

# Student Failure

## Student Failure

At some time every preceptor has a student s/he believes will not be successful. Ideally, this determination should be made well before the preceptorship ends. Contact the faculty advisor early on to help resolve this situation and find solutions. Remedial measures and counselling by the faculty advisor should be documented to indicate that the student was aware of the problems, and efforts were made to help her/him resolve those problems.

Judging student performance is a challenging responsibility. Sometimes preceptors doubt their observations of the student or lack confidence to act on observations. Role conflict may exist when preceptors cannot sort out students' well-being from that of the patients'. The preceptor's caring attitude can also interfere in her/his objective evaluation of clinical performance. Preceptors may be anxious knowing the student may fail if they report their observations, rather than uphold a concern for patient safety. **If you feel unsure of your role as assessor and evaluator, or have concerns about a student, please contact the faculty advisor, who will be glad to meet with you, support you, and find strategies for success.**



Some **warning signs** that a student is not doing well are:

- The student does not ask questions.
- The student displays an unenthusiastic attitude towards being a nurse or caring for people.
- The student demonstrates unsatisfactory skill performance, especially in the area of safety.
- The student does not consistently demonstrate professionalism.

Students fail to meet course objectives for a number of **reasons**:

1. Competing priorities outside of school inhibit the ability to focus on the clinical experience, and sometimes prevent promptness and attendance.
2. Lack of self-directedness misplaces the locus of control for success on the preceptor, facility, or faculty.
3. Inability to grasp the basic competencies and requirements such as safety, professionalism, and the ability to multitask; and an inability to provide safe, appropriate, and competent care in an efficient and timely manner in accordance with individualized care plans.



If a student continues to be unsafe or unprofessional despite remedial measures, a learning contract may be implemented. Persistent unsafe and/or unprofessional behaviour may lead to failure of the practicum, regardless of accumulative grades or success in other clinical competencies.

Occasionally, a student will find that being a nurse is not what s/he expected and choose to leave. Recognize that people have different strengths and priorities and wish her/him well.

Sources: Hohler, 2003; Hrobsky & Kersbergen, 2002.

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