



University of Victoria  
Nurse Practitioner Patient Programs

# Standardized Patient Handbook

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# Introduction

## Territory Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the Lək'ʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm / Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək'ʷəŋən and WSÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

## The UVic Nurse Practitioner Program

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are advanced-practice nurses who practice independently as primary-care providers or in more specialized roles. NPs can diagnose conditions, order tests, prescribe medications, make referrals, and help patients across the lifespan to manage their health. The Nurse Practitioner Program in the School of Nursing at the University of Victoria was founded in 2003 and 10 students graduated in the first class. Since then, cohort numbers have grown rapidly so that in 2026, 50 graduates will join the ranks of practicing NPs in British Columbia.

## What Is Simulation?

One of the most valuable elements of education of health professionals is *simulation*. Simulation is a type of experiential learning that mimics real encounters between patients and nurse practitioners. In these encounters, students learn to perform physical exams, effective communication and interviewing, diagnostic skills, and treatment and management. To avoid risk to real patients, and to provide consistency and learning opportunities not possible in clinic, patients are portrayed by trained Standardized Patients.

## What Is a Standardized Patient?

A Standardized Patient (SP) is trained to portray the physical and emotional characteristics of the patient in the simulated case and to answer questions about the patient's medical and social history. SPs combine acting and education skills to play a unique part in simulation work.

We welcome SPs as part of our team:  
we couldn't do this work without you!

# Contacts

## Staff

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*for questions about specific SP events, SP training, and payments*

## Website

### Patient Programs website

For basic information about the Standardized Patient program and also about Volunteer Patients (a separate role); please feel free to share this link (and this handbook) with anyone who may be interested in this work:

<https://www.uvic.ca/health/nursing/graduate/nurse-practitioner/np-patient-programs/index.php>

### Nurse Practitioner Program website

For information about the Nurse Practitioner Program:

<https://www.uvic.ca/health/nursing/graduate/nurse-practitioner/index.php>

# Requirements for SPs

## Standardized Patient Skills

A Standardized Patient does *not* need to be a trained actor, or even to have acting experience (although this is often an advantage). SPs do need the following skills and abilities:

- Portray **physical attributes** (for example, convey pain through facial expression or fatigue through posture)
- Portray **emotional states** (for example, distress, depressed state, or anxiety)
- Maintain a **consistent portrayal** over multiple consecutive repetitions of a simulation
- **Accept feedback** and incorporate any adjustments into their portrayal
- Maintain **stamina** to participate in multiple rounds of simulation during an event
- **Memorize and retain** considerable detail about the case assigned
- **Provide feedback** to students (*required only for selected events*) in a constructive, professional, and empathetic manner

## Standardized Patient Responsibilities

We rely on you as a Standardized Patient to:

- **Fulfil commitments** made in taking on a role: to **arrive on time and prepared** for training and events, and give as much notice as possible if you're not able to attend due to illness or an emergency. Organizing simulation events involves hundreds of people and complex scheduling worthy of a moon rocket launch. We count on you!
- Be **prompt** with email communication: we expect replies to emails within 24-48 hours
- Be **prepared to use the technology required for virtual training and events**
- Be **professional** when interacting with others and handling confidential information
- **Refrain from seeking medical advice** from students or examiners
- Completely **avoid using alcohol or drugs** in the hours before, or during, program events
- Completely **avoid smoking or vaping** during events

## Required Documents

The NP Program requires Standardized Patients to complete these documents either the first time the SP is signed on to a role, or before each event, as applicable:

- Release of liability
- Confidentiality agreement
- Consent for photography or videography
- Application for direct deposit

# Simulation Events

## Types of Events

Standardized Patients are an essential part of a variety of simulation-based learning events in the Nurse Practitioner Program. We'll share full details of timing, location, and format with you before each event you are booked for, but this section gives you an overview.

### OSCEs

#### What

Observed Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs, pronounced “oz-keys”) are examinations in which students are evaluated on their clinical skills. Each student moves individually through several stations, each of which involves a Standardized Patient and an examiner (an instructor or community nurse practitioner). The simulation in each station may involve *one or more* clinical tasks: **taking a medical history, performing a physical exam, or discussing with the patient how to manage their condition**. In OSCEs, SPs do *not* give feedback to students.

#### Where

Some OSCE days are held **in person** and others are **virtual** sessions held on Zoom.

#### When

Each simulation typically takes **10 minutes**. Students have additional time for preparation and debriefing (not involving the SP). Each Standardized Patient will usually engage in **9-12 rounds** of simulation of their case during an OSCE. In-person OSCEs have all simulation rounds in the morning, ending at lunchtime (lunch is then provided for SPs). Virtual OSCEs are more spread-out, and there are rounds in the morning and afternoon, separated by a lunch break.

### Virtual Diagnostic Reasoning Days

#### What

Virtual Diagnostic Reasoning Days (VDRs) offer a series of simulations of virtual-care (telehealth) visits. VDRs allow students to polish their diagnostic skills as well as the unique skills required for virtual care. Students work in groups of 2-3, with one student designated as the lead NP to engage with the SP. (The lead NP may consult with their peers at times, but the SP engages in simulation only with the lead.) Also present in each station is a facilitator (an instructor or community nurse practitioner). The simulation in each station always involves **taking a history** and consideration of what **physical examination or test results** are needed. Some VDRs also require students to develop a **management plan** and discuss it with the patient. SPs do *not* give feedback to students during a VDR.

## Where

VDRs are **virtual** sessions held on Zoom.

## When

Each round takes 45 minutes in total, including preparation and debriefing time. In some events, the SP participates in **12 minutes** of simulation; in other events, there are two parts to the simulation: **10 minutes in the first part, then another 8 minutes** after a pause for students to consult together. Each SP will usually participate in **6 rounds** of simulation on a VDR Day: 3 in the morning and 3 in the afternoon, separated by a lunch break.

## Courageous Conversations

### What

This event simulates challenging situations such as sharing a serious diagnosis or dealing with concerns about abuse and the cases tend to be more complex compared to cases for OSCEs or VDRs. Students work in small groups of 5-7 with one student designated as the lead NP for each round of simulation, with consultation with their peers as needed. A facilitator (instructor or community NP) is always present. The focus for students is more on **communication and interviewing** skills rather than medical details. There are no physical examinations. SPs have an opportunity to offer feedback to students.

## Where

Courageous Conversations simulations are held **in person**.

## When

Each round of a Courageous Conversations event takes 55 minutes in total, including time for preparation and debriefing. The simulation portion takes about **20 minutes, plus about 5 minutes for the SP to give feedback**. Each SP will usually participate in **6 rounds** of simulation: 3 in the morning and 3 in the afternoon, separated by a lunch break.

## Simulated Clinics

### What

In the first year of their program, student nurse practitioners are introduced to simulation in *simulated clinics* (“sim clinics”). These are not examinations; instead the focus is on the learning experience. As the name suggests, sim clinics mimic a patient visit to an NP in clinic. Students work in pairs with one designated as the lead NP. An examiner (instructor or community NP) is always present. Sim clinics require students to **take a history** and **perform a physical exam**, then to determine their **diagnosis**. SPs do *not* give feedback in simulated clinics.

## Where

Simulated clinics are held **in person**.

## When

Each round of a sim clinic takes 40 minutes in total, including time for preparation and debriefing. The simulation portion usually takes about **25-35 minutes** (timing is more flexible here, so can vary considerably). Each SP will usually participate in **8 rounds** of simulation: 4 in the morning and 4 in the afternoon, separated by a lunch break (lunch is typically provided).

## MOSCEs

### What

Also in the first year of their program, student Nurse Practitioners are introduced to the OSCE format through *modified* OSCEs (MOSCEs) which are slightly simpler in content compared to full OSCEs. Students work in pairs with one designated as the lead NP. The lead may consult with their partner at times, but only the lead engages with the SP. An examiner (instructor or community NP) is always present. MOSCEs require students to **take a history** and **perform a physical exam**, then to determine their **diagnosis**. SPs do *not* give feedback.

### Where

MOSCEs are held **in person**.

## When

MOSCE rounds take about 35 minutes, including time for preparation and debriefing. The simulation portion takes about **30 minutes**. Each SP will usually participate in **5 rounds** of simulation in this half-day event, ending at lunchtime (lunch is typically provided).

## On the Day of an Event

### Wellness Check

Strictly speaking, a wellness check happens the day *before* an event. We will ask you to email or text us the day before an event to let us know that (we hope) you are feeling well and expect to attend the following day. Barring a bout of food poisoning that evening or another last-minute emergency, the chances are good that if you're feeling well the day before, you'll be present on the day of the event. If you're not well, we can alert the back-up they may be needed.

### Preparing for Virtual Training and Events

By the time you log in to Zoom for training or on the morning of a virtual event, be prepared:

- Make sure your **Zoom application is updated** (don't wait until log-in time to discover your computer has to install an update and restart, which can take lots of time!)
- Make sure your **camera is properly connected and your microphone works**. You may need to adjust Zoom settings, so be sure to do this well before log-in time.
- Make sure you know how to **turn your camera and microphone on and off**.
- Know how to **change your screen name** (this is important for events, but not necessary for training sessions); we'll cover this in training.

## **Parking**

If you're hired for an in-person event (our in-person events are held on the UVic campus), we'll provide you with a parking code for the day. This will cover parking in spaces that are *not* marked "reserved" or "short-term." Watch those signs! The NP Program is not responsible for any parking tickets if you enter the code incorrectly or park in a reserved or short-term spot.

## **Event Arrival Time**

You are paid from the time we set as your arrival time for in-person events, or from log-in time for virtual events. This time is set to allow you to settle in to prepare for your role, meet the examiner/facilitator in your station, and for us to release back-ups and attend to other last-minute preparations. Please be aware of the demands on staff in the time leading up to the dry run and the first round of simulation – if you have questions about payments or future SP work, etc., please save them for later!

## **Orientation**

For online events, we hold a brief orientation for SPs before the event starts in the morning. For in-person events, there is no further orientation beyond the preparation and training session you'll have completed.

## **Dry Run**

On the morning of an OSCE (both in person and virtual), we hold a real-time dry run. The examiner in your station will play the student and we will make simulation timing announcements. The examiner will ask you the same sorts of questions you may expect from the students you'll be seeing and may quickly run through any physical exam. The dry run is a chance for you and the examiner to settle into the case; you may ask questions (especially helpful if there are any lingering doubts about physical exams, etc.), and we'll make sure the timing announcements are running smoothly.

## **Debriefing Periods**

All simulations are followed by a debriefing portion in the station. If you are in a virtual role, you'll turn off your camera and microphone. If you are in an in-person role, you might be asked to step outside the room to allow the student and examiner to debrief in private.

## **Examiner Marking**

Examiners are responsible for assessing each student's performance. They may be using a detailed checklist to do so and may also be marking answers to written questions and making notes for the debriefing portion. They often need the time between rounds to complete this marking, so keep this in mind when engaging in conversation between rounds.

## **Changes to the Case**

To maintain standardization of each SP's performance, and consistency for students, we typically do not allow changes to case details or performance characteristics during an event.

You'll discuss consistency in your training session. If an examiner asks that you change an aspect of your portrayal and you have any concerns that this would affect consistency, ask the examiner to check with the Coordinator of Clinical Training or a course instructor during or immediately after the dry run – *before* the event begins.

## Lunch

For most (but not all) in-person events, we provide lunch for SPs and examiners, usually with vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options. We may have light refreshments available on arrival or during breaks (coffee, fruit, granola bars, etc.).

## Confidentiality and Privacy

We take the security of our simulation materials very seriously, not only for academic fairness to students but also because of the overwhelming difficulty of replacing a case that can't be used because details have become known. Developing and refining the cases we use in our events takes hundreds of hours and we want to avoid losing those in a compromised case.

We'll ask you to sign a confidentiality agreement when you become a Standardized Patient. This means treating materials with care and not discussing details with anyone outside the simulation program. We ask you to:

- **Permanently delete** case materials you have stored on your computer or in email folders after the event has finished.
- **Securely shred** any paper copy of materials you may have printed for your own use (you can give them to us at an in-person event as we have secure shredding on site).
- **Do not share details of cases in conversations or on social media** about your work as an SP (you can of course share about the work that you do, but avoid specifics such as "I'm playing a patient with asthma.")
- **Do not discuss student performance** with others. It's fine to say "those NP students are terrific" (we hope that will be your opinion!), but not to mention a student by name or even refer to a specific student without using their name.

## SP Safety and Comfort

Your safety and comfort as a Standardized Patient are top priorities for us. Your work is challenging (and, we hope, rewarding), and we want to support your wellbeing to avoid burnout or distress.

## Choice in Roles

If there are certain **health concerns that you would prefer not to portray** in simulations, let us know when you first apply to the program or at any time afterward if you discover that certain topics are uncomfortable for you. Some SPs, for example, prefer to avoid portraying challenging

mental health concerns, or cases that involve abuse. You do not need to share your reasons for avoiding certain roles.

Let us know if you **prefer to avoid cases that involve physical exams**, or physical exams of certain body parts (perhaps you have arthritis in your knees, for example, and prefer not to undergo repeated knee exams).

### **Uncomfortable Situations**

If you have an experience during a simulation event that you find concerning, we hope you will feel safe to share this with us. Alert the examiner in your station or the Coordinator of Clinical Training or NP Program Manager (see the contacts section of this handbook). We want to hear about troubling interactions so we can ensure the safety and comfort of all those involved in our program and help all involved in our programs learn from difficult experiences. Your concern will be treated confidentially.

### **Self-Care**

SP work is demanding. For the most part, SPs accept this and even thrive with the challenge, but please do look after yourself and your wellbeing. Plan for how you'll restore your energy after a long and demanding day. Reward yourself for all that you've done to contribute to the education of new nurse practitioners!

# Training

## Training Session Format

For each of our simulation events, we'll have 2-5 stations running the same case simultaneously. That means we'll have several Standardized Patients taking on the same role (including a back-up). **All SPs covering the same role will train together as a group.** Training together means each SP can see how others are portraying the role, and as a group we can determine the best way to handle certain challenges, such as how distressed to appear (and how much distress is too much!). Many SPs tell us that collaborating on establishing the character is one of the most enjoyable parts of preparing for a role.

**All training sessions are held virtually**, on Zoom, even if the actual event will be held in person. A training session typically lasts 1.5-2 hours.

**You are expected to come to training with the details of your case memorized** (being “off-book” is the term in the acting world), so that you can participate without having to rely on your case materials.

## Scheduling Training Sessions

The Coordinator of Clinical Training will send all SPs covering the same role several possible time slots for a training session and ask you to reply with your availability for each slot. The goal is to find a mutually convenient time for all to meet, and this is juggled with finding times for groups of SPs covering other roles. Please reply within 24-48 hours with your availability so we can determine a date as soon as possible and allow you to release holds you may have put on your calendar for the other potential times.

## Training Session Agenda

During your training session, you'll cover these areas:

- **Introductions**
- **Housekeeping** details: confirming event date, time, location, schedule of the day; confirming all required paperwork has been received by the NP Program
- **Wellness check:** reminder to contact us the day before the event to confirm you are feeling well and expect to attend
- **Key principles** of SP work: consistency, answering only the question asked, not volunteering extra information, deliver your opening line verbatim, how to handle unexpected questions during the simulation, etc.

- **Review of the case:** a read-through to get everyone onto the same page (so to speak) and go over any questions or inconsistencies
- **“Progressive interview”** (more familiarly known as a “round robin”): the Coordinator of Clinical Training, acting as the student NP, conducts a run-through of the simulation by asking a cluster of questions of each SP in turn so that by the end of the round, the entire simulation has been completed. This means an individual SP will not complete an entire run-through of the simulation, but will have performed part of the role and observed others.
- **Physical examination:** the trainer will share details on how to accurately respond to students’ actions during a physical exam (for example, to display pain when a student presses gently in one area of the abdomen but not another, reflecting the reality of the clinical case). The trainer will also explain what students may ask the SP to do during an exam (for example, display the range of motion of the elbow joint). The case materials shared with you may also contain links to videos that show certain specifics of physical examinations so you can see what they look like.
- **Group discussion** to agree (with the guidance of the Coordinator of Clinical Training) on the level of emotiveness to display, how to convey certain attributes, and so on. Also what is acceptable to share or withhold according to the principle of answering only what is asked: sometimes this is clear, but other times it seems to be a grey area, so it’s helpful for the group to explicitly address these issues together.

# Hiring and Compensation

## Applying to NP Patient Programs

All prospective Standardized Patients submit an application to NP Patient Programs that collects key information, including **personal information**, which is collected under section 26(c) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), RSBC 1996, c.165, for the purposes of administering UVic Nurse Practitioner Patient Programs. Information is shared with program staff only on a need-to-know basis.

## Initial Meeting

Once we've reviewed your application form, we'll meet with you, usually on Zoom, so we can get to know you a little more and you can ask questions. We might work through a simple simulation scenario – very informal, very friendly, no preparation needed! This is just to give you a feel for what simulations are like and helps us identify the roles you might be most suited for.

## How SPs Are Selected

We take several things into account when selecting Standardized Patients for roles. First, we match **demographic characteristics** such as age, gender, or ethnicity, where these are relevant to the medical details of the case. Sometimes, **physical characteristics** are important, such as being quite burly or slim. We might avoid selecting a particular SP if they have physical features that could confuse students in a particular simulation. For example, for a knee-pain case, we may avoid hiring an SP who has a real surgical scar on their knee so that students don't wonder if a previous surgery is responsible for the simulated patient's symptoms.

We also take into account the **SP's preferences and experience**. Some particularly like certain types of roles, or wish to avoid others. We usually start novice SPs with simpler cases and offer more challenging roles as they gain experience.

## Time Commitment

When you are hired as an SP for an event, you commit to the self-study preparation and training for that role, and for the hours of the event specified. We hire for each event in each term separately, so your commitment ends with the particular event you are hired for. That said, we may be in touch in a future term to ask if you'd like to reprise a role or take on a different one.

## Cancellation Expectations

Once hired for a role, we regard this as a firm commitment on your part, as it is on ours. We expect you to reserve the time of the event and the training session. Of course, illness and family emergencies can't be anticipated, so if you must cancel your participation in a training or simulation event:

- **Please give us as much notice as possible** so we have time to find and prepare a replacement or can notify the back-up SP as needed.
- If you are not able to attend a scheduled training session due to illness or an emergency, the Coordinator of Clinical Training will discuss options with you.
- If you must cancel your participation in an event, you will be paid for the training session (if you attended) and the allowed self-study preparation time if it's close to the date of the event and you've completed this.

## Back-Up SP Roles

We always hire a back-up SP for every role. Illness or an emergency can strike at any time, and we need to know there's someone who can fill in even at the last minute for an absent SP.

Back-ups are informed at the time of hiring that this is the role they are asked to fill. Back-ups will learn the case and attend the training session along with the other (primary) Standardized Patients assigned to that role. They are then expected to arrive (for in-person events) or log in (for virtual events) at the appointed time on the day of the event. If the back-up is not needed to fill in (that is, if all primary SPs are present), the back-up will be released for the day before the event begins.

**Back-ups are paid for the usual preparation and training time, and because they must set aside the entire block of time on the day of the event in case they are needed, they are also paid for *half* the scheduled event hours, even if released at the beginning of the day.** Of course, if a back-up is needed to fill in for an absent primary SP, they are paid for the full hours of the event.

## Payment

### Compensation

We compensate Standardized Patients with an honorarium (\$24 per hour), for the time allowed for self-study, for the training session, and for the event itself. Lunch breaks are not paid.

## **V-Number (UVic ID)**

The first time you work for UVic, we'll ask for your Social Insurance Number (SIN) in order to set up your permanent UVic ID, called a "V-number." We won't ask for your SIN after this. If you were a student at UVic or worked for the university in some other capacity, you will already have a V-number. We can help find this number if you don't recall it.

## **Direct Deposit**

We require that you submit an authorization for direct deposit of your honorarium to your bank account. This is quicker than waiting for a cheque to be cut, avoids postal delays, and avoids situations where a cheque is sent to an old address if you haven't updated us after a move. We'll send you a link to the authorization request form; you'll submit this by postal mail (*not* email) directly to UVic Financial Services (the form does not come to the NP Program).

## **Payment Timeline**

We submit a payment request to UVic Accounts Payable within approximately one week of each simulation event. Processing time with Accounts Payable can be anywhere from 2-8 weeks depending on time of year (holiday periods and fiscal year-end are busy). Keep these timelines in mind when deciding when to look for your payment to arrive.

## **Updating Your Address**

If you have moved since the last time you were paid by UVic (or since you were a student if you ever were), let us know your new address and we can request an update in the university's central administrative system (Banner). It's helpful to keep address records up to date even if you are signed up for direct deposit.