SON OP 40.415: Graduate Program Clinical Experiences Policy

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Clinical Experiences policy is to detail the process for establishing clinical experiences for graduate students and identifying and subsequently approving preceptors for clinical experiences. The Graduate Program faculty members recognize that a clinical experience with a preceptor provides the student an excellent opportunity to develop and participate in learning activities with an expert in a one-to-one relationship in the professional role.

REVIEW: All policies in the Graduate Program Manual shall be reviewed by the Graduate Program Associate Dean/Department Chairs by December 1 of even numbered years in collaboration with the Graduate Program Council. Final approval of the Graduate Program Manual is by the Dean.

POLICY/PROCEDURE
1.0 Policy

To achieve student learning outcomes, various Graduate Program courses require Graduate program students to spend time in clinical experiences working with preceptors to expand the students’ knowledge and skill base. The purpose of providing students with the opportunity to work with preceptors is to achieve course objectives through a meaningful educational experience with an individual identified as an expert in a particular area.

Individuals who serve as preceptors for students in the Graduate Program Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) clinical courses must meet the following qualifications:

a) Nurses: master’s degree in nursing from an accredited university; current RN license in the state where the student will engage in clinical experiences; authorization to practice as an advanced practice nurse in the state in which they practice; and practicing in the advanced nursing role for a minimum of one year. Experienced APRN preceptors who were certified before January 1, 2003 and do not hold a master’s degree in nursing may be approved by the program director.

b) Physicians: Doctor of Medicine or Osteopathy from an accredited university and currently licensed and practicing for a minimum of one year.

c) Other healthcare professionals: currently licensed in the state and population specialty in which the student will engage in clinical experiences; able to provide supervision and teaching in clinical settings designated as appropriate for advanced practice nursing Area of practice must be relevant to the educational clinical practice component.

d) Able to provide adequate supervision, teaching, and provide feedback of students for the achievement of clinical course objectives and learning needs. Although preceptors provide feedback, faculty are responsible for evaluating student clinical learning experiences.

e) Able to facilitate active participation of students in the delivery of health care.
Commitment to the concept of advanced practice nursing.

Individuals who serve as preceptors for Graduate Program students in the Leadership tracks (nursing education, administration, or informatics) must meet the following qualifications:

a) Formal education and professional experience as required for the professional role and practice area; preferably an earned graduate degree or its equivalent in a specialty area of practice.

b) State licensure as required for the professional role and practice area.

c) Clinical practice expertise derived from practical and theoretical preparation for individuals in clinical practice roles.

d) Administrative or management expertise derived from practical and theoretical preparation for individuals in administrative or public health positions.

e) Commitment to assist students to develop unique aspects of a particular role and meet defined learning objectives as established by the program of study.

Learning objectives to be achieved through the clinical experience guide the student’s activities while working with the preceptor.

Clinical experiences for students in the Graduate Program APRN clinical courses must meet the following definition of clinical practice hours: “Clinical practice hours refer to hours in which direct clinical care is provided to individuals, families, and populations in population-focused areas of NP practice; clinical hours do not include skill lab hours, physical assessment practice sessions, or a community project” (National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education, 2012, p. 9). Work hours as part of paid employment do not count as clinical practice hours for students in the MSN APRN clinical courses.

Clinical experiences for students in the Graduate Program Leadership track courses may include direct or indirect patient care experiences; observational experiences; interviews; participation in community events or local, state or national meetings relevant to the learning objectives; or other unique learning opportunities from which the student can achieve defined learning objectives. Clinical experiences may take place in the student’s place of employment if the experience clearly provides an opportunity to achieve specified learning objectives.

Course faculty must approve all preceptors, clinical sites, and student learning objectives for the clinical experience. Faculty approve preceptors based on preceptor qualifications (section 1.0) as well as students’ learning needs, and course and program objectives. School of Nursing faculty may serve as preceptors. The clinical experience and preceptor approval process is detailed in Section 2.0 below.

2.0 Procedure

1. Graduate Program graduate students, in conjunction with faculty, are responsible for identifying and obtaining clinical preceptors appropriate for course learning objectives in order to successfully complete all course requirements.

2. Under guidance from course faculty and support from designated staff in the TTUHSC SON Office of Student Affairs, students access the centralized electronic portal (TTUHSC SON GRAD CENTRAL Portal) to begin the process of clinical preceptor submission and to verify approval. The TTUHSC SON
GRAD CENTRAL Electronic Portal is maintained by School of Nursing Education Support Services Staff and utilized for formal documentation and communication of clinical preceptor procedures and processes.

3. After the preceptor is identified, the student accesses the electronic Preceptor Data Sheet and Letter of Agreement, completes the form and submits the form electronically through the TTUHSC SON GRAD CENTRAL portal.

4. Initial submission of the Preceptor Data sheet and Letter of Agreement is electronically forwarded to the identified preceptor to obtain the preceptor’s licensure, credentials and clinical site information and linked to the appropriate student. Clinical preceptors submit the requested information electronically via a secure link directed into the TTUHSC SON GRAD CENTRAL Portal to complete this form.

5. The TTUHSC SON Office of Student Affairs shall review all completed, submitted preceptor forms in a timely fashion to determine eligibility for clinical site approval and preceptor verification of licensure and certification. The Office of Student Affairs ensures that an affiliation agreement is either currently in place or needs to be secured for the clinical site being considered (School of Nursing OP 30.250 Memorandum of Understanding & Affiliation Agreement Policy). Once the affiliation agreement has been secured and verified, the Office of Student Affairs verifies preceptor licensure and certification. Following clinical site and preceptor verification, the preceptor form is forwarded to the appropriate faculty for final approval via the TTUHSC SON GRAD CENTRAL Portal. If a clinical site affiliation agreement or preceptor verification cannot be finalized for any extenuating circumstances, the Office of Student Affairs shall notify both the student and course faculty.

6. Prior to engaging in any clinical experiences or course activities, students must have final approval from course faculty. Course faculty determine and communicate final approval of preceptors to students electronically via the TTUHSC SON GRAD CENTRAL portal.

7. Once a preceptor is approved by faculty, preceptors receive confirmation electronically that the student has received approval to work with the preceptor to achieve the learning objectives detailed in the Preceptor Data Sheet and Letter of Agreement. The confirmation also provides electronic access to a formal orientation in the TTUHSC SON Preceptor Orientation Portal.

8. Preceptors are asked to provide feedback about the student’s performance utilizing the Clinical Performance Feedback Forms specific to each clinical course provided by students and/or faculty. Although preceptors provide feedback, faculty are responsible for evaluating student clinical learning experiences.

9. Course faculty develop and maintain on-going contact with preceptors as appropriate. Faculty are available to the preceptor via phone and e-mail. All Graduate Program faculty may perform clinical site visits at any time in the semester via phone, in person, or electronically based on course requirements and individual student needs. Graduate Program APRN faculty conduct at least one clinical site visit annually during population-focused courses. Graduate Program faculty visit leadership track students (nursing education, administration, or informatics) either in–person or by phone in approved clinical settings at least one time during the final practicum course.

10. Upon completion of the clinical experience, students are required to provide feedback regarding clinical sites and preceptors as directed within the specific course.

11. Designated staff in the TTUHSC SON Office of Student Affairs maintain databases of all individuals who serve or have served as preceptors for Graduate Program students and for all clinical sites.
   a) Databases for preceptors include title, discipline, credentials, licensure/approval/recognition, highest academic degree, years in role, site, type of clinical supervision, patient population, and number of students concurrently precepted.
   b) Databases for clinical sites include name of site, type of site (e.g., community health center, private practice, rural clinic, etc.), and client characteristics.

Reference: