

Pre-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook

2023-2024

Supplemental to
WCU Undergraduate Catalog

CONTENTS

- I. The Western Carolina University School of Nursing
 - A. Introduction to WCU
 - B. Introduction to the School of Nursing
 - C. Organization of the School of Nursing
 - D. Introduction to the Pre-Licensure BSN Program
 - E. Mission, Vision, and Philosophy of the School of Nursing
 - i. Mission
 - ii. Vision
 - iii. Philosophy
 - F. BSN Program Student Learning Outcomes
- II. Educational Policies, Procedures, and Information
 - A. General Information
 - i. Admissions and Progression
 - a. Admission to the Upper-Division
 - b. Transfer of Upper-Division Nursing Credits
 - c. Progression in the Major
 - d. Readmission to the Major
 - ii. Academic Information
 - a. Introduction to WCU
 - b. Lockers in the HHS Building
 - c. Grading Standards
 - d. Standardized Testing Program
 - e. Laptop Requirement
 - f. Online Testing Software
 - g. Use of References for Papers
 - h. Penalties
 - i. Dosage Calculation Exams
 - j. Faculty Office Hours
 - k. Advising
 - l. Registration
 - m. Appeals Policy for the School of Nursing
 - iii. Student Complaints/Grievance Information
 - a. WCU Dean of Students Complaints and Concerns
 - b. Sexual Harassment Complaints
 - c. Discrimination Complaints
 - d. Academic/Grade Appeal
 - e. Other
 - iv. Expectations of Students
 - a. Academic Integrity
 - b. Social Media Policy
 - c. Policy on Attendance
 - d. Tardiness
 - e. Examinations

- f. Core Competencies Necessary for Students to Achieve program Outcomes
 - g. Health and Behavioral Competencies
 - h. Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy
 - v. Expected Respectful and Professional Behaviors
 - vi.
 - B. Information Specific to Clinical Courses
 - i. Documentation Required for Clinical Placement
 - ii. Proof of Completion of Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Training
 - iii. Professional Liability (Malpractice) Insurance
 - iv. OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens and HIPAA Training
 - v. Student Health Form
 - vi. Immunizations and TB Screening
 - vii. Criminal Background Checks
 - viii. Fire and Laboratory Safety Training
 - ix. Guidelines for Dress in the Clinical Setting
 - x. Cell phone use
 - xi. Cumulative Clinical Evaluation
- III. Student Development
- A. Organizations
 - i. Association of Nursing Students (ANS)
 - ii. Nurses Christian Fellowship (NCF)
 - iii. Eta Psi Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, International Nursing Honor Society
 - iv. CHHS and SON Student Ambassadors
 - v. Health Equity Circle (HEC)
 - B. Committees
 - i. Pre-Licensure Curriculum Committee (PLCC)
 - ii. Pre-Licensure Student Affairs Committee (PLSAC)
 - iii. School of Nursing Director's Advisory Council (DAC)
 - iv. Student Ambassadors
 - C. Engagement
 - i. Visiting Scholars, Professional Meetings, and University Events
 - ii. Travel Abroad
 - D. Scholarships, Loans, and Grants
 - i. Scholarships
 - ii. Healthcare Agencies
 - iii. WCU
 - E. Career Planning
 - i. WCU's Career Services Center
 - ii. Letters of Reference
 - F. Graduation
 - i. Commencement
 - ii. Scholastic Status Check
 - iii. Filing Application for Diploma (Filing for Graduation)
 - G. School of Nursing Convocation
 - H. Awards for Graduating Seniors
 - I. Alumni

- IV. Appendices
 - A. Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan
 - B. Social Media Guidelines
 - C. Performance Improvement Plan – Prelicensure Program
 - D. College of Health and Human Sciences & Undergraduate Pre-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook Agreement and Consent Form

WELCOME

I want to welcome you to the Western Carolina University School of Nursing (WCU-SON). We are so glad you chose WCU-SON to pursue a nursing degree! Here you will have the opportunity to work with dedicated faculty who are experienced educators and clinicians, and dedicated staff with years of administrative and advising experience. We are all committed to your success and to helping you meet your educational goals.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the unique circumstances that we continue to face as a result of COVID19; a global pandemic presents challenges that must be addressed in the classroom and clinical aspects of your education. But I can promise you that the SON faculty and staff have been working endlessly to ensure that you will have a rich educational experience. You have chosen an exciting time to enter the extraordinary profession 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 to welcome you as a part of the Western Carolina nursing family and I wish you success in your studies. I hope for the opportunity to meet you, either virtually or in person. You are the future of nursing!

Go, Catamounts!

*Terrica Durbin, PhD, DNP, CRNA
Director and Associate Professor
Western Carolina University
School of Nursing*

Instructions to Students concerning the *Pre-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook*

Students in the School of Nursing (SON) are responsible for reading and understanding the information contained in the *Pre-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook* and adhering to any policy changes and/or updates in subsequent editions. Each student is responsible for reading the *Pre-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook* and must submit a signed copy of the Student Handbook Agreement upon admission to their respective nursing program. The signed copy will be placed in the student's file. The Student Handbook Agreement is in the appendices of this document.

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 comprised of the Graduate School and five undergraduate colleges: College of Health and Human Sciences (which includes the School of Nursing), Arts and Sciences, Business, Fine and Performing Arts, and Education and Allied Professions. 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 Undergraduate Catalog is the official source of information concerning University policies, student services, academic regulations, the University calendar, and degree requirements. Students can obtain a copy of the Undergraduate Catalog at <http://catalog.wcu.edu/>.

B. Introduction to the School of Nursing

The North Carolina Legislature, at the request of Western Carolina University 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 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students graduated in 1973. In 1982, the RN to BSN program was founded to further serve western North Carolina people.

The first class of Master of Science degree students started in the Family Nurse Practitioner program in 1999. Since then, tracks have been added in Nurse Leadership, Nurse Educator, and Nurse Anesthesia. In May of 2007, the Accelerated BSN program was founded for individuals with baccalaureate degrees in other fields. Shortly after, in July of 2007, the nursing program was officially changed as WCU's School of Nursing.

In 2009 Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) Program was introduced. Students in this program work with a partnered community college and WCU to earn

both their Associate Degree in Nursing and Bachelor of Science in Nursing within four years.

In 2013, the School of Nursing established a Post-Master's Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program jointly with the University of North Carolina Charlotte (UNCC). In May 2018, well ahead of the nationally mandated deadline of 2022, the Nurse Anesthesia program transitioned to a BSN to DNP program.

The School now has well over 3,500 alumni who practice in clinical and leadership roles nationwide. Students who graduate from the School of Nursing perform well on their licensure and certification exams with pass rates above national averages. Students have clinical experiences throughout western North Carolina in a variety of health care institutions and agencies. Through these clinical sites students gain valuable experience working in both rural and urban areas.

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

C. Organization of the School of Nursing

A list of School of Nursing faculty and staff can be found at <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/departments-schools-colleges/HHS/nursing/school-of-nursing-faculty-and-staff/index.aspx>.

D. Introduction to the Pre-Licensure Baccalaureate Nursing Programs

The Traditional BSN program leads to a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. Upon graduation, pre-licensure students sit for the National Council of State Boards of Nursing licensure examination for registered nurses (NCLEX-RN). Didactic classes are held in Cullowhee for traditional pre-licensure students, and clinical nursing experiences are held at health care agencies throughout Western North Carolina.

The Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) enables candidates already holding a bachelor's or higher degree to complete the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing over four consecutive semesters. Didactic classes for the ABSN are held at Biltmore Park in Asheville, and clinical nursing experiences are held at health care agencies throughout Western North Carolina.

E. Mission, Vision, and Philosophy of the School of Nursing

i. Mission

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

ii. Vision

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

iii. Philosophy

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 various health care settings. The master's and doctoral curriculum build on the baccalaureate education and prepare 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.

According to Roach (1997), the professionalization of caring in nursing includes:

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

Compassion – shared awareness and connectedness with experiences of others.

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

Conscience – state of moral awareness.

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

Comportment – demeanor, conduct, personal bearing, behavior.

Excellence in nursing requires a blending of science and art. Nursing science is the body of nursing knowledge derived from integrating 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 inter-professional 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.

F. BSN Program Outcomes:

Upon completion of a prelicensure program at WCU, the student will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Apply the nursing process with clinical judgment to provide safe, holistic, and compassionate care to diverse individuals and populations across the lifespan.
2. Synthesize knowledge from nursing and other disciplines to inform clinical judgment, provide evidence-based care, and explore innovative solutions to improve healthcare on the individual and systems level.
3. Improve individual and population health by integrating principles of

leadership, advocacy, health equity, and social justice with knowledge of health policy, health care systems, and the social determinants of health.

4. Collaborate in a culture of safety and quality through an understanding of healthcare systems, care outcomes, evidence-based practice, economics, and regulatory requirements.

5. Communicate effectively through written, verbal, behavioral, and technological modalities to manage information, collaborate with the healthcare team, gain knowledge, and drive decisions for safe, high-quality, efficient, and evidence-based nursing care.

6. Cultivate lifelong learning and integrate professional standards rooted in the ANA Code of Ethics to lead with empathy, self-awareness, integrity, and resilience in providing therapeutic care and supporting nursing excellence.

II. EDUCATIONAL POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND INFORMATION

Students are responsible for following the SON policies as presented in this document. A form acknowledging the receipt of the information in this Handbook is found in the appendices of this document. Students are required to sign and submit this agreement to their CastleBranch account.

As noted in the WCU Undergraduate Catalog, the SON reserves the right to modify school policies and procedures. Students should periodically consult their nursing faculty advisor to obtain current information. The SON will make every effort to notify currently enrolled students of any changes. Changes and updates to student information will be posted on the SON website. Students are expected to keep the University informed of any changes to their address, phone numbers, and email address. These can be updated in the MyWCU portal.

A. General Information

i. Admissions and Progression

a. Application to a Nursing Program

Applications are submitted through the NursingCAS system at www.nursingcas.org. For current requirements and deadlines, visit the program websites at bsn.wcu.edu or absn.wcu.edu. Transfer students must be admitted to WCU to be eligible for both the BSN or ABSN programs.

b. Transfer of Nursing Credits

Any student seeking transfer of nursing credits must provide a letter from the director of the School of Nursing where the credit was earned, verifying the student is in good standing. Per the WCU *Undergraduate Catalog*, "the applicability of transferred credits toward degree requirements is determined by the Registrar's Office and the department head of the student's major. In some cases, due to accreditation standards, validation of a course by successful completion of more advanced work in the same discipline or by examination may be required." The work must have been done at an institution "accredited by a nationally-recognized regional accrediting agency." Nursing credits must also come from a program accredited by a national agency, either CNEA (formerly NLN-AC) or CCNE.

The WCU *Undergraduate Catalog* states, "there is no time limit on the course work accepted for undergraduate transfer credit. However, students who plan to schedule courses with stated prerequisites should consider auditing the prerequisite courses if no work has been attempted in the field within the past five years." For the upper-division nursing major at WCU, no more than a year should have elapsed since the last clinical course, and students may be asked to provide evidence clinical skills have remained current through employment. The student must also go through the admissions process to the major and have met all prerequisites. There must be an available seat in the cohort the student is joining.

For faculty to evaluate the nature of transferred upper-division nursing courses, the student must submit course materials, including syllabus, learning packet, and any papers returned to the student. A grade of C or better must have been earned in each course. Nursing faculty who teach the equivalent course at WCU will review these materials and make recommendations to the Director of the SON. The student may be required to enroll for one or more hours of Independent Study during the term the comparable course is taught at WCU to attend lecture, seminar, laboratory, or clinical experiences that may be missing in the transferred course.

c. Progression in the Major

Courses are taken in sequence as indicated in the curriculum plans, and students must demonstrate professional and safe nursing practices. A student admitted into the BSN or ABSN program must pass each class with a grade of Satisfactory or a C (2.00) or better in all required courses.

Students are also required to earn a **weighted exam average of 77%**, including the final, within each course. Courses exempt from the 77% weighted exam average are NSG 314 (Nursing Informatics), NSG 315 (Nursing Ethics and Health Policy), NSG 324 (Evidence-Based Nursing Practice) and NSG 424 (Concepts of Nursing Leadership in Management).

Students who fail to meet these retention standards will be dismissed from the upper-division nursing major.

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 the University are responsible for following the WCU Undergraduate Catalog procedures. Failure to withdraw per WCU's withdrawal policy will result in a grade of F on the student's transcript. Any student who is dismissed has the option of appealing the decision (see [Appeals](#)) and/or of reapplying to the appropriate program.

d. Readmission to the Major

Students who have been dismissed from the program but remain in good academic standing with the University may apply for readmission to the program if a vacant seat is available within the cohort. Students who have failed (earned a course grade less than C) for two or more nursing courses are not eligible for readmission to the major.

Students seeking readmission to the first semester must submit a new program application during the regular admissions cycle. The student's current GPA, TEAS, and ACT scores, along with any other applicable

materials will be used to calculate an admission score. Re-admission for these students will be based upon the applicants ranked admission score in the overall applicant pool.

Students applying for re-entry into semesters two, three, or four are required to submit a written request for readmission to the chairperson of the School of Nursing Pre-Licensure Student Affairs Committee. Approval for re-admission to these semesters is determined by the committee, acting as the Admissions Committee, and requires a seat is available within the requested cohort. There is an abbreviated application form including a written request for readmission. This request should include an analysis of why the student did not progress and a plan for success that addresses strategies for improvement. In addition, the committee must receive at least two letters of support from nursing faculty addressing the student's previous performance and potential for successful completion of the nursing curriculum, if readmitted.

Students who are readmitted will be required to retake the failed course. It is recommended these students audit or retake the corresponding courses as needed. The Student Affairs Committee will advise readmitted students regarding which courses will be required. The Committee reserves the right to interview the student seeking readmission and to require the student to comply with additional requirements or conditions as appropriate.

The deadlines for receipt of the application for readmission and faculty letters of support are different, dependent on the current enrollment status of the student. For individuals who are not currently enrolled in the nursing program, the deadline for Fall readmission is **June 1**, Spring readmission is **October 15** and Summer readmission is **March 15**. Students who have been notified of a failure to progress in the major have until **12:00 PM on the Thursday of Exam Week** to submit readmission request and documentation for the upcoming semester.

Readmission decisions will not be made until after the deadline. Approval of the application for readmission does not guarantee re-entry at the beginning of the next scheduled semester as re-entry is based on availability of a seat in the program. The application is available from the SON's Office of Student Services.

The Office of Student Services will direct readmitted students to repeat program entrance requirements and clinical requirements as needed. Students must submit current documentation by the appropriate deadlines to remain in the program.

ii. Academic Information

a. WCU Student Orientation

Due to the unique characteristics of the nursing program, attendance at Program Orientation sessions is required at the beginning of each semester for baccalaureate students. Failure to attend orientation may result in forfeiture of admission.

Transfer students new to WCU are required to attend general orientation sessions arranged by the University.

All students should familiarize themselves with the WCU *Undergraduate Catalog*, found at <http://catalog.wcu.edu/>, and the behaviors expected of WCU students, see *Expectations of Students (II.A.iii)*.

b. Lockers

When lockers or similar personal storage spaces are available, the SON may make them accessible to students. Access may be granted either on an assigned basis or as first come-first served. All such storage spaces remain the property of the School of Nursing. The SON reserves the right to inspect the contents of such storage spaces. Students should be aware this right includes removal of any personal locking devices. The SON is not responsible for damage to personal locking devices, which may occur during inspection of the storage space.

c. Grading Standards

The SON uses the grading scale below for all non-clinical BSN courses required in the major. Clinical courses and independent study are graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory courses. Elective courses are at the discretion of the instructor.

A+ = 100 - 97.50	A = 97.49-92.50	A- = 92.49 - 90.50
B+ = 90.49 -87.50	B = 87.49 - 84.50	B- = 84.49 - 82.50
C+ = 82.49 - 78.50	C = 78.49 - 76.50	C- = 76.49 - 74.50
D+ = 74.49 - 71.50	D = 71.49 - 68.50	D- = 68.49 - 66.50
	F = 66.49 - 0	

d. Standardized Testing Program

Students enrolled in the pre-licensure BSN programs are required to participate in a proprietary RN-NCLEX preparation/standardized testing program selected by faculty. Failure to participate in this program will

result in failure to progress in the nursing major. Proctored assessment examinations are administered periodically throughout the program.

e. Laptop Requirement

Students are required to have a laptop computer for use throughout the nursing program. Tests will be completed online and may be required to use the laptop in class regularly.

f. Online Testing Software

The School of Nursing currently uses an online testing program for all exams and tests. This is a required program and access must be purchased upon admission and every fall semester through the WCU bookstore. Students are responsible for ensuring their computers are up-to-date and compatible with the software.

g. Use of References for Assignments

Students are expected to use references no older than five (5) years. For deviations from this policy, the student must consult the faculty. The standard citation and reference manual for the SON is the most current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

h. Penalties

All papers have a due date and time. Penalties are specific to the course syllabus; however, work handed in after the deadline will lose a minimum of 5% for each calendar day (including weekends) it is late. In courses graded S/U all written work must be submitted to the satisfaction of the professor or the student will receive a grade of U in the course.

i. Dosage Calculation Exams

Accurate calculation of medication dosages is a critical nursing skill and is essential for patient safety. Some nursing courses will include required medication dosage calculation examinations (Med Math Exams). All students must demonstrate mastery in calculation of medication dosages on these exams. Students are permitted a maximum of two attempts to achieve a passing score of at least 90%. Failure to achieve at least 90% by completion of the second attempt will result in grade of unsatisfactory for the course and failure to progress in the major.

If the two failed dosage calculation exams were administered in ATI, a third faculty-written exam may be administered to assess competence. If the faculty-written exam does not meet a passing score of at least 90%, this will result in a grade of unsatisfactory for the course and failure to progress in the major.

Students will be notified in advance of the exam dates. Specific criteria and guidelines will be provided in each respective course syllabus.

j. Faculty Office Hours

Individual faculty members will post office hours during each semester. These hours may be advertised on course syllabi, on the faculty's door, or by other means. Appointments are available during office hours and at other times as arranged by the faculty member.

k. Advising

Each pre-licensure student will be assigned to a nursing faculty advisor. Each student must make an appointment to see the advisor before registration and whenever assistance is needed. Most faculty advisor appointments are only available during the 9-month academic year.

The ultimate responsibility of registering for classes, dropping classes, completing curriculum and graduation requirements rests with the student, not the advisor.

The student advisee is expected to:

Consult the WCU Undergraduate Catalog to become familiar with procedures and deadlines.

Attend the required group advising session on Advising Day.

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

Complete any required forms completely and accurately.

Make final course selection and register for classes *after* consulting with your advisor.

Keep the advisor informed about academic difficulties *as they occur*.

Ask their program director about changing advisors if the assigned advisor is not meeting the student's needs.

Complete any requested evaluations of the advising process and advisor.

The Nursing Faculty Advisor is expected to:

Post and keep office hours, including expanded availability around registration windows.

Help students find answers to questions regarding Liberal Studies and major requirements.

Assist students with identifying campus resources, and understanding academic policies such as the grade point average, effect of repeats and withdrawals, probation status, and the readmission process.

Maintain confidentiality.

Assist students in exploring alternative academic and career options as necessary.

l. Registration

Dates, materials, and instructions for registration are published in the WCU Undergraduate Catalog and the Office of the Registrar's website.

The Schedule of Classes for upcoming semesters are made available prior to advising day. Fall and Summer schedules are made available in late February. Spring schedules are made available in late October. Schedules are subject to change up to the beginning of the semester. You may obtain your access number (ALT-Pin) to register by attending the appropriate group advising session on Advising Day. ALT-Pins will **not** be handed out in advance and are not provided via email.

m. Appeals Policy for the School of Nursing

Students have the right to appeal a final assigned grade or dismissal from a program 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 specific 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 WCU Undergraduate Catalog under the *Academic Action Appeal Policy* section.

iii. Student Complaints/Grievance Information

For the School of Nursing, a student grievance or complaint is a university, college, or program related problem or condition that a student believes to be unfair, inequitable, discriminatory, or a hindrance to the educational process and may be addressed through the following university processes.

a. WCU's Dean of Students Complaints and Concerns

The WCU Dean of Students office maintains a webpage for Complaints and Concerns which provides definitions, examples, and portals to report comments, complaints, concerns, and occurrences of bias, discrimination, or intimidation. This page can be found at <https://www.wcu.edu/discover/safe-at-wcu/index.aspx>

b. Sexual Harassment Complaints

WCU Policy 129, *Title IX Sexual Harassment*, provides a complaint process for allegations of sexual harassment. University definitions and processes to follow are outlined at <https://www.wcu.edu/discover/safe-at-wcu/index.aspx>

c. Discrimination Complaints

WCU Policy 53, *Unlawful Discrimination*, provides a complaint process for allegations of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, political affiliation, and veteran status. The University definitions and processes can be found at <https://www.wcu.edu/discover/safe-at-wcu/index.aspx>

d. Academic/Grade Appeal

School of Nursing Students have the right to appeal a final assigned grade or dismissal from a program if it can be shown that the grade or program dismissal was assigned arbitrarily or impermissibly. A student who wishes to appeal a final grade on a specific 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 can be found in the WCU Undergraduate Catalog Under the [Academic Action Appeal Policy](#).

e. Other

Concerns that are not under the jurisdiction of a university grievance or complaint process may be reported to and addressed by SON Faculty or Program Directors. Issues that are reported to SON Faculty or Program Directors that are covered by another university process will be referred to the appropriate University process

iv. 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 School of Nursing, the University, and in their careers.

Nursing students are held to the Western Carolina University Academic Honesty Policy, published in the Undergraduate Catalog's *Academic Integrity Policy* section.

Dishonesty will not be tolerated. Professors have the right to determine the appropriate sanction or sanctions for an incident of academic dishonesty. Acts of academic dishonesty may result in penalties ranging from a grade of zero on the paper/project/test, a "U" in a clinical course, failure of the course, and/or immediate dismissal from the program. Circumstances of the act of academic dishonesty and consequent sanctions will be documented in the student's academic file and reported to the SON Director in accordance with WCU policy.

Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. This includes, but is not limited to: utilization of peers or classmates on assignments, reproduction of any part of a web hosted examination

(examples: saving, printing, "cut & pasting", or e-mailing), or unauthorized access of the examination.

Fabrication: Creating and/or falsifying 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: Helping or attempting to help someone to commit a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy in any academic exercise (e.g. allowing another to copy information during an examination)

Tips on how to avoid plagiarism are available through [WCU's Tutoring Services website](#) on the *Writing Support* page.

b. Social Media Policy

See *Appendix B*.

c. Policy on Attendance

Students are expected to attend all scheduled learning activities such as orientation, lectures/classes, seminars, labs, observations, clinical rotations, evaluations, conferences, and other activities as scheduled by faculty. Refer to individual course syllabi for course specific attendance policies.

Learning activities may be scheduled for any time throughout the day (including early morning, evening, night shifts, and weekends). Students are responsible for their own transportation to and from all scheduled learning activities. Students should not schedule appointments or activities conflicting with scheduled learning activities. In the case of outstanding circumstances students must receive prior approval for any exceptions to the attendance policy. All absences from scheduled clinical experiences require communication with the clinical faculty to arrange for a make-up assignment. Any absences will be documented in the student's clinical evaluation tool.

Attendance means arriving *prior to the scheduled experience and staying for the full duration*. Late arrival is disruptive to a class/clinical setting and the faculty member has the option to exclude the student from the learning activity. Faculty members have the option to exclude students from activities for late arrival. Exclusion from class/clinical learning activity due to tardiness results in absence and will be treated as such. In the case of an emergency students must make every effort to notify the appropriate faculty member. Students who arrive late to an exam will **not** receive additional time.

Students who do not complete assigned preparation for clinical have committed a safety violation, which is considered unsatisfactory performance. Students who fail to comply with attendance policies may be issued a failing or unsatisfactory grade for the involved course.

d. Examinations

Students are expected to complete examinations on the scheduled dates. If a student is unable to take a scheduled exam they must notify the professor of the anticipated absence prior to the exam. Failure to notify the professor may result in a grade of zero for that exam. Faculty, in consultation with the Associate Director and respective Program Director will evaluate patterns of missed exams individually.

In the case of an approved absence the student is responsible for making arrangements with the professor to make-up the exam. Make-up exams should take place within a week of the originally scheduled exam. Failure to make up the exam at the rescheduled time will result in the grade of zero for the exam. The timing and format of the make-up exam is at the discretion of the instructor. Class time will not be used for make-up exams.

e. Core Competencies Necessary for Students

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 including physical, cognitive, communication and behavioral core competencies essential to the functions of the entry-level professional nurse. These core competencies are considered to be the minimum and are 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. An applicant must meet the competencies despite any handicap with or without reasonable accommodation.

Examples of competencies for each of the areas are below. These descriptions are intended to be examples and are not all-inclusive.

Observation:

An 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. An applicant 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. An applicant should be able to execute motor movements required to perform general care and emergency treatment of clients including, 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:

An 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.

Candidates 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 being admitted to their program, each student will be asked to submit a signed statement indicating the student is capable of meeting these core competencies. The signature form can be found in the respective program's Homeplace in Canvas. This signed statement will be uploaded to CastleBranch and 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 Accessibility Resources. Students need to be aware 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 initiating and completing the process with the Office of Accessibility Resources and providing documentation of the disability to the professor and requesting accommodation(s).

The Office of Accessibility Resources will provide the student with a letter of suggested accommodations for the student to give to the professor. 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 Office of Accessibility Services cannot agree upon a reasonable accommodation the issue can then be taken to the Director of the School of Nursing, moving on to the Associate Dean as necessary. In each of these steps, the student's right to confidentiality will 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 students can be academically sanctioned, disciplined, or dismissed from the nursing major.

Unprofessional conduct may be defined as, but is not limited to:

An act or behavior of the type that is prohibited by the *North Carolina Nursing Practice Act* or *Administrative Code* (available online at www.ncbon.org).

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

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

An act or behavior that constitutes a practice a student is not prepared, authorized, or permitted to perform.

An act or behavior that interferes with the learning environment.

Professional ethics and North Carolina law require a nurse to protect patients from unsafe practice. Thus, the nursing student is obligated to reveal to nursing faculty her/his own or others' questionable conduct that might interfere with safe professional practice.

If a student is academically sanctioned and/or removed from the learning environment due to a behavioral problem, a conference will then be scheduled to include the student, faculty member, Program Director and Director of School of Nursing to discuss the student behavior and retention and/or progression in the program. The conference will be documented in the student's file.

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 Services. Per this policy, drug testing will take place upon acceptance to the Nursing major, when

required by clinical agencies, and if 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 Director of Student Services, Program Director, and Director of the School of Nursing will collaborate with the Dean's office to implement the policy. The policy may be reviewed in its entirety on the College of Health and Human Services website (chhs.wcu.edu).

All SON students 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 consent to undergo any drug and or alcohol testing required by the program. Results of screenings are handled with utmost confidentiality.

Students who submit a positive drug screening will be contacted by CastleBranch's Medical Research Officer within 72 hours for consultation. If cause of a false-positive is not identified, students will not be able to be placed at clinical sites. Students in this situation will be dismissed from their program due to an inability to progress within their program.

A return of dilute negative is treated as a potential positive screening by our clinical/practicum partners. Dilute negatives are often the result of over hydration but can be a result of efforts to tamper with the validity of a screening. However, as this result does not read as a truly positive screening students will have 48 hours to complete a second drug screening.

h. Expected Respectful and Professional Behaviors

Students are to behave in a professional manner in class and clinical experiences. As a member of the SON it is vital to fulfill these expectations when interacting with patients, clinical agency personnel, faculty and staff, peers, and the general public. Examples of how students can demonstrate professional behavior and respect for others are below. Students who fail to exhibit these behaviors may be asked to leave the classroom or face other discipline within the program.

Classroom:

Students are expected to invest in their academic experience. Preparation not only allows students to succeed in didactic classes but is required for successful completion of clinical experiences. Students will be held to the highest level of the University's *Academic Integrity Policy*.

While attending didactic classes, students are expected to maintain professionalism. Instructors may schedule breaks as appropriate. Because of the difficult nature of these courses it is important students remain attentive for the duration of classes. Students should avoid distracting themselves or others by talking or use of electronic devices. Students are expected to maintain the level of self-care allows them to be attentive, well rested, and contribute to the classroom or clinical experience.

Computers may be allowed by the instructor for the purpose of taking notes. Computers will be required for exams and presentations. Students should ensure their personal device meets the requirements of the University and SON. Recording lectures is also allowable with the permission of the instructor. Guests are not allowed to in the classroom or clinical experiences.

Testing:

Exams in the SON are provided through an online proctored program. Exams are to be taken without the use of outside materials, peer assistance, or the internet. Students should be aware the proctoring software will track internet usage during the assessment. Additionally, this program allows faculty and staff to complete analysis of each exam for fairness and accuracy.

Any attempt to cheat, plagiarize, or distract the class during an exam this will be regarded as a violation of the *Academic Integrity Policy*. If a student violates this policy the instructor reserves the right to dismiss the student from the class. Students are to observe all testing policies listed in the course syllabus. These policies may include but are not limited to:

No personal items allowed on the desk/table.

No hats with bills or smart watches.

Any jackets or loose clothing should be placed on the back of the student's chair, not in their lap.

Students are allowed the use of ear plugs during exams, but they will be held responsible for any announcements made throughout the exam. If a student has questions regarding a particular test item they should an appointment with the involved faculty and submit your question in writing, with a documented source from either lecture or the assigned textbook. This needs to be done within 7 days of the exam.

If a student is unable to attend an exam for extenuating circumstances the instructor is to be notified *prior* to the absence. For the policies on missing and making up an exam see item II.A.iii.d in this Handbook.

Communication:

Students are expected to take every effort to maintain professional communication with staff, faculty, patients, and peers. Faculty and staff should be addressed with appropriate titles (“Professor” or “Dr.”) unless otherwise directed. Students should not enter an office if the faculty or staff member is not present. It is a common courtesy to knock on a door prior to entering an office.

Conflict resolution is a necessary skill for a practitioner to develop. It is important that students address issues or concerns in a respectful and mature manner. Questions regarding specific material should be first directed to the instructor of the related course. If the concern is not resolved the student should then follow the appropriate channels (Instructor, Program Director, Associate Director, then Director of SON).

As mentioned in item II.A.iii.C, it is the responsibility of the student to communicate with instructors, clinical agencies, and peers regarding any schedule conflicts. This communication should be done via email when possible to allow for a record of the conversation.

B. Information Specific to Clinical Courses

i. Submission of Documentation for Clinical Placement

All required documentation for students must be submitted to CastleBranch prior to starting the first clinical course. Unless otherwise stated, submission deadlines for incoming students are **August 1** for Fall semester and **December 1** for Spring semester.

Students must supply documentation for the duration of their program. The Office of Student Services will communicate any unresolved clinical requirements prior to the beginning of a clinical experience. Failure to submit required documentation by the provided deadlines can result in inability to participate in clinical experiences and/or dismissal from the nursing program. Clinical agency requirements are subject to change and may include screenings, trainings, or immunizations beyond those for required by SON.

ii. Proof of Completion of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Training

Students are required to upload a photocopy (front and back) of their active certification in **Basic Cardiac Life Support (BCLS) for Health Care Providers**. It is the student’s responsibility to maintain active certification in BCLS. The CPR course must be completed through the American Heart Association’s BCLS program. Online courses for CPR are *not* accepted.

iii. Professional Liability (Malpractice) Insurance

All pre-licensure students are enrolled in the WCU’s student liability insurance policy. A Certificate of Insurance will be provided for students to upload to their CastleBranch account prior to the start of their first semester in the program. A charge will be placed on the individual student’s account each semester to pay for their coverage. Liability insurance for Pre-licensure students does not cover any work

outside of program and clinical course experiences.

iv. OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens and HIPAA Training

The Occupational Safety and Healthcare Administration (OSHA) Bloodborne Pathogens and HIPAA trainings are required annually. Trainings and assessments for OSHA and HIPAA can be found in the program Homeplace. After completing the assessments with 80% or higher students should submit a screenshot showing the assessment name, date taken, grade, and student name to CastleBranch. Students will follow the same steps to submit their OSHA and HIPAA renewal each year.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and its implementing regulations restrict students and faculty use and disclosure of Protected Health Information (PHI) to protect a patient's privacy. PHI includes information 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; or the past, present, or future payment for the provision of health care to a participant; and identifies the participant or for which there is a reasonable basis to believe the information can be used to identify the participant. PHI includes information of persons living or deceased.

It is the SON's policy to fully comply with HIPAA's requirements. All students, faculty and staff who have access to PHI must comply with all HIPAA Privacy Policies. Failure to comply may result in dismissal from the School of Nursing.

See Appendix A for WCU's *Exposure Control Plan* for Bloodborne Pathogens per OSHA requirements.

v. Student Health Form

All students are required to submit a completed SON Health Form, provided in the program Homeplace, to their CastleBranch account. The student must inform the Program Director of any changes in physical, mental, or emotional health which could interfere with providing safe clinical care. If there is a change in a student's health status, the student must submit an updated health form or note from a health care provider stating the student is physically and mentally able to perform in clinical spaces as specified in the Core Competencies. Students are responsible for ensuring this form is updated as needed while enrolled in the program.

vi. Immunizations and TB Screening

Students may not participate in clinical activities until documentation of all immunization requirements being current has been submitted to CastleBranch. 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. The Office of Student Services will notify students of upcoming renewal requirements in a timely manner.

Required immunizations for clinical participation vary according to site but typically include, *but are not 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.

Tuberculosis Testing: Annual screenings are required and expire 12 months from the test date. If a clinical agency requires more frequent TB testing, students assigned the agency will be required to comply.

Covid19: The School of Nursing defers to the College of Health and Human Sciences Covid 19 policy.

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 Hospitals 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 complete a criminal background check (CBC) prior to matriculation in the pre-licensure nursing program. An initial CBC is included with the purchase of a student account with CastleBranch. Clinical facilities may require an additional CBCs to meet agency standards. All CBCs are completed at the student's expense.

Criminal background check results are first reviewed by the Office of Student Services. Per CHHS policy, findings that may impact progression in the program and/or professional licensure will be reviewed by the Associate Dean of CHHS and the CBC Review Committee.

In the event a clinical agency denies placement to a student based on the result of a criminal background check, the student will not be eligible to complete the clinical course and will not progress in the program. Failure to complete a criminal background check in accordance with this policy, or failure to sign the School's consent form authorizing release of the report generated from the criminal background check, will result in failure to progress in the program or denial of enrollment in the program.

Any criminal conviction, including felony or misdemeanor convictions or convictions of major traffic infractions occur following completion of the initial criminal background check must be communicated in writing to the Dean of the

College of Health and Human Sciences within three (3) days after such conviction has been entered by the court, notwithstanding the pendency of any appeal.

The Dean may instruct the Director of the School of Nursing to report the conviction to clinical agencies in which the student is assigned, or will be assigned for a clinical practicum. In the event a clinical agency denies placement to a student based on the conviction the student will not be eligible to complete the clinical course and will not progress in the program. The College of Health and Human Sciences Criminal Background Screening Policy for Students may be reviewed on the *Policies for Students in the College of Health and Human Sciences* website.

viii. *Fire and Laboratory Safety Training*

All students must complete fire and laboratory safety training during first semester of the nursing program and as required thereafter.

ix. *Guidelines for Dress in the Clinical Setting*

Students in the SON will dress and groom in a manner appropriate professional nursing students. Overall appearance must be modest and not reveal cleavage, undergarments, or midriffs. Clinical faculty are responsible to provide final approval regarding questions of grooming, dress, and personal appearance.

a. Identification

Department approved identification badges are to be worn whenever the student enters a clinical agency in any variation of professional attire or when representing WCU in a student capacity. Students who change their names must obtain new identification badges.

b. Uniforms

Color: The standard uniform consists of uniform pants in the color eggplant. While Cherokee brand eggplant pants aren't required, this is the appropriate shade of purple. Other shades of purple are not accepted. The top should be white.

Pants: Eggplant purple.

Tops: A white uniform top with the *Western Carolina University Nursing* arm patch securely sewn on the left sleeve. The patch should be attached mid-way between hem and shoulder seam of a short- sleeved uniform shirt. Uniforms should be worn for all patient care activities, unless directed otherwise by their clinical faculty.

A white long sleeve shirt that is form fitting may be worn underneath the uniform top or blouse. The long sleeve shirt must be plain and have no writing, pictures, or advertising on it. Uniforms must be modest in and not reveal cleavage, midriffs, or undergarments; they must be clean and wrinkle-free. A white lab coat and name badge are required for whenever the student will be in the clinical area without a uniform. Students may have embroidery on the lab jacket. Embroidery must read as follows:

(line one) *First Name or First Initial Last Name*

(line two) *Nursing Student, Western Carolina University*.**OR**
(line one) First Name or First Initial Last Name
(line two) Nursing Student
(line three) Western Carolina University

Embroidery must be completed in eggplant ink to match uniform pants. Clothing worn under the lab coat should be professional attire, such as khaki pants, or skirts, with nice shirt or blouse. No blue jeans or t-shirts are to be worn in the clinical setting.

c. Shoes

Solid black or white, professional leather shoes must be worn with the hospital uniform. Athletic shoes are acceptable if they have all-leather uppers and are solid black or white, including the soles. Clogs with solid black or white uppers are acceptable.

Shoes with large holes on the top of the shoe are not acceptable. Open-toed shoes, sandals, or flip-flops are *not* allowed in the clinical setting at any time, including orientation or tour days.

d. Hosiery

Hose or socks must be solid colored and match shoe color. Hose or socks are required to be worn in hospital clinical settings.

e. Hair

Hair must be secured off the face. Longer hair must be pulled back into a ponytail or bun.

f. Nails:

Artificial nails are not allowed. To prevent injury to patients and maintain asepsis nails should be kept short and clean with no polish.

g. Jewelry

The student must have a watch with either a second hand or a timer that is easy to read. Watchbands should be simple rather than a decorative bracelet style.

Necklaces or bracelets are not allowed in the clinical setting. Rings are limited to one flat wedding band. Rings with stones can easily damage patient skin as well as be an infection control risk. Students may wear one pair of non-dangling pierced earrings. Other types of pierced jewelry (tongue, eyebrow, nose rings, ear spacer etc.) are not allowed in the clinical setting. Neither the SON nor the clinical agency will be responsible for lost or damaged jewelry.

h. Gum

Chewing gum is not allowed in the professional setting.

i. Tattoos

Historically, the SON has prohibited visible tattoos in the clinical environment. However, societal trends as well as potential infection control risks that coverings on hands and arms might present, require an update to the SON policy on visible tattoos. This policy seeks to address evolving societal norms and support safe practice.

For clinical practicum placements, visible tattoos must conform to the policies of the organization in which the student is assigned. Students with tattoos are responsible for researching and adhering to agency-specific policies related to visible tattoos in the clinical setting. For clinical activities that are not affiliated with the student's assigned practicum, students should cover visible tattoos. Questions related to specific clinical site tattoo policy should be addressed with the clinical instructor before the first clinical orientation (or rotation if no orientation is required).

j. Community health experience

Appropriate attire is agency specific. The SON identification badge must be affixed to the outermost layer of clothing on the upper-left chest area.

Exceptions to these guidelines may be made by the professor depending on clinical activities.

x. Cell Phone use

Student cell phone use will be permitted for professional use only, pursuant to clinical agency guidelines, and with the consent of assigned clinical faculty.

xi. Cumulative Clinical Evaluation

Clinical Evaluation Tools are utilized throughout the nursing program to evaluate attainment of the *Expected Outcomes* for clinical rotations. These documents are maintained in the student record, which is accessible to faculty for review as you progress through the program. Clinical performance is evaluated as "Satisfactory" (S) or "Unsatisfactory" (U). A satisfactory evaluation indicates a student has demonstrated attainment of minimal standards for each of the *Expected Outcomes* detailed on the evaluation tool.

To support student success in the program, faculty will develop an Improvement Plan (IP) for identified unsatisfactory performance. An IP is developed in consultation with the student and is documented as a permanent part of the student record.

Accumulation of three improvement plans over the course of the program requires review of overall performance in the curriculum by the Program Director in consultation with the Associate Director. The review is conducted to determine if the pattern of unsatisfactory performance represents a failure to attain *Student Learning Program Outcomes*. This may result in a final grade of Unsatisfactory (U) for the involved clinical practicum and failure to progress in the program.

Any egregious and/or knowing violation of patient safety, confidentiality, or

professionalism will be reviewed by the Program Director in consultation with the Associate Director and may result dismissal from the program. All reviews of individual student performance are documented in the student record.

III. STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

A. Organizations

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities to become involved in governance within the SON, CHHS, and WCU. Campus organizations offer a wide variety of activities and learning experiences, as well as the opportunity to develop leadership skills and a peer network. Students are encouraged to keep academic schedule needs and student involvement responsibilities in balance. The following nursing organizations are registered with WCU Student Affairs.

i. Association of Nursing Students (ANS)

Association of Nursing Students is a pre-professional organization patterned after its parent organization, the American Nurses Association. Pre-licensure students are strongly encouraged to join and participate at the local (WCU ANS), state (NCANS), and national levels (NANS). The purpose of the association is to promote professionalism through leadership opportunities, professional contacts, networking, and applied community service learning. More information is available at <http://www.ncans.org/>.

WCU ANS is open to all nursing and pre-nursing students. Yearly dues provide membership at the national, state, and local level.

ii. 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/>.

iii. 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. The top 35% of pre-licensure students are eligible for nomination after completing at least half of their nursing courses.

iv. CHHS and SON Student Ambassadors

Students who are interested in representing the WCU SON in promotional events and celebrations, such as Education Fairs and Homecoming, may apply to become a Student Ambassador. Two students are chosen by faculty to represent each cohort of pre-licensure students. This is an excellent opportunity for students to show pride in the WCU SON and share what it is like to be in the nursing program. Student Ambassadors are asked to remain engaged with the School of Nursing as alumni.

v. Health Equity Circle (HEC)

The Health Equity Circle is an interprofessional, student-led organization that brings students together to learn about health equity issues and how to act through

advocacy and community organizing. The purpose of HEC is to learn, educate and take action on issues that promote health equity through interdisciplinary partnerships between students and civil society organizations. By partnering with community groups HEC builds collective power to make the positive changes they want to see in our community and advance health equity.

HEC at WCU is a local member chapter of the Health Equity Circle, a 501(c)3 nonprofit with chapters at universities across the country. Learn more at www.healthequitycircle.org.

B. Committees and Engagement

i. Pre-Licensure Curriculum Committee (PreLCC)

The Pre-Licensure Curriculum Committee is composed of Pre-Licensure faculty and three student representatives (two traditional students, and one ABSN student). Student representatives are elected by their peers at the beginning of the academic year to serve in an advisory capacity. This committee meets monthly during the academic year to evaluate and develop policies and procedures related to curriculum, ensure conformity with present-day trends, and to provide leadership in developing the framework and design of the curriculum.

ii. Pre-Licensure Student Affairs Committee (PreLSAC)

The Pre-Licensure Student Affairs Committee is composed of at least five faculty members, and three student representatives (two traditional students, and one ABSN student). Student representatives are elected by their peers to serve in an advisory capacity. Duties of this committee include annually reviewing policies and procedures concerning admission to the Pre-Licensure nursing programs and making recommendations for modifications as needed. The committee will act on appeals from students regarding admission and retention. The committee develops student related policies for the SON.

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 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 contact their representative at any time if they have ideas or concerns.

iv. College of Health and Human Sciences Dean's Advisory Council

This is a committee to enhance the student's ability to communicate with the administration of the College of Health and Human Sciences. Student representatives are selected from each Pre-Licensure program. The committee meets approximately once a semester.

v. Visiting Scholars, Professional Meetings, & University Events

Students may be invited to attend or participate in special events hosted by the University or its partners. Faculty are given the right to assign participation in these events within their courses. Students are encouraged to take advantage of

these opportunities of personal and professional growth.

vi. Travel Abroad

The Office of International Studies is the University's source of information for sponsored study abroad opportunities. Presently there are no study abroad opportunities offered to fulfill the upper-level nursing requirements. Students interested in pursuing a study abroad experience should contact the Office of International Studies.

The SON coordinates service abroad opportunities for nursing and pre-nursing students each year. Students interested in a service abroad experience should speak with their faculty advisor. Announcements regarding these experiences will be made through the Blackboard Homeplace.

C. Scholarships, Loans and Grants

Students can receive financial aid through public, private, and employer related funds. Recipients of financial aid are expected to comply with the guidelines and requirements by the agency or donor awarding the funds.

i. Federal Aid

Students must submit a *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)* to be eligible to receive federal financial aid. Questions regarding this application should be directed to the WCU Financial Aid Office. More information is available at the WCU Financial Aid Office's website.

ii. Scholarships

Students can learn more about scholarship opportunities through WCU by visiting the <https://www.wcu.edu/apply/scholarships/>. As most scholarships funded by private individuals or groups these funds are often contingent upon funding from outside sources. Most scholarships require recipients to be in good standing with their declared major or program while maintaining at least a 3.00 average for eligibility.

iii. Health Care Agencies

Several local health care agencies provide scholarships and/or tuition reimbursement programs for their employees enrolled in nursing programs. Information about employer scholarships and/or tuition reimbursement is available from the personnel office of your employing health care agency.

D. Career Planning

i. WCU's Center for Career and Professional Development

The WCU Center for Career and Professional Development helps students and alumni identify employment opportunities, refine interviewing skills, and update application materials. Students are encouraged to meet with Center for Career and Professional Development periodically throughout their college experience. To set up an appointment students can call 828-227-7133 or visit the Center for Career and Professional Development website.

ii. Letters of Reference

Letters of reference are common requirements for job applications. Students who ask faculty or staff members for letters of reference should ask before submitting the individual's name as a reference. Students should be courteous and provide the reference writer with ample time to fulfill the request. While faculty and staff are often glad to assist with references, there is no obligation for them to do so.

E. Graduation

i. Commencement

A University Commencement Ceremony (Graduation) is held at the end of the spring and fall semesters. The University will also provide students with information concerning the graduation ceremonies, rehearsals, ordering caps and gowns.

ii. Scholastic Status Check

Students are expected to know the information in the catalog and their degree audit to verify their graduation status. This includes students running a degree audit each semester to ensure courses are counting towards their major requirements as needed.

If a student has questions regarding how or where a course applies they should speak with their faculty advisor. 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. Applying for Graduation

All students must apply 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.

iv. School of Nursing Convocation

The SON hosts a Convocation event each fall and spring semester prior to the University-wide Commencement to recognize students who have successfully completed one of the SON programs. This event 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 goals. Information about this event will be provided by the Office of Student Services.

F. Awards for Graduating Seniors

The SON recognizes outstanding graduates through a variety of awards presented at the SON Convocation and the College of Health and Human Sciences awards ceremony.

i. The Deitz Outstanding Student Award

This award honoring Dr. Vivian Deitz, Head of the SON from 1988 through 1996, is presented to a pre-licensure, RN to BSN, and MSN graduate or alumna who demonstrated outstanding qualities as a student.

ii. Eta Psi Leadership Award

This award is given by Eta Psi Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau to a student member who has demonstrated leadership qualities.

iii. Ethics Award

This award is funded by a graduate in honor of Dr. Barbara Cosper and Dr. Sharon Jacques and is given to a pre-licensure student who has demonstrated high ethical standards.

iv. Student-Driven Awards

This award is presented to a student who is elected by their cohort and recognized by peers as an exceptional leader, who fosters engagement and collaboration among other students.

v. Additional Awards

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

G. Alumni

Graduates are encouraged to join the School of Nursing Alumni Association to continue their involvement with the SON and its growth. To maintain up-to-date records of alumni, graduates are asked to keep the SON, and the University informed of current addresses and employment. Graduates are encouraged to recommend qualified students into the SON and to support the School's current students and special projects.

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 many people do not know they are infected and medical history and examination cannot reliably identify all people infected with bloodborne pathogens.

OSHA mandates 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.

a. 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.

b. 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.

- c. *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.

- d. *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 likely to generate splashes or splatters of blood or other body fluids.
 - iv. Appropriate protective gowns or aprons must be worn during procedures 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., needle stick;
- 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 immediately seek 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 at 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 immediately seek a medical evaluation at an emergency treatment center, 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 reported 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 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 document 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 their 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 they are 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 the Office of Safety and Risk Management's *Biological Safety Manual*, Section 9 and has been adapted for students in the SON.

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, and staff. 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 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996, 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 and adheres to the standards of professionalism within nursing.

Definitions:

Social media is defined as mechanisms for communication allowing for the creation and exchange of user-generated content which is disseminated through social interaction using various platforms. When publishing information on social media sites students should remain aware the information is available for anyone to see, cannot be permanently deleted, and can be traced back to its source.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Social networking – Facebook, LinkedIn, Tumblr, blogs, podcasts and RSS feeds
- Photo- and video-sharing – YouTube, Flickr, SnapChat
- Micro-blogs – Twitter, Yammer
- Forums and discussion boards – Reddit

Guidelines:

Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the university, faculty, students, clinical facilities, staff, patients/clients, or others with whom one has contact in the role of a Western Carolina University School 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) must be approved (posters, fliers, postings) by administration.

The use of iPhones and other devices employed for social media will be used only as authorized by faculty.

If a student identifies themselves as a WCU student, they should ensure their profile and related content is consistent with the professional behavioral expectations of the University and the School of Nursing. Students should identify their views as their own. When posting their point of view, the student needs to ensure it is clear they are not speaking for WCU, unless they have been authorized to do so in writing. The student is solely responsible for what they post. Be smart about protecting yourself, and others' privacy, and confidential information, especially in regards to HIPAA. Students are legally liable for what they post and should 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.).

**Appendix C Performance
Improvement Plan**
Western Carolina University School of Nursing
Pre-Licensure Programs

Student: First M Last

Semester/Course: Semester, YYYY / Nursing XXX

Date: Month DD, YYYY

Faculty: First M Last, Instructor of Record

First M Last, Instructor

Issue:

Comments:

Evidenced by:

- 1.
- 2.

Corrective Action:

Expectations:

Student Plan for Correction:

I have received a copy of this improvement plan form and will keep the contents of the form and conversation confidential. I understand this form will be placed in my student record.

First M. Last, Student Date

First M. Last, Instructor Date

First M. Last, Instructor of Record Date

Appendix D
COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES & SCHOOL OF NURSING
UNDERGRADUATE PRE-LICENSURE 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. 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. As a condition of participation in the Program I knowingly and voluntarily consent 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 all drug testing results to the Dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences and clinical partners as needed.

<i>Student Name:</i>	<i>Student Signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
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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.

<i>Student Name:</i>	<i>Student Signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
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Pre-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook Agreement: I acknowledge I have received and read the Pre-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook and understand that I am responsible for adhering to the current policies outlined therein and any policy changes and/or updates in subsequent editions.

<i>Student Name:</i>	<i>Student Signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
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Continued

Student Information Release Authorization

DIRECTIONS: In compliance with FERPA, and the University’s Policy on Access to Student Education Records www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-services/registrar-office/transcripts/ferpa.aspx, the University is prohibited from providing certain information from your student records to a third party, including academic records, test scores, program status, and license application information.

In order for the College of Health and Human Sciences to release information for the purpose of arranging clinical experiences, internships, or field placements, you must complete the following authorization form.

This release authorization is intended for the release of information maintained by the:

College of Health and Human Sciences | 3971 Little Savannah Road | Cullowhee, NC 28723

SECTION A: Student Information	
Name (Last, First, Middle Initial)	Student ID Number
SECTION B: Third-Party Receiving Information	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ï Prospective placement sites for clinical experiences, internships, or field placements; ï Relevant licensing and credentialing board(s); and/or ï Other entities as specified here: <hr style="width: 50%; margin-left: 20px;"/>	
SECTION C: Purpose	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ï Arrangement of clinical experiences, internships, or field placements; and/or ï Recommendations for licensure or credentialing 	
SECTION D: Records to be Disclosed (as needed)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ï Academic and clinical records, including prior clinical performance outcomes ï Test scores ï Program status, including prior disciplinary action resulting in suspension or removal from the program ï Information shared in applications to the University, Graduate School, College, Department, or specific program 	
SECTION D: Certification	
<p>I authorize the College of Health and Human Sciences to disclose and discuss confidential information from my education record with the above third parties, named in Section B, for the purposes named in Section C.</p> <p>This authorization shall be considered as a waiver of any and all of my rights and/or privileges as provided under the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended. A photocopy of this authorization shall be considered as valid as the originally signed document.</p>	
Student’s Signature	Date

* **NOTE:** For the third-party designees named on this form, this release overrides all FERPA directory suppression information that you have set up in your student record.

