining to the role of the professional nurse. Philosophic foundations of decision making in contemporary health care, particularly in rural border communities, with extension to identification and management of ethical dilemmas will be examined. A focus is placed on analyzing legal guidelines from the Texas Nurse Practice Act and landmark court cases to clinical situations with consideration for the role of the professional nurse.

The student is given an opportunity to incorporate legal and ethical principles, values, cultural, social, and concepts, inter-professional collaboration, and information technologies. Ethical issues health care and confidentiality of patient information are examined.

**FACULTY INFORMATION:**

**Name:** Cindy Turner MSN, RN

**Email:** [Cindy.Turner@sulross.edu](mailto:Cindy.Turner@sulross.edu)

**Office Hours:** Virtual Wednesdays 9am-11am CST, and by appointment as needed.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Each student enrolled in the course will be expected to meet course objectives that are presented within the applicable framework of the Texas Board of Nursing (TBON) Disseminated Essential Competencies of Graduates from Texas Nursing programs (DEC's), the American Association of College of Nursing (AACN) Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice (BSN Essentials), and the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (KSA's) in this course.

The student will be able to:

1. Examine cultural values, ethical principles, and legal issues foundational to professional nursing.
2. Explore the role of reflective practice in examining personal and professional values and the impact of these on professional decision making and behavior.
3. Evaluate ethical and regulatory implications of landmark court cases and contemporary health care issues.
4. Apply a model of ethical decision making based on legal/ethical guidelines in clinical situations.
5. Identify the professional nurse's responsibilities and accountability within professional scope of nursing practice to consumers of health care.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1. OER Resource:



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2. American Psychological Association. (2020). Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. (7th Edition). (Secure references from Library) 3. Articles: (as needed) See Schedule and Assignments for links

**COURSE LEARNING ACTIVITIES, ASSIGNMENTS, GRADING, AND EXPECTATIONS:**

**LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

**Class Participation**

Students will engage in online collaborative activities. Student dialogue will focus on developing professional perspectives, identifying the trends and issues in professional nursing and analyzing factors that affect professional nursing. Students are expected to contribute to the dialogue using critical thinking, clinical reasoning, and ethical comportment. **Discussion Forums**

Students will participate in weekly discussion forums providing at least three (3) substantive posts each week with a supporting reference. **Professional Paper**

Professional papers are to provide students with the opportunity to explore a topic related to trends and issues in nursing, use references, and demonstrate the mechanics of professional writing and use of APA 7th edition format.

**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

Evaluation of student performance is based on evidence of achievement of course objectives. Students are graded on their attendance and participation in the class, knowledge and comprehension of reading assignments, and completion of course assignments. Criteria for each course activity and assignment including grading rubrics are delineated either in the syllabus or in the modules.

**Summary of Measures for Evaluations:**

Course Requirements	Points
Discussion Boards	50%
Professional Papers	50%
Total Points	100%

**Calculation of Final Grade:**

The final grade is derived as a summary of the points delineated on specific rubrics for the assignments and participation. Students must pass course quizzes with an average of 80% or higher in order to pass the course.

**Grading Scale**

A = 90 – 100

B = 80 – 89

C = 75 – 79

D = 70 – 74

F = 69 or below



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## **POLICIES FOR EXAMS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**Online testing/Assessments:** When assigned, examinations will be given via the use of Blackboard or faculty-proctored exams in the classroom. Instructions will be provided at the time of the examination. **Missed Examinations and Makeup Examinations:** Faculty members must be informed immediately when a student is aware that an examination will be missed. Make-up should occur within a week of the scheduled examination as agreed on between faculty and student. Should scheduling conflicts and/or family emergencies arise, students should contact faculty by phone, email, or text as soon as possible. If students have spoken with faculty and an agreement is reached, late make-up exams can be arranged without penalty.

**Late and Make-up Assignments:** To achieve the designated points for an assignment, the assignment must be submitted at or before the scheduled date and time. Ten points per calendar day will be deducted for late submission of assignments. Assignments will not be accepted after three (3) days late. Should scheduling conflicts and/or family emergencies arise, students should contact faculty by phone, email or text as soon as possible. If students have spoken with faculty and an agreement is reached, late and make-up assignment extensions can be arranged without penalty.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

### **NURS 4303 – LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN HEALTH CARE**

(This schedule is subject to change by faculty as needed.)

Class Weeks will be from Sunday 12:00 midnight –Sunday 11:59 PM Central Time. All assigned work activities for the week must be completed by Sunday midnight unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. **Discussion Boards –** The initial entry for the week’s discussion board must be completed by Wednesday at 11:59pm. Two substantive responses to classmates’ initial entry must be completed by Sunday 11:59pm. No Late submission on Discussion Post will be accepted.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics &amp; Objectives</b>	<b>Learning Activities</b>
Week 1:	<p><b>Topic:</b> Nursing Ethics and the ANA Code of Ethics</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze the foundational ethical principles and nursing values that guide professional nursing practice and are embedded within the ANA Code of Ethics and Standards of Nursing Practice.</li> <li>2. Examine the structure, purpose, and key provisions of the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses, including its role in guiding professional conduct, accountability, and moral decision-making in diverse clinical settings.</li> <li>3. Apply ethical principles and the ANA Code of Ethics to clinical and professional scenarios to distinguish right from wrong and support ethical nursing judgment.</li> <li>4. Evaluate the nurse’s ethical responsibilities and professional accountability in upholding patient rights, maintaining professional integrity, and adhering to ethical and legal standards of nursing practice.</li> </ol>	<p>Syllabus Attestation - Due Friday</p> <p>Introduction Post- Due Friday</p> <p>Week 1 Discussion Post- Due Friday</p>



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Week 2:	<p><b>Topic:</b> Ethical Decision-Making, Patient Autonomy, and Family Conflict</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain core ethical principles (autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, and fidelity) as they relate to professional nursing practice.</li> <li>2. Apply an ethical decision-making model to analyze a clinical dilemma involving patient refusal of treatment and family disagreement.</li> <li>3. Evaluate the nurse's professional responsibilities in advocating for patient autonomy while addressing family concerns through ethical and therapeutic communication.</li> <li>4. Demonstrate ethical reasoning and professional judgment consistent with the ANA Code of Ethics and BSN-level nursing standards</li> </ol>	Week 2 Assignments due Sunday by 11:59pm
Week 3:	<p><b>Topic:</b> Autonomy in Nursing Ethics</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define and articulate the ethical principle of autonomy and its significance in professional nursing practice.</li> <li>2. Analyze clinical scenarios where patient autonomy may conflict with family preferences or clinical recommendations.</li> <li>3. Apply ethical frameworks and nursing standards (e.g., ANA Code of Ethics) to uphold patient autonomy while ensuring safe, evidence-based care.</li> <li>4. Demonstrate strategies for ethical advocacy and therapeutic communication that respect patient decision-making and support ethical, patient-centered care.</li> </ol>	Week 3 Discussion Post due Wednesday 11:59pm
Week 4:	<p><b>Topic:</b> Ethical Analysis of Pediatric Cases</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify and articulate complex ethical dilemmas in high-profile pediatric cases, including conflicting perspectives of patients, families, and healthcare institutions.</li> <li>2. Analyze clinical situations using ethical principles, such as autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice.</li> <li>3. Apply the ANA Code of Ethics to guide ethical reasoning and professional nursing decision-making.</li> <li>4. Demonstrate professional judgment and critical thinking in evaluating multiple perspectives and ethical frameworks.</li> <li>5. Reflect on implications for nursing practice, patient advocacy, and professional accountability in ethically challenging scenarios.</li> </ol>	Week 4 Assignment Due Sunday 11:59 pm



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Week 5:	<p><b>Topic:</b> Ethics in Organizations and Leadership</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the role of ethics in organizational nursing leadership and its impact on patient care, staff engagement, and quality outcomes.</li> <li>2. Analyze ethical dilemmas at the organizational level, including conflicts between policies, resources, and professional standards.</li> <li>3. Apply ethical frameworks and the ANA Code of Ethics to guide leadership decision-making.</li> <li>4. Evaluate strategies for promoting ethical culture within healthcare teams, including mentoring, policy development, and conflict resolution.</li> <li>5. Demonstrate professional judgment in analyzing leadership scenarios that balance ethical responsibilities, organizational priorities, and patient-centered care.</li> </ol>	Week 5 Discussion Post due Wednesday 11:59pm
Week 6:	<p><b>Topic:</b> Ethics in Mental Health Nursing</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify ethical issues in mental health nursing and describe how they impact patient care and clinical decision-making.</li> <li>2. Locate and critically analyze evidence-based, peer-reviewed literature related to ethical challenges in mental health nursing.</li> <li>3. Explain the role of professional nursing organizations in guiding ethical practice and policy in mental health nursing.</li> <li>4. Apply ethical reasoning and professional standards to analyze real-world scenarios in mental health nursing.</li> </ol>	Week 6 Assignment due Sunday by 11:59pm
Week 7:	<p><b>Topic:</b> Emotional Support for Healthcare Professionals &amp; the Role of Ethics Committees</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe the emotional and ethical challenges faced by healthcare professionals in morally complex clinical situations.</li> <li>2. Analyze the role of hospital ethics committees in supporting staff, patients, and families during ethical dilemmas.</li> <li>3. Evaluate strategies to revitalize and effectively utilize ethics committees in healthcare organizations.</li> <li>4. Apply ethical reasoning and professional standards to ethically complex patient care scenarios.</li> <li>5. Reflect on self-care strategies and institutional support systems to mitigate moral distress among healthcare professionals.</li> </ol>	Week 7 Discussion Post due Wednesday 11:59pm



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Week 8:	<p><b>Topic:</b> Cultural Competence, Social Justice, and Nursing Advocacy</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify and describe situations in patient care where cultural competence or social justice issues arise.</li> <li>2. Analyze strategies used to address cultural and social disparities in healthcare delivery.</li> <li>3. Recommend interventions to promote culturally sensitive, equitable, and patient-centered care.</li> <li>4. Examine the nurse's role in advocating social justice, including reducing health disparities locally and globally.</li> <li>5. Reflect on professional ethical responsibilities to promote equity, cultural awareness, and advocacy in nursing practice.</li> </ol>	Week 8 Assignment due Wednesday by 11:59pm
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### **COURSE EXPECTATIONS:**

Verbal and written responses to assignments incorporate evidence that the student has read appropriate assignments and is able to articulate information that reflects individual cognition and understanding of information. Most of the course learning activities will use reflective dialogue and integrative learning approaches to expand, clarify, find meaning, or extend students' understanding of course concepts, topics, and students' investigations into practice issues and reviews of literature. The course is designed to provide opportunities for you to participate in case analysis, demonstrate clinical reasoning, completion of e-learning assignments, and scholarly writing, make professional presentations, and engage in self-appraisal. APA format is used for written assignments.

Refer technical difficulties related to Blackboard Collaboration to IT resources as soon as possible.

### **Faculty and Student Picture and Biography:**

Faculty will submit a picture and summary of their educational and professional experiences that prepared them to teach in respective courses to be posted online.

During the first week of class, each student must submit a picture of themselves with a brief personal and professional biography including educational and clinical experiences and any personal information that highlights why they are choosing to seek a BSN degree.

### **ONLINE COURSES:**

Web courses (offered online) are not self-paced and require considerable work to meet requirements. Students should be prepared to devote approximately 12 hours per week to accomplish the work required for a 3-hour class (i.e., students should devote approximately the same study time for an online course as would be spent in a regular class with outside work requirements, a measure generally calculated at 3 hours outside work for each hour in class.) Students MUST have a reliable high-speed internet connection available on a regular basis for course work and other assignments whenever University computer laboratories are not open. Computer labs are open Mon.-Thurs., 8 a.m.-10 p.m., and Fri. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. University computer labs are not open on weekends and holidays, but computers are available at the Southwest Texas Junior College and Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College libraries. A student who fails to participate in assignments during any one work period may be subject to being withdrawn from class and given a grade of F. Students should regularly log in to their class.





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**STUDENT/FACULTY EXPECTATIONS IN THE TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESS:**

Learning is a shared endeavor based upon respectful and collaborative relationships between students and faculty. The learning activities designed for this course were developed based upon the following:

1. As adult learners we are partners in learning.
2. Faculty members serve as mentors, resource, guide, or coach and professional peers.
3. Our work and life experiences differ and serve to enrich our individual and mutual learning.
4. Each member of the class is committed to preparing for and successfully completing class learning activities.
5. Each member of the class will organize their time, learning goals, and activities to fully participate in the course and assignments.
6. Each member of the class can use computer technology and access resources via the Internet and other mobile technologies as needed for the course.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

- Announcements – Check announcements each time you log onto the course.
- Course email – Check course email frequently for communications and make sure your email address is current. Faculty will respond to inquiries and comments within 24 hours Monday- Friday.
- Use of technology: If you have any technical questions, problems or concerns with Blackboard, do not spend more than 15 minutes on any technical problem, seek help immediately. Contact the 24-7 Help Desk at: 1-888-837-2882 and/or [techassist@sulross.edu](mailto:techassist@sulross.edu).
- Responses to emails and course postings: Please respond to faculty requests and/or communications within 24 hours. Use course or Sul Ross email & if not available, mobile phone or texting between the hours of 9 AM and 6PM if possible. Messages received on the weekends or holidays will be answered by the next working day.
- Assignments: Assignments will be reviewed and returned with feedback/grade within 4 days of submission.
- Writing and use of APA: All written assignments and bulletin board postings will be submitted using the American Psychological Association (APA) Guidelines.  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01>

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:**

- Your attendance is expected at every class meeting.
- Readings and learning activities relevant to the weekly topic are identified in the course schedule and modules.



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- Scholarly and knowledgeable participation requires that you read assigned readings prior to joining the class discussions.
- If you have an emergency and cannot attend a class meeting or complete an assignment by the due date, you must contact your faculty by phone, email or text as soon as possible and make arrangements to make up the assignments.

### **RULES OF NETIQUETTE:**

The term “netiquette” refers to written and unwritten rules regarding appropriate communication on the Internet. It primarily applies to your interactions on the course Discussion Board, assignments both individual and group, and email communications.

1. Help create a community of scholars by encouraging a cooperative win-win attitude in which all members of the class are willing to work together, each contributing in their own way.
2. Be courteous and respectful to students and faculty in the course.
  - a) There is a difference between making a statement that is a critical appraisal of an idea and criticizing someone for their point of view.
  - b) Be careful with the tone of what you are communicating, sarcasm and subtle humor; one person’s joke may be another person’s insult.
  - c) Do not use all caps in the message box (it is considered shouting);
  - d) Do not use language that is inappropriate for a classroom setting or prejudicial in regard to gender, race or ethnicity.
3. Be helpful and be sure to do your part in group work so that assignments can be completed.
4. Common courtesy and good manners, along with proper use of grammar, sentence structure, and correct spelling, are essential when taking an online class.
  - a) Use a meaningful title in the Subject line. For e-mail, include course number. Use the person’s name you are writing to as a greeting in the first line of the message – this helps ensure you are writing to the intended person (group).
  - b) Close the post by writing your full name at the end of the message.
5. Emails and Discussion Boards are public, and the University archives all materials - Do not post anything too personal as all students in the class and your instructor will see what you write.
  - a) Keep the messages you post to the Email and Discussion Board relevant to the course and assignment and provide a rationale including references as appropriate to support your point of view.
  - b) Avoid duplication. Read the previous discussions before you comment or ask a question as the information may have already been covered.
  - c) When posting a response, make sure you identify the post to which you are responding.





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- d) If the topic you plan to address is covered in an existing thread, do not start a new thread.
  - e) When responding to a specific comment, quote only the relevant part of the comment and stay focused on the assignment.
  - f) Try not to lurk, meaning you are just reading and not participating.
6. Quality of online communications/postings is important
- a) It is not acceptable to present work or ideas of others as your own. Use APA format when you quote directly from a source-using quotation marks and provide the original author's name, year, and page or location in the body of the narrative; when you paraphrase a source – using your own words to explain your understanding of another's ideas or work – provide author and year in the body of the narrative. At the end of the posting provide the complete reference using APA format.
  - b) If the posting is going to be long, use paragraphs.
  - c) Do not overuse acronyms like you use in text messaging. Some of the participants may not be familiar with acronyms.
  - d) Just as you would proofread a formal paper, before posting an email or discussion.
  - e) Read what you have written for content.
  - f) Rethink what you have written for tone.
  - g) Reread what you have written for organization and coherence; and
  - h) Revise what you have written for grammar, punctuation and mechanics.
  - i) Once you submit your work, discussion, or e-mail, you cannot change what you have written

## **MANDATORY UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS**

### **Academic Honesty Policy:**

The University expects all students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is beyond reproach and to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. The University may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. Academic Dishonesty includes:

1. Copying from another student's test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files, data listings, and/or programs, or allowing another student to copy from same.
2. Using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test.
3. Collaborating, without authorization, with another person during an examination or in preparing academic work.
4. Knowingly, and without authorization, using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, soliciting, copying, or possessing, in whole or in part, the contents of a non-administered test.
5. Substituting for another student; permitting any other person or otherwise assisting any other person to substitute for oneself or for another student in the taking of an examination or test or the preparation of academic work to be submitted for academic credit.
6. Bribing another person to obtain a non-administered test or information about a non-administered test.



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7. Purchasing or otherwise acquiring and submitting as one's own work any research paper or other writing assignment prepared by an individual or firm. This section does not apply to the typing of a rough and/or final version of an assignment by a professional typist.
8. "Plagiarism" means the appropriation and the unacknowledged incorporation of another's work or idea in one's own written work offered for credit.
9. "Collusion" means the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work offered for credit.
10. "Abuse of resource materials" means the mutilation, destruction, concealment, theft or alteration of materials provided to assist students in the mastery of course materials.
11. "Academic work" means the preparation of an essay, dissertation, thesis, report, problem, assignment, or project that the student submits as a course requirement or for a grade.

**Statement for use of AI**

The rise of generative AI technologies—such as ChatGPT and DALL·E—has generated significant interest among students in our field. These tools can support a range of academic activities, including idea generation, deeper exploration of complex questions or problems, and creative engagement with course materials.

In this course, we may incorporate generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) to critically examine how such technologies can enhance our understanding of the subject matter. You will receive clear instructions regarding when and how these tools may be used, along with appropriate guidance on attribution where applicable.

**Please note: Any use of generative AI tools outside where specified guidelines permit will be considered a violation of academic integrity and treated as plagiarism.**

All academic dishonesty cases may be first considered and reviewed by the faculty member. If the faculty member believes that an academic penalty is necessary, he/she may assign a penalty, but must notify the student of his/her right to appeal to the Department Chair, the Associate Provost/Dean, and eventually to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs before imposition of the penalty. At each step in the process, the student shall be entitled to written notice of the offense and/or the administrative decision, an opportunity to respond, and an impartial disposition as to the merits of his/her case.

In the case of flagrant or repeated violations, the Vice President for Academic Affairs may refer the matter to the Dean of Students for further disciplinary action. No disciplinary action shall become effective against the student until the student has received procedural due process except as provided under Interim Disciplinary Action.



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## AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) STATEMENT

Sul Ross State University is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Qualified students with disabilities needing academic or other accommodations to facilitate full participation in our programs, services and activities should contact the Accessibilities Coordinator, Ferguson Hall Room 112, Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., 432-837-8203 at the Alpine campus.

## GENERAL CAMPUS REGULATIONS AND CONDUCT

All students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the University's functions as an educational institution. It is also expected that all students who enroll at Sul Ross State University agree to assume the responsibilities of citizenship in the university community. Association in such a university community is purely voluntary, and any student may resign from it at any time when he/she considers the obligation of membership disproportionate to the benefits. All students are subject to university authority, and those students whose conduct is not within the policies of the University rules and regulations are subject to dismissal. Students are responsible for abiding by all published University rules and regulations. Failure to read publications will not excuse the student from the requirements and regulations described therein. The SRSU Student Handbooks and other official University publications outline specific regulations and requirements.

**The Table below demonstrates which elements of DEC's, Essentials and QSEN are addressed in relation to course objectives.**

Objectives	TBON DEC's	AACN Essentials	QSEN
Examine cultural values, ethical principles and legal issues foundational to professional nursing.	I-A 1-4; I-D 1-5; II-C 2 b, 3; II-D 1-5; II-E 2-4 & 7-12	I-1-10; VIII	Patient-Centered Care; Ethics
Explore the role of reflective practice in examining personal and professional values and the impact of these on professional decision making and behavior.	I-B 2a, b; I-B 2, 3d; I-B, 4- 9; III-B5; 7	II-1-10	Patient-Centered Care; Professionalism; Safety
Evaluate ethical and regulatory implications of landmark court cases and contemporary health care issues.	I-A2; I-B1-8; III-C1, 2, 3; III-D1, 2, 3; III-E 14; III- F1-3; IVA1-4	V & VI	Safety; Quality Improvement
Apply a model of ethical decision making based on legal/ethical guidelines in clinical situations.	II-A 2b, c, 3; II-F3; III-A1- 6; IV-C4-8; IV-D2, 4, 6, 7; IV-F1-4	III & VI	Safety; Patient-Centered Care; Evidence-based Practice
Identify the professional nurse's responsibilities and accountability within professional scope of nursing practice to consumers of health care.	I-B4-7; I-C 1-6	IV	Patient-Centered Care; Safety; Evidence-based Practice