

### Nursing Ethics Educator Proficiency Rubric

A Developmental Framework for Faculty Growth Across Four Levels of Proficiency

This rubric is intended for reflective self-assessment and professional development conversations. It may be used alongside the **Nursing Ethics Educator Self-Assessment Questionnaire** for a more detailed developmental review.

### How to Use This Rubric

This rubric is designed as a developmental tool for self-assessment, peer review, mentoring, and faculty evaluation in the context of nursing ethics education. It is not a summative evaluation instrument; rather, it is intended to support honest reflection and professional growth across ten competency domains.

**Level Descriptions:** Level 1 (Novice) reflects early-career faculty or those new to ethics instruction. Level 2 (Developing) describes faculty who are actively building skills. Level 3 (Proficient) reflects confident, evidence-informed practice. Level 4 (Expert) characterizes faculty who lead, contribute, and mentor in the field.

**Note:** An educator may demonstrate different levels across different domains. Progress is rarely linear, and reaching Level 4 in every domain is neither expected nor required. Domain 10 — Level of Comfort — reflects the affective and dispositional dimension of ethics teaching and is intended to complement, not replace, the knowledge and skill domains.

## ETHICS EDUCATION RESOURCE



| Domain / Competency Area                          | Level 1 Novice                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Level 2 Developing                                                                                                                                                                                               | Level 3 Proficient                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Level 4 Expert                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Knowledge of Ethics Content</b>             | Has basic familiarity with core principles (autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice) but limited depth; relies heavily on textbook definitions; minimal awareness of emerging ethical issues in healthcare.   | Demonstrates solid grasp of major ethical theories and frameworks; beginning to connect principles to clinical practice; some awareness of contemporary issues such as technology ethics or health equity.       | Comprehensive and nuanced knowledge of ethical theory, bioethics, and healthcare law; consistently integrates emerging issues (AI, genomics, social determinants); knowledgeable about institutional ethics structures.      | Mastery-level expertise across ethical theory, clinical ethics, policy, and law; recognized as a resource by colleagues; actively contributes to the field through scholarship, ethics committee work, or curriculum leadership. |
| <b>2. Facilitation &amp; Pedagogy</b>             | Primarily lecture-based; relies on slides and textbook content; limited use of discussion or active learning; uncomfortable with student disagreement or silence; tends to provide answers rather than guide inquiry. | Beginning to incorporate case studies and guided discussion; asks some open-ended questions; shows awareness of the need for student-centered learning but facilitation can feel controlled or teacher-directed. | Skilled at Socratic questioning and facilitating nuanced dialogue; uses simulation, role-play, and reflective exercises effectively; manages conflict constructively; draws out diverse perspectives without imposing views. | Expert facilitator who designs transformative learning experiences; seamlessly integrates narrative medicine, ethics rounds, simulation, and community-based learning; mentors colleagues in pedagogical development.            |
| <b>3. Bridging Theory &amp; Clinical Practice</b> | Keeps theoretical content largely separate from clinical application; uses generic or dated case examples; students report difficulty seeing relevance of ethics content to clinical work.                            | Makes some effort to connect theory to practice; uses relevant case scenarios but may lack clinical specificity; beginning to use clinical experiences as learning material.                                     | Consistently and skillfully connects ethical frameworks to current clinical realities; draws on students' clinical experiences; helps students navigate the theory-practice gap with concrete strategies.                    | Masterfully integrates theory and practice; collaborates with clinical partners to ground ethics teaching in real-world complexity; students regularly apply ethical reasoning fluently in clinical settings.                    |

| Domain / Competency Area                             | Level 1 Novice                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Level 2 Developing                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Level 3 Proficient                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Level 4 Expert                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>4. Managing Diversity &amp; Cultural Humility</b> | Applies a single ethical framework without acknowledging cultural variation; may inadvertently silence minority viewpoints; limited awareness of how culture, religion, or identity shape ethical perspectives.          | Acknowledges diversity in values but may struggle to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue; beginning to distinguish between personal, cultural, and professional ethical obligations; shows developing awareness of positionality. | Creates inclusive environments where diverse viewpoints are genuinely respected; skillfully distinguishes personal values from professional ethics; helps students develop cultural humility as an ethical competency.            | Exemplifies cultural humility in teaching and practice; actively designs curriculum to address structural racism, social justice, and health equity as ethical imperatives; models courageous cross-cultural engagement.               |
| <b>5. Supporting Student Moral Development</b>       | Addresses ethics primarily as rule-following or compliance; limited attention to students' moral distress or emotional responses; may dismiss student concerns about clinical experiences as naivety.                    | Recognizes that students experience moral distress; provides some space for reflection; beginning to support development of moral reasoning beyond rule-following; occasionally uses journaling or debriefing.                   | Intentionally fosters moral reasoning, ethical sensitivity, and moral courage; regularly debriefs clinical experiences; normalizes moral distress as a professional reality while equipping students to manage it constructively. | Designs comprehensive developmental pathways for ethical identity formation; supports students through moral residue and distress with sophistication; cultivates moral courage, professional integrity, and ethical leadership.       |
| <b>6. Assessment of Ethical Competence</b>           | Primarily uses multiple choice or short-answer tests to assess ethics knowledge; limited ability to evaluate moral reasoning or ethical sensitivity; feedback is surface-level and evaluative rather than developmental. | Beginning to use case-based assessments or reflective writing; provides more substantive feedback; shows awareness that ethics requires performance-based assessment but tools are still underdeveloped.                         | Uses a range of valid assessment strategies including reflective journals, ethical case analyses, simulation debriefs, and peer dialogue; feedback promotes deeper reasoning; assessment is aligned with learning outcomes.       | Designs and evaluates sophisticated, multi-modal ethics assessments; contributes to program-level assessment of ethical competence; uses assessment data to drive curriculum improvement; may publish or present on ethics assessment. |

| Domain / Competency Area                        | Level 1 Novice                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Level 2 Developing                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Level 3 Proficient                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Level 4 Expert                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>7. Addressing the Hidden Curriculum</b>      | Unaware of or avoidant of the gap between formal ethics teaching and clinical realities; does not address ethical lapses students observe in practice; may inadvertently reinforce cynicism.                        | Acknowledges that clinical environments sometimes conflict with classroom ethics teaching; beginning to use student clinical observations as learning material; supports students somewhat in processing dissonance. | Actively addresses the hidden curriculum; uses observed ethical lapses as powerful teaching moments; helps students develop resilience and moral courage without becoming desensitized; models ethical practice personally.  | Advocates systemically for alignment between formal and informal curricula; engages clinical partners in ethics education; leads institutional efforts to foster ethical organizational cultures; models and teaches reflective practice. |
| <b>8. Professional Role Modeling</b>            | Limited explicit awareness of their role as an ethical model; may demonstrate inconsistency between values taught and personal behavior in the classroom; ethics treated as content to cover rather than to embody. | Shows awareness of the importance of modeling ethical behavior; demonstrates respect, fairness, and transparency in most interactions; occasional inconsistencies between espoused values and classroom behavior.    | Consistently models the ethical virtues and professional behaviors they teach; transparent about their own ethical reasoning and uncertainty; demonstrates intellectual humility, fairness, and respect in all interactions. | Universally regarded as an ethical exemplar by students and peers; demonstrates moral courage in institutional settings; integrates ethical reflection into their own professional life visibly and authentically.                        |
| <b>9. Ongoing Development &amp; Scholarship</b> | Limited engagement with ethics beyond assigned courses; does not regularly read ethics literature or attend relevant professional development; ethics teaching is static and rarely updated.                        | Participates in some professional development related to ethics; beginning to update course content to reflect current issues; shows interest in improving ethics pedagogy.                                          | Actively pursues professional development in ethics and pedagogy; engages with current literature and contemporary bioethics debates; may serve on ethics committees or participate in professional organizations.           | Contributes original scholarship in nursing ethics or ethics education; presents at conferences; mentors other faculty; leads institutional or professional initiatives; regarded as a leader in the field.                               |

| Domain / Competency Area                         | Level 1 Novice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Level 2 Developing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Level 3 Proficient                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Level 4 Expert                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <b>10. Level of Comfort with Ethics Teaching</b> | Experiences significant anxiety or avoidance when teaching ethics; prefers to stay close to prescribed content and deflects emotionally charged or controversial questions; may convey discomfort to students through tone, brevity, or topic redirection; ethics feels like an obligation rather than a professional strength. | Teaches ethics with growing confidence in familiar content areas but feels noticeably less at ease with ambiguous, contested, or emotionally loaded topics; beginning to tolerate productive discomfort in the classroom; occasionally reflects on personal values and their influence on teaching; seeks support when encounters feel beyond current capacity. | Demonstrates consistent composure and presence across a range of ethics topics, including morally complex or emotionally charged content; models intellectual humility and openness to uncertainty; uses personal discomfort as data rather than a signal to retreat; reflects regularly on how identity, experience, and values shape their ethical stance and teaching. | Leads from a place of grounded ethical confidence; openly names and navigates discomfort, ambiguity, and moral complexity as a visible teaching practice; cultivates psychological safety for students and colleagues; serves as a resource for peers who struggle with ethics teaching; integrates ongoing reflective practice as a cornerstone of professional identity. |

## Answer Key & How We Measured

Each column corresponds to a proficiency level. Responses are based on levels of development in teaching ethics. They are assigned numeric points corresponding with those levels and added together as a running total. The total falls within assigned ranges to indicate an appropriate pathway.

| Q   | Competency Area                        | A = Novice | B = Developing | C = Proficient | D = Expert | Scoring                     |
|-----|----------------------------------------|------------|----------------|----------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| Q1  | Knowledge of Ethics Content            | 1 pt.      | 2 pts.         | 3 pts.         | 4 pts.     | = Score Q1                  |
| Q2  | Facilitation & Pedagogy                | 1 pt.      | 2 pts.         | 3 pts.         | 4 pts.     | = Score Q2 + Score Q1, etc. |
| Q3  | Bridging Theory & Clinical Practice    | 1 pt.      | 2 pts.         | 3 pts.         | 4 pts.     | = Q3 score + previous, etc. |
| Q4  | Managing Diversity & Cultural Humility | 1 pt.      | 2 pts.         | 3 pts.         | 4 pts.     | = new Q score + total       |
| Q5  | Supporting Student Moral Development   | 1 pt.      | 2 pts.         | 3 pts.         | 4 pts.     | = new Q score to total      |
| Q6  | Assessment of Ethical Competence       | 1 pt.      | 2 pts.         | 3 pts.         | 4 pts.     | = new Q score to total      |
| Q7  | Addressing the Hidden Curriculum       | 1 pt.      | 2 pts.         | 3 pts.         | 4 pts.     | = new Q score to total      |
| Q8  | Professional Role Modeling             | 1 pt.      | 2 pts.         | 3 pts.         | 4 pts.     | = new Q score to total      |
| Q9  | Ongoing Development & Scholarship      | 1 pt.      | 2 pts.         | 3 pts.         | 4 pts.     | = new Q score to total      |
| Q10 | Level of Comfort with Ethics Teaching  | 1 pt.      | 2 pts.         | 3 pts.         | 4 pts.     | = new Q score to total      |

## Interpreting Results

Review your responses (which are color-coded as shown in the above columns). Look for patterns and identify where you have both strengths and opportunities, and can improve. Consider the following reflection questions:

- In which domains did you most consistently select Level 3 or Level 4 responses? What factors have contributed to your strength in those areas?
- In which domains did you select Level 1 or Level 2 responses? What specific knowledge, skills, or experiences might help you advance in those areas?
- How does your comfort level (Domain 10) align with your knowledge and skill domains? A high-knowledge, low-comfort profile may suggest different professional development priorities than a high-comfort, lower-knowledge profile.
- Are there results that surprised you? Consider seeking peer feedback to triangulate your self-perception.