

Post-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook

2023-2024

Supplemental to
WCU Undergraduate Catalog

CONTENTS

- I. Western Carolina University School of Nursing
 - A. Introduction to Western Carolina University
 - B. Introduction to the School of Nursing
 - C. Organization of the School of Nursing
 - D. Introduction to the Post Licensure BSN Programs
 - i. RN to BSN Program
 - ii. RN to MS(N) Early Entry Option
 - iii. RIBN Program
 - E. Mission, Vision, and Philosophy of the School of Nursing
 - i. Mission
 - ii. Vision
 - iii. Philosophy
 - F. Program Outcomes and Curricula
 - i. Undergraduate Program Outcomes
 - ii. Post Licensure Program Outcomes
 - iii. RN to BSN Curriculum
 - a. Introductory Semester
 - b. Community Health Semester
 - c. Leadership Semester
 - d. Research Semester
 - e. Electives Requirement
 - iv. RIBN Curriculum
 - a. Fall Semester
 - b. Spring Semester
- II. Educational Policies, Procedures, and Information
 - A. General Information
 - i. Admissions and Progression
 - a. RN to BSN Admission
 - b. Progression in the RN to BSN Program
 - c. Readmission to the RN to BSN Program
 - d. RIBN Admission
 - e. Progression in the RIBN Program
 - f. Readmission to the RIBN Program
 - g. Maintenance of Current Licensure
 - ii. Academic Information
 - a. Orientation
 - b. Grading Standards
 - c. Transfer of Upper Division Nursing Credits
 - d. Credit by Examination
 - e. Formatting for Student Documents
 - f. Computer Requirements
 - g. Online Testing Software
 - h. Use of References for Assignments
 - i. Penalties
 - j. Faculty Office Hours
 - k. Advising

- 1. Registration
 - 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. Attendance Policy
 - d. Tardiness
 - e. Examinations
 - f. Core Competency for Students to Achieve Program Outcomes
 - g. Health and Behavioral Competencies
 - h. Alcohol and Illegal Drug Testing Policy
 - i. Expected Respectful and Professional Behaviors
- 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
 - B. Committees and Engagement
 - i. Curriculum Committee (CC)
 - ii. Student Affairs Committee (SAC)
 - iii. School of Nursing Director's Advisory Council (DAC)
 - iv. Visiting Scholars, Professional Meetings and University Events
 - v. Travel Abroad
 - C. Scholarships, Loans, and Grants
 - i. Federal Aid
 - ii. Scholarships
 - iii. Health Care Agencies
 - D. Career Planning
 - i. WCU's Center for Career and Professional Development
 - ii. Letters of Reference
 - E. Graduation
 - i. Commencement
 - ii. Scholastic Status Check
 - iii. Applying for Graduation
 - iv. School of Nursing Convocation
 - F. Awards for Graduating Seniors
 - i. The Vivian Deitz Outstanding Student Award
 - ii. Eta Psi Leadership Award
 - iii. Ethics Award
 - iv. ANS Award

- v. Additional Awards
 - G. Alumni
- IV. Appendices
 - A. Social Media Policy
 - B. Academic Warning Form
 - C. CHHS & Undergraduate Post Licensure Student Handbook Agreement and Consent Form

WELCOME

Welcome to the Western Carolina University School of Nursing (WCU-SON)! We are delighted that you have chosen to pursue your nursing degree with us. Our experienced faculty and staff are committed to providing you with an outstanding educational experience and helping you achieve your goals.

As you embark on your educational journey with us, please know that we have a variety of resources available to support your learning and enhance your experiences. Our handbook outlines the School of Nursing policies and procedures and provides other important information to help you manage the demands of your program. We encourage you to take advantage of these resources to help you succeed.

At WCU-SON, you are joining a profession that is essential to the health and well-being of our communities. We are excited to have you as a member of our community and are here to support you every step of the way. Whether in person or virtually, we look forward to getting to know you and welcoming you to the Western family.

Thank you for choosing WCU-SON, and we wish you all the best in your studies. You are the future of nursing, and we are honored to be a part of your journey!

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

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

Students in the School of Nursing (SON) are responsible for reading and understanding the information contained in the *Post-Licensure Student Handbook* and adhering to any policy changes and/or updates in subsequent editions. Each student is responsible for submitting a signed copy of the Student Handbook Agreement upon admission to their respective nursing program. 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 access 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 the people of western North Carolina.

The first class of Master of Science degree students started in the Family Nurse Practitioner program in 1999. 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. The School of Nursing has continued to grow and develop new programs based on the needs of the communities we serve.

The School of Nursing now has thousands of alumni who practice in clinical and leadership roles worldwide. Students who graduate from the SON perform well on their licensure and certification exams with pass rates well above national averages. 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

See WCU School of Nursing website at <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/departments-schools/colleges/HHS/nursing/index.aspx>

A list of School of Nursing faculty and staff can be found at nursingdirectory.wcu.edu

D. Introduction to the Post Licensure BSN Programs

i. RN to BSN Program

This program awards a BSN degree to individuals with diplomas or associate degrees who currently hold a license to practice as a Registered Nurse (RN). Students are admitted during the fall and spring semesters. Coursework is conducted online through WCU's Distance Learning Program. Precepted clinical experiences are no longer a required part of the program's curriculum. Experiential clinical assignments are embedded in the curriculum. Additional information can be found at rntobsn.wcu.edu

ii. RN to MS(N) Early Entry Option

This option is designed to assist RNs with good academic records to move smoothly through the RN to BSN curriculum into an online MS(N) program. The RN to MS(N) Early Entry Option is currently available for WCU's Nurse Educator and Nursing Leadership programs. RN to BSN students may apply for consideration after completing 12 hours of the RN to BSN curriculum.

If accepted, 500-level core graduate nursing courses will be used to satisfy the elective credit requirement within the RN to BSN curriculum. Students will maintain undergraduate status until completion of their BSN. Approval for this option does *not* guarantee admission into the master's program. Students should refer to this handbook, their RN to BSN advisor, and the coordinator of the RN to MSN Early Entry Option for questions about this program.

iii. Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) Program

The RIBN program is a collaboration between WCU's SON and select local North Carolina Community Colleges (NCCC). Students must meet institution and program admission requirements at both WCU and the NCCC. For the first three years of the RIBN program students will be dually enrolled while completing their Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) at their NCCC institution. Students are required to complete a minimum of one course through WCU every three semesters, summer included, to maintain enrollment at WCU. After graduating from their NCCC ADN program and successfully passing the NCLEX, students will complete their fourth year of the RIBN program through two full-time semesters at WCU.

Current Partners of WCU's RIBN program are Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (ABTech), BlueRidge Community College (BRCC), Isothermal Community College (ICC) and Southwestern Community College (SCC). Information on the RIBN program can be found at RIBN.wcu.edu

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 a variety of health care settings. The masters and doctoral curriculum build on the baccalaureate education and prepares graduates to practice in advanced roles.

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

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 the integration of theory, research, and practice. The art of nursing is the creative integration of empirical, personal, ethical, intuitive, esthetic ways of knowing in practice. The art of nursing is that which humanizes the delivery of nursing care.

Learning in nursing occurs through the integration of multiple ways of knowing. Self-awareness, reflection, and ethical and critical reasoning are important aspects of the learning that occurs in practice situations and through 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 endpoint but the beginning of a life-long commitment to learning.

F. Program Outcomes and Curriculum

i. Undergraduate Program Outcomes

- Apply the nursing process with clinical judgment to provide safe, holistic, and compassionate care to diverse individuals and populations across the lifespan.
- 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.
- 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.
- Collaborate in a culture of safety and quality through an understanding of healthcare systems, care outcomes, evidence-based practice, economics, and regulatory requirements.
- 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.
- 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. Post Licensure Program Outcomes

Upon completion of the BSN curriculum offered in the RN to BSN or RIBN programs graduates will demonstrate:

- Effective communication (oral written and nonverbal) to support the development of therapeutic relationships with colleagues and clients in diverse healthcare settings.
- Use of the nursing process to support clinical reasoning to provide holistic, patient and family centered care to diverse populations in a variety of settings.
- Effective interactions with colleagues, other members of the health care team as well as patients and families toward a unified goal of high-quality patient outcomes.
- Nursing practice that is rooted in ethical behaviors, caring actions, and professional comportment.
- Technology and information systems to critically evaluate and analyze data to support.

iii. RN to BSN Curriculum

Thirty hours (30) are required for program completion designed in 4 part-time semesters: Twenty-four (24) hours of core RN to BSN courses and six (6) credit hours of 300-400 upper level electives.

a. Introductory Semester

This semester must be taken first in the RN to BSN program. After consultation with the student's faculty advisor, an elective course may be added.

- NSG 301 – *Professional Transitions in Nursing* (3 hrs)
- NSG 398 – *APA Writing Style and Format* (1 hr)
- NSG 399 – *Clinical Update for RNs* (2 hrs)

b. Community Health Semester

This semester may be taken as the second or third block as directed by the student's faculty advisor. Most students will complete an Upper-Level Elective during this semester.

- NSG 302 – *Community Health Nursing I: Theory* (3 hrs)
- NSG 374 – *Community Health Nursing II: Practicum* (1 hr)
- NSG 305 – *Community Health Nursing III: Intervention Project* (2 hrs)

c. Leadership Semester

This semester may be taken as the second or third block as directed by the student's faculty advisor. Most students will complete an Upper-Level Elective during this semester.

- NSG 460 – *Nursing Leadership I: Theory* (3 hrs)
- NSG 474 – *Nursing Leadership II: Practicum* (2 hrs)
- NSG 463- *Nursing Leadership III: Intervention Project* (1 hr)

d. Research Semester

This semester is taken as the final, or capstone, semester of the RN to BSN program. *Most students do not take an elective this semester

- NSG 471 – *Nursing Research I: Research Process* (2 hrs)
- NSG 472 – *Nursing Research II: Critical Reading* (2 hrs)
- NSG 473 – *Nursing Research III: Clinical Application* (2 hrs)

e. Electives Requirement

Six (6) hours of upper-level (300 or 400 level) electives are required to be taken at WCU to meet the University's graduation requirements. Students in the RN to MS(N) Early Entry Option will take 500 level core graduate nursing courses to satisfy this requirement. See RN to MS(N) website for more information:

<https://www.wcu.edu/learn/departments-schools-colleges/HHS/nursing/undergrad-programs/rnbsn/rmsn.aspx>

iv. RIBN Curriculum

Upon admission to the RIBN program students will complete a zero-credit orientation course, UE 101, through WCU. RIBN students should complete nine hours of upper-level electives, three hours may be elective or perspective, six hours must be upper-level perspectives through WCU during the first three years in the program.

The 4th year curriculum is completed exclusively at WCU.

a. Fall Semester

- NSG 327 – Nursing in Healthcare Policy and Systems (3 hrs)
- NSG 302 – *Community Health Nursing I: Theory* (3 hrs)
- NSG 374 – *Community Health Nursing II: Practicum* (1 hr)
- NSG 305 – *Community Health Nursing III: Intervention Project* (2 hrs)

b. Spring Semester

- NSG 328 – *Essentials of Baccalaureate Nursing Practice II* (3 hrs)
- NSG 331- *Perspectives of Nursing Care for Older Adults* (3 hrs)
- NSG 471 – *Nursing Research I: Research Process* (2 hrs)
- NSG 472 – *Nursing Research II: Critical Reading* (2 hrs)
- NSG 473 – *Nursing Research III: Clinical Application* (2 hrs)

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.

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

Admission and progression for WCU's post-licensure programs vary. Applicants are expected to review the information provided in this handbook and on WCU's website for the most up to date information. Admitted students are expected to maintain a running calculation of their performance within each course and as they progress through their program's curriculum.

Students who elect to withdraw from a course or the University are responsible for following the WCU deadlines, policies, and procedures. Failure to follow withdrawal procedures may result in the student earning a failing grade. Students who are dismissed are provided the opportunity to appeal their dismissal (*see*

Appeals, II.A.ii.m.) or to seek readmission to their program. Information regarding the readmission process for each program is provided below.

a. RN to BSN Admission

Admission criteria for the RN to BSN program can be found at rntobsn.wcu.edu. To be considered for admission students must complete all science prerequisites, complete or waive all liberal studies requirements, transfer at least 60 non-nursing credits, and maintain current RN licensure. Students who meet all prerequisite requirements except for one Liberal Studies Perspective course may be accepted into the program provided one of their Upper Level Electives will be used to satisfy this requirement. Students must submit the program application and apply for admission through WCU's Distance Learning. Admission to WCU does not guarantee admission to the RN to BSN program.

The UNC system has implemented an articulation agreement with all North Carolina Community Colleges (UNCC) for all students beginning an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program during or after the fall 2015 semester. This agreement waives liberal studies requirements for students who graduate with their ADN provided the student completed the block plan required by the articulation agreement.

b. Progression in the RN to BSN Program

Students who fail to demonstrate satisfactory progress during a course will receive documentation of their academic warning and recommendations for academic assistance and resources. The student and faculty will sign a copy of the *Academic Warning Form* (Appendix B). A copy will be placed in *Navigate* and distributed to the Program Director and faculty advisor. The student will have one week to sign and return the form. A template of the *Academic Warning Form* is found in *Appendix B* of this document.

An RN to BSN student must maintain a 2.5 cumulative GPA and maintain **a current RN license**. Students who receive a grade of C-, D, F, or U in a required course, including upper-level electives, will be required to send a letter reviewing their academic performance to the Program Director prior to the end of the semester. This letter should include changes or strategies the student will implement to successfully progress in the program. A second semester of unsatisfactory progress will result in dismissal from the RN to BSN program.

c. Readmission to the RN to BSN Program

Students in good standing who are not consecutively enrolled for 3 or more semesters, including summer, must reapply to the University and the RN to BSN program. As mentioned in Section *II.A.i.b*, students seeking readmission are required to submit a statement of academic intent to the Program Director for review. This statement should include a description of challenges faced in the past, changes the student has made, and how the student plans to succeed in the program moving forward. Readmission requests must be sent to the Program Director or designee no later than 30 days prior to the start of the desired reentry semester. Readmission will be based on the student's previous performance, faculty recommendations, and space available.

d. RIBN Admission

Students must meet the admission requirements of the collaborative community college and WCU. Specific details are provided in the application materials available from the Student Success Advisor (SSA) at the collaborative community college.

e. Progression in the RIBN Program

To demonstrate satisfactory progress within the RIBN program students will complete the general studies and required courses to earn their Associate Degree of Nursing (ADN) through years one to three at their community college. During this time students will be expected to complete a minimum of one course through WCU every three (3) semesters (nine hours total). These courses must include at least 9 hours of upper-level electives (6 hours must be liberal studies courses).

Progression at the community college level is contingent upon following the policies set forth in the handbook and community college catalog at the student's institution. Students should adhere to all guidelines found in the syllabus, catalog, and institutional policies. The professional behaviors outlined by the ANA Code of Ethics should always be maintained.

After completing the third year and earning their ADN, RIBN students must successfully pass the NCLEX prior to beginning the fourth year of the program. During their fourth year, students will enroll full-time at WCU to complete their Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. Students are encouraged to not work full-time to allow for successful completion of their coursework.

Academic progress is determined by performance at both WCU and the community college level. Students must maintain a 2.5 cumulative GPA. Courses must be passed with a grade of C or better at both the community college and WCU. Students in the first year of the program can repeat a course to improve an unsatisfactory grade. This must be completed prior to the start of their second year.

During years two and three of the RIBN program, failure to achieve a C or better in any course will result in dismissal from the RIBN program. Please note the following:

- i. Some courses are only taught during certain semesters. For example, CHM 132 may only be taught during a spring term. If a grade of C or higher isn't met and the course cannot be completed prior to the fall semester the student will be dismissed from the RIBN program.
- ii. Incomplete grades must be resolved prior to the start of the next semester in the RIBN curriculum.
- iii. Students should not drop or withdraw from a course without consulting with the SSA and the RIBN Program Director at WCU.

Students who fail to meet the academic or clinical requirements outlined by WCU and their community college will be dismissed from RIBN. These students may be allowed by their community college to continue in their ADN program at the community college's discretion.

During year four of the RIBN program, students who fail to demonstrate satisfactory progress in a course, or the program, will receive documentation of their academic warning and recommendation to meet with their academic advisor to discuss academic assistance and resources. After the consultation, the faculty member will sign a copy of the *Academic Warning Form* (Appendix C) and provide it to the student with information regarding areas of improvement and success strategies. The student will have one week to sign and return the form. A copy will be placed in *Navigate* and distributed to the Program Director and faculty advisor.

f. Readmission to the RIBN Program

Readmission for students who have been dismissed from the RIBN program varies depending on the point of the program at which they were dismissed. Students who were dismissed in their first year must submit a new application to their SSA during the regular admissions cycle..

Students applying for readmission into years two, three, or four should consult with their community college's SSA for their institution's specific readmission policy. The student must be approved for readmission to the ADN program prior to application for readmission to the RIBN program. The student is required to submit a written request for readmission to the WCU RIBN Program Director no later than 30 days prior to the start of the desired reentry semester. The written request for readmission must include an analysis of why the student did not progress and a plan for success addressing strategies for improvement.

Students who receive unsatisfactory grades (C- or below) in two or more nursing courses are not eligible for readmission to the RIBN program.

g. Maintenance of Current Licensure

Students in the RN to BSN program and the 4th year of the RIBN program are responsible to maintain continuous US state licensure as an RN while in the program.

ii. Academic Information RN to BSN and RIBN Programs

a. Orientation

Students in the RN to BSN program and the RIBN program are not required to attend WCU's general student orientation. Online orientation to the programs is provided prior to the first semester. These sessions will be conducted online.

b. Grading Standards

The SON uses the grading scale below for all nursing courses (grade of satisfactory/unsatisfactory may be utilized).

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	

START HERE_ February Meeting

Make-up work or extra-credit is generally not provided for low or failing grades. Faculty will respond in a timely manner to requests for verification of grade accuracy.

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.” The student the program and have met all the prerequisites.

All WCU students are required to earn 25% of the credits required for their program as upper-division (3-400) credits at WCU. This requirement, known as **residency**, is met through the program curriculum and upper level electives.

c. Credit by Examination

The SON adheres to the WCU policy set forth in the WCU Undergraduate Catalog. Students in this program interested in earning credit by examination should consult with their Faculty Advisor and the Office of Student Services to determine if it is advantageous pursue this path.

d. Format

All scholarly assignments must be submitted in the formatting style of the most current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Associations* style guide, also known as APA format.

Written assignments should be submitted within Canvas as a **Word** document (or PowerPoint, as applicable). Students should *not* submit assignments as email attachments to instructors. The following name format should be used for all course documents unless directed otherwise by the instructor:

CourseID_lastname_firstname_daymonthyear_title
(Title means the NAME of the paper or assignment)

e. Computer Requirement

Students are required to have a computer for use throughout the RIBN or RN to BSN programs. Due to the online nature of these programs students should ensure they have an up-to-date system with access to a reliable internet connection. Students should review the College of Health and Human Sciences computer requirements on the [WCU Information Technology website](#).

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 each academic year for all courses that have online testing. Students are responsible for ensuring their computers are up-to-date and compatible with the software which must be downloaded for use.

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. Work submitted after the deadline will lose a minimum of 5 points for each calendar day (including weekends) it is late. After seven calendar days, the assignment may not be accepted and a grade of 0 may be given. 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. Faculty Office Hours

Faculty are available for appointments during each semester. To make an appointment the student should email faculty using their MyWCU email account.

j. Advising

Each post-licensure student will be assigned to a nursing faculty advisor. Each student has an opportunity for an appointment to meet with the advisor before registration and whenever assistance is needed. Faculty advisor appointments are only available during the 9-month academic year.

The 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:
http://catalog.wcu.edu/misc/catalog_list.php?catoid=51
- Review advising letter and reply to advisor with any changes requested.
Make final course selection and register for classes after consulting with advisor. To view the searchable class schedule:
<https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-services/registrar-office/registration.aspx>
- Keep the advisor informed about academic difficulties as they occur.
- Ask the Program Director about changing advisors if the assigned advisor is not meeting the student's needs.

The Nursing Faculty Advisor is expected to:

- Communicate availability to students.
- 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.

k. 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 by the Registrar prior to advising day. Fall and Summer schedules are made available in late February. Spring schedules are made available in late October. The list of courses offered can be found within a student's MyWCU and at <https://banxp-wcu.uncecs.edu:9939/wcuprodStudentRegistrationSsb/ssb/term/termSelection?mode=search>

Schedules are subject to change up to the beginning of the semester.

Elective and liberal studies courses frequently reach capacity shortly after opening. To ensure progression within their program students are encouraged to register as soon as their registration window opens. Failure to do so may postpone a student's expected graduation date.

ii. *Student Complaints/Grievance Information*

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/experience/dean-of-students/complaints-and-concerns.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/leadership/office-of-the-chancellor/legal->

[counsel-office/university-policies/numerical-index/university-policy-129.aspx](https://www.wcu.edu/discover/leadership/office-of-the-chancellor/legal-counsel-office/university-policies/numerical-index/university-policy-129.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/leadership/office-of-the-chancellor/legal-counsel-office/university-policies/numerical-index/university-policy-53.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

iii. Expectations of Students

a. Academic Integrity

Honesty and integrity are fundamental values for the nursing profession and the University. Students will not lie, steal, or cheat in their academic endeavors, nor will the student tolerate the actions of those who do. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the consequences of violating academic honesty policies and the impact such violations can have on their standing in the 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 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.
- **Self-plagiarism:** Reusing work that you have already published or submitted for a class. It can involve re-submitting an entire paper, copying, paraphrasing passages from your previous work, or recycling old data
- **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:
<https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-success/tutoring-services/services-resources/writing-support/>

b. Social Media Policy

See *Appendix A*.

c. Policy on Attendance

Students should refer to the course syllabus for specific attendance requirements. Students should check each online course for email, discussion postings, announcements, and grades at least every 24 hours.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled learning activities, such as orientation, lectures, learning experiences, evaluation, conferences, and other activities as scheduled by faculty. Online course attendance may be maintained through online discussion boards, participation in video lectures, or web meetings.

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 respective Program Director, will evaluate patterns of missed exams individually.

In the case of an approved absence the student is responsible for coordinating with the professor to make-up the 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.

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 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.

If a student requires accommodation due to a stated disability, the disability must be documented through the Office of Accessibility Resources. 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 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 may 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. 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.

h. Expected Respectful and Professional Behaviors

Students are to behave in a professional manner in class. 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 disciplinary action.

Classroom:

Students will be held to the highest level of the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

Computers will be required for program participation including exams and presentations. Students should ensure their personal device meets the requirements of the University and SON.

Testing:

If a student has questions regarding a test item they should **email** the involved faculty and submit the question in writing, with a documented source from either lecture or the assigned textbook. This should be done within 7 days of the exam.

If a student is unable to complete 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 refer to the course syllabus.

Communication:

Students are expected to maintain professional communication with staff, faculty, and peers. Faculty and staff should be addressed with appropriate titles ("Professor" or "Dr.") unless otherwise directed.

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 course 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, and School of Nursing Director.

It is the responsibility of the student to communicate with instructors regarding any schedule conflicts. This communication should be done via email to allow for a record of the conversation.

III. STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

A. Organizations

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities to become involved in the governance processes 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. Nurses Christian Fellowship (NCF)

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

ii. Eta Psi Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, International Nursing Honor Society

The purposes of Sigma Theta Tau are to recognize superior academic achievement, recognize the development of leadership qualities, foster high professional standards, encourage creative work, and strengthen commitment to the ideals and purposes of the profession. The Honor Society is open to pre-licensure, RIBN and RN to BSN students as well as graduate students, and community leaders by invitation. The top 35% of BSN students are eligible for nomination after completing at least half of their nursing courses. More information is available at www.nursingsociety.org.

B. Committees and Engagement

i. Curriculum Committee (CC)

The Curriculum Committee is composed of faculty and student representatives. Students serve in an advisory capacity. This committee usually meets monthly during the academic year to evaluate and further develop policies and procedures related to curriculum, to ensure conformity and current-ness with present-day trends, and to provide leadership in developing the framework and design of the curriculum.

ii. Student Affairs Committee (SAC)

The Student Affairs Committee is composed of faculty members and student representatives. Duties of this committee include annually reviewing the Post Licensure BSN Handbook, policies and procedures concerning admission to undergraduate nursing programs, and making recommendations for modifications as needed. The committee develops student related policies for the School of Nursing. The committee will act on appeals from students regarding admission, retention, and promotion.

iii. 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 for personal and professional growth.

iv. 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 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 Canvas 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 <https://www.wcu.edu/apply/scholarships/>

As most scholarships are 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. 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.

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. If a student has questions regarding how or where a course applies to their degree audit, they should speak with their faculty advisor.

ii. Applying for Graduation

All students must submit a graduation application by the dates provided on the WCU Applying for Graduation web site. **Students should apply for graduation in the semester prior to the graduation semester.** The application process is completed using the link on the WCU Graduation web page named Graduation Application APPLY NOW. It is the student's responsibility to initiate and complete the application for graduation.

iii. School of Nursing Convocation

The SON hosts a Convocation event each fall and spring semester, generally on a Thursday evening 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 will be provided.

iv. Commencement

A University Commencement Ceremony (Graduation) is held at the end of the spring and fall semesters. WCU Commencement information can be found at: <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-services/registrar-office/graduation/index.aspx>

F. 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.

G. Awards for Graduating Seniors

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

i. The Vivian 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, RIBN, 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 completed 50% of the core program hours, demonstrated leadership qualities and is in the top 35% of GPA .

iii. Additional Awards

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

Appendix A Social Media Guidelines

WCU Code of Student Conduct:

https://www.wcu.edu/_files/experience/CodeOfStudentConduct.pdf

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 media, text messaging, and networking
- Photo- and video-sharing
- Micro-blogs
- Forums and discussion boards

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

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of the patient/client **and** of the facility.

- Respect copyright and fair use. When posting, be mindful of the copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of the university. For guidance, visit the University's Library or Copyright Office sites.
- Do not use WCU or the School of Nursing logos and/or graphics, on personal social media sites. Do not use WCU's name to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.
- Use of the School of Nursing marks (logos and graphics) for 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 you identify yourself as a WCU student, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with the professional behavioral expectations of the University and the School of Nursing. Identify your views as your own. When posting your point of view, the student needs to ensure it is clear they are not speaking for WCU, unless you have been authorized to do so in writing.
- The student is solely responsible for what he/she posts.

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 B

**Academic Warning Form
Western Carolina University
Post Licensure Nursing Program**

Academic Warning

Student:

Course:

Term:

I have been informed by faculty that as of _____ my performance is:
(Date)

Grade:

Assignment	Due Date	Status

Recommendations by faculty for improvement:

Student (electronic signature): _____ Date _____

Faculty (electronic signature): _____ Date _____

Copy of completed form provided to:

1. Student Navigate profile (through *Report on Appointment*)
2. Program Director

Appendix C
COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES & SCHOOL OF NURSING
UNDERGRADUATE POST-LICENSURE NURSING STUDENT HANDBOOK
AGREEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

Post-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook Agreement: I acknowledge I have received and read the Post-Licensure BSN 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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