

NURSING UNDERGRADUATE SOCIETY

TIPS & TRICKS GUIDE

DEAR CLASS OF 2023

Congratulations on your admission to the Faculty of Nursing! The next two years will be filled with wonderful opportunities that will supplement your growth as a prospective health care professional. It may seem overwhelming to enter a new program, but there is a community of students, faculty, and staff waiting to support you on your academic and clinical journey.

Our goal with this guide, written by your second-year colleagues, is to alleviate some of your concerns and to answer some of your questions about this nursing program's first year. While we understand some elements of the program will change from the past year, it is our hope that these opinions are still useful when the program begins.

Your second-year mentors are available to answer any questions you have on the class of 2023 Facebook group: Class of 2023 - Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing (UofT).

We can't wait to meet you during orientation!

- Maggie Ng (Mentorship Coordinator NUS)



WHAT DOES THE FIRST-YEAR SCHEDULE LOOK LIKE?

The first-year schedule consists of 3 courses each semester, with one of the courses containing the clinical component.

In the Fall Term you will have the following classes:

NUR 350: Introduction to Nursing Practice - in addition to synchronous and asynchronous online content, the course is complemented by mandatory on campus sim lab participation.

NUR 351: Introduction to the Discipline and Profession of Nursing

NUR 361: Introduction to Nursing in Health and Wellness

In the Winter and Spring terms your courses will be:

NUR 370: Pathophysiology and Pharmacotherapeutics (Jan-June)

NUR 390: Introduction to Community Health (Jan-April)

You will also cycle through the 3 clinical courses at 7 week intervals from Jan-June:

NUR 371: Introduction to Acute Care Nursing (Adult)

NUR 374: Introduction to Nursing Care of Childbearing Persons and Families

NUR 373: Introduction to Nursing Care of Children and Families



WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM CLINICAL PLACEMENTS?

For your placements, you will be placed in a clinical group consisting of 4-8 students and one Clinical Instructor (CI). During each clinical shift, you will be paired with a staff nurse and assigned to 1-2 patient(s). With the support and supervision of your CI and staff nurse, you will provide nursing care to your assigned patient(s).

The first day of every rotation is dedicated to familiarize you with the institution and the nursing practice in your unit. Students usually shadow a staff nurse during the first week of each clinical rotation as part of their transition into a new clinical setting. A typical clinical day will consist of time spent on the floor (performing nursing care and appropriate documentation as per institution policy; observing and performing nursing procedures, etc.), lunch, and a post-conference at the setting if space permitted by COVID. The day will be debriefed with your clinical group and the clinical instructor in the post-conference.

You will receive more information about clinical placements in your first week of NUR 361.

The following materials are ESSENTIAL for your clinical placements:

1. **SCRUBS:** Students are required to purchase "postman blue" coloured scrubs for clinical placements. You can buy them at the campus bookstore (in person or online) or at other stores (as long as they are the correct color). Dixie Uniforms is recommended by many students due to the wide selection of sizes and lengths available.
2. **STETHOSCOPE:** Most students this year purchased the Classic III Littman stethoscope. No specific colour is required. The UofT bookstore offers a selection of these stethoscopes; other students have also purchased their stethoscopes online (i.e stethoscope.ca). Getting a label or engraving is important if you misplace it on a unit!
3. **SHOES:** Shoes must be close-toed and cover your heels. Because you will be on your feet for many hours, wear something comfortable and non-slip. You should choose shoes you don't mind getting dirty, since hospitals have a variety of liquids and solids that can land on your feet! For health and safety reasons, shoes that are impermeable (no mesh!) and wipeable are mandatory. According to our experience, no specific color is required. However, most students chose to wear neutral-coloured shoes (white and black, specifically).

In most cases, CIs will send you an e-mail prior to your placements - this is a good opportunity for you to find out what materials you are allowed to use/bring in your unit (i.e notebook, watch, pen light). Some students wear compression stockings; however, you are not required to do so. During your first week of clinical, you can often gauge which materials are going to be most helpful to you.



WE HIGHLY RECOMMEND WAITING UNTIL CLASSES HAVE STARTED TO BUY YOUR BOOKS. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A BUNDLE OF THE REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS WITH ONLINE RESOURCES FOR FALL TERM COURSES.

WHICH TEXTBOOKS DO I NEED?

The U of T bookstore website allows you to generate a list of the required and supplementary textbooks for your courses.

You can purchase textbooks in hard copy or electronic format. Some of the textbooks used by upper-year students can also be found on other websites like Amazon, Chapters, and Facebook.

HOW DO I GET TO THE NURSING BUILDING?

The closest subway station to the Faculty's main building (155 College Street) is Queen's Park station at the corner of College St. & University Ave. The 506 College Streetcar also stops right outside of the Faculty at the corner of McCaul St. and College St.

Post-Secondary Student Monthly Passes for the TTC are available for \$128.15/month. To be eligible for this pass, you must obtain a TTC post-secondary photo ID, which can be purchased at the Bathurst Subway Station with proof of enrolment. Please visit the TTC website's fares & passes tab for more information on post-secondary student fares, as well as hours of operation for the Bathurst Station photo ID centre.



CAN I WORK DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR?

Students report varying experiences managing both program workloads and part-time jobs. During the first weeks of the program, you may want to assess your abilities and limitations. Others have worked from the beginning of Year 1 to its end, while others have even waited until the second term of the program to find employment. Several students have participated in nursing externships to strengthen their fundamental skills. In either case, time management and self-awareness are essential to your success in this program!

You must be available during all scheduled placement days even if the clinical schedule hasn't been finalized yet. You should ensure that any job you take on will not interfere with your clinical schedule.



WHAT ABOUT HEALTH AND DENTAL INSURANCE? OR USING THE GYMS ON CAMPUS?

All nursing students are eligible for the UTSU health and dental benefits plan! Make sure to familiarize yourself with your benefits at:

<https://www.utsu.ca/health/>

Information on coverage changes (including opt-outs and family enrolment), may also be found on the website above.

Gym fees are included in your tuition fee. Registered students can use facilities at Hart House and the Athletic Centre in the Fall and Winter terms.

The following website contains COVID-19 updates regarding their safety protocols, programs offered and the facility updates.

<https://bloomberg.nursing.utoronto.ca/coronavirus-updates/>



WHAT IS NUS?

The Nursing Undergraduate Society (NUS) is a council that represents undergraduate nursing students at UofT, ensuring that your voices are heard within the faculty and the greater university community. To get to know your NUS members, please visit our website:

<https://www.uoftnus.com>

There are some positions in NUS that are available for first year students! If you are looking to get involved in this council, we will be releasing more detailed information on the positions and the application process in September, so please stay tuned!

WHAT SUPPORTS DOES THE FACULTY HAVE?

Students have access to counselling services on-site at the Faculty of Nursing through an Embedded Wellness Counsellor. The Counsellor will offer brief counselling services to student tailored to the challenges presented by university life. The focus of counselling is on strengths, resiliency, and skills-building.

Students can call Health & Wellness at 416-978-8030 if they have any questions or wish to book/reschedule an appointment

For more information on the mental health services offered at UofT, please visit: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/mental-health-care/>

To contact our Faculty's administrative staff, please visit:

<https://bloomberg.nursing.utoronto.ca/current-students/academic-contact/>





Don't be hard on yourself. When the year starts and everyone is placed into their placements and starts sharing their amazing experiences, do NOT compare yourself or your clinical experience. Everyone has a different journey, a different patient population they are exposed to, and a different preceptor. As long as you are trying your best, coming to clinical prepared and creating learning opportunities for yourself that is all that matters.

Proof read your written assignments. Small errors tend to add up and lead to lower than expected grades on an assignment.

In doing written assignments, start early, do a rough draft of the full assignment, then revise over and over again. It's better to get all your ideas down first, then editing it to sound professional, rather than trying to write a "perfect" paper as you're typing it.

Get started on a sleeping schedule right away. Many of my friends in the program struggle with sleeping early the night before clinical, and as a result struggle to get up early or make it through the long 12-hour shifts. Try to have consistency in your sleep schedule where you can. Most helpful for me, was always waking up early the day before clinical, as this made sure I was extra sleepy the night before and could fall asleep early enough to get a restful sleep before the early-morning clinical shift.

My favourite thing to listen to while studying is Alpha Waves on youtube! I find it helps me tune out outside noise and I am able to focus on tasks much longer.

Being a student that commutes from Mississauga I have had to commute far to most clinicals and labs. I have learned the importance of leaving extra time during the commute in case there is traffic, an accident, etc. From commuting to clinicals and labs I was shocked at how much the fees accumulated but getting the student deal for Presto can help save some money. Another tip I found useful was using online resources to help with your learning. There are many helpful YouTube videos and websites available for nursing students.

Build a peer network on whom you can rely on if you need further explanation on a course related topic.

Make and print a blank template for collecting assessment data at clinical
Eat breakfast and stay hydrated before clinical
Take time for self care

Save money by having coffee or tea at home before leaving for class or clinical, and bringing homemade snacks or lunches where you can. While it seems like a small change, buying coffees and snacks in the hospital cafeteria really adds up, even when you're only there once a week.



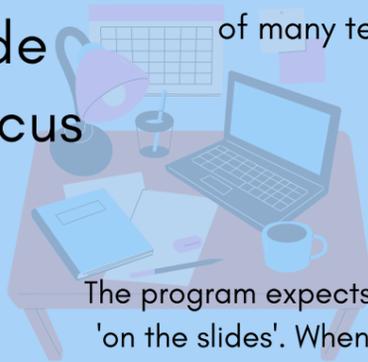
Organize classes/assignments on google calendar. Don't worry about which shoes to get for clinical, as long as they are comfortable you should get whatever works for you. The U of T library has the cheapest scrubs for clinical, and you only need 1-2 pairs max. Get compression socks (using the health insurance benefits) from Dundas University Health Clinic.

Make study/summary notes as you go. This program throws a lot of information at you very quickly. It can get extremely overwhelming to parse through all the information when you are preparing to start studying for an exam. I highly recommend taking time at the end of each week to go through all your lecture notes and make summary notes from them so that when it comes time to study, your "study notes" are already prepared.

Study for patho/pharm throughout the semester not just one week prior to the exam. Also, clinical time flies by so be selfish with your learning and ask a lot of questions

Try to make relationships with your clinical instructors! If you end up with a great CI that is in your area of interest, it can be very beneficial to you to build a relationship with them. They can offer career advice, write you reference letters, and overall be a resource to you.

When navigating NUR 370 (Patho/Pharm), actively engage yourself by creating drug charts or tables that make sense to you. For me this meant grouping certain medications together, and noting their similarities, differences, and unique side effect profiles. Most importantly, consider the nursing implications and considerations associated with each drug! Often this isn't covered as well in lectures, but will be the focus of many test questions and the NCLEX.



The program expects more of you than to just know what is 'on the slides'. When studying, truly try to engage with the information and think critically about how it may be presented in the context of a patient case study, or 'NCLEX' style question. Our exams are always application based, which can present as a challenge when the information is presented in a cut-and-dry manner in the lectures, it is often your responsibility to imagine how the information would play out in a clinical setting. Use the textbook online question banks, pre-made NCLEX-style quizlets, or even design your own questions. I've heard from many classmates that making their own questions on Anki or Quizlet was tremendously helpful, as you study actively just by creating the questions.

Things to bring to clinical: stethoscope, watch (with a seconds hand), multicoloured pen, small notebook, scrubs, nursing shoes
Study habits: study with friends online! It makes studying way more fun and bearable, and it's very helpful talking out certain concepts and topics with another person.

Graham Library is a great place to study for those who enjoy a more traditional, cozy, classic academia environment (think armchairs and fireplaces)!



It is going to be a lot more than you expect right at the beginning, there isn't an ease in to the program. Get prepared and start a study schedule to keep you on track from day 1. If doing online school, know when you do your best work and create a time period that is distraction free. Studying from home inevitably leads to more distractions, especially if living with others. Also, strategize your studying. You will have a lot of information in front of you at times (especially with required readings), don't get lost in the details, so start with big concepts and lecture material, and work on the smaller details later. Many times readings just help with understanding and materials discussed exclusively in the textbook aren't tested (this is not always true). Readings are generally meant to help build on lecture content.

One thing I wish I knew before starting the program is that I can study on my commute to and from my placement using the OneDrive app on my phone. To preface, my commute time to downtown Toronto placements is about 1 hour and a half in one direction (without delays on the TTC subway). Since January 2021, I learned that I can make my files offline on my OneDrive app and can access my lecture notes without connecting to wi-fi (which was beneficial on my TTC subway commute). When travelling to clinicals on public transportation, I recommend studying your notes this way if you have a long commute. When travelling back from clinicals on public transportation, I highly recommend using this time to relax by listening to music or maybe taking a light nap (if you can).

Study habits: read the slides and finish asynchronous lectures as well as the readings prior to synchronous lecture in order to ask for clarifications during the lecture when the professor is addressing the topic!

One tip for campus life, for those who identify as female, there are three gyms and one of them offers women-only hours, so if any females wish to exercise but don't feel comfortable in the gym around men, look at the Athletic Centre's website to learn when women-only hour happens. They happen once per day for one hour.

With covid - I found that making a sleep/study/break schedule helped immensely with finding that balance where I didn't feel overwhelmed. This schedule not only helped me with getting enough rest before clinical days, but also gave me a sense of "normal" in our current situation.

Commuting - I drive to most clinical sites and one thing that can get costly is parking. I found that parking in Toronto's public parking spaces were cheaper than parking at the hospitals themselves. I know many of our seniors used the TTC to get to clinical, but for those who drive and want to save some \$\$ this website is great for finding cheaper parking: <https://parking.greenp.com/>

For commuting tips if person lives up north-east (Scarborough) - Taking the train to finch line and stopping at college to walk to queen's park or university is actually a really cool walk that takes 5-10 minutes and get some exercise too.

In terms of insider knowledge - some study rooms in the libraries are usually bookable and can be used by students, sometimes people book it too but don't use it - Hence you can actually use it to make use of the rooms!

Furthermore, your UofT login can be used for many things such as to watch movies (online-on-demand movies) such as classics like Back to the Future! and many other perks with UTORid (Criterion-on-demand)

It's not all about grades, it's really learning about the information and be able to apply in the clinical setting. There are so many career options as a nurse, it doesn't always have to be bedside

A tip that I have for incoming students is to make use of UofT's insurance plan and get prescribed compression stockings. I found that they really helped with preventing any discomfort in the lower limbs that could result from being on your feet all day at clinical. I would also recommend taking advantage of the Health Sciences Writing Centre for assignments, as they provide very useful feedback.

Start your essays early and reach out to profs/TA's/CI's about your paper, they will most often provide really helpful advice and next steps.

Don't be afraid to get involved with activities on campus and within the faculty! Although it may feel like a lot to take on, if you are used to doing extra-curricular activities it will help you maintain a balance between life and academics. Especially if you are someone who is usually very busy, it helps with time-managing and being productive when you do sit down to study or write a paper.