Western Carolina University
Graduate Nursing Program

2012-2013
Student
Handbook

Instructions to Students for Graduate Nursing Student Handbook

All students in the nursing program are responsible for reading and understanding the information contained in the Graduate Nursing Student Handbook and adhering to any policy changes and/or updates in subsequent editions. Each student must read the Graduate Nursing Student Handbook and submit a signed copy of the Student Handbook Agreement upon admission to the nursing program. The signed copy will be placed in the student’s file. The Student Handbook Agreement is located in the appendices and is accessible on the School of Nursing Forms & Guides website and in Blackboard MS(N) CORE Homeplace.
Welcome

Welcome to the Graduate School of Nursing at Western Carolina University. As you pursue a graduate degree please know that the faculty at WCU are committed to your success. Your course work is just a small fraction of the knowledge you need to excel within your profession. It is up to you to go beyond that course work by immersing yourself in the professional literature, seeking new and challenging learning experiences, and involving yourself in opportunities within your student and professional organizations and in the community.

This handbook contains important information about the nursing program at Western Carolina University. The School of Nursing policies and procedures are presented and are to be used in conjunction with University requirements, policies, and procedures. In addition, the handbook contains other useful information such as suggestions for coping with the stress of being in the graduate program. Please review the handbook and retain it for future reference.

I am very glad you selected WCU for your graduate education. I wish you great success in your studies. If you need to meet with me for any reason, please feel free to make an appointment.

Judy Neubrander, EdD, FNP-BC, CNE
Director, School of Nursing.
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Section 1
Organizational Structure

FACULTY AND STAFF

Director, School of Nursing:
Dr. Judy Neubrander, EdD, FNP-BC, CNE

School of Nursing Graduate Programs Administrative Staff:

Director of Student Services
Dr. Jessica Shirley, EdD (jshirley@wcu.edu)

Graduate Program Administrative Support Associate
Suzan Melvin (samelvin@wcu.edu)

Nurse Anesthesia Program Temporary Administrative Support Associate
Amy Crossman (abcrossman@email.wcu.edu)

Graduate Faculty of the MS(N) Program:

Interim Associate Director of Graduate Nursing Programs:
Dr. Shawn Collins, DNP, CRNA (shawncollins@wcu.edu)

Nurse Educator Track:
Andrea Alvaro, MSN, Interim NE Coordinator (icomera@wcu.edu)

Family Nurse Practitioner Track:
Dr. Lydia Elliott, DNP, FNP-BC, FNP (lydiaelliott@wcu.edu)
Dr. Liz Repede, PhD, RN, FNP-BC (ejrepede@wcu.edu)

Nurse Anesthesia Program:
Dr. Mason McDowell, DNAP, CRNA, Interim Program Director (mmcdowell@wcu.edu)
Dr. Mark A. Kossick, DNSc, CRNA, APN, Professor (makossick@wcu.edu)
Prof. Ian Hewer, MSN, CRNA, Assistant Professor (ihewer@wcu.edu)

Nurse Administration Track:
Prof. Ramona Whichello, MN, RN, NEA-BC, NAadm Coordinator (nwhichello@wcu.edu)

RN to BSN Program:
Prof. Ramona Whichello, MN, RN, NEA-BC, RN to BSN Coordinator (nwhichello@wcu.edu)

Dr. Julia Wetmore, PhD, RN (jwetmore@wcu.edu)
Dr. Ann Johnson, EdD, RN, CNE (johnsona@email.wcu.edu)
Prof. Summer Huntley-Dale. MSN (shuntleydale@email.wcu.edu)
Prof. Cheryl Conway, MSN, RN-BC, NE-BC (cmconway@email.wcu.edu)
SCHOOL OF NURSING / GRADUATE NURSING PROGRAM COMMITTEES

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<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Faculty &amp; student representatives from FNP, NA, NAdm &amp; NE tracks, RN to BSN</td>
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INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY AND THE NURSING PROGRAMS

Introduction to Western Carolina University

Western Carolina University (WCU) is a regional comprehensive state-supported university focused on quality education and preparation for responsible citizenship in a changing world. The College of Health and Human Sciences includes the School of Nursing. Teaching and learning constitute the central mission of WCU. The commitment of the WCU community to service, research, and creative activities complements the central mission and extends the benefits of its scholarship to society.

The WCU general catalog, *The Record*, contains authoritative information concerning the University, student services, academic regulations, the University calendar, and degree requirements. *The Record* is published in both undergraduate and graduate versions. **Students are to obtain a copy of The Record at their level and refer to it for guidance. This is available online at the Graduate School website.**

Introduction to the Master of Science in Nursing Program

The Master of Science degree in Nursing – MS(N) – has three academic tracks and one program: Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) Track, Nurse Educator (NE) Track, Nurse Administration (NAdm) Track and Nurse Anesthesia (NA) Program. The tracks/programs are offered on a full-time basis for the NA Program and part-time basis for the FNP, NAdm and NE Tracks. Graduate classes are admitted annually in the fall semester (FNP), fall semester and spring semester (NAdm & NE), and the spring semester (NA). The FNP Track requires 49 to 50 semester hours of graduate coursework including 720 clinical hours. The NE Track requires 38 to 39 semester hours including 180 hours of teaching practicum. The NAdm Track requires 40-41 semester hours and 220 clinical hours. The NA Program requires a minimum of 66 course credits during the 28-month program. In addition to School of Nursing required...
courses, NA students will take anesthesia specialty courses. The program integrates research, physiology, pharmacology, pathophysiology, and anesthesia principles. The FNP Track is designed to prepare expert nurses to serve the primary care needs of Western North Carolina. The NE Track is designed to prepare nurses to serve in one of three areas of nursing education: academic, staff, or patient. The NAdm Track is designed to prepare nurses to serve in administrative positions in various service delivery and academic settings. The overall MS(N) program is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. The NA Program is accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs. Required hours for all tracks/programs depend on whether the thesis or research project is selected.

Comprehensive exam(s) are administered during the final term of the student’s program of study.

A Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate course of study is available to students who have earned a MS(N) degree. The course of study requires thirty-eight semester hours of study. A Post-Master’s Nurse Educator Certificate course of study is available to nurses who have a MSN, or other appropriate graduate degree, and requires 18 semester credit hours. All interested applicants to the MS(N) program are required to complete an online application through the graduate school at Apply Now: http://www.wcu.edu/5642.asp.

The Nurse Anesthesia Program has its own handbook in addition to the Graduate School of Nursing Student Handbook.

The RN to BSN Program has its own handbook.

RN to MSN Fast Entry Option
The RN to MSN fast entry option is designed to assist selected RNs with good academic records to move smoothly through the RN to BSN curriculum directly into MSN study for advanced nursing roles. RN to BSN students may apply for consideration for this option. If accepted, the first semester of core graduate nursing courses will be applied to the RN to BSN requirement for up to 8 credits of undergraduate electives. Students maintain undergraduate status until completion of the BSN and are not guaranteed acceptance into the masters program. Students should refer to the RN to BSN handbook, their RN to BSN advisor, and the coordinator of the RN to MSN Fast Entry Option for questions about this program.
MISSION and PHILOSOPHY

Western Carolina University
Educational Mission

Western Carolina University creates engaged learning opportunities that incorporate teaching, research and service through residential, distance education and international experiences. The university focuses its academic programs, educational outreach, research and creative activities, and cultural activities to improve individual lives and enhance economic and community development in the region, state and nation.

Western Carolina University
School of Nursing

Mission Statement
The School of Nursing educates professional nurses at the baccalaureate and graduate levels to address the health care needs and improve the lives of diverse populations. In accordance with its primary mission of teaching, the school provides a scholarly atmosphere that stimulates collaborative engagement, service, research, and creative activities by its faculty and students.

Vision Statement
The School of Nursing will be recognized as a center of excellence for progressive evidenced-based teaching and practice, technology-enhanced learning, and engaged stewardship and service to the community.

Philosophy of the School of Nursing

The philosophy of the School of Nursing reflects beliefs and values of the faculty and gives direction to the baccalaureate and master's curricula. Faculty believe that their major responsibility is guiding the learning process to foster the holistic development of undergraduate and graduate students. Faculty model quality and safety in healthcare for students at all levels of nursing education.

Faculty believe that the core concepts of the discipline are interactive and dynamic. These concepts are client, environment, health, and nursing. The focus of nursing care is the client, defined as an individual, family, group, community, or population. Clients have intrinsic worth and the right to self-determination in responding to their unique health care needs. Environment is the internal and external phenomena which are the context for the development, expression, and satisfaction of human needs. Health is not merely the absence of infirmity or disease but is a dynamic process of client-environment interaction; health is defined individually and culturally.

Nursing is an evolving practice discipline based on scholarship derived from theory, research, and experience. Nursing practice involves contextual awareness of the
physical, emotional, socio-cultural, and spiritual state of the client. Faculty emphasize a holistic approach to caring in the human health experience across the life-span, exemplified by recognition of and appropriate interventions for human responses to actual or potential health concerns. This approach is facilitated by the nurse’s self-awareness, effective communication, and reflective, creative critical thinking. Faculty and students are expected to demonstrate the spiritual and humanistic values of a caring profession. These include respect and concern for persons of diverse cultures and lifestyles, advocacy for social justice, and an ethic for public service. Within an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, faculty and students exhibit integrity, honesty, and accountability for their own actions. Faculty promote student participation in the processes of self-nurturance and life-long learning to promote and maintain professional growth.

Faculty believe that the study of liberal arts and sciences is foundational for nursing education. In addition to generating and utilizing its own unique body of knowledge, nursing synthesizes knowledge from other fields and disciplines. Faculty incorporate innovative teaching strategies that focus on quality and safety in nursing.

The baccalaureate graduate is a generalist who designs, provides, manages, and coordinates nursing care in a variety of health care settings. A master’s education in nursing builds on this foundation and prepares nurses for specialist roles and doctoral education.

Graduates are involved in scholarly inquiry, the development of evidence-based practice, and the application of nursing research. At both levels, graduates effectively engage clients in health education and collaborate with other disciplines in promoting, preserving, and restoring health across the life-span. Graduates develop and enhance their roles in leadership of the profession and interdisciplinary management of health care while exhibiting autonomy appropriate to their level of education and practice.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES FOR THE GRADUATE NURSING PROGRAM

Graduates of the Western Carolina University MS(N) Program will:

1. Demonstrate competence in a defined role or area of advanced nursing practice.
2. Utilize the process of scientific inquiry to translate evidence into advanced practice nursing.
3. Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and an understanding of human diversity in delivery of health care across the lifespan.
4. Build and lead collaborative interprofessional care teams to improve quality outcomes.
5. Lead in the integration of healthcare services across practice environments
6. Promote excellence in practice environments through a commitment to lifelong learning.
Section 2
EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES, CONDUCT STANDARDS, UNIVERSITY POLICIES

2.1 Policies and Procedures

The Graduate Nursing Student Handbook is available on the School of Nursing Web page and must be downloaded and read by the student. The student is responsible for following the School of Nursing policies as presented in this document. Policies in the Nurse Anesthesia Student Handbook supersede policies in the Graduate Nursing Student Handbook.

As noted in the graduate catalog, The Record, the School of Nursing reserves the right to modify school policies and procedures. Students must periodically consult their nursing faculty advisor and the Graduate Nursing Student Handbook to obtain current information. The School of Nursing will make every effort to notify currently enrolled students of any changes. Changes and updates to student information will be posted on the School of Nursing website. Students must keep the School informed of their current address, phone numbers, and email address.

The Student Handbook Agreement which documents the student’s receipt of the information in this Handbook is located in the appendices. A signed copy of the form must be submitted to the School of Nursing upon admission and will be placed in the student’s School file.

PROGRESSION and RETENTION in the Graduate Program

Standards of Conduct
The University is committed to developing and maintaining the highest standards of scholarship and conduct. Therefore, all students are subject to the rules and regulations of the University. In accepting admission to Graduate School students indicate their willingness to abide by University rules and regulations and acknowledge the right of the University to take appropriate disciplinary action, including suspension and/or expulsion as may be deemed appropriate, for failure to abide by University rules and regulations. Rules related to student conduct and procedures for the resolution of cases may be found in the Code of Student Conduct in the Student Handbook at http://www.wcu.edu/24861.asp.

Disruption of Learning Environments

Children: Due to safety factors, student’s children are not allowed in lab or clinical settings. Due to disruption of group process, children are not allowed in seminars. Students are discouraged from bringing children to lecture class or exams. If a student brings a child to lecture class/exam, the instructor will ask the student and child to leave if the child is disruptive. Children may not be left in University buildings without direct adult supervision.
Beepers and cellular phones: Group experiences are easily disrupted by electronic devices. Students who must leave such devices on are asked to set them to vibrate and to sit near the door for easy exit. Others are asked to turn such devices off.

Academic Honesty Policy

Western Carolina University, as a community of scholarship, is also a community of honor. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students work together to achieve the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense at WCU because it threatens the quality of scholarship and defrauds those who depend on knowledge and integrity.

Academic Integrity

Honesty and integrity are fundamental values for the nursing profession and the University. Students will not lie, steal, or cheat in their academic endeavors, nor will the student tolerate the actions of those who do. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the consequences of violating academic honesty policies and the impact such violations can have on their standing in the nursing program, the University, and in their careers.

Nursing students are held to the University’s Academic Honesty Policy, on the web at http://catalog.wcu.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=143#honestypolicy. To maintain the public's trust in nurses, dishonesty will not be tolerated. Acts of academic dishonesty may result in penalties ranging from a grade of zero on the paper/project/test, or a "U" in a clinical course, to failure of the entire course and immediate dismissal from the program. Consequences will be determined by the supervising instructor. Circumstances of the act of academic dishonesty and consequent penalties will be documented in the student's academic file and reported to the School Director, Dean, and the School of Nursing Student Affairs Committee in accordance with WCU policy. Students may appeal the instructor's decision through the School or Graduate School appeals process.

Examples of academic dishonesty:

- Cheating: intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- Fabrication: intentional falsification or invention of information or citation in any academic exercise.
- Plagiarism*: representing the words or ideas of someone else as one’s own in any academic exercise.
- Facilitation of academic dishonesty: intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help someone else to commit an act of academic dishonesty, such as knowingly allowing another to copy information during an examination or other academic exercise, or being aware of academic dishonesty by another student and not reporting to the Instructor of Record.
*Specific guidelines about avoiding plagiarism are available at:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/

Congruent with The Record, Graduate Catalog. For specific information on procedures for cases involving allegations of academic dishonesty see WCU Student Handbook.

**Policy on Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all scheduled learning activities, such as orientation, lectures, seminars, labs, observations, clinical practica, evaluation, conferences etc. No other activities are to be planned that conflict with learning activities. Students are responsible for resolving any conflicts that may arise. Students are responsible for their own transportation to and from clinical practice sites. **Attendance means arriving on time and staying for the duration of all learning experiences.**

**Religious Absence Policy:**

WCU allows two days of absence from each academic year for religious observances required by faith. To obtain permission to be absent for religious reasons, a student must complete the Absent Due to Required Religious Observances form, obtain all necessary signatures, submit it to each instructor for review and approval, and submit it to the Senior Academic Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for final approval at least two weeks prior to the proposed absence. Students are encouraged to discuss these absences with the faculty member prior to the end of drop/add in case the absence will unavoidably keep the student from completing the requirements of the course. However, if the student completes the form and submits it to the instructor prior to the two-week time frame, he/she shall be given the opportunity to make up any tests or other work missed due to an excused absence for a required religious observance.

**Examinations:**

Students are expected to write examinations on the scheduled dates. If a student is unable to write a scheduled exam, for whatever reason, she/he must notify the instructor prior to the day of the exam. Failure to notify the instructor may result in a grade of zero for that exam, point reduction in exam score, additional assigned work, delayed progress in the program, or being dismissed from the course or program. Patterns of missed exams will be evaluated individually by faculty in consultation with the MS(N) Program Administrator.

The student must make arrangements to make up the exam when she/he notifies the instructor that the exam cannot be written as scheduled. Class time will not be used for make-up exams. Scheduling to make up the exam is at the discretion of the course instructor. Failure to make up the exam may result in a grade of zero for that exam, point reduction in exam score, additional assigned work, delayed progress in the program, or being dismissed from the course or program. The format of the make-up exam is at the discretion of the faculty. The allocated time period for an exam will not be extended for a student who is late.
**Tardiness:**
Students are expected to attend all scheduled learning activities on time. Every effort should be made to notify the appropriate faculty member when unavoidable circumstances will cause lateness. Since late arrival is disruptive to a class/clinical setting, the faculty member has the option to exclude the student from the learning activity. Exclusion from class/clinical learning activity due to tardiness results in absence and will be treated as such.

**Absence:** When absence from a scheduled learning activity cannot be avoided, the student must notify the appropriate faculty member. **Notification of faculty prior to the absence is expected** but when that is not possible, notification should be carried out as soon after the absence as possible. Absence from a scheduled learning activity may result in a grade of zero for that portion of course content, point reduction in exam score for that course content, additional assigned work, delayed progress in the program, or being dismissed from the course or program. If any scheduled learning activities are missed, the student will need to make-up these learning activities or withdraw from the course. The format and scheduling of make-up activities is at the discretion of the course instructor. Absences may be documented in the student file. A pattern of absences may result in a failing grade for the course, delayed progress in the program, or being dismissed from the course or program. Due to the nature of some course activities, a make-up session may not be possible.

**Textbooks and Supplemental Course Materials**

Students are responsible for obtaining the required textbooks and/or electronic materials from the appropriate sales agency. Each nursing course's instructor-prepared materials (syllabus, learner packet,) may be combined into one package of course material. Course materials will be made available at the start of classes.

**Format for all Student Documents:**


**File naming convention for students to submit course documents:**

CourseID_lastnameFirstname_daymonthyear_title

(Title means the NAME of the paper or assignment)
Electronic Mail Policy – WCU Policy #93

PURPOSE:
To ensure the appropriate use of the University’s Electronic Mail System (E-mail) by its students, faculty, and staff

► The IT Division maintains the University’s official E-Mail System

► An E-Mail message regarding University matters sent from an administrative office, faculty or staff member is considered to be an official notice

► E-Mail may be used for incidental personal purposes if it does not violate policy #52 & 93

► Privacy of personal E-Mail content through University equipment should not be expected

► E-Mail accounts are only for the individual that it is assigned to

► Faculty, staff and students are required to read their E-Mail messages on a regular basis

For the complete details about Policy #93, visit the website at: http://www.wcu.edu/25376.asp.
2.2 Ethical Guidelines of the Program

**Purpose:**
To provide guidelines for the implementation of ethical conduct by program faculty and students

**Policy and Procedure:**

A. Ethical conduct by Graduate Nursing Program faculty and students is expected. Ethical conduct is demonstrated by honoring commitments, keeping confidences, and demonstrating high principles and professional behavior. This conduct is monitored by clinical performance evaluation tools, annual faculty evaluations, and clinical site assessment.

B. Students and faculty have an ethical responsibility regarding financial assistance they receive from public or private sources.

C. The School of Nursing in accordance with the University of North Carolina policy, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, marital status, national or ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation or preference, gender, age, or any other factor protected by law in the administration of educational policies, admission policies, financial aid, employment, or any other University program or activity.

D. Harassment of any kind is not acceptable at Western Carolina University; it is incompatible with the University’s commitments to excellence and to respect for all individuals.

E. The Graduate Nursing Program and its affiliations will not knowingly distort and/or misrepresent faculty accomplishments, program travel requirements, program length, tuition and fees, the academic calendar, or the program’s accreditation status.

F. Recruitment literature and recruitment activities for the Graduate Nursing Program will accurately reflect the clinical and didactic program.

G. Admission requirements will be clearly and accurately stated in program literature.

H. The grading policy will be clearly outlined in the *Graduate Catalog*, the *Graduate Nursing Program Student Handbook*, and course syllabi.

I. The program will routinely provide accurate information about student achievement, retention, and attrition to the public.

*Congruent with University Policy #53*
2.3 Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) Guidelines

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and its implementing regulations restrict WCU students and faculty ability to use and disclose protected health information (PHI).

Protected Health Information. Protected health information means information that is created or received by a health care entity and relates to the past, present, or future physical or mental health or condition of a participant; the provision of health care to a participant; and that identifies the participant or for which there is a reasonable basis to believe the information can be used to identify the participant. Protected health information includes information of persons living or deceased.

It is the WCU School of Nursing's policy to comply fully with HIPAA’s requirements. To that end, all students, faculty and staff of the WCU School of Nursing who have access to PHI must comply with all HIPAA Privacy Policies within the facilities in which we provide patient care or participate in learning experiences.

Each student and faculty member will be required to participate in an extensive HIPAA training program prior to starting their initial clinical experiences and annually thereafter.

2.4 Faculty Rights and Responsibilities

Purpose:
The School of Nursing and the Graduate Nursing Program place a high value on open communication with students, fair and equitable treatment, and effective instruction. The following list of specific faculty rights and responsibilities is predicated on the belief that students are fellow members of the academic community, deserving of respect and consideration in their dealings with faculty.

Policy and Procedure:

1. Class attendance: Faculty will make every effort to attend all class meetings. If unable to attend, a substitute instructor will be sought or class rescheduled.

2. Course content: Faculty will update their courses periodically to reflect the latest scholarship in the areas they teach.

3. Grading: Faculty will make clear in writing at the outset how grades will be determined, what work in the course will be graded, and what standards will be applied. Faculty report the grades to the registrar’s office at the end of each semester.

4. Office hours: Faculty will be available to meet with students through scheduled appointments, phone, and email correspondence. Upon student request for a meeting, every effort will be made to meet with the student as expeditiously as possible.
5. Advising: Faculty are responsible for guiding students through the academic program of study and for referring students for additional assistance as needed. Faculty will monitor students’ degree audits.

6. Scheduling of exams, papers, and assignments: Exam schedules, deadlines for papers and so forth will be established early in the semester and kept.

7. Syllabi: Faculty will distribute to their classes at the beginning of each semester a syllabus covering the course for that semester to give students a clear prospectus of the course.

8. Letters of recommendation: Students depend upon faculty recommendations when applying for jobs or doctoral programs. If a faculty member agrees to write such a letter, it will be prepared promptly, accurately, and thoroughly, and a copy kept in the student file.

9. Faculty has the right to expect that students will abide by the ethical guidelines and standards of conduct set forth by Western Carolina University and the Graduate Nursing Program.

*Congruent with WCU Faculty Handbook, Policy 5.00.*

2.5 Transfer of Graduate Credits & Post-Master’s Certificate

**Transfer of Graduate Credits:**

**Purpose:** To outline the guidelines regarding transfer of credits.

**Policy and Procedure:**

1. The number of hours that can be transferred for graduate courses completed at other regionally accredited institutions is based on the standards of the Graduate Catalog. Programs requiring different total numbers of hours allow differing amounts of transfer credit.
   a. 30-39 hours (up to 6 hours can be transferred)
   b. 40-49 hours (up to 9 hours can be transferred)
   c. 50+ hours (up to 12 hours can be transferred)
2. Transfer credit will be considered only for academic work completed within six years prior to matriculation in the Graduate Nursing Program.
3. Such units are transferable only if the student has received a grade of B (3.0 or equivalent) or better.
4. Courses used toward a prior degree may not be used for a degree program.
5. Transferred courses must be appropriate to the student’s program and be approved by the Program Administrator. A student wishing to transfer course work should make a written request to the Program Administrator and provide a syllabus or some other description of the course he/she wishes to have considered for transfer credit.
6. Forms for the transfer of credits are available at the Graduate School.

7. Student may apply up to twelve semester hours of graduate credit earned at WCU with grades of B or better from non-degree status with approval from the program administrator.

*Congruent with The Record, Graduate Catalog*

**Post-Master’s Certificate for FNP/NE Students:**

**Purpose:**

A Post-Master’s FNP Certificate course of study is available to nurses who have earned a Master’s degree in nursing. The FNP certificate course of study prepares the nurse in the advanced practice role of a Family Nurse Practitioner with competencies in family health promotion and clinical management of common conditions across the lifespan. The three year program requires 38 hours of graduate course work including 720 clinical hours. A comprehensive exam will be required during the final semester. Students are exempt from the graduate core courses (NSG 501, 510, 511, 516) and thesis or research project requirements.

The Nurse Educator post-graduate certificate is available for those students who have earned a Master of Science in Nursing MS(N) degree or those with a master’s degree in a related discipline. The post-graduate certificate course of study requires 18 hours of graduate coursework.

**Policy and Procedure:**

1. The Graduate Nursing Program offers a post-master's certificate to students who already have an earned MSN and are seeking specialized knowledge.

2. Students who have been admitted into the School of Nursing for a post-master’s certificate will not be awarded a master’s or higher degree upon completion of the program.

3. Completion of the certificate course of study will be documented in the student’s academic transcript.

4. The FNP student must successfully complete all the required courses in the post-master’s certificate course of study to meet the qualifications to apply for advanced practice certification.
2.6 Grades/Progression in the Program

NURSING (NSG) COURSE POLICIES

Purpose:

To establish guidelines for award of grades and acceptable progression in the program.

Grading Standards

Clinical courses and independent study are graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. The MS(N) program uses a 4 point scale for letter grading.

The exams, papers, and other evaluation criteria contributing to each course grade are outlined in the corresponding syllabus; criteria for papers, presentations, clinical performance, and other evaluation methods are available online for each course. Grading for elective nursing courses is at the discretion of each instructor.

Use of References for Papers: The nursing faculty expect students to use references no older than 5 years. For variations to this policy, the student must consult the faculty. The standard reference manual for the School of Nursing is the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition (2009).

Penalties

Grade penalties are outlined in the Attendance Policy and in the criteria for each paper or assignment. These penalties are at the discretion of the course instructor, and may include a zero grade, point reduction, being dismissed from the course or program, or delayed progress in the program.

Policy and Procedure:

1. Course Load: The maximum full-time course load for graduate students is fifteen hours per semester. The minimum full-time load per regular semester is nine hours (Fall and Spring semesters). Full-time credit load is determined by University policy.

2. Grading System: Grades that may be assigned to graduate credit courses are:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>(4.0)</td>
<td>90-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>(3.0)</td>
<td>80-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Passing</td>
<td>(2.0)</td>
<td>70-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>69-belown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
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<td>U</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
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3. Grade Average for Graduation: An average of B (3.0 GPA) is required for all graduate degrees. Grades received in all graduate courses will be included in the graduate cumulative average.

4. Incomplete Grades: Instructors may give an incomplete ("I") grade when students are unable to complete a course for nonacademic reasons. An incomplete is not a satisfactory grade and may lead to an academic warning. All incomplete grades must be removed and a grade of A, B, C, F, S, or U must be submitted to the registrar by the last day of classes in the next semester, excluding the summer; an F grade is automatic if the student has not completed the coursework. A grade of incomplete will be awarded only when there is a reasonable prospect that the student can pass the course by making up the work missed. All incomplete grades in courses taken as part of the degree program must be removed before graduation.

5. Course Withdrawal: After consultation with the academic adviser and the instructor of the course, a student may withdraw from any course prior to the expiration of one-half of the term and receive a W. A completed withdrawal form must be presented to the One Stop Student Service Center prior to the withdrawal deadline for posting. Course withdrawals do not count toward the twelve hours required for full-time enrollment.

After one-half of a term, but prior to the fourteenth week of the semester (or before the last two class days of summer sessions), a "W" will be assigned only for written verifiable mental health, medical, legal, or administrative reasons. In order to obtain a "W", the student must first consult with the course instructor, who may elect to support or withhold support for the student’s request. If the instructor supports in writing the student's request, the student must receive written verifiable support from Western Carolina University Health Services' staff, Counseling and Psychological Services’ staff, an official court of law, or a college dean, as appropriate. If a withdrawal is granted by the course instructor, the head of the department offering the course, and the student’s adviser, the withdrawal form must be submitted to the One Stop Student Service Center no later than the last day of the thirteenth week of the semester. No Ws will be assigned after the last day of the thirteenth week of a semester, or during the last two class days of a summer session. In extenuating circumstances, or if the student’s request is not approved by any university party involved, the student can appeal through the Academic Appeal Procedure within thirty five days after the end of final exams.

6. STOP OUT / LEAVE of ABSENCE: Students are expected to be continuously enrolled while completing their program of study and failure to do so may jeopardize graduation. If a student needs to take time off and receives approval from the Program Coordinator to do so, the student must submit a Stop Out/Leave of Absence request form to the School of Nursing Office of Student Service. The Stop Out/Leave of Absence request form is available on the
Graduate School website or by contacting the School of Nursing Office of Student Services. Students may “stop out” for one or two consecutive semesters without reapplying to the Graduate School pending approval from the Associate Director of the Graduate Nursing Programs. Students who do not enroll for three or more consecutive semesters (Leave of Absence) must reapply to the Graduate School and the Graduate Nursing Program. Readmission to the nursing program is contingent upon approval by the School of Nursing.

7. University Withdrawal: To withdraw from the university (i.e. cease to attend all courses), a student must complete a withdrawal form from the Advising Center. If an emergency prevents a student from completing the withdrawal process before leaving the campus, the student should call, write, or arrange for a relative to contact the Advising Center at 828-227-7170.

Any time a student is forced to withdraw from the university during a term for mental health, medical, legal, or administrative reasons which are verified in writing, a grade of W will be assigned in all courses in which the student is registered. If a student withdraws from the university for other than mental health, medical, legal, or administrative reasons after one-half of the total class time has elapsed, an F, W, or I grade will be assigned by the instructor according to the following guidelines:

a. A ‘W’ grade will be assigned if the student is passing or if the student’s progress has not been evaluated.

b. An ‘I’ grade will be assigned if the instructor agrees that there is a reasonable prospect that the work can be made up and agrees to allow the student to do so.

c. An ‘F’ grade will be assigned if the student is failing.

Current policies and procedures pertaining to grades, indebtedness, and refunds are applicable upon withdrawal from the university. A student who withdraws from the university either during or at the end of a term for any reason is responsible for clearing any indebtedness to Residential Living, bookstore, financial aid office, controller’s office, library, university police department, academic departments, and health services.

8. Psychological/Mental Health University Withdrawal and Re-admittance: If a student obtains a psychological or mental health withdrawal, re-admittance to WCU is contingent upon review by Counseling and Psychological Services to ensure that recommended services can be obtained. These students will not be allowed to preregister or register for future classes until they have met the criteria outlined at the time of withdrawal.

9. FNP TRACK READMISSION & CONTINUANCE CRITERIA
On occasion, students may have interruptions in the regular progress through their FNP track or FNP certificate curriculum. To ensure appropriate clinical, didactic content, and skills mastery, this policy applies to reentry or continuance
in the FNP program. An absence of more than two consecutive semesters (fall and spring) from the FNP program will require reevaluation of clinical and didactic skills and knowledge before readmission or continuance in the FNP program is granted. This reevaluation process will include individual comprehensive exams for NSG 517 Advanced Pathophysiology, NSG 622 Advanced Pharmacology, NSG 627 Diagnostics for FNP, and NSG 623 Health Assessment for FNP, as well as a comprehensive patient exam simulation for NSG 623. For any exam in which a grade of 80% or better is not achieved, the applicant will be required to take that course again for transcript credit before re-entering or continuing in the program. In addition, for any student reentering or continuing in the third year who has taken NSG 622 Advanced Pharmacology more than four consecutive semesters ago, this course will need to be repeated for transcript credit prior to graduation.

*Congruent with The Record, Graduate Catalog.*

**Dismissal for Improper Conduct:**

The nursing faculty have an academic, legal, and ethical responsibility to protect members of the public and of the health care community from unsafe or unprofessional conduct. It is within this context that students can be academically sanctioned, disciplined, or dismissed from the nursing major.

**Improper conduct is defined as:**

1. An act or behavior of the type which is prohibited by the *North Carolina Nursing Practice Act* or *Administrative Code* (Rules) (available online at [www.ncbon.org](http://www.ncbon.org)).

2. An act or behavior that violates the American Nurses Association statement of ethical standards, the *Code of Ethics for Nurses* (available online at [www.nursingworld.org](http://www.nursingworld.org)).

3. An act or behavior which threatens, or has the potential to threaten, the physical, emotional, mental, or environmental safety of the patient/client, family member, another student, faculty member, other health care provider, or any other person.

4. An act or behavior which constitutes a practice a student is not prepared or authorized to perform on any other person at the time of the incident.

5. Dishonesty.

6. Inability to cooperate with supervisor, clinical preceptors, peers, hospital staff or faculty.
Investigation and Evaluation of Improper Conduct:

1. When an incident occurs which a faculty member believes may constitute improper conduct, he/she shall notify the student promptly and instruct the student to immediately leave the clinical setting; a determination will be made by faculty if the student is safe to drive himself/herself, or if alternate transportation is needed.

2. It is the instructor’s responsibility to make the recommendation for action relative to the student’s conduct. The School of Nursing handles the fact finding, the determination of the degree of seriousness of the student’s conduct, and the resulting discipline, if any.

3. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the School’s deliberation, he/she may appeal in accordance with the School of Nursing Graduate Student Appeals Procedures.

4. Faculty will notify Assistant Director immediately when incident occurs.

Health Problems:

The student who, in the opinion of the faculty, has a physical or behavioral health problem that interferes with safe practice will be removed from learning experiences until the problem is resolved to the satisfaction of the School. A health problem is defined to include behavior that is injurious or potentially injurious to the student, her/his patients/clients, or other persons, or results in conduct detrimental to a classroom, seminar, clinical, or laboratory experience.

Professional ethics and North Carolina law require a nurse to protect patients/clients from unsafe practice. Thus, the nursing student is obligated to reveal to nursing faculty her/his own or others’ questionable conduct that might interfere with safe practice. The faculty believe that most health problems are responsive to treatment and will not necessarily end a student's professional future when an evaluation and treatment program have been completed.

Removal from a learning experience: If the problem behavior is detrimental to a classroom, seminar, clinical, or laboratory experience, the student will be removed from that learning experience. At such time a conference will be scheduled between the faculty and student as soon as practical to discuss the behavior problem and possible alternative experiences that will guarantee both safe practice and accomplishment of course objectives. A written record of this conference will be placed in the student's file, and the student will be given opportunity to make written comments of her/his own. The student may be required to obtain professional help for any health problem that is not temporary. The entire cost of such help shall be the student's responsibility. The student must give the person providing help permission to report to the School of Nursing that the student is receiving help.
**Dismissal from the Graduate Nursing Program:**

Dismissal from the graduate nursing program due to a health problem may occur in the following situations:

1. If the conduct persists and the student does not get the required professional help.

2. If the health problem is so long-term that missed experiences cannot reasonably be made up before the end of the session. The student may in this situation either withdraw from the course or negotiate for a grade of incomplete. The granting of an incomplete shall be solely at the discretion of the faculty.

3. If the health problem is not responsive to treatment, or the student is unable to demonstrate sufficient improvement in safe practice, she/he will be dismissed from the graduate program. Additionally, she/he will be ineligible for re-admission until safe practice can be demonstrated. Before the student is dismissed, a conference will be scheduled between the faculty and student to discuss the health problem. A written record of this conference will be placed in the student's file, and the student will be given opportunity to make written comments of her/his own.

**2.7 Academic Standards and Academic Appeals**

**Purpose:**

To describe the criteria and processes for academic warning, academic appeal, and dismissal.

**Policy and Procedures:**

**Academic Progress/Advisement Warning:**

A student who is not progressing satisfactorily in a course or in the program will receive documentation of academic warning and recommendation that the student meet with his/her academic advisor to discuss academic assistance. This form is to be provided to the student and includes information on areas needing improvement and suggested strategies for improvement.

- Faculty will sign the form.
- The student must sign and return the form within one week.
- The completed form is placed in the student folder, copy to Program Director, Track Coordinator, and Advisor.
- If unsatisfactory progression involves clinical performance, the student may be placed on Clinical Probation.
WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE NURSING
ACADEMIC PROGRESS/ADVISEMENT

Student: ____________________________________________________________

Course: ___________________________________________________________

Term: ______________________________

I have been informed by faculty that as of _________________________ my
performances (Date)

Clinical: _____ Unsatisfactory (Grade____)  _____ Borderline (Grade _____)

Didactic: _____ Unsatisfactory (Grade____)  _____ Borderline (Grade _____)

Recommendations by faculty for improvement:

STUDENT: Please sign and return via campus mail to Professor ________________________
or by USPS mail to WCU School of Nursing, Biltmore Park, 28 Schenck Parkway, Suite 307 Asheville, NC 28803.

Student (signed): ______________________________________DATE__________

Faculty (signed): ______________________________________DATE__________

Copy of completed form to:

1.) Student File  2.) Program Administrator  3.) Track Coordinator
**Academic Dismissal:**

**MS(N) Program Dismissal Policies**

**Academic dismissal**

A graduate student “who accumulates more than three grades of C or any grade of F will automatically be dismissed from the Graduate School. A student who has been admitted provisionally and fails to meet the terms of admission will also be dismissed from the Graduate School” *(WCU Record, Graduate Catalog)*.

The graduate nursing program student is held to a higher standard and a student who accumulates two grades of C or any grade of F or (U) will automatically be dismissed from the Graduate Nursing Program.

Students are expected to maintain a running calculation of their status as exam and paper grades accumulate. Students who find themselves in danger of falling below the standards should consult with their academic advisors about their weaknesses and available resources. Students who find it necessary to withdraw from a course or from the University are responsible for following procedures in the *WCU Record* or run the risk of F grades on their transcripts. Any student who is dismissed has the option of appealing the decision (see Appeals) or of reapplying to the appropriate program.

All clinical nursing courses are graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U). Progressive evaluation of student performance using the Clinical Evaluation Tool (see course syllabus) is provided throughout a clinical course with suggestions for improvement. Students are expected to be familiar with these criteria and to seek clarification from faculty when needed. Should a student earn an unsatisfactory (U) mark for the clinical day, the instructor will provide both verbal warning as soon as possible and written warning within a week if at all possible. Prior to the next clinical experience, the instructor will hold a conference with the student to review and put into writing the reason for the (U), instructor comments, and student comments. This document will be signed by instructor and student. Copies will be given to the student, placed in the student’s School file, and given to the MS(N) Program Administrator.

The first (U) mark for a clinical day is considered to be a warning. The second (U) mark within a clinical course will cause the student to be removed from the clinical experience, to receive a (U) in the course, and to be dismissed from the nursing major, regardless of performance in other areas. However, any safety or professionalism violation that results in severe actual or potential harm to the patient/client may warrant an automatic (U) in the course at the discretion of the instructor.

Refer to the Nurse Anesthesia Handbook for additional policies that apply to the Nurse Anesthesia Program.
Re-admission of Nursing Graduate Students

Once dismissed from the graduate nursing program, a student cannot register for graduate nursing courses and may not be re-admitted for one year. Graduate nursing students seeking readmission must petition in writing the Dean of the Graduate School and must reapply to the program. Approval for re-admission may be accompanied by additional requirements. A re-admitted student who receives an additional grade of C or lower will be permanently dismissed.

Upon approval from the Dean for re-admission the student must apply for re-admission to the graduate nursing program at least 3 months prior to the start of the semester in which he/she wishes to be readmitted. Re-admission to the program will be based upon available space, student’s previous performance and faculty recommendations.

Academic Action Appeal Policy

A student has the right to appeal a final assigned grade or dismissal from a program level. A student may only appeal a final grade or program dismissal if he/she can show the grade or program dismissal was assigned arbitrarily or impermissibly. A student who wishes to appeal a grade on a particular assignment or exam can do so if it affects their final assigned grade or dismissal from a program.

A final grade or program dismissal is deemed to have been assigned arbitrarily or impermissibly if, by a preponderance of the evidence, a student establishes that:

1. The final grade or dismissal was impermissible based in whole or in part upon the student’s race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or for some other arbitrary or personal reason unrelated to the instructor’s reasonable exercise of his or her professional academic judgment in the evaluation of the academic performance of the student.
2. The final grade or program dismissal was assigned in a manner not consistent with the standards and procedures for evaluation established by the instructor, the program, or the University in the Catalog, in the course syllabus, or during the class/program in written or oral communications directed to the class/program as a whole.
3. The final grade or program dismissal was the result of a clear and material mistake in calculating or recording grades or other evaluation.
4. Individual elements (e.g., assignments, tests, activities, projects) which contribute to a final grade are generally NOT subject to appeal or subsequent review during a final grade appeals procedure. However, individual elements may be appealed under these procedures providing all of the following conditions are met:
   a) The student presents compelling evidence that one or more individual elements were graded on arbitrary or impermissible grounds;
   b) Grounds can be established for determining a professionally sound grade for the appealed element(s); and
c) The ensuing grade for each appealed element would have resulted in a different course grade than that assigned by the faculty member.

If dismissal is a result of grades, the student may appeal the grade causing the dismissal. If the appeal is unsuccessful, the dismissal stands; the student cannot appeal the dismissal as well as the grade because dismissal is based upon the grades. If the appeal is successful, the dismissal will be rescinded.

If a student is appealing dismissal from a program, or a final assigned grade that results in dismissal, the student shall be allowed to continue taking courses until the appeal is resolved (with the approval of the program in which the classes are taken), with the exception of clinical placements or internships, or when the students’ continued participation is deemed by the program director or department head to be harmful or disruptive to other students and/or the program.

If the appeal is unsuccessful and the dismissal stands, the student will be removed from any classes in which he or she is registered and will be responsible for any tuition and fees accrued as a result of registration during the appeals process.

Students who feel that they have been treated unjustly by an instructor in any matter pertaining to academic work should appeal by taking the following steps:

**Final Grade Appeal Procedures**

The following procedures detail the steps for appealing a final assigned grade (whether or not that grade results in dismissal from the Graduate School). The student is encouraged to meet/talk with the instructor prior to filing a formal appeal. The student must demonstrate that the grade was impermissibly or arbitrarily assigned (see Academic Action Policy). That the student simply disagrees with the assigned grade does not constitute a basis for a review.

**(Step 1) Appeal to Instructor:**

Within 35 calendar days after the student receives notification of the academic action (grade) the student should submit a formal written appeal to the instructor. This appeal must include:

a) a statement of the reason(s) why the student believes the grade was impermissibly or arbitrarily assigned (see policy Academic Action Appeal Policy)

b) the resolution sought.

If the grade being appealed is leading to dismissal from the Graduate School, the Dean of the Graduate School should be copied on the student’s initial appeal. All correspondence should include contact information. The instructor must respond to the student’s request in writing as soon as possible (no later than ten working days after receiving the student’s written appeal). This response should detail whether or not the instructor is approving or denying the appeal.
(Step 2) Appeal to Department Head:
If the student is unable to resolve the grievance through the appeal to the instructor, the student should submit a written appeal to the department head within 10 working days of receiving the instructor’s written response (from Step 1). If the department head is the instructor for the grade assigned, the associate dean of the department’s college will serve this function. Students appealing to the department head assume the burden of proof. Therefore, the appeal must include:

a) A statement of the reason(s) the student believes the grade was impermissibly or arbitrarily assigned;
b) The steps taken to resolve the disagreement over the assigned course grade; and
c) The resolution sought.

The appeal must be accompanied by evidence the student believes supports the conclusion that the grade was impermissibly or arbitrarily assigned. Evidence might include papers, tests, syllabi, or written documentation. Within ten working days of receiving this appeal, the department head will attempt to resolve the appeal. If the department head is unable to resolve the appeal within ten working days, the department head will notify the student of the decision, and the student has 10 days to appeal to the associate dean of the academic college.

(Step 3) Appeal to the Academic College (Associate Dean Review):
If appealing to the academic college, the student should forward (to the associate dean of the academic college) his/her initial Appeal to the Instructor and response from the instructor (from Step 1), the subsequent Appeal to the Department Head, and the department head’s written notification (from Step 2). Upon receipt of the appeal and aforementioned materials the associate dean may request further information from the student, the instructor, and/or the department head. If the associate dean concludes that the facts alleged by the student do not constitute permissible grounds for appeal as set forth in this Academic Action Appeal Policy or Procedures, the associate dean may, in consultation with the Dean and Graduate Dean if applicable, dismiss the review. The student will not be allowed any further appeal. If the associate dean determines that the facts alleged in the student’s written appeals could, if true, constitute a violation of the Academic Action Appeal Policy or Procedures, the associate dean, within ten working days of receiving all information, shall refer the case to the College’s Academic Action Committee.

(Step 4) Academic Action Committee Review:
The College Academic Action Committee (CAAC) will consist of faculty members (who do not teach in the program from which the appeal originated) and students as designated by the academic college (graduate or undergraduate based upon appeal) appointed by the appropriate Academic Dean or Associate Dean. At least two of the faculty members shall be selected from “allied” disciplines or programs. The Associate Dean will serve as ex officio (non-voting) chair of this committee. The purpose of the CAAC is to determine whether the facts support the student’s
contention that the grade was impermissibly or arbitrarily assigned, or there was material procedural deviation, as defined in the policy. It is not the function of the Committee to re-evaluate the student’s work to determine whether the CAAC agrees with the professional judgment of the faculty member who assigned the grade.

The CAAC Chair shall convene the Committee not later than ten working days from the request by the associate dean to examine the student’s appeals to the instructor and department head. The CAAC will also take into consideration any written statements received by the associate dean from either the student or the instructor, and any additional relevant documentation. Additionally, the CAAC may request oral presentations from both parties. Other relevant parties may be questioned.

Neither the student nor the faculty member may be accompanied or represented in the hearing by legal counsel or other advisor. The CAAC may consider only such evidence as is offered by the parties and at the hearing(s) and need consider only the evidence offered that it considers fair and reliable. The burden of proof shall be on the student to satisfy the Committee that a preponderance of the evidence supports a conclusion that the grade was awarded arbitrarily or impermissibly as defined. All recommendations of the CAAC shall be made by a simple majority vote.

Within ten working days from the conclusion of its hearing(s) on the matter, the CAAC Chair will provide a written report to the academic dean and to the graduate dean (for graduate-level grade appeals). The Committee report must include the Committee’s finding as to whether or not the grade assigned was awarded arbitrarily or impermissibly as defined in the policy. If such a determination is made, the CAAC shall recommend a course of action which could include recommending assignment of a specific grade to replace the one originally assigned or implementation of some process to re-evaluate the student’s work.

(Step 5) Review by the Dean:
Within ten working days after receiving the CAAC’s report, recommendations and other documentation assembled in the review, the academic Dean will, in consultation with the faculty member and department head, determine a final course of action. S/he will then communicate the final action in writing to the student, faculty member, department head, and (for graduate-level grade appeals) the dean of the Graduate School.
2.8 Academic Advisement

Purpose:

To provide each student with personalized academic advisement opportunity throughout the program.

Policy and Procedures:

1. The student is assigned a faculty advisor in accordance with clinical and research interests and/or the area of study. The assigned faculty advisor may change during the duration of the student’s academic tenure.

2. The advisor assists the student in planning and implementing his/her course of study throughout the master’s program.

3. The student is responsible for knowing the curriculum of the School of Nursing and progression criteria. The student is responsible for seeking advising meetings as needed throughout the semester. The student and the faculty jointly determine meeting times, with the student initiating the contact.

4. The ultimate responsibility for choosing classes, dropping classes, and meeting curriculum and graduation requirements belongs to the student, not the advisor.

The student advisee is expected to:

1. Consult the WCU The Record and the Schedule of Classes to become familiar with procedures and deadlines. Contact the assigned advisor to schedule an appointment, especially during early registration.

2. Do preliminary planning and course selection prior to the advisor appointment; the later the registration date, the more options in courses and sections should be prepared. Fill out forms completely and accurately.

3. Make final course selection and do course scheduling after having consulted with your advisor. Let your advisor know if major problems are expected or encountered (not just a section change).

4. Keep your advisor informed about academic difficulties **AS THEY OCCUR**.

5. Ask about changing advisors if the assigned advisor is not meeting your needs.

6. Perform regular degree audits.

The academic advisor is expected to:
1. Provide academic guidance and course selection prior to registration appropriate to the selected program.

2. Post and keep office hours, including expanded schedules for early registration.

3. Know about University resources and make referrals as needed.


5. Consult on alternative courses of study when advisees are not achieving a record of academic success.

**Registration**

Web registration is now required. Dates, materials, and instructions for pre-registration are posted in MyCat. Final grades may also be accessed by students through MyCat. The two data items needed by graduate students to enter and register through MyCat are the student 92 number and password.
2.9 Graduate Nursing Student Clinical Evaluation Process/Grades for Family Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Administrator, and Nurse Educator Students (Nurse Anesthetist Students refer to their handbook)

Purpose:

To provide a process for evaluation of graduate nursing student clinical performance

Policy and Procedures:

A. Formative Student Clinical Evaluations

1. Each student shall be evaluated before the end of the semester.

2. Each Clinical Evaluation Form contains objectives specific for each clinical semester.

3. One form should be completed by each preceptor during the semester.

4. Each student is evaluated on his/her performance by the preceptor and clinical faculty.

5. The clinical instructor will review the evaluation with the student. The instructor will sign and date the form. A copy will be given to the student, and then forwarded to the coordinator of the track.

B. Summative Student Clinical Evaluations

1. End of Semester
   a. Each student will receive a final semester clinical grade of S or U based on clinical evaluation forms and feedback from clinical instructors and preceptors.
   b. A student may not progress to the next semester’s clinical level unless they satisfactorily meet the semester’s clinical behavioral objectives. A student must receive an S grade in each category of the evaluation form and an overall S grade in the clinical practicum to continue in the program.

C. Clinical Standards

1. Graduate nursing students must adhere to the Western Carolina University Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct, and policies on use of illegal drugs.
   a. Academic Honesty Policy: [http://catalog.wcu.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=143#honestypolicy](http://catalog.wcu.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=143#honestypolicy)
c. Western Carolina University Graduate Student Catalog
   *(The Record)* which can be accessed from

2. Graduate nursing students may be dismissed from the program for
   unprofessional or unsafe behavior including, but not limited to:
   a. Unsafe practice
   b. Clinical error or poor clinical judgment affecting patient safety
   c. Inability to cooperate with supervisors, clinical preceptors, peers,
      faculty or hospital staff
   d. Habitual tardiness or absenteeism
   e. Performing as an FNP or CRNA clinician outside the confines of the
      graduate program
   f. Consistent lack of preparation for clinical practicum
   g. Evidence of drug or alcohol abuse
   h. Falsification of records
   i. Medication diversion
   j. Dishonesty
   k. Violation of HIPAA Regulations

D. Clinical Probation

1. Each student’s clinical progress will continually be monitored by the Preceptor,
   Clinical Program Instructor and Program Administrator.

2. If a student is not satisfactorily meeting the clinical objectives, the student may be
   placed on clinical probation. A “Probationary Action Form” outlining the reasons for
   probation and the necessary actions to correct the stated problem(s) will be
   completed.

3. Clinical probation is defined as a 30 day period designed to remediate and evaluate
   the clinical performance of a student who has not satisfactorily met the semester’s
   clinical objectives. The probationary clinical site will be assigned by the Program
   Administrator.

4. A maximum of one probation period will be allowed for each student. Exceptions to
   this rule may be made by the Program Director.

5. Probation may be terminated at any time during probation for cause and the student
   dismissed at the discretion of the Program Director in consultation with clinical
   preceptors and other faculty.

6. Student vacation and time-off will not be allowed during the probation period, except
   for extenuating circumstances.
7. During the clinical probation period the clinical preceptor will meet weekly with the student to evaluate the student’s progress. A “Preceptor Weekly Evaluation Form” will be completed and forwarded to the clinical instructor.

8. At the end of the 30-day period the student, clinical preceptor and the clinical instructor will meet. If the student continues to fail to meet the specific clinical objectives they may be dismissed from the program.
Transportation to and from Clinical Laboratory Assignments

Students must provide their own transportation to and from the clinical areas. Clinical starting and ending times will vary. Students will be informed in each clinical nursing course orientation of the hours of the clinical experience.

Guidelines for Dress in the Clinical Setting

Student attire in the clinical setting shall be “business casual” with a WCU/facility nametag. A white lab coat will be worn in some clinical settings. A general rule of thumb is to dress like one’s preceptor.

Placement of Students for Clinical Laboratory Assignments
(NA students refer to Nurse Anesthesia Handbook)

Placement for clinical nursing experience is influenced by a variety of factors such as consideration of students’ learning needs, availability of appropriate assignments, and availability of faculty or preceptors. Students are responsible for identifying clinical experience sites and preceptors and placement is then approved by the faculty.

Graduate nursing students must submit written preceptor requests and documentation for each clinical course in the nurse practitioner, nurse administrator and nurse educator sequences. Requests must be submitted on an appropriate form by midterm of the term preceding the scheduled clinical course; all additional clinical experience and preceptor documentation must be submitted by the appropriate deadline.
PROBATIONARY ACTION FORM

Student Name:

Date:

Probationary Period: ____________________ to ____________________

REASON(S) FOR PROBATION:

PROPOSED REMEDIAL ACTIONS:

Program Administrator

Student

Faculty

Faculty
2.10 Identification of Graduate Nursing Students

**Purpose:**

To establish appropriate methods of identifying nursing students to patients, visitors, and other professionals within the practicum setting

**Policy and Procedures:**

A. The Graduate Nursing Program recognizes an obligation to assure the proper identification of graduate nursing students to patients, visitors, and other professionals in the practicum setting. Clear recognition of the student’s status is necessary to increase the understanding and knowledge of others of the role and abilities of the student.

B. Nametags identifying the student as a WCU student must be worn in the practicum area at all times.

C. All students should introduce themselves to patients as a student who is part of the clinical team.

D. The Graduate Nursing Program forbids the employment of students as FNP or NA by title or function.

E. ID photos will be taken during orientation and an ID badge fee will be collected. Students will receive their ID badge from the Graduate Administrative Assistant prior to the start of practicum.
2.11 Student Requirements Prior to Clinical Placement

**Purpose:**

The School of Nursing, in consultation with area clinical agencies and in compliance with North Carolina law, has developed the following requirements that students must satisfy prior to clinical placement. It is the student’s responsibility to provide documentation to the School of Nursing’s Office of Student Services prior to beginning clinical rotations.

**Students will not be permitted to enter any clinical agency as a nursing student until all required health and immunization records have been completed and submitted to the School of Nursing’s Office of Student Services.**

**Student Clinical Documentation Needed for Admission and Progression:**

1. **Health Examination** - A complete health history and physical/emotional evaluation must be completed and documented in the Student Health Examination & Immunization form by a physician, nurse practitioner or physician’s assistant. Students must be examined every two years to determine if they are in good physical and emotional health and able to provide safe nursing care to the public. The Student Health Examination & Immunization form is available in Blackboard MS(N) CORE Homeplace.

2. **Proof of Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification; In addition, Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) and Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) Certification are required for the Nurse Anesthesia Program.**

3. **Proof of Professional Malpractice Liability Insurance** – Students are automatically enrolled in WCU’s Professional Malpractice Liability Insurance during all clinical/practicum semesters. Nurse Anesthesia students should see the Nurse Anesthesia Program Handbook for insurance information specific to their program.

4. **OSHA/HIPAA Training** – All students must complete OSHA/HIPAA training prior to their first clinical/practicum semester and then annually thereafter. OSHA/HIPAA assessments are posted in Blackboard MS(N) CORE Homeplace.

5. **Tetanus/Diphtheria (TD)** - Booster date must be within 10 years

6. **TDaP:** If you have had the pertussis vaccine separately and have not had the TDaP, then you must show proof that you have had the TDaP vaccine one time.

7. **Tuberculosis skin test** – Required annually and must remain current during practicum rotation *OR chest X-ray* if skin test positive
8. **Measles/Mumps/Rubella** – Proof of year(s) of original immunizations AND year of second dose (MMR) if born in 1957 or later OR serologic proof of immunity to measles, rubella

9. **Chicken pox** (varicella) OR positive serum titer showing immunity

10. **Hepatitis B** (HBV) – proof of series of three vaccinations

11. **Influenza vaccine** is required annually. Students will be informed of the deadline for receiving the vaccine at least two weeks prior to the deadline.

Students who have a known allergy to any required vaccine, which prohibits them from receiving it, are responsible for notifying the School of Nursing and providing documentation of such by an appropriately licensed health care provider prior to enrollment in clinical courses. Students who have had previous allergic reactions to vaccines should NOT receive further vaccinations until approved by their health care provider. Contact the School of Nursing’s Office of Student Services to obtain the Immunization Declination Form.

Students are responsible for the cost of all vaccinations and submitting proof of vaccination (receipt, consent, or other documentation from provider of vaccine) by the annual deadline. Failure to provide proof of all required immunizations may result in suspension from clinical or practicum course and failure to progress in the nursing program.

**BLOOD-BORNE PATHOGENS**

**Introduction**

On December 6, 1992, Federal OSHA promulgated a new occupational health standard intended to eliminate or reduce the health risks associated with exposure to the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and other blood-borne pathogens that can be transmitted through exposure to blood and other potentially infectious materials. This federal rule was adopted verbatim in North Carolina by the Commissioner of Labor with an effective date of March 6, 1992.

The occupational health standard addresses employees who could come in contact with blood or body fluids as part of their work. Nursing students are addressed in the most current OSHA standard (Updated U.S. Public Health Service Guidelines for the Management of Occupational Exposures to HBV, HCV, and HIV and Recommendations for Post-exposure Prophylaxis, US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, June 29, 2001, Vol. 50, No. RR-11, p. 2). Furthermore, the School has always recognized that nursing students and faculty are at
risk of exposure to human body fluids and thus, faculty teach and implement infection control procedures in on-campus laboratories and clinical agencies. The school's infection control, i.e., exposure control plan, is presented below and was adapted from the OSHA rule 29 CFR 1910 1030 Subpart Z.

**School of Nursing Exposure Control Plan**

All students who experience a potentially hazardous exposure to blood or body fluid should follow the policy of the facility where the exposure occurs. The student should immediately notify the Program Administrator/Track Coordinator prior to leaving the clinical site. The student will be responsible for any fees incurred that are not covered by the facility where the exposure occurred.

**HEPATITIS B VIRUS (HBV)**

Viral Hepatitis B (also called serum hepatitis) is a severe liver disease of adults and children and accounts for about one-half of all hepatitis cases in the United States. It is spread between human beings by contaminated needles, by intimate contact with an infected person, and by blood transfusions. Health care professionals are at increased risk for acquiring Hepatitis B virus infection. Acute Hepatitis B is characterized by fever, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, enlargement of the liver, jaundice (yellow skin) and occasionally by rash and pain in the joints. About 10% of people do not recover from their infection but become carriers of the virus throughout their lifetime. This carrier state is associated closely with the development of cirrhosis of the liver, which can be fatal, and the development of liver cancer.

No specific treatment of Hepatitis B is available. However, there is one type of vaccine available. This is synthetic. The vaccine is generally well tolerated. No serious adverse reactions attributable to the vaccination have been reported for the vaccine. As with any vaccine, there is the possibility that broad use of the vaccine could reveal rare adverse reaction not observed in the clinical trials. Of the reported reactions, approximately half of them were injection site soreness. Low grade fever, less than 101 F, occurs occasionally and is usually confined to the 48 hour period following vaccination. Systemic complaints including malaise, fatigue, headache, nausea, dizziness, myalgia, and arthralgia are infrequent and have been limited to the first few days following vaccination.

Adult individuals should receive 3 doses of the vaccine intramuscularly. The second dose is given one month and the third dose is given six months after the first dose. The duration of the protective effect of the vaccine is unknown at present.
Precautions

Female personnel who are pregnant or who are nursing mothers should consult their health care providers, who must give written authorization prior to the vaccine being administered.

Personnel who have any known cardiopulmonary compromise or who are dialysis patients or immunocompromised should consult their health care providers, who must give written consent prior to the vaccine being administered. Individuals who have well documented allergic reactions to formalin (formaldehyde) or thimerosal (mercury derivative) or yeast should receive special consultation from his or her health care service personnel prior to the administration of the vaccine.

Although the vaccine protects against Hepatitis B, it does not protect from other infections such as Hepatitis B or C which can be transmitted by blood and other body fluids. For this reason, techniques for careful handling of these fluids cannot be relaxed.

Availability of Vaccine for Nursing Students

Students who work for a health care agency may have received the vaccinations as a condition of their employment. Other sources of the vaccine might be the student’s local health department or personal health care provider. The student is responsible for the cost of the vaccinations.
2.12 Students’ Rights and Responsibilities

(NA students must refer to item 6.5 in the NA student handbook)

Purpose:

Students are expected to assume a respectful decorum in the classroom, to assume the responsibilities of a well-prepared graduate nursing student when they enter the clinical area for training and to exercise professional socialization.

Policy and Procedures:

The School of Nursing and Graduate Nursing Program place a high value on open communication with students, fair and equitable treatment, and effective instruction. Teaching/learning in the WCU Graduate Nursing Program is predicated on the belief that students are fellow members of the academic community, deserving of respect and consideration in their dealings with faculty.

Students are encouraged to review the Western Carolina University Student Bill of Rights and the Code of Student Conduct http://www.wcu.edu/24861.asp.

Maintenance of Current Licensure and Certification

It is the student’s responsibility to maintain continuous state licensure as an RN in the state in which the student plans to complete their practicum. Students must maintain current certification in Basic Life Support (CPR) while in the program.

Documentation Required by Nursing Programs

All required documentation for graduate students must be submitted by deadlines as defined in this section. All materials must be submitted prior to starting the student’s first clinical course. Students must supply documentation covering the inclusive period of time in which they are enrolled in clinical courses, and must conform to the same due dates. Failure of any student to conform to any documentation deadline will result in dismissal from the nursing program.

Students’ Rights and Responsibilities in the Clinical Area:

1. Plan activities with the faculty and preceptor to attain identified goals.

2. Confer with the clinical preceptor and faculty when experiences are not conducive to meeting objectives.

3. Complete all requisite evaluations in a timely manner.
4. Arrive in the clinical area at a time established by each clinical site preceptor, allowing enough time for preparation.

5. Clinical commitment time is expected to be completed. Professional behavior is expected regarding completion of clinical responsibilities and other assignments as appropriate.

6. The clinical preceptor will be responsible for case selection each clinical day considering each student’s individual ability, needs, and knowledge, and case availability. Each student is required to give a completed copy of their clinical objectives and goals to the clinical preceptor on the first day of the clinical site rotation. This will enable the clinical preceptor to assign patients/teaching experiences based on student need.

7. Universal Precautions - Each facility has developed specific guidelines and policies regarding blood borne pathogens and universal precautions. All facilities provide and maintain personal protective equipment needed for the practice of universal precautions. The student will review and adhere to each facility’s policies while on rotation.

8. Vacation/Conference Time/Request for Time Off  
   a.) Students are encouraged to participate in local, state and national professional activities. Attendance at some educational activities, outside of the normal course offerings may be required. Educational conference requests must be made in writing to, and approved by, the Track Coordinator at least 1 month before the requested time off. 
   b.) All requests for excusal from the clinical area must be made in writing to the Track Coordinator and to the affiliation site clinical coordinator. A student’s absence from the clinical area is not excused unless it is approved by the Instructor of Record. All requested clinical time-off, including time off for illness, must be rectified with the Instructor of Record by rescheduling clinical days.
   c.) In the event of illness, the student must notify the clinical preceptor and instructor as early as possible.

9. Clinical Experience Record  
   Each student is responsible for the accurate completion of the clinical log required in the course syllabus. The student is responsible for submitting a copy to the clinical instructor weekly throughout the semester.

10. Professional Liability Insurance  
    a.) Students are responsible to obtain and maintain professional liability insurance, (coverage of $1,000,000 per incident/$3,000,000 aggregate) prior to the start of clinical rotations. A university policy is available for students who qualify and will be required.
11. Severe Weather Policy
   a.) If the student feels that it is unsafe to travel during inclement weather, they
       should not attempt and are under no obligation to attend clinical. The site
       and Track Coordinator should be notified ASAP if clinical will be missed.
   b.) Class sessions that are missed due to inclement weather will be
       rescheduled.
   c.) It is the student’s responsibility to reschedule clinical time that is missed
       due to inclement weather.

    All information and policies provided in the Nurse Anesthesia Handbook
    supersedes the policies in this handbook.

13. Reporting Clinical Events
    Any clinical event that results in either a potential or actual adverse patient
    outcome or threatens patient safety must be documented. The goal is to
    further educational development regarding the identification and
    documentation of clinical events as they pertain to patient safety. Students are
    required to report any witnessed injury, breach in patient safety or poor patient
    outcome in which they are involved. Students must complete the Clinical
    Event Report form and submit it to the Graduate Nursing office within 48
    hours of any unusual event or in the discovery of any unusual event in the
    clinical area. Faculty may also complete the Clinical Event Report form. The
    appropriate faculty will review the report. A conference including faculty and the
    student will be held as needed to address the clinical event. A serious infraction
    of patient safety is grounds for possible probation and/or dismissal from the
    program. Failure of the student to report an unusual clinical event within 48
    hours of the events, or the discovery of the event, to the Graduate Nursing
    Department may result in possible probation and/or dismissal from the
    program.
WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE NURSING PROGRAM
Report of Clinical Event

Report MUST be submitted to the Graduate Nursing Department within 48 hours of any unusual clinical event or the discovery of any unusual clinical event.

Student Name: __________________________________________

Date of Clinical Event: __________________________________

Date of Discovery of Clinical Event (if different): ________________

Location of Clinical Event: _________________________________

List of staff and students directly involved: ______________________

________________________________________________________________

Brief description of the event (include specifics of how you were involved):

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Date reported to the Graduate Nursing Faculty/Program: ________________

Submitted by: ___________________________________________________
Students’ Rights and Responsibilities in the Classroom:

A. Attend all classes at scheduled times.

B. Notify the course instructor if unable to attend class.

C. Maintain a respectful and professional decorum while in the classroom.

D. Read all assigned course materials prior to class.

E. Discuss course problems and academic difficulties with the instructor in a timely manner.

F. Complete all requisite evaluations in a timely manner.

G. Observe Western Carolina University Standards of Conduct, Code of Ethics, and Academic Honesty Policy.

H. Students have the right to the Graduate School appeal/grievance procedure.

I. Students have the right to academic and personal advisement at Western Carolina University.

Criminal Background Checks
All nursing students must have criminal background and sanction checks completed upon admission to the nursing program. Student criminal background and sanction checks are required by many of the clinical agencies which partner with the School of Nursing. Students admitted to any School of Nursing program must complete the process of the checks by deadlines stated in the admission packet. Failure to complete the checks by the stated deadline may jeopardize admission.

Criminal background and sanctions checks are performed by Certiphi Screening Incorporated, a web-based service (www.certiphi.com). Students initiate the screenings online through the Certiphi website. Total cost of the checks varies but average less than $40. The student is responsible for cost of the Certiphi criminal background check.

Results are reviewed by the office of the Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences. Positive findings will be reported to the Director of the School of Nursing and will be reviewed with the student.
Students with previous international residency may result in a delayed criminal background check screening. A delayed receipt of the criminal background check report may result in the postponement of a clinical rotation.

If a clinical agency declines to accept a student based on the result of the criminal background check, the student will not be eligible to complete the clinical course and progress in the program.

2.13 Graduation Process

1. All students anticipating graduation must complete a degree audit before meeting with their advisor. Advisors must review the degree audit with student during the academic year preceding their planned graduation.

2. Students cannot graduate until:
   - all required coursework is completed
   - the Graduate Project/Thesis is complete and the student’s committee has signed off on the project/thesis
   - the student has successfully completed a comprehensive exam
   - the student has completed the WCU Graduation Application (see Graduate School website, http://www.wcu.edu/43.asp)

3. Submit the application online along with the graduation application fee, which is also paid online.

4. Graduation Application deadline dates will be provided to students each academic year, based on Graduate School information.

5. Order graduation regalia and graduate nursing pin (optional).

6. Complete paperwork for certification examination (FNP, NA).
Section 3

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS
AND
CAMPUS PROFESSIONAL EVENTS

3.1 Professional Development Opportunities for Students

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities to become involved in governance within the School, College, and University. Organizations offer a wide variety of activities and learning experiences, as well as the opportunity to develop leadership skills and a peer network. Students are encouraged to keep their academic schedule needs and student involvement responsibilities in balance.

Organizations

North Carolina Nurses Association (NCNA)
NCNA is open to registered nurse students. Yearly dues provide membership at the national, state, and local level. In addition to membership benefits inherent in the association’s purpose, members receive the Tar Heel Nurse, The American Nurse, continuing education opportunities, involvement in community activities, and reduced rates for the annual state convention. Students are welcome at NCNA meetings.

Visiting Scholars, Professional Meetings, & University Events
When the School of Nursing is involved in extracurricular events, there will be opportunities for students to participate. Faculty will determine whether such events may constitute course requirements or extra credit. Regardless, students are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities to participate in the professional or social life of the School, College, and University.

American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP)
AANP is open to any registered nurse currently enrolled in a program preparing nurse practitioners. Yearly dues provide membership at the local, state, and national level. In addition to the benefits inherent in the organization’s mission, members receive the Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, the Academy Update and other publications and position statements, web site and dedicated list serves for Academy interest groups and forums, extensive representation and lobbying in health policy arenas, continuing education opportunities, and reduced rates for national conferences and certification examinations for FNPs. The Academy also offers scholarships for students in nurse practitioner programs. More information is available at www.aanp.org.
American Association for Nurse Anesthetists (AANA)
Founded in 1931, the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) is the professional association representing more than 40,000 Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) and student nurse anesthetists nationwide. More information is available at www.aana.com/.

American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE)
AONE provides leadership, professional development, advocacy and research in order to advance nursing practice and patient care, promote nursing leadership excellence and shape health care public policy. More information is available at http://www.aone.org/.

National League for Nursing (NLN)
Dedicated to excellence in nursing education, the National League for Nursing is the preferred membership organization for nurse faculty and leaders in nursing education. NLN members include nurse educators, education agencies, health care agencies, and interested members of the public. The NLN offers faculty development programs.

Graduate Student Association – Campuswide
WCU has an active Graduate Student Association. Please contact the Graduate School for information on involvement, activities, and benefits.

Activities for Elected Representatives

Graduate Curriculum Committee
The Curriculum Committee is composed of faculty and a graduate student from each track (NA, FNP, NAdm, NE, RN to BSN). Student representatives are elected by their peers or appointed by faculty at the beginning of the academic year. This committee usually meets monthly during the academic year to evaluate and further develop policies and procedures related to curriculum, to ensure conformity with current standards, and to provide leadership in developing the framework and design of the curriculum.

Graduate Student Affairs Committee
The Student Affairs Committee is composed of faculty members and a graduate student from each track (NA, FNP, NAdm, NE, RN to BSN). The student representatives are elected by their peers or appointed by faculty at the beginning of the academic year. Duties of this committee include annually reviewing policies and procedures concerning admission to the professional nursing program at all levels and making recommendations for modifications as needed. The committee will act on appeals from students regarding admission, retention, and promotion. The committee develops student related policies for the Nursing School.
Activities Open by Invitation Only

**Eta Psi Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, International Nursing Honor Society**
The purposes of Sigma Theta Tau are to recognize superior achievement, recognize
the development of leadership qualities, foster high professional standards, encourage
creative work, and strengthen commitment to the ideals and purposes of the profession.
The honor society is open to nursing students. Students are eligible for nomination after
completing at least half of their nursing courses. More information is available at
www.nursingsociety.org

**College of Health and Human Sciences Dean’s Student Advisory Committee**
This is a committee created to enhance students’ ability to communicate with faculty and
administration. It is open to students selected by faculty and is comprised of
representatives from all programs. The committee meets once a semester with the
Dean to discuss student issues and to plan College events.

**School of Nursing’s Student Advisory Council (SNSAC)**
This is a committee created to enhance students’ ability to communicate with nursing
faculty and administration. It is open to students selected by their peers to represent the
pre-licensure, RN to BSN and the MS(N) programs. The representatives meet once a
semester with the School Director and invited faculty to discuss student issues and
goals and to plan School of Nursing events. Students should contact their
representative any time they have an idea or a concern.

### 3.2 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Various financial sources, e.g., work study, grants, and loans, including the NC Nurse
Scholarship Loan Program, are available to graduate nursing students. To become
eligible, application for financial assistance is made by contacting (1) the WCU Financial
Aid Office in the Killian Annex Building, telephone 828-227-7290. Financial aid
recipients are expected to comply with the guidelines established by each specific
granting or loaning agency.

**Scholarships**

**WCU**: To learn about scholarships available to all qualified WCU graduate students,
contact the WCU Graduate School located in the Cordelia Camp Building at 828-227-7398 or http://www.wcu.edu/43.asp.

**Health Care Agency**: Many western North Carolina health care agencies provide
scholarships and/or tuition reimbursement programs for their employees enrolled in
nursing programs. Information about employer scholarships and/or tuition
reimbursement is available usually from the human resources office of your employing
health care agency.
**Nurse Specialty Organizations** often offer scholarships to their members.

**Forgivable Education Loans for Service (FELS):**
The College Foundation of North Carolina is now offering the Forgivable Education Loan Program for undergraduate and graduate nursing students. Complete information is available at [www.cfnc.org/FELS](http://www.cfnc.org/FELS).

**HRSA Traineeship Awards:** These small grants are often available and may be awarded by the School of Nursing yearly. Contact Dr. Jessica Shirley, SON Director of Student Services for additional information.

**Arbaugh Scholarship:** This monetary award is given to the College of Health and Human Sciences by the parents of a deceased student to partially support three graduate students at Western Carolina University in the departments of Physical Therapy, Communication Sciences & Disorders, and the School of Nursing. This is a $2000 scholarship for each student, which can be given in a lump sum or $1000 per semester. The School of Nursing will rotate the award among the graduate program tracks. The scholarship will be awarded every 2-3 years.

**Mission Scholarship:**
The College of Health and Human Sciences at Western Carolina University has established a fund for student support through the generous gift of Mission Health System of Asheville, North Carolina. The purpose of this fund is to increase the number of qualified health and allied health care providers in and beyond the western North Carolina region. The fund supports scholarships for students demonstrating exceptional academic merit/promise and/or financial need. Complete information about the various Mission Health System Scholarship opportunities for current and prospective graduate nursing students is available at [http://www.wcu.edu/4225.asp](http://www.wcu.edu/4225.asp).

### 3.3 PREPARATION for GRADUATION

**Convocation Ceremony and Commencement**

*Convocation:* A formal School of Nursing Assembly of all Faculty and Students during which awards are conferred and undergraduate senior students receive pins and completing graduate students receive hoods. It provides an opportunity for students to reflect upon their educational experience, celebrate their graduation, and recognize the contributions of others in helping them achieve their nursing education goals.

*Commencement:* A formal University ceremony at which students receive academic degrees. Commencement is held at the end of the spring and fall semesters.

*Responsibilities* of all students/graduates include responding promptly to all information distributed by the Graduate School, the University, or the School of Nursing, submitting payments due, and attending the Convocation Ceremony.
3.4 Awards for Graduating MS(N) Students

The School of Nursing recognizes outstanding graduate students through a number of awards presented at the MS(N) Hooding Ceremony (part of the convocation ceremonies).

**The Deitz Outstanding Student Award.** The Dr. Vivian Deitz award is given to a graduate student who, by vote of the faculty, is considered an outstanding student in nursing practice. This award is given in honor of Dr. Vivian Deitz, former Department Head of the WCU School of Nursing.

**MS(N) Faculty Award.** This award is given to a graduate nursing student who has accomplished outstanding academic performance. The student must have a GPA in the top 20% of her/his class. The student must have actively participated on graduate committees or worked as a graduate assistant for the MS(N) program. Graduate nursing faculty will nominate and select the recipient of this award.

**Outstanding FNP Award.** This award is given to a Nurse Practitioner student who has demonstrated academic excellence and superior clinical performance. Students eligible for this award must have a GPA in the top 20% of her/his class and have superior evaluations from clinical preceptors. Family Nurse Practitioner Track faculty will nominate and select the recipient of this award.

**Outstanding NE Award.** This award is given to a Nurse Educator student who has demonstrated academic excellence and superior performance during her/his practicum. Students eligible for this award must have a GPA in the top 20% of her/his class and have superior evaluations from clinical preceptors. Nurse Educator Track faculty will nominate and select the recipient of this award.

**Outstanding NA Award.** This award is given to a Nurse Anesthesia student who has demonstrated academic excellence and superior clinical performance. Students eligible for this award must have a GPA in the top 20% of her/his class and have superior evaluations from clinical preceptors. Nurse Anesthesia Program didactic and clinical faculty will nominate and select the recipient of this award.

**Outstanding NAdm Award.** This award is given to a Nurse Administrator student who has demonstrated academic excellence and superior performance during her/his practicum. Students eligible for this award must have a GPA in the top 20% of her/his class and have superior evaluations from clinical preceptors. Nurse Administrator Track faculty will nominate and select the recipient of this award.

3.5 Alumni

To maintain up-to-date records of alumni, graduates are asked to keep the School of Nursing and the University informed of current addresses, email addresses, phone numbers and employment. Graduates are encouraged to recruit qualified students into the School of Nursing. The School of Nursing Alumni Committee faculty representatives may contact graduates regarding specific events that occur throughout the academic year, which graduates are encouraged to attend. The graduates’ support of the School’s current students, special events and projects is greatly appreciated and encouraged.
Section 4
Additional Guidelines, Policies, and Documents

4.1 Thesis and Project Guidelines and Documents

Two documents provide guidance for the required MS(N) Thesis and Research Project. These include the *Advanced Nursing Project Guidelines* and the *Thesis Guidelines*.

These documents can be obtained in their entirety on the Western Carolina University School of Nursing website.

Students are responsible to download and follow one of these documents as they pursue their Project or Thesis in collaboration with their committee faculty chair.

4.2 Competency Policies

Policy for Core Competencies Necessary for Students to Achieve Program Outcomes

It is the policy of the School of Nursing and the College of Health and Human Sciences to adhere to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students admitted to the School of Nursing are expected to be able to complete curriculum requirements which include physical, cognitive, communication and behavioral core competencies that are essential to the functions of the professional nurse. These core competencies are considered to be the minimum and essential necessary to protect the public. An applicant for any of the degree programs in Nursing must be competent in the following areas: observation, communication, motor, and intellectual-conceptual.

*Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*: Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities. Students who require reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and provide current diagnostic documentation to Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact Disability Services for more information at (828) 227-2716 or 144 Killian Annex. You can also visit the office’s website at [http://www.wcu.edu/12789.asp](http://www.wcu.edu/12789.asp).

These core competencies are further described in Policies of the School. A student applying for admission to the nursing program is not required to disclose any disability prior to admission. After the student has been admitted, the student will receive a packet of information which will also include a statement to be signed by the student that the student is capable of meeting the core competencies. This statement will become part of the student’s record.
4.3 Western Carolina University School of Nursing
Graduate Nursing Student Agreement

I, ________________________________, the undersigned student, enrolled in the WCU Nursing PROGRAM, hereby understand and agree to the following conditions, including during my clinical education at assigned FACILITIES:

I understand my participation in this program in which I will receive structured clinical experience is contingent upon my satisfactory performance and cooperation with the FACILITY staff, and if at any time I do not abide by the below conditions, I understand that I may be removed from the program.

I certify that I am covered by professional liability insurance and understand that I must provide proof of such coverage to the SCHOOL/PROGRAM.

I understand my clinical performance as it relates to program objectives will be evaluated on a regular basis by designated faculty and/or FACILITY representatives and that I may be dismissed if my performance is not satisfactory.

I understand that the records and documents of the FACILITY are legally confidential, and I will not divulge any personal and/or medical and/or business information concerning any person and/or record which I encounter at any FACILITY.

I understand that during my participation in the clinical experience I am not an employee of Western Carolina University and am not entitled to any of the benefits of employment such as worker's compensation coverage, wages, liability or medical insurance. I understand that I also am not an employee of the FACILITY and am not entitled to any employment benefits during my participation in this program.

I understand that I am responsible for my transportation to and from the FACILITY and to any clinical assignment.

I understand that I am responsible for expenses related to my own illness.

I have reviewed a copy of the Exposure Control Plan which outlines the Program's requirements regarding vaccinations, precautions, and education concerning blood-borne pathogens, and my responsibilities and options should an exposure occur.

I am in compliance with North Carolina General Statue 130A-155.1 and North Carolina Immunization Rules and have provided the University with evidence of the following current immunizations: (a) diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus or tetanus-diphtheria, (b) measles (rubeola), mumps, and rubella (MMR is the preferred vaccine), (c) chicken pox (varicella), (d) influenza vaccination and (e) a tuberculin skin test (PPD) or a chest X-ray if the skin test is positive.

I understand that I am responsible for following the administrative policies of the FACILITY, and for completing and providing a record of mental and physical health, immunizations, current CPR
certification, and other informational forms (using school forms) requested by the FACILITY or the Nursing Faculty.

I will submit to any additional laboratory tests required by clinical agencies with which the University has an educational affiliation agreement. I will follow the recommendations of a qualified health care provider for corrective measures in instances of a known health problem.

I understand that I am responsible for adhering to the dress code of the School and FACILITY and for any necessary expense in attaining and maintaining appropriate uniforms.

I understand that I am responsible for reporting to the designated individual (faculty or FACILITY liaison) at the FACILITY on time during my scheduled assignment, and that I must notify the designated individual of any deviation from my scheduled arrival/departure times.

I understand that I am required to adhere to the policies and procedures delineated in the GRADUATE NURSING PROGRAM STUDENT HANDBOOK.

I agree to verbally report promptly to my clinical faculty instructor any incident of which I have actual knowledge which might involve legal liability on the part of myself, a classmate, or licensed nursing personnel. I agree to report promptly in writing to the Director of the School of Nursing any incident of which I have actual knowledge which might involve legal liability on the part of my supervising faculty instructor. Such report shall be filed within two days after the occurrence of such incident.

I pledge on my honor as a professional student in the School of Nursing that I will comply fully with the academic honesty policy in the WCU Student Handbook, which precludes:

1. Cheating—intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials
2. Information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
3. Fabrication—intentional falsification or invention of information or citation in any academic exercise.
4. Plagiarism—intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of someone else as one’s own in any academic exercise.
5. Facilitation of academic dishonesty – intentionally or knowingly helping or tempting someone else to commit an act of academic dishonesty, such as knowingly allowing another to copy information during an examination or other academic exercise.

The nursing faculty has my permission to keep samples of my written work to use as exhibits for approval and accreditation processes.

I understand that Nursing program faculty will consult with each other regarding my clinical and academic performance. I understand that acts of dishonesty will result in penalties ranging from zero on the paper/project/test (or a “U” in a clinical course) to failure of the entire course and immediate dismissal from the program.
I agree to submit to a criminal background check and/or drug testing as required by the WCU School of Nursing or clinical site policy.

I acknowledge that by signing the Graduate Student Handbook Agreement I understand the above conditions and agree to perform accordingly.
4.4 Graduate Nursing Student Handbook Agreement

I, ____________________________, acknowledge that I have received and read the Graduate Nursing Student Handbook and understand that I am responsible for adhering to the current policies outlined therein and any policy changes and/or updates in subsequent editions.

__________________________________________            ______
Student Signature                        Date

This contract will be filed in the student's School of Nursing academic folder after it is signed and dated.