NAU NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

School of Nursing

Virtual Classroom and Online Guidelines

for Students and Instructors

<u>Professional Classroom Behavior During Use of Video Conferencing</u>

The following guidelines were developed in response to a student survey administered at the end of the Fall 2020 semester. NAU School of Nursing (SON) faculty and staff want to ensure that each student has the opportunity to learn and participate in classes with a high level of professionalism that is expected and required of all nurses.

The following guidelines are for professional online communication requested by the students and professors of the SON:

1. Students will join class on time.
2. When on the Video Conference, enter your name as first and last name. If desired, include preferred pronouns.
3. Camera is to be on the entire time during the class.
    a. If you cannot have your camera on, this must be communicated to the professor <u>before</u> the start of the class.
    b. If you need to leave during the class for a short period of time, you must send a note to the professor and turn off your camera. You must return within at least 10 minutes.
4. Students are not allowed to drive while in a Video Conference class. This is a safety issue.
5. When not talking, microphone must be muted.
6. While in class, sit or stand, but do not lie down.

7. Limit distractions in your camera view. Use virtual backgrounds as appropriate to limit distractions of kids, pets, etc.
8. Please refrain from eating or smoking/vaping while on camera.
9. Classes conducted via Video Conference should be viewed the same as classes conducted in a physical setting. This means wearing suitable attire and acting in a professional and appropriate manner.
10. Please raise your hand if you wish to speak, either by using the raised hand feature in the Video Conference platform or physically raising your hand.
11. Always ensure that appropriate and professional commentary is used within the chat feature.

If a student is perceived by the professor to be communicating unprofessionally during an online interaction, the professor will request to have a meeting with the student.

Professors have been requested (by students) to do the following to make sure that each student's needs are met:

1. If possible, record classes and post the video link in Bb Learn or the current learning management system platform for later viewing.
2. Use class activities and discussions to keep the attention of the student and to engage in active learning.
3. Use breakout rooms sparingly.
4. Provide breaks during the class to allow for students to get away from the computer.
5. Require that students attend an office hour so that all students must check in with the professor.
6. Log on early to class or stay after class to answer student questions.

Recommendations for Creating a Successful Online Learning Experience

Netiquette, a social code that defines "good" online behavior is something to keep in mind during your online course interactions. Writing in discussion forums, course "walls" and email messages may be the only means of communication you have with classmates and instructors, so it is especially important to use written language effectively and responsibly.

Follow the guidelines below in order to communicate as a knowledgeable, respectful, and polite individual who is positioned to succeed professionally.

1. **Avoid using all capital letters.**

There's a time and a place for everything—BUT IN MOST SITUATIONS TYPING IN ALL CAPS IS INAPPROPRIATE. Most readers tend to perceive it as shouting and will have a hard time taking what you say seriously, no matter how intelligent your response may be.

This is true for both posting to online course walls or discussions and with personal email communications with your professors, advisors, and fellow students. Using appropriate capitalization and focusing on your tone when writing will help ensure that your virtual communication is appropriate and professional.

2. **Refrain from using sarcasm.**

Sarcasm has been the source of plenty of misguided arguments online, as it can be incredibly difficult to understand the commenter's intent. What may seem like an obvious joke to you could come across as off-putting or rude to those who don't know you personally. As a general rule, it is best to avoid sarcasm altogether in an online classroom. Instead, lean toward being polite and direct in the way you communicate to avoid misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

3. **Be accurate and factual.**

The internet is a vast place with information coming from sources that have varying levels of credibility and professionalism. It is important to include credible resources in all papers and posts. Be cautious when searching for sources online. NAU provides online library resources through **NAU Cline Library**. [Home - How do I...? - Research Guides at Northern Arizona University](#)

4. **Attempt to locate your own answer.**

If you're confused or stuck on an assignment, your first instinct may be to immediately ask your instructor a question. But before you ask, take the time to try to figure it out on your own using the materials available to you in BbLearn or the current learning management system platform and the internet.

For questions related to class structure, such as due dates or policies, refer to your syllabus and course FAQ first. Attempt to find the answers to any other questions on your own using a search engine. Then if your questions remain unanswered, reach out to your instructor.

At NAU, you also have access to a lot of support outside of the classroom including 24/7 technology support, student advisors, and library services to help you find answers about your classwork, technology use, or program.

5. Grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Always try to use proper punctuation, spelling and grammar when composing emails and posting in discussion forums. Trying to decipher a string of misspelled words with erratic punctuation frustrates the reader and distracts from the point of your message. While this is something you should pay attention to for all your virtual communication, it is especially important for the papers and assignments you complete.

If grammar, spelling, and punctuation are generally a weakness for you, do not become discouraged. At NAU, you have access to **The Writing Commons** where you can submit a paper to receive support and feedback on both your grammar and your writing overall. This is a free service. University Writing Commons | University Writing Commons (nau.edu)

Another NAU resource that is available for free to all students is the **Academic Support Centers (ASCs).** For writing assistance, the ASCs has a Composition Tutoring service which is offered in person or online and can be used for any class. Peer tutors are well-versed in APA and MLA formats, and basic structures of professional papers regardless of topic or subject.

Students can also access ASCs for help with the following:

- Time management skills.
- Familiarization with the NAU learning management system, such as Bb Learn.
- How to write a discussion board post.

The ASCs has a program called Peer Academic Coaching (PACs). Coaches meet with students individually and review exactly what is needed to support a student's academic success.

The phone number for the **ASCs** is 928-523-5524.

The website for **ASCs** is: www.nau.edu/asc

6. Set a respectful tone.

Every day may feel like casual Friday in an online classroom where you don't see anyone in person, but a certain level of formality is still expected in your communication with instructors. In addition to proper punctuation and spelling, it is good netiquette to use respectful greetings and signatures, full sentences and the "please" and "thank you" you use in real life.

7. Submit files the correct way.

Because students do not print assignments and hand them to their teacher in person, knowing how to properly submit your work online is key to your success as an online student. Online course instructors often establish ground rules for submitting assignments, like naming conventions to help keep things organized or acceptable file formats. Ignoring these instructions is a common example of poor netiquette. For example, instructors often like to provide comments and feedback on student's papers using the Review function in MS Word. If a student submits a paper as a PDF file, this approach for providing feedback is not available.

If students do not follow instructions, they are taking the risk that their instructor will not be able to find or open their assignment. Be sure to read the instructor's instructions carefully before submitting.

8. **Read first before responding.**

For discussion board assignments, take some time to read through each of the previous discussion post responses before writing your own response. If the original post asked a specific question, there is a good chance someone has already answered it. Submitting an answer that is eerily similar to a classmate's indicates to the instructor that you have not paid attention to the conversation thus far.

Remember, that because discussions can move fairly quickly, it is important to review all of the information before crafting your reply. Building upon a classmate's thought or attempting to add something new to the conversation will show your instructor you have been attentive to the discussion rubric expectations.

9. **Think before you submit.**

A passing comment spoken in class can be forgotten a few minutes later, but what you share in an online classroom is part of a permanent digital record. Whether or not privacy settings are in place, the internet tends to house things for a very long time, and what you say privately can easily become public.

Not only is it good practice to be guarded when it comes to personal information, you always want to be just as respectful toward others as you would be if you were sitting in the same room together.

HIPAA: In an online environment, the same holds true for protecting the information of your patients that you care for while in clinical rotations or within your employment venue. Be careful when posting clinical stories in your discussion forums or papers, and when sending emails and texts that you are not disclosing any patient identifying information. It is never appropriate to post photographs of patients or any image of clinical settings where you are completing your clinical coursework.

10. **Be kind and professional.**

Some online communication comes with a level of anonymity that doesn't exist when you're talking to someone face-to-face. Sometimes this leads people to behave rudely when they disagree with one another. Online students probably do not have the complete anonymity that comes with using a screen name, but you could still choose to use unkind or harsh communication poorly because of the distance between screens. Make a point to be kind and respectful in your comments, even if you disagree with someone.

Be advised that the discussion board forums are not venues for students to complain or vent. Be professional and respectful at all times. The discussion board area is meant for the exchange of

scholarly work and ideas, factual information and evidence-based practice. Opinions are welcomed when accompanied by empirical and peer-reviewed support.

In addition, practicing professional communication skills while you are in school will also serve you well in the workplace.

11. Appropriate Photos and Images

Your instructor may invite you to post a photo of you or your family when introducing yourself to the classroom within the discussion board. Be sure to post tasteful photos only. In BbLearn or the current learning management system platform for the NAU discussion forum, a photo may be uploaded; in these instances, a head shot or a photo of you wearing your NAU scrubs, would be most appropriate. If you ever have any concerns or questions regarding photos or images within the online learning environment, please reach out to your instructor.