

# **GRADUATE NURSING STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**2018 - 2019**

Supplemental  
to

*The Western Carolina University Graduate Catalog*

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## **WELCOME**

*I extend to you a warm and heart-felt welcome to the Western Carolina University School of Nursing! We are excited that you chose Western to pursue a nursing degree and I am personally looking forward to working with you to ensure your success and in reaching your education goals. You are entering a rewarding and extraordinary profession at a time in an ever-changing healthcare environment. You are the future of nursing.*

*As you begin your educational journey with us, I want you to be aware of the many resources available to you that will enhance your learning opportunities and experiences. Many of those resources are outlined in this handbook. Specifically, you will find in the pages to follow the School of Nursing policies and procedures and other information that will better assist you in managing the demands of your program. I trust that you will take advantage of these opportunities as they are especially for you.*

*I am thrilled that you are part of the Western family and I wish you great success in your studies. I hope to have the opportunity in the near future to meet you personally.*

*Again, welcome to Western and Go Cats!*

*Anthony James Roberson, PhD, PMHNP-BC, RN, FAANP  
Director and Professor  
Western Carolina University  
School of Nursing*

## **Instructions to Students Concerning the *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 Student Services website and in Blackboard MS(N) and DNP Homeplaces.

In addition to the Graduate Nursing Student Handbook, all School of Nursing graduate students should read and be familiar with all polices found in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

## **I. THE WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF NURSING**

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

### **B. Introduction to the School of Nursing**

The North Carolina Legislature, at the urging of WCU and the people of the western counties, established a baccalaureate program in nursing at WCU in 1969 and appropriated funds for its support.

The first director of the program was Dr. Mary K. Kneedler, a nationally recognized leader in health care who helped develop the Head Start program under President Lyndon Johnson. The first class of BSN students graduated in 1973. In 1982, the RN to BSN program was started.

The Master's Program was initiated in 1999 with the Family Nurse Practitioner as the first program. We now also offer programs in Nursing Anesthesia, Nursing Education and Nursing Leadership at the graduate level.

In May of 2007, we also started an accelerated entry option for our pre-licensure program for individuals with baccalaureate degrees in other fields. In July of 2007, we were renamed as a School of Nursing. Fall of 2009 marked the School of Nursing's 40th anniversary.

In 2008, we added the Nursing Leadership (formerly Nursing Administration) Program to the master's in nursing program. Soon thereafter, we introduced the Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) Program joining forces with Asheville-Buncombe Tech, Blue Ridge, Isothermal and Southwestern community colleges. The RIBN Program allows students to be dually enrolled in the community college and WCU to earn both their Associate Degree in Nursing and Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing within four years.

In 2013, the School of Nursing established a Post-Master's Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program jointly with UNC Charlotte (UNCC). In May 2018, well ahead of the

nationally mandated deadline of 2022, the NA Program commenced the BSN to DNP program, a three year degree that will replace our current MS(N) program.

The SON now has well over 2000 alumni who practice in clinical and leadership roles nationwide. Students who graduate from our programs perform well on their licensure or certification exams with pass rates well above national averages.

Students have the opportunity for clinical experiences throughout western North Carolina in many different types of health care institutions and agencies. A strong element of our programs is that we offer clinical opportunities in rural and urban areas, providing students with diverse practice experiences.

The SON is approved by the North Carolina Board of Nursing and accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. The Master's in Nurse Anesthesia is also accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA) of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs.

### **C. Organization of the School of Nursing**

Please see the link below for a list of the faculty and staff of the School of Nursing.

[nursingdirectory.wcu.edu](http://nursingdirectory.wcu.edu)

### **D. Introduction to the RN to MS(N) Early Entry Option**

The RN to MS(N) Early Entry option is designed to assist RNs with good academic records to move smoothly through the RN to BSN curriculum directly into MS(N) study for advanced nursing roles. The RN to MS(N) Early Entry Option is only available for the Nurse Educator and Nursing Leadership programs. RN to BSN students may apply for consideration for this option after they have completed 12 hours of RN to BSN nursing courses. If accepted, the 500-level 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 Master's program. Students should refer to the Post-Licensure Handbook, their RN to BSN advisor, and the coordinator of the RN to MS(N) Early Entry Option for questions about this program.

### **E. BSN to DNP Nurse Anesthesia Program**

The NA Program requires 86 semesters hours of graduate coursework, which includes approximately 2,600 clinical hours. Graduates will have a solid foundation for full service nurse anesthesia practice and will be prepared to sit for the national certification exam. The NA Program is also accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA) of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs.

## **F. Introduction to the Master of Science in Nursing Programs**

The Master of Science degree in Nursing – MS(N) – is composed of four academic programs: Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) Program, Nurse Anesthesia (NA) Program, Nurse Educator (NE) Program and Nursing Leadership (NL) Program. The programs are offered on a full-time basis for the FNP and NA Programs, and on a part-time basis for the NL and NE Programs. Graduate classes are admitted annually in the fall semester (FNP), Fall semester and Spring semester (NE & NL), and the spring semester (NA). The MS(N) degree is accredited by the CCNE. Additionally, the Nurse Anesthesia Program is accredited by the Council on Accreditation. **Comprehensive exam(s) are administered during the final term of the student's program of study.**

The FNP Program is designed to prepare advanced practice nurses to provide primary care in a variety of settings. The FNP Program prepares students to sit for either national certification exams offered by American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP). The FNP Program requires 52 semester hours of graduate coursework including 640 clinical hours.

The NE Program is designed to prepare nurses to serve in one of three areas of nursing education: academic, staff, or patient. The NE Program requires 38 to 39 semester hours including 165 hours of practicum.

The NL Program is designed to prepare nurses to serve in leadership positions in various service delivery and academic settings. The NL Program requires 40-41 semester hours and 220 clinical hours.

The NA Program requires 66 semesters hours of graduate coursework including 2,640 clinical hours. Graduates will have a solid foundation for full service nurse anesthesia practice and will be prepared to sit for the national certification exam. The NA Program is also accredited by the COA of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs. Required hours for all programs depend on whether the thesis or research project is selected.

## **G. Introduction to the Post-Masters Certificates**

A Post-Master's FNP Certificate is available to nurses who have earned a Master of Science in Nursing MS(N) degree. The FNP certificate course of study prepares the nurse in the advanced practice role of an FNP with competencies in family health promotion and clinical management of common conditions across the lifespan. The two-year program requires 43 hours of graduate course work including 640 clinical hours. A comprehensive exam will be required during the final semester. Students are exempt from the thesis or research project requirements.

The Nurse Educator Post-Master 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 19 hours of graduate coursework. Students are exempt from the thesis or research project requirements.

## **H. Introduction to the Post-Master's Doctor of Nursing Practice Program**

The DNP program was established as a consortium with UNCC in 2013. Students are admitted annually in the fall semester. The DNP program requires 42 Post-Master's hours, including 500 Post-Master's clinical hours. The Program offers both full-time and part-time enrollment options. In spring of 2016, the Post-Master's DNP Program received accreditation through the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and is good for 5 years.

## **I. Mission, Vision, and Philosophy of the School of Nursing**

### ***i. Mission of the School of Nursing***

Educate nurse leaders who are dedicated to caring and participating with individuals, families and communities to meet health needs.

### ***ii. Vision of the School of Nursing***

To be recognized for excellence in the transformation of health care through the scholarship of teaching, practice and research.

### ***iii. Philosophy of the School of Nursing***

The Philosophy of the SON reflects the beliefs and values of the faculty and gives direction to the baccalaureate, masters and doctoral curricula. The baccalaureate graduate is a generalist who designs, provides, manages and coordinates nursing care in a variety of health care settings. The masters and doctoral curricula build on the baccalaureate education and prepares graduates to practice in advanced roles.

Nursing is a discipline of knowledge and professional practice. Nursing occurs in relationship with self and others and requires the intentional presence of the nurse. The focus of nursing is to improve health outcomes with individuals, families and communities through caring.

The professionalization of caring in nursing includes:

Competence – knowledge, wisdom, skills, judgment, experience and motivation.

Compassion – a shared awareness and connectedness with the experiences of others.

Commitment – a deliberate choice to act in accordance with beliefs and obligations.

Conscience – a state of moral awareness.

Confidence – the internal belief that one will act in a right, proper, or effective way which fosters trusting relationships.

Comportment – demeanor, conduct, personal bearing, and behavior. (Roach, 1997)

Excellence in nursing requires a blending of science and art. Nursing science is the body of nursing knowledge derived from the integration of theory, research, and practice. The art of nursing is the creative integration of empirical, personal, ethical, intuitive, esthetic ways of knowing in practice. The art of nursing is that which humanizes the delivery of nursing care.

Learning in nursing occurs through the integration of multiple ways of knowing. Self-awareness, reflection, and ethical and critical reasoning are important aspects of the learning that occurs in practice situations and through interprofessional collaboration. A supportive environment for learning is one which respects and values the contributions of each person and is a collaborative relationship between faculty, and students. The completion of a nursing degree is not an end-point but the beginning of a life-long commitment to learning.

Roach, S. (1997). *Caring from the heart: The convergence of caring and spirituality*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.

01/10/2013

## **I. Graduate Program Outcomes**

### ***i. 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.

### ***ii. Graduates of the Western Carolina University DNP Program will:***

1. Analyze and integrate evidence from nursing science with evidence from other relevant scientific disciplines to form a scientific foundation for advanced practice in nursing.
2. Apply clinical scholarship, scientific evidence, and analytical methods to improve health care outcomes.
3. Develop and evaluate systems to enhance safety and quality of health care.
4. Advocate and participate in collaborative interdisciplinary efforts to improve health outcomes at the practice/organization, community, state and national levels.
5. Engage in culturally competent and ethically sound advanced nursing practice.
6. Demonstrate leadership in the improvement of patient outcomes and transformation of health care delivery.
7. Manage directly the complex problems of clients/populations and systems to facilitate access and navigation of the health care system to improve health outcomes.

## **II. EDUCATIONAL POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND INFORMATION**

The Graduate Nursing Student Handbook is available on Blackboard Homeplace 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 program specific Handbooks supersede policies in the Graduate Nursing Student Handbook.

As noted in the WCU Graduate Catalog, 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 SON and the University 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.

### **A. General Information**

#### *i. Admissions and Progression*

##### *a. Admission to the Graduate Programs*

For information see [School of Nursing](#) website.

##### *b. Progression in the Graduate Program*

###### **1. 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 and Advisor.
- If unsatisfactory progression involves clinical performance, the student may be placed on Clinical Probation.

###### **2. Academic Dismissal**

Any WCU 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 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 Graduate Catalog 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 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.

*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.*

#### **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 condition 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 nursing 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.

### **3. 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 readmitted for one year. If a student was also dismissed from the graduate school, the graduate nursing student seeking readmission must petition in writing the Dean of the Graduate School and must then reapply to the individual program. Approval for re-admission may be accompanied by additional requirements. A re-admitted student who receives an additional grade of C or lower, or a U (Unsatisfactory), will be permanently dismissed.

Upon approval from the Dean of the Graduate School for re-admission, the student must apply for re-admission to the graduate nursing program prior to the respective program's deadline for 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.

### **4. FNP Program Readmission and Continuance Criteria**

On occasion, students may have interruptions in the regular progress through their FNP Program 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 622 Advanced Pharmacology, and NSG 690 Advanced Health/Physical Assessment and Diagnostics, as well as a comprehensive patient exam simulation for NSG 691 FNP Applied Advanced Physical Assessment and Diagnostics. 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.

#### ***c. Appeals Policy for the School of Nursing***

A student has the right to appeal a final assigned grade or dismissal from a graduate nursing program. 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. Information and instructions for filing an appeal may be found in the graduate catalog, [Academic Action Appeal Policy](#) section.

*ii. Academic Information*

*a. Advising*

- The student is assigned a faculty advisor upon admission to the program. The assigned faculty advisor may change during the duration of the student's academic tenure.
- The advisor assists the student in planning and implementing his/her course of study throughout the graduate program. On occasion, life events occur that may impact the ability of a student to complete the outlined course of study. Examples include debilitating family illness, financial hardship, pregnancy, etc. If this occurs, it is strongly recommended that the student contact his/her appointed advisor to develop a plan to promote ongoing success.
- In addition to required advising sessions, the student is responsible for seeking advising meetings as needed throughout the semester. The student and the faculty jointly determine meeting times.
- The student is responsible for knowing the program of study and progression criteria for their designated program/track. 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:**

- Consult the WCU Graduate Catalog and the Schedule of Classes to become familiar with procedures and deadlines.
- Contact the assigned advisor to schedule an appointment, especially during early registration.
- Do preliminary planning and course selection prior to the advisor appointment.

- 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).
- Keep your advisor informed about academic difficulties **AS THEY OCCUR.**
- Speak with the Program Director if the assigned advisor is not meeting your needs.
- Perform regular degree audits.
- Evaluate your advisor each semester through a link provided by the Office of Student Services.

**Registration:** Dates, materials, and instructions for registration are posted in MyWCU.

***b. Grading Standards***

Clinical courses and independent study courses are graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. The MS(N) and DNP programs use a 4-point scale for letter grading. See the Policy and Procedure Grading System section for more information.

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:**

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

A	Superior	(4.0)	90-100
B	Good	(3.0)	80-90
C	Passing	(2.0)	70-79
F	Failure	(0)	69-below
I	Incomplete		
S	Satisfactory		
U	Unsatisfactory		

- Grade Point 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.
- 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.

#### **c. Format for all Student Documents**

All scholarly assignments must be submitted as Word documents using the most current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association's APA style*.

Submit all assignments in Blackboard as an attached Word document rather than in the body of an email. Students must use

the following file naming convention when submitting course documents:

CourseID\_lastname\_firstname\_daymonthyear\_title  
(Title means the NAME of the paper or assignment)

***d. Laptop Requirement***

Students are required to have a laptop computer with webcam capability for use throughout the nursing program. Headphones and microphone may be required. Students will complete all testing online and may be required to use the laptop in class regularly.

***e. Online Testing Software***

The School of Nursing currently uses an online testing program for all exams and tests. This is a required program. NA and FNP students must purchase access upon admission and every fall semester through the WCU bookstore. NE and NL students must purchase access for all courses that require online testing. Students are responsible for ensuring that their computers are up-to-date and compatible with the software. DNP students will be notified of any online testing software needs on a course-by-course basis.

***f. Additional Guidelines, Policies, and Documents***

**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 and in MS(N) Homeplace.

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.

**2. DNP Clinical Scholarly Project Guidelines**

Guidelines for completion of the Clinical Scholarly Project can be found in the *Doctor of Nursing Practice Clinical Scholarly Project Guidelines*.

This document can be found in its entirety on the Western Carolina School of Nursing website, the DNP Homeplace in Blackboard, and embedded in each of the Clinical Residency and Project Development courses (I, II, III and IV). Students are responsible for downloading and following this document as they pursue completion of their Project in collaboration with their committee faculty chair, clinical expert, and additional committee members.

### *iii. Expectations of Students*

#### *a. 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. Click on the graduate catalog's [Academic Honesty Policy](#) link for complete details. 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 of Nursing Director, College of Health and Human Sciences Dean or Dean of the Graduate School, and the School of Nursing Graduate Student Affairs Committee in accordance with WCU policy.

#### *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.

Click on the [Plagiarism Resources](#) link for specific guidelines about avoiding plagiarism.

*For specific information on procedures for cases involving allegations of academic dishonesty see the WCU Graduate Catalog.*

**b. Social Media Policy**

See Appendix B.

**c. Policy on Attendance**

Students are expected to attend **all scheduled learning activities**, such as orientation, lectures, seminars, labs, observations, clinical practica, evaluation, conferences, online course meetings, 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.

**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, additional assigned work, or delayed progress in the program. The format and scheduling of make-up activities is at the discretion of the course instructor. All absences from scheduled clinical experiences require a conference with the clinical faculty to arrange for a makeup clinical assignment. 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.

***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 the drop/add in case the absence(s) 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.

**d. 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.

**e. 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 entry level 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, integrative, and quantitative abilities. An applicant must meet the competencies in spite of any disability with or without reasonable accommodation.

Examples of competencies for each of the areas follow. Note that these descriptions are intended to be examples rather than all-inclusive.

**▪ Observation:**

The applicant must be able to observe a client accurately at a distance and close at hand. Observation relies on the functional use of vision and touch, enhanced by the sense of smell.

**▪ Communication:**

Communication includes speaking, writing, reading, and listening to obtain information, describe changes, and perceive non-verbal communication. A candidate must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with clients and peers. The applicant must be able to

communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written form with clients, families, peers and other members of the health care team.

- **Motor:**

An applicant should have sufficient motor function to obtain information from clients by palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other assessment techniques. The applicant should be able to execute motor movements required to perform general care and emergency treatment of clients such as (but not limited to) cardiopulmonary resuscitation, administration of intravenous medications, and manipulation of life support devices. These actions require coordination of both gross and fine motor muscular movements, equilibrium, functional use of touch and vision senses.

- **Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities:**

The applicant must be able to demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills required of nurses. Essential intellectual abilities include measurement, calculation, analysis, synthesis, and clinical reasoning.

Prospective graduate applicants who believe they may have difficulty meeting the core competencies in one or more areas are encouraged to contact the School of Nursing for more information. However, students applying for admission to the program are not required to disclose any disability prior to admission.

After students have been admitted to the program, each student will be sent 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 (see the student handbook agreement). This statement will become part of the student's record.

If a student requires accommodation due to a stated disability, the disability must be documented through the Office of Student Support Services for academic disabilities or through the Office for Student Affairs for Section 504/ADA issues. Students need to be aware that the first clinical nursing course will require demonstration of physical mobility skills such as lifting, positioning, and the ability to see and hear, etc. The student is responsible for providing documentation of the disability to the instructor and requesting accommodation(s). The instructor will notify the Program Director.

Disability Services provides the student with a letter of suggested accommodations that the student gives to the instructor. Examples of "reasonable accommodation" might include use of an amplified stethoscope (purchased by the student) or extra time to take a test for a

student with dyslexia. If the professor, student, and the Disability Services cannot agree upon “reasonable accommodation”, the issue is then taken to the Program Director, the School Director and on to the Associate Dean, if necessary. In each of these steps, the student’s right to confidentiality must be protected.

***f. Health and Behavioral Competencies***

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

***g. Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy***

The School of Nursing enforces the Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy of the College of Health and Human Sciences. The policy provides for drug testing upon entry to the Nursing major, when required by clinical agencies, and when there is reasonable suspicion of drug and/or alcohol abuse on the part of a student. Students who exhibit chemically impaired behavior in the classroom or clinical setting, or who violate state or federal law governing alcohol and drugs, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Program. The Program Director, Associate Director and Director of the School of Nursing will collaborate with the Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences to implement the policy. The policy may be reviewed in its entirety on the [Policies for Students in the College of Health and Human Sciences](#) website. In addition, all students enrolled in the School of Nursing must sign the Acknowledgement and Consent Form located at the back of this handbook. The signed form attests to the student’s acknowledgement of the provisions of the policy and the student’s consent to undergo any drug and or alcohol testing required by the policy.

***h. Expected Respectful and Professional Behaviors***

**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 Ethics and the Academic Integrity Policy in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

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.

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 [Code of Student Conduct](#) webpage for complete details.

### **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. Children may not be left in University buildings without direct adult supervision.

*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.

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.

### **Students' Rights and Responsibilities in the Classroom:**

- Attend all classes at scheduled times.
- Notify the course instructor if unable to attend class.
- Maintain a respectful and professional decorum while in the classroom.
- Read all assigned course materials prior to class.

- Discuss course problems and academic difficulties with the instructor in a timely manner.
- Complete all requisite evaluations in a timely manner.
- Observe Western Carolina University Standards of Conduct, Code of Ethics, and Academic Honesty Policy.
- Students have the right to the Graduate School appeal/grievance procedure.
- Students have the right to academic and personal advisement at Western Carolina University.

## B. Information Specific to Clinical Courses

### *i. Documentation Required for Clinical Placement*

All required documentation for students must be submitted prior to starting the student's first clinical course with the following submission deadlines: **August 1** for fall semester, **December 1** for spring semester and **May 1** for summer semester, **or as communicated by the School of Nursing**. Students must supply documentation covering the inclusive period of time in which they are enrolled in clinical courses (even if all clinical hours have been completed), and must conform to the same due dates. Some clinical agencies have unique requirements and deadlines that students are also responsible for meeting. **Failure of any student to conform to any documentation deadline may result in dismissal from the nursing program.**

### *ii. Proof of Completion of Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Training*

All students must submit current proof of the successful completion of a course in basic cardiac life support for Health Care Providers. Each student will provide a photocopy (front and back) of a card that documents successful completion. The **American Heart Association Health Care Provider Life Support** (BCLS) is required. Some cards expire in 12 months; others are in effect for 24 months. The student is responsible for recertifying and submitting an updated card to the School of Nursing before the previous card expires. It is the student's responsibility to maintain a current status. Online courses for CPR are *not* accepted.

In addition, Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) and Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) Certification are required for the Nurse Anesthesia Program.

### *iii. Professional Liability (Malpractice) Insurance*

FNP, NE, and NL 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.

***iv. OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens and HIPAA Training***

All students must complete Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) training prior to their first clinical/practicum semester and then annually thereafter. OSHA/HIPAA assessments are posted in Blackboard MS(N) Homeplace.

*a. OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens*

See Appendix A.

*b. HIPAA Guidelines*

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

*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 which 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.

***v. Student Health Form***

All students in clinical courses must have on file with the SON a completed SON Health Form. The SON Health Form must remain current for the time the student is enrolled in the program. The student must inform the program director of any changes in physical and emotional health which would interfere with providing safe care during the time the student is enrolled in the program. If there is a change in a student's health status while in the program, the student must submit an updated health form or note from a health care provider stating that the student is physically and/or mentally able to continue with school activities as specified in the Core Competencies.

#### *vi. Immunizations and TB Screening*

Because students in all levels of SON programs will be performing patient care activities, there are additional health screening and educational requirements. Students may not participate in patient care activities until all immunization requirements are up-to-date. Immunizations must remain current through the end of all clinical rotations. Failure to meet these requirements may result in inability to attend clinical activities and dismissal from the program.

These include, but may not be limited to:

*Annual Influenza Vaccination*

*Hepatitis B vaccination (HBV) series*

*Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)*

*Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (TDaP)*

*Varicella:* Proof of vaccination (series of 2 at least 28 days apart), or a serum titer indicative of immunity, or medical verification of having had Chicken Pox (statement and signature of licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant).

*Tuberculosis Testing:* Results must be submitted annually and expire 12 months from the test date. If student-learning activities take place at any clinical agency that requires more frequent TB testing, students assigned to that agency will be required to comply. Other Immunizations may be added as required by clinical facilities.

Students who have a known allergy to any required vaccine, which prohibits them from receiving it, may request a copy of the WCU School of Nursing Immunization Declination form. This form must be completed by a healthcare provider and submitted, along with all other health records documentation, by the stated deadlines. Any student completing a clinical or practicum on any Mission Health campus who submits an immunization declination for the influenza vaccination must also be approved by the Mission Hospitals Medical Director of Staff Health

Services.

***vii. 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 may be required to repeat the checks based on clinical site requirements. 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](http://www.certiphi.com)).

Students initiate the screenings online through the Certiphi website. The student is responsible for cost of the Certiphi criminal background and sanctions checks.

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.

***viii. Laboratory Fire and Safety Training***

All Family Nurse Practitioner and Nurse Anesthesia students must complete fire and laboratory safety training upon admission to the program.

***ix. Guidelines for Dress in the Clinical Setting***

Students must always wear WCU name badges while in clinical settings. Graduate students should follow the dress code of the organization in which they are performing clinical practicums. Students should communicate with their preceptor regarding professional dress in the particular setting.

***x. 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 his/her practicum.

***xii. 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.**

***xiii. Students' Responsibilities in the Clinical Area***

- Plan activities with the faculty and preceptor to attain identified goals.
- Confer with the clinical preceptor and faculty when experiences are not conducive to meeting objectives.
- Complete all requisite evaluations in a timely manner.
- Arrive in the clinical area at a time established by each clinical site preceptor, allowing enough time for preparation.
- Clinical commitment time is expected to be completed. Professional behavior is expected regarding completion of clinical responsibilities and other assignments as appropriate.
- The clinical preceptor/clinical coordinator will be responsible for case selection each clinical day considering each student's individual ability, needs, and knowledge, and case availability. Each student is encouraged to provide clinical objectives and goals to their 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.
- 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.

- 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 Program Director at least 1 month before the requested time off.
  - b. All requests for absence from the clinical area must be made in writing to the Program Director and to the affiliation site clinical preceptor. 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 reconciled 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.
- Clinical Experience Record

Each student is responsible for the accurate completion of the clinical log as specified in the course syllabus.
- 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 Program Director should be notified as soon as possible 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.
- 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 **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.

### **III. STUDENT DEVELOPMENT**

#### **A. Organizations**

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities to become involved in governance within the SON, 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. You are encouraged to keep your academic schedule needs and student involvement responsibilities in balance. The following organizations are registered with WCU Student Affairs.

*i. Nurses Christian Fellowship (NCF)* Nurses Christian Fellowship provides an opportunity for nursing students, faculty, and staff to share spiritual concerns from a Christian perspective. Membership is open to any interested pre-nursing student, nursing student, faculty, or administrator. More information is available at <http://ncf-jcn.org/>.

*ii. Eta Psi Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, International Nursing Honor Society*  
The purposes of Sigma Theta Tau are to recognize superior academic 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 pre-licensure, RIBN and RN to BSN students as well as graduate students, and community leaders by invitation. More information is available at [www.nursingsociety.org](http://www.nursingsociety.org).

**iv. 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. More information is available at ncnurses.org.

**v. American Association 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 Association of Nurse Practitioners, the AANP SmartBrief and other publications and position statements, web site and dedicated list serves for Association 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 Association also offers scholarships for students in nurse practitioner programs. More information is available at [aanp.org](http://aanp.org).

**vi. American Association of 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 [aana.com](http://aana.com).

***vii. 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 [aone.org](http://aone.org).

***viii. North Carolina Organization of Nurse Leaders (NCONL)***

NCONL serves as a voice for nurse leaders; provides venues for professional development and advocacy; facilitates research and its application to advance nursing practice and health care policy; and serves as a catalyst for transforming patient care. Discounted graduate student memberships are available. More information is available at [NCONL.org](http://NCONL.org).

***ix. 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. More information is available at [nln.org](http://nln.org).

***x. WCU Graduate Student Association – Campus-wide***

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

***xi. Graduate Nursing Student Academy (GNSA)***

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) formed the Graduate Nursing Student Academy. The purpose is to provide high value programs, services, and resources to nursing students enrolled in master's and doctoral programs. Through the GNSA, AACN focuses on meeting the professional development needs of graduate nursing students who are poised to assume leadership roles within the profession, including service as future faculty members and researchers. Membership is free to WCU nursing students. Visit the [GNSA website](http://GNSA website) for more information.

## **B. Committees**

***i. Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC)***

The Curriculum Committee is composed of faculty and a graduate student from each program (DNP, NA, FNP, NE and NL). Students serve in an advisory capacity. 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.

*ii. Graduate Student Affairs Committee (GSAC)*

The Student Affairs Committee is composed of faculty members and a graduate student from each program (DNP, NA, FNP, NE and NL). Students serve in an advisory capacity. 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.

*iii. School of Nursing Director's Advisory Council (DAC)*

This is a committee created to enhance students' ability to communicate with nursing faculty and administration. A student is selected to represent each level and type of program in the SON. The representatives meet once a semester with the SON Director and invited faculty to discuss student issues and goals and to plan SON events. Students should not hesitate to contact their representative at any time if they have ideas or concerns.

*iv. DNP Advisory/Oversight Committee*

The purpose of the DNP Advisory/Oversight Committee is to examine any issues or business related to the Dual DNP Program between UNC Charlotte and Western Carolina University. Students may provide valuable feedback for the improvement and continued success of this joint program. The DNP Advisory/Oversight Committee is composed of the DNP Program Director/Coordinator, two additional elected DNP program faculty members from each school who are involved in practice, a DNP student representative from each School, and the Associate Directors of the Graduate Division from each school as Ex-officio members.

## C. Engagement

*i. Visiting Scholars, Professional Meetings, & University Events*

When the SON 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 SON, College, and University.

*ii. Travel Abroad*

Students have the opportunity to participate in many educational and service opportunities abroad. The Office of International Studies lists many trips open to WCU students. In addition, the School of Nursing offers several travel courses

and mission travel opportunities each year. Please talk to your advisor if you are interested in travel, contact the Office of International Studies, and watch the Blackboard MS(N) Homeplace for SON travel announcements.

## **D. Financial Assistance**

### *i. Scholarships*

Students can learn more about scholarship opportunities through WCU by visiting the [ScholarCat website](#). Various financial sources, e.g., work-study, grants, and loans, are available to nursing students. To become eligible, application for financial assistance is made by contacting the WCU Financial Aid Office in person at Killian Annex, by telephone at 828-227-7290, or by email. More information about financial aid options is available at the [WCU Financial Aid Office's website](#). Financial aid recipients are expected to comply with the guidelines established by each specific granting or loaning agency.

To learn about scholarships available to graduate nursing students, contact the School of Nursing, visit the [Nursing Scholarships website](#) or Blackboard Homeplace.

### *ii. Health Care Agencies*

Health care agencies may 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 department of your employing health care agency.

## **E. Career Planning**

### *i. WCU's Career Services Center*

The WCU Career Services Center offers a unique service by helping students (and alumni) identify employment opportunities, refine interviewing skills, and develop a professional file of reference letters and other documents for the Resume Referral Service. The Resume Referral Service is free and can be used indefinitely after graduation provided the file is kept current. To obtain instructions for developing a professional file, call the Career Services Center (828-227-7133) or check online with the Career Services website.

### *ii. Letters of Reference*

Letters of reference are ordinarily required for job applications. Although not obligated to do so, faculty are pleased to complete references on request. Students are asked to seek references only for serious employment considerations and/or to develop a file at the [Center for Career and Professional Development](#). It is a courtesy to request a faculty member to complete a reference before

submitting that person's name, and to allow ample time for the request to be completed.

## F. Graduation

### *i. Commencement*

A University Commencement Ceremony (Graduation) is held at the end of the spring and fall semesters. The University provides information concerning the graduation ceremonies, rehearsals, ordering caps and gowns to students. Watch your Catamount email for specifics.

### *ii. Scholastic Status Check*

"Each student is expected to know the information in the catalog and to verify that quantitative and qualitative requirements for a particular class rank and for proper progress toward graduation are being met. All students should check official records periodically to confirm their status. The University does not assume responsibility for the student's unexpected failure at the last minute to meet all requirements for graduation, whether failure is due to misunderstanding or negligence concerning those requirements or to an inability to meet them."

### *iii. Requirements for Graduation*

- All required coursework is completed
- The Graduate Project/Thesis or the DNP Clinical Scholarly Project is complete and the student's committee has signed off on the project/thesis
- If required, the student has successfully completed a comprehensive exam
- The student has completed the WCU Graduation Application (see the [Graduate School website](#))

### *iv. Filing Application for Diploma (Filing for Graduation)*

All students must submit an application for graduation by the dates provided by the Registrar's Office. The application process is completed online through MyWCU. It is the student's responsibility to initiate and complete the application for graduation process. Students and advisors **collaborate** to fulfill this important task.

### *v. Additional Graduation Information*

Information will be provided in MS(N) Homeplace and via Catamount email about ordering graduation regalia and graduate nursing pins (optional).

Following degree conferral, required signatures for certification examinations may be obtained from the Associate Director.

## G. School of Nursing Convocation

A School of Nursing Convocation is planned prior to commencement exercises by the Convocation Committee within the SON to recognize students who have completed a nursing degree at WCU. Students may receive awards. MS(N) and DNP students are

hooded. Convocation is held twice a year: May and December. Students graduating in August may participate in the preceding May Convocation Ceremony but do not participate in Commencement until the following December. 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 educational goals. Only graduates may cross the stage at Convocation unless prior approval is given by the Executive Associate Director of the School of Nursing. Information will be provided about convocation invitations, class photographs, hoods and planning activities.

## **H. Awards for Graduating Students**

The SON recognizes outstanding graduates through a variety of awards presented at the SON Convocation or at the College of Health and Human Sciences awards ceremony. Nursing faculty nominate eligible graduates. Information may be solicited from the nominees to facilitate faculty voting on the recipients. Awards may be initiated or added to by alumni and friends of the SON; contact the SON Director to make arrangements.

### ***i. 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.

### ***ii. 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.

### ***iii. Outstanding Family Nurse Practitioner 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 Program faculty will nominate and select the recipient of this award.

### ***iv. Outstanding Nurse Educator 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 Program faculty will nominate and select the recipient of this award.

### ***v. Outstanding Nurse Anesthesia 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.

***vi. Outstanding Nursing Leadership Award***

This award is given to a Nurse Leadership 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. Nursing Leadership Program faculty will nominate and select the recipient of this award.

***vii. Outstanding Post-Master's DNP Award***

This award is given to a Post-Master's Doctor of Nursing Practice student who has demonstrated academic excellence and superior leadership skills. Students eligible for this award must have a GPA in the top 20% of her/his class and demonstrated exceptional leadership in the program as evidenced by serving on Program and/or School Committees, engagement in professional organizations, or assuming a leadership role in her/his practice setting. The Post-Master's DNP Program faculty will nominate and select the recipient of this award.

***viii. Additional awards*** may be made available by various non-University sponsored agencies or organizations on a year-to-year basis.

## **I. 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. Please join the School of Nursing Alumni Association prior to your graduation.

## IV. APPENDICES

### Appendix A WCU BLOODBORNE PATHOGEN

#### *Exposure Control Plan*

The following Exposure Control Plan (ECP) has been developed to eliminate or minimize student exposure to bloodborne pathogens. This plan addresses all of the provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens Standard (29CFR 1910.1030), and is implemented by the Office of Safety and Risk Management. All faculty, staff, and students must complete annual exposure training. Additionally, each faculty member will review the following, as well as **specific agency guidelines**, at the beginning of each semester for on-campus laboratory experiences and at the beginning of each new clinical rotation.

**Scope:** Blood and body fluid precautions must be used by all students who come in contact with any human blood, body fluid, or other potentially infectious materials.

**Rationale:**

- According to OSHA, Universal Precautions are defined as the infection control practices in which all human blood and certain human body fluids are treated as though they are known to be infectious for bloodborne pathogens. The Universal Precaution approach is based on the premise that many people do not know that they are infected and that medical history and examination cannot reliably identify all people infected with bloodborne pathogens.
- OSHA mandates that Universal Precautions shall be observed to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- WCU students should consider all human blood and body fluids as potentially infectious and must employ appropriate protective measures to prevent possible exposures. All body fluids are included, not just those that appear bloody. Blood is not always visible in body fluids or is not recognized until an exposure has occurred.
- Western Carolina University also includes the following under “other potentially infectious materials”: Any unfixed human tissues or organs, HIV-, HBV-, or HCV-containing cell lines, any animals or animal tissues infected with these pathogens, all primary human cell lines, and any established human cell lines. All human cell lines (including established lines) are also included in the definition of “other potentially infectious materials.” Exposure Risk Determination Exposure risk is determined by reviewing employee positions for reasonably anticipated risk of occupational exposure to human blood, body fluids, or other potentially infectious materials (OPIMs) as defined by the Bloodborne Pathogens Standard and OSHA interpretations as follows:
  1. Occupational Exposure Risk is “reasonably anticipated skin, eye, mucous membrane, non-intact skin, or parenteral contact with blood and other potentially infectious materials that may result from the performance of an employee’s duties.”
  2. Other Potentially Infectious Materials are any unfixed tissue or organ (other than intact skin) from a human (living or dead); including primary and established human cell lines and HIV containing cell or tissue cultures, organ culture medium or other solutions, and

blood, organs, or other tissues from experimental animals infected with HIV, HBV, or HCV.

1) Standard Safe Work Practices

- i) Eating, drinking, smoking (including electronic cigarettes), applying cosmetics, and handling contact lenses are prohibited in work areas where there is potential for occupational exposure to blood or OPIM.
- ii) Food and drink shall not be stored in work areas where blood or OPIM are present.
- iii) Procedures involving blood or OPIM are to be performed in a manner to minimize splashing, spraying, spattering, and droplet generation.
- iv) Mouth pipetting is prohibited. Always use mechanical means to pipette.
- v. Infectious waste and items contaminated with body fluids (paper towels, sponges) shall be "red bagged" in leak proof containers, which are labeled with the "Biohazard" symbol and autoclaved properly before discarding in the trash.
- vi. All students and faculty should wash their hands following the completion of on-campus laboratory activities, after removal of gloves and protective clothing, and before leaving the on-campus laboratory or contaminated work area of the clinical agency. If hand-washing facilities are not available, antiseptic hand cleansers are to be used. Hands are to be washed as soon as feasible.

2) Puncture Precautions

- i) All students must take precautions to prevent injuries when using sharp instruments or devices during procedures; when cleaning used instruments; during disposal of used needles and sharps; and when handling sharp instruments after procedures.
- ii) All students must be trained on the availability and use of approved safety devices where appropriate for their work responsibilities.
- iii) Needles must not be recapped, purposely bent or broken, removed from disposable syringes, or otherwise manipulated by hand. Exceptions (such as when needles must be recapped for sterility, i.e., re-use of needle on the same patient) for specific procedures must be approved by the Safety Office. Any approved recapping procedures must be done either by using a recapping device or a one-handed scoop method for recapping.
- iv) Broken, contaminated glassware must not be handled directly with hands, but must be cleaned up by mechanical devices such as a dustpan, cardboard, or tongs.
- v) After use, disposable syringes and needles, scalpel blades, scissors, slides, any activated or inactivated safety devices, and other sharp items must immediately, or as soon as feasible, be placed in puncture-resistant containers for disposal by the sharps user.
- vi) The puncture-resistant containers must be located as close as practical to areas where disposable needles or sharps are used. The needle disposal containers are to be replaced before they become full.

3) Hand/Skin Washing

- i) Hands and other skin surfaces must be washed as soon as possible if they become contaminated with blood or body fluids.

- ii) Hands must be washed immediately after removing gloves, and before leaving the laboratory/work area.

#### Barrier Precautions (Personal Protective Equipment)

- i.) Students must use appropriate barrier precautions to prevent skin and mucous membrane exposure when contact with any blood or other body fluids is anticipated. During clinical and lab, the faculty and student will assess the exposure potential from procedures to be performed and identify all procedures which necessitate routine use of personal protective equipment because of a probability of exposure. In addition, each student should critically review their work responsibilities to make informed decisions regarding the appropriate use of personal protective equipment.
- ii) Gloves must be worn for touching blood or body fluids, mucous membranes, or non-intact skin of all patients, for handling items or surfaces soiled with blood and body fluids, and for performing venipuncture and other vascular access procedures.
- iii) Masks and protective eyewear or face shields must be worn to prevent exposure of mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, and eyes during procedures that are likely to generate splashes or splatters of blood or other body fluids.
- iv) Appropriate protective gowns or aprons must be worn during procedures that are likely to generate splashes of blood or other body fluids. For procedures during which you anticipate your clothing will be soaked, fluid resistant aprons or gowns must be worn.
- v) Shoe covers or boots must be worn in instances where gross contamination with blood/body fluids is reasonably anticipated (i.e. sewage spill)

**Post Exposure Evaluation and Follow-up:** Significant exposure includes contamination by blood or other body fluids or high titers of cell-associated or free virus via

- 1) percutaneous, e.g., needlestick;
- 2) permucosal, e.g., splash in eye or mouth; or
- 3) cutaneous exposure, e.g., non-intact skin, or involving large amounts of blood or prolonged contact with blood, especially when exposed skin is chapped, abraded, or afflicted with dermatitis.

In the event of an exposure to eyes, mouth, mucus membrane, non-intact skin or parenteral contact, the area contacted should be washed with soap and water immediately. A medical evaluation should be performed immediately and the clinical faculty, WCU Safety Officer, and the SON Director notified as soon as feasible by the faculty member for either student or faculty member exposure. The student and faculty member should adhere to the following guidelines.

1. If the exposure occurs on campus, the faculty member will inform the student to seek immediately a medical evaluation from his or her physician/health care provider, the WCU Health Services (i.e., Infirmary), the local health School, or an emergency treatment center. The faculty should remind the student to follow the procedures and/or recommendations of the individual(s) providing the medical evaluation. The student shall be responsible for any health care fees or charges associated with implementation of this policy. If the student refuses a medical evaluation, the faculty member will record this declination in the student's School record. The faculty member will also document

the exposure incident in the student's School record.

2. If the exposure occurs in an off-campus location not owned or operated by the University and the exposure occurs while the student is completing a nursing course assignment, the faculty member will inform the student to seek immediately a medical evaluation at an emergency treatment center or from the student's physician/health care provider or the WCU Health Services. The faculty should remind the student to follow the procedures and/or recommendations of the individual(s) providing the medical evaluation. The student shall be responsible for any health care fees or charges associated with implementation of this policy. If the student refuses a medical evaluation, the faculty member will record this declination in the student's School record. The faculty member will record likewise the exposure incident in the student's School record.
3. Any incident involving a student, should be report to the agency/facility liaison where the incident occurred. Faculty will work with the agency/facility liaison to complete any agency/facility required documentation related to the incident.

The student shall have the responsibility of following through with the protocol suggested by the individual(s) providing the medical evaluation. While the School cannot prescribe the protocol to be followed by a student, OSHA recommends that the following steps be taken by the individual(s) providing the post-exposure evaluation and follow-up:

1. Documentation of the route(s) of exposure, and the circumstances under which the exposure incident occurred.
2. Identification and documentation of the source individual, unless the School or the clinical agency can establish that identification is infeasible or prohibited by state or local law.
  - a. The source individual's blood shall be tested as soon as feasible and after consent is obtained in order to determine HBV and HIV infectivity. If consent is not obtained, the School or the clinical agency shall establish that legally required consent cannot be obtained.
  - b. When the source individual is already known to be infected with HBV or HIV, testing for either is not required.
  - c. Results of the source individual's testing shall be made available to the exposed student within 15 days of the completion of the evaluation, and the student shall be informed of applicable laws and regulations concerning disclosure of the identity and infectious status of the source individual.
4. Collection and testing of the exposed student's blood for HIV and HBV serologic status.
  - a. The exposed student's blood shall be collected as soon as feasible and tested after consent is obtained.
  - b. If the student consents to baseline blood collection, but does not give consent at that time for HIV serologic testing, the sample shall be preserved for at least 90 days. If, within 90 days of the exposure incident, the student elects to have the baseline sample tested, such testing shall be done as soon as feasible.
5. Post-exposure prophylaxis should be administered when medically indicated.
6. Counseling on the immediate and long term effects of potential infectious agents should be discussed with the exposed individual.

7. The exposed student will be encouraged to report all related diseases and problems to his or her physician or health care provider for follow-up.
8. All information should be recorded by the evaluator and made available to the student. The student may be asked to provide documentation that he or she is complying with the recommended protocols.
9. Records should be maintained by the medical evaluator for 30 years following the completion of the evaluation.

This policy is from [WCU Biological Safety Manual – Office of Safety and Risk Management](#), Section 9 modified for students in the school of nursing.

## **Appendix B**

### **Social Media Guidelines**

#### **Purpose:**

The School of Nursing supports the use of social media for the purpose of engaging in professional and personal communication between the University, other students, prospective students, faculty, staff, and alumni. These WCU School of Nursing guidelines apply to anyone who engages in Internet conversations for school-related purposes or school-related activities such as interactions in or about clinical and didactic course activities. Dissemination of sensitive and confidential information, which is protected under HIPAA, whether discussed through traditional communication channels or through social media is prohibited outside the appropriate setting. Our goal is to ensure that all participation online is respectful and upholds the mission, vision, and values of Western Carolina University and the School of Nursing.

#### **Definitions:**

Social media is defined as mechanisms for communication that allows for the creation and exchange of user-generated content, which is disseminated through social interaction, using various platforms that are immediately searchable and shareable. So, remember when publishing information on social media sites to remain cognizant that the information is available for anyone to see and can be traced back to you.

Social media is defined as, but not limited to, web-based or mobile technologies used for interactive communication. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Social networking sites – Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter, blogs, podcasts, RSS feeds, etc.
- Photo-sharing and video websites – YouTube, Flickr
- Micro-blogging sites
- Forums and discussion boards – Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups

#### **Guidelines:**

- Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the university, staff, students, clinical facilities, patients/clients, or others with whom one has contact in the role of a Western Carolina University, School of Nursing student.
- Students are not to use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, pornographic images, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the professional workplace.
- No student shall videotape professors or fellow students for personal or social media use without the express written permission of the faculty or fellow

student. Patients/clients are **not** to be videotaped or photographed without **written** permission of the patient/client **and** of the facility.

- Respect copyright and fair use. When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the university. For guidance, visit the University's Library or Copyright Office sites.
- Do not use WCU or the School of Nursing logos and/or graphics, on personal social media sites. Do not use WCU's name to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.
- Use of the School of Nursing marks (logos and graphics) for School sanctioned events must be approved (posters, fliers, postings) by administration.
- The use of smartphones and other devices employed for social media will be used only as authorized by faculty.
- No personal phone conversations or texting are allowed while in patient/client areas or in the classroom. If the student needs to respond to an emergency text or phone call during class or clinical, the student is asked to leave the classroom/clinical area to take the call.
- Use of computers (Ipads, Notebooks, etc.) during class shall be restricted to note taking and classroom activities.
- If you identify yourself as a WCU student, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with the professional behavioral expectations of the University and the School of Nursing. Identify your views as your own. When posting your point of view, the student needs to ensure that it is clear that they are not speaking for WCU, unless you have been authorized to do so in writing.
- Ultimately, the student is solely responsible for what he/she posts. Be smart about protecting yourself, and others' privacy, and confidential information, especially in regards to HIPAA. You are legally liable for what you post and remember individual bloggers have been held liable by the courts for comments made on social media sites that were proprietary, defamatory, libelous, obscene or copyrighted.

#### **Consequences:**

- All violations by students of patient/client privacy with an electronic device will be subject to HIPAA procedures/guidelines and consequences.
- Other social media violations in which students share confidential or unprofessional information will be reviewed by the Student Affairs Committee and may result in disciplinary action and/or dismissal from the program.

- Each student is legally responsible for individual postings and may be subject to liability if individual postings are found defamatory, harassing, or in violation of any other applicable law as well as any copyrighted information (music, videos, text, etc.).

**Related Resources:**

- [NCSBN](#)
- [HIPAA](#)
- [WCU Career Services Social Media Information](#)

## **V. COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES & GRADUATE NURSING STUDENT HANDBOOK AGREEMENT AND CONSENT FORM**

**College of Health and Human Sciences Acknowledgement and Consent:** I have read and understand the College of Health and Human Sciences Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy for Students (“Policy”). I also have had an opportunity to ask questions about the Policy.

By my signature below, I agree to comply with the requirements of the College, Program, this Policy, and all applicable policies and regulations of the University and affiliated clinical agencies. Further, as a condition of participation in the Program, I knowingly and voluntarily consent to submit to any requisite pre-placement drug testing, reasonable suspicion drug testing required by the University, or any random drug testing required by an affiliated clinical agency.

I hereby authorize the disclosure of any and all drug testing results to the Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences.

**I hereby agree, for myself and on behalf of my successors, heirs, and assigns, to hold harmless and waive any and all claims and release, satisfy, and forever discharge Western Carolina University and its trustees, officers, and employees, and the University of North Carolina and its governors, officers, and employees from any and all actions, claims, damages, judgments, demands, rights, and causes of action of whatever kind or nature, arising out of or in connection with the College's, Program's, and University's administration of the Policy.**

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Student Name

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Student Signature

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Date

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

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Student Name

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Student Signature

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Date

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