MASTER OF SCIENCE IN NURSING
STUDENT HANDBOOK

Family Nurse Practitioner
Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner
Nurse Educator

Georgia College & State University
School of Nursing

Updated Spring 2023
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Welcome to the MSN Program

Welcome to the Georgia College & State University, the College of Health Sciences, and the School of Nursing. At Georgia College, tomorrow’s nurses are educated as if lives depend on it! Students are uniquely prepared for nursing through liberal arts integration in the curriculum leading to students’ understanding of clients as unique, holistic individuals.

As a student of nursing, you will be challenged to acquire the scientific knowledge and skills of the discipline of nursing, internalize the behavior of a professional nurse, develop technical and decision-making skills, incorporate ethics into your practice, and develop awareness of your own and others’ value systems as a context for professionalism. This will require hard work and commitment on your part but will be a remarkable experience you will treasure for a lifetime, resulting in a career that will give you an endless sense of having made a difference in the world.

This is an incredible journey. We are excited that you have chosen GCSU for that journey and we, the faculty, will do everything we can to support your success as we take the Journey alongside you.

- The Nursing Faculty -

Purpose of the MSN Handbook

This handbook, prepared for the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) students admitted to the program with concentrations in Family Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner, and Nurse Educator- provides specific information about nursing that supplements – but does not replace – the University’s Graduate Catalog. You are expected to read this handbook, abide by the policies, and be directed by its many features to help you be successful in your MSN journey. Failure to read these sources will not excuse students from abiding by policies and procedures described in them. As part of your orientation to the MSN program you will be required to take a validation exam that indicates your receipt, review, and intent to follow the policies in this handbook.

The handbook is prepared and revised annually for the use of administrators, faculty, students, and staff. Suggestions regarding clarification or addition of topics are welcome. The School of Nursing reserves the right to make changes to this handbook including changes in policies and procedures as deemed appropriate and necessary. All changes will be promptly communicated to students, faculty, and staff.

Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) Accreditation

The MSN programs are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education*. The contact information for the CCNE is:

655 K Street NW Suite 750
Washington, D.C.
202-463-6930

* The Nurse Midwifery track currently holds ACME Pre-accreditation status. Full accreditation will be pursued following graduation of the first cohort of students. Please see the separate Nurse Midwifery Handbook for information regarding this program.
School of Nursing Mission, Vision, Philosophy, Concepts

Mission
In concert with the Georgia College liberal arts mission, the School of Nursing is committed to the formation of nurse leaders to engage in evidence-based practice, lifelong learning, and civic participation in a health information intensive environment through the development and mastery of clinical reasoning, professional nursing skills, and values. The Family Nurse Practitioner program prepares nursing professionals to fulfill primary care advanced practice roles in rural and underserved areas. The Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program prepares nursing professionals to fulfill mental health advanced practice roles in rural and underserved areas. The Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner program prepares nursing professionals to fulfill women’s health advanced practice roles in rural and underserved areas. The Nurse Educator program prepares nursing professionals to address educational needs in academic and healthcare organizational settings.

Vision
The GC School of Nursing aspires to be recognized as a national leader in nursing education. GC nurses will serve at the forefront of the changing healthcare delivery system.

Philosophy
Georgia College’s School of Nursing builds the philosophy by defining the basic concepts that comprise the discipline and science of nursing. These concepts are health, nursing, environment, education, and person.

Health
Health is the dynamic integration of the physical, psychological, spiritual, cognitive, and socio-cultural well-being of individuals, families, groups, and communities. The meaning of health varies between individuals and cultures and is universally accepted as more than being free of disease or infirmity. Health beliefs and practices are impacted by the affordability and accessibility of health care.

Nursing
Nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response to actual or potential health problems for health promotion, disease prevention, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities, and populations (American Nurses Association, 2010a, p. 1).

Environment
The environment is the accumulation of physical, physiological, social, cultural, spiritual, economic, and political conditions that interact with and influence the human experience. The interaction is constant, and the environment can be altered to influence health outcomes. Nursing can create and sustain a culture of safety and quality health care that can transform the environment by creating a safe workplace that produces optimal patient outcomes.

Education
Nursing education is an active process where the student develops and masters clinical reasoning, professional nursing skills and values that enable graduates to thrive in a health information intensive environment. The minimal level of education for entry to professional nursing practice occurs at the baccalaureate level and mastery occurs through graduate education and life-long learning.

- Clinical reasoning is a cognitive process of thinking where data is reviewed and analyzed to improve health outcomes.
Professional nursing skills are developed through integration of theoretical knowledge and guided clinical practice.

Professional nursing values are the consistent demonstration of altruism, autonomy, human dignity, integrity, and social justice.

**Person**

Person is a complex, unique, holistic individual with inherent worth and dignity. The meanings a person attaches to life experiences are influenced by the environment, developmental level, group membership, culture, and ethnicity. The person has the power to identify their own life choices.

Approved NFO, last updated 4/4/2011

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**MSN Program Outcomes with Relationship to Program Concepts**

(Approved by Graduate Committee: January 2019)

1. Integrate liberal arts foundation with scholarly inquiry and client values as a basis for problem solving.
   - Essential II (Leadership) and III (Quality/Safety)
   - NONPF Leadership Competencies and Quality Competencies
   - NLN 5 (Leadership)

2. Demonstrate leadership in the advanced specialty role through legal and ethical decision-making, accountability, and a commitment to quality improvement and safety.
   - Essential V (Informatics)
   - NONPF Technology and Information Literacy Competencies
   - NLN 3 (Assessment and Evaluation)

3. Demonstrate informatics and healthcare technology competencies to enhance outcomes for clients and populations.
   - Essential VI (Policy/Advocacy)
   - NONPF Policy Competencies and Ethics Competencies
   - NLN (Policy)

4. Advocate for ethical policies that promote access, equity, quality, and cost effectiveness.
   - Essential VII (Collaboration) and VIII (Clinical Prevention/Population Health) NONPF Health Delivery Systems Competencies

5. Collaborate within nursing and inter-professional teams to improve client and population health.
   - Essential IX (Master’s Level Nursing Practice)
   - NONPF Independent Practice Competencies
   - NLN I (Facilitate Learning), II (Facilitate Learner Socialization and Development), VI (Curriculum)

6. Demonstrate the competencies associated with the graduate nursing specialty role.

**Link to AACN Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education:**

[The Essentials: Competencies for Professional Nursing Education (aacnnursing.org)](https://aacnnursing.org)

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**Programs of Study**

After students are admitted to the University and accepted to the MSN program, the student will work with an MSN program coordinator to develop a program of study (POS) depending on admission status (full-time vs part-time) and MSN specialty track. The POS will outline the courses required each semester.
GC School of Nursing currently offers five MSN Specialty Tracks. Below is a list of current offerings and the corresponding MSN coordinator.

- Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) – Dr. Krystal Canady. See Appendix for the POS.
- Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) – TBD. See Appendix for the POS.
- Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner (WHNP) – Dr. Monica Ketchie. See Appendix for the POS.
- Nurse Midwifery (NM) – Dr. Monica Ketchie. (See separate handbook)
- Nurse Educator (NE) – Dr. Debbie Greene. See Appendix for the POS.

Once the initial POS is signed, the student may not make changes to admission status (full-time vs part-time), specialty track, or course sequence without first discussing with the assigned program coordinator and signing an updated POS. If space is available, students in the full-time program may elect to move to the part-time program after meeting with their advisor and requesting this change. Because of course sequencing, students in the part-time program are not able to move to the full-time program.

Once the program of study is on file, students should register for courses as early as possible. Registration is available by logging into your Unify account and selecting the PAWS tile. See the Academic Calendar for registration dates for more information.

Academic Advising/Mentoring

The purpose of advising in the graduate nursing program is to assist the graduate nursing students to be successful in their programs of study. Academic advising is a shared responsibility between students, faculty and staff. Each MSN student is assigned a Faculty Advisor upon admission to the program. If you are unsure who your academic advisor is, you can locate that information by logging into your Unify account and selecting the PAWS tile. Once in PAWS select the Student Services tab at the top of the screen. Here you will be able to view your academic information including your advisor name.

Appointments (virtual or in person) with academic advisors are encouraged to discuss coursework, programs of study, and opportunities for clinical placement and to release advisor holds for registering for classes.

Specific Aims of Advising

1. Students will receive effective advising consistent with GC, College of Health Sciences, and School of Nursing Guidelines.
2. Students will actively participate in the advising process
3. Successful completion of program of study

Advisor Responsibilities

Graduate students can expect their advisors to:

1. Understand and effectively communicate the University policies and procedures.
2. Provide information about and strategies for utilizing available campus resources and services.
3. Monitor and accurately document the advisee’s progress toward meeting curricular goals.
5. Be accessible via posted office hours, scheduled virtual appointments, email, and/or telephone.

Advisee Responsibilities

The advisees are ultimately responsible for their educational success and are expected to:

1. Participate in mandatory graduate orientation.
2. Read the University Catalog and Graduate Handbook.
3. Schedule regular appointments or make regular contact with their academic advisor.
4. Make use of campus services and resources to enhance your personal and academic success.
5. Be prepared for each advisement meeting with questions and discussion points.
6. Accept responsibility for own decisions.

**ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses**

All professional nurses are expected to provide ethical care. All students should review the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics for Nurses.

**Georgia Registered Professional Nurse Practice Act**

Graduate nursing students are to comply with Georgia Board of Nursing Rule 410-10-.01, Standards of Practice for Registered Professional Nurses. In addition, graduate nursing students shall understand the definition and consequences of unprofessional conduct and practice as outline in Georgia Board of Nursing Rule 410-10-.03. Professional behavior is expected in all areas of their lives: academic, work, and personal. The professional standards that are expected of nurses translate to the use of social media as well. Students who through unprofessional conduct are unable to maintain an unencumbered license in their state of practice will be withdrawn from the graduate program.

**University Policies**

The School of Nursing (SON) follows the policies and procedures outlined in the University Graduate Catalog. This includes but is not limited to grievances, appeals, and petitions; transfer and transient credit; graduation requirements, and the student code of conduct.

**Transfer and Transient Credit**

Transfer credit applied toward MSN degree requirements from another ACEN or CCNE accredited school may be possible. Contact the Assistant Director of Graduate Programs to inquire. In addition, consult the University Graduate Catalog for policies related to transfer credit. Students may transfer a maximum of 9 credit hours. Students may take classes at another University as transient students. Students should contact their academic advisor for more information.

**Grievances, Appeals, and Petitions**

The School of Nursing (SON) follows the policies and procedures outlined in the University Graduate Catalog regarding academic and non-academic grievances and appeals. These can be found in the Graduate Catalog under Grievance and Appeals.

**Student Code of Academic Conduct**

Graduate students are expected to comply with all aspects of the Georgia College Student Code of Academic Conduct Policy and should understand the definition and consequences of Academic Dishonesty.

**Health Insurance and Waiver**

The Georgia Board of Regents requires all nursing students to obtain student health insurance. The fee for this service is added to tuition each fall & spring.

Graduate students who already have health insurance may complete a waiver from USG Student Health Insurance Program (SHIP) by completing a form found HERE. Information about this will be distributed by the GCSU Business Office each fall and spring semester. Questions regarding the student health insurance policy and the waiver procedure should be directed to the Business Office (478-445-5254; email businessoffice@gcsu.edu.)
Nursing Policies

The graduate student is expected to adhere to School of Nursing Policies and Procedures while in the learning environment.

Campus Laboratory Policy & Guidelines (Appendix 1001A – Lab Rules): Policy #1001
The purpose of this policy is to support safety and professional practice in campus laboratory activities.

GC Dress Code Policy: Policy #1002
The purpose of this policy is to outline undergraduate and graduate expectations related to dress code.

Standard & Transmission-Based Precautions: Policy #1003
The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the prevention of pathogen transmission in the laboratory and clinical setting. Guidelines for education and post-exposure treatment are also included.

Student Accident/Injury Policy #1004
The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance to faculty and students regarding what to do when injury or exposure occurs.

Student with Chemical Impairment: Policy #1005
The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for faculty and students related to suspected chemical impairment.

GC Sim Policy and Procedure Manual: Policy #1010
The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance related to the Simulation and Translational Research Center and the Campus Skills Lab.

Graduate Online Testing: Policy #3000
The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidelines to faculty and students regarding testing in the program.

Graduate Faculty Testing: Policy #5012
The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to the student and faculty regarding exam administration, test review, and exam absences.

Admission, Progression, and Dismissal: Policy #3001
The purpose of this policy is to provide faculty and student guidance regarding the application, admission, advising, progression, re-entry, and dismissal guideline.

Student Orientation & Onboarding: Policy #3002
The purpose of this policy is to guide the onboarding process for new graduate students.

MSN Course and Clinical Guidelines: Policy #3003
The purpose of this policy is to provide general guidelines for students and faculty related to course and clinical experiences.

APRN Graduate Student Safety: Policy #3005
The purpose of this policy is to provide the APRN student with guidelines regarding safety issues during clinical rotations.
Synthesis Requirements

All MSN students are expected to demonstrate successful achievement of program outcomes as evidenced by depth and breadth of knowledge, a synthesis of data, complexity of skills and interventions, and role autonomy by the end of the program. Through a comprehensive synthesis of skills and knowledge acquired through core and specialty courses. In addition, the Advance Practice RN student (FNP, PMHNP, WHNP) is expected to demonstrate that they are educationally prepared to assume responsibility and accountability for the assessment, diagnosis, and management of the patient, which includes health promotion and/or maintenance as well as the use and prescription of pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic interventions. The process of synthesis should be a scholarly experience that threads throughout the program and is finalized in the last semester. The MSN programs use two methods to demonstrate mastery of program outcomes. The Electronic Portfolio (all MSN students), and the Simulated Certification Exam (APRN only).

Electronic Portfolio Requirements

Students will receive information on the program outcomes and an introduction to the Electronic Portfolio during orientation. Once created, students will share the portfolio link with their advisor and/or program coordinator. Each semester, course faculty will use the syllabus to identify assignments to be included in the portfolio. Emphasis is placed on demonstration of the relevance of coursework to clinical practice. Students and faculty are encouraged to arrange multiple experiences in synthesis and application to practice throughout the program. The portfolio should demonstrate the student’s mastery of the program outcomes. Students are required to make an appointment with their advisor for the purpose of reviewing the portfolio each semester. This electronic portfolio must be started at the beginning of the program and shared with the student’s academic advisor at least once during each semester for the advisor hold to be released for the student to register. Students are required to submit their portfolio for review at the end of their program. Documentation of a satisfactory portfolio will be confirmed in the practicum course.

Exit Exam Requirements

The Exit exam is a comprehensive exam and covers all topics that the NP student has had during their Program of Study. This exam is designed to simulate the respective Certification Board Exam. APRN eligible students (FNP, PMHNP, WHNP) are required to successfully complete a simulated Exit Certification Exam with a score that is within the acceptable range (see practicum course materials for program specific requirements regarding number of allowed unsuccessful attempts and the process for proceeding).

GC Graduate Writing Guidelines

Students enrolled in graduate programs at the Georgia College & State University School of Nursing are responsible for ensuring that assignments and major papers meet the formatting requirements of the program of study. The Georgia College School of Nursing has adopted the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th edition (referred to as the APA Manual) as the official guide for preparation of written work within all programs. This guide has been developed to assist students in preparation of written work in compliance with the guidelines. This document will also guide the student in adapting the guidelines to meet specific School of Nursing requirements.

Criteria for Written Assignments

Because written assignments reflect the student's knowledge of content, as well as professional communication skills, they should be prepared with care. The following general guidelines should be followed in additional to any course specific criteria.
1. Typewritten in Microsoft Word and saved as a .doc or .docx document. (It is the student’s responsibility to seek assistance with using the Microsoft Office software.)

2. Containing appropriate resources that are of high quality.
   a. The most current information (generally written within 3-5 years).
   b. Information should be from peer-reviewed resources.
   c. Seminal (important & influential) works should take precedence in certain situations.
   d. Primary sources - the author who did the research was the person who wrote the article – are preferred.
   e. Secondary sources - the author refers to an article written by another person – may be appropriate in certain circumstances.

3. Written in accordance with the latest APA Manual guidelines unless otherwise specified by faculty.
   a. Purchase of the APA manual is required for all graduate students.

4. Composed using correct sentence and paragraph structure.

5. Written using correct grammar and spelling.

6. Presented in a professional manner.

7. Prepared according to criteria specified in the course requirements and The GC Graduate Writing Manual Guidelines.

Turnitin Plagiarism Detection Software
Faculty reserve the right to use plagiarism detection software. This software is built into the learning management system and students should assume it will be active for all assignments. The School of Nursing prohibits students from using other individual’s work or ideas and passing them off as their own. All resources should be appropriately paraphrased and cited to avoid a charge of plagiarism. If plagiarism is detected, it is punishable by receipt of a grade of 0 for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, or possible expulsion from the university. See above link to the University Policy titled “Student Code of Academic Conduct.”

Technology Requirements
If you have questions regarding minimum technology requirements for laptop and desktop computers, as recommended by GC, please contact the Serve Help Desk at 478.445.7378 or via email at serve@gcsu.edu.

Technology Resources

- **Laptop computers, iPods, iPads, digital cameras, and other resources** are available through GC Library and Information Technology Center (LITC).
- **Computer software** can be purchased with significant discounts at Software Resource & Services because of a University System of Georgia contract. Approved software can be purchased online and postal mailed to the student’s home. Additionally, students can download Microsoft Office 365 for free through UNIFY and also get 7GB of storage for use while they are a student at GC.
- **Bibliographic software** GC provides free access to bibliographic software used to retrieve citation information from digital libraries and to cite references in scholarly papers. The software is compatible with Windows and Mac operating systems. Software can be downloaded from all GC campus sites at http://software.gcsu.edu. Contact SERVE if you need help in downloading the software from off campus locations (serve@gcsu.edu).
- The **GALILEO Digital Library** database is available for accessing peer reviewed resources. The password access to GALILEO changes every semester. Students can retrieve the password from PAWS. From the Main Menu in PAW, click on the GALILEO link.
The D2L Learning Management System is used to teach on-line portions of graduate courses. All courses use D2L learning management system as a support tool and faculty expect that graduate students are computer-literate.

**Study Abroad and Nursing International Exchange Opportunities**

The College of Health Sciences has international exchange agreements with several universities. Graduate students in good standing within the University may apply for an international exchange experience during their academic program. Academic requirements and scheduling are negotiated between graduate course faculty at GC and the respective faculty abroad. For further information on the international exchange possibilities, please visit the GC International Exchange website and consult Dr. Sallie Coke/sallie.coke@gcsu.edu.

Multiple study abroad activities are also available through the School of Nursing. Every fall, students are encouraged to participate in a study abroad to Honduras and every spring to Tanzania. Cost and academic credit vary depending on experience and course registration. For further information on the study abroad opportunities please contact Dr. Sallie Coke (sallie.coke@gcsu.edu) for Honduras, or Dr. Catherine Fowler (catherine.fowler@gcsu.edu) for Tanzania.

**Scholarships**

General information concerning scholarships, awards, prizes, and grants may be obtained from the scholarship committee. Contact the GC Financial Aid Office at 478.445.5149.

**Georgia Nurses Foundation, Inc.**
The Georgia Nurses Foundations offers scholarships and awards on an annual basis.

**Georgia Association for Nursing Education (GANE)**
GANE offers the Spillman-Bischoff scholarship for graduate nursing students. Visit their website for more information.

**Theta Tau Nursing Scholarship**
Sigma awards the Helene Fuld Trust Scholarship on an annual basis. See the website for more information.
Awards and Honors

Outstanding Graduate Student
The purpose of the award is to recognize an outstanding graduate student in the areas of clinical performance, community service or service learning, and scholarly activities. Students are encouraged to develop a portfolio which documents their development as a master’s prepared nurse, emphasizing the following areas: involvement with national or local nursing organizations in their area of expertise, university involvement, community service in the area of nursing, and the development of an evidence-based practice in their area of expertise.

The Graduate Committee will announce a call for students who are graduating to apply for Graduate Student Awards each spring semester. Students will be notified of the application process and deadlines during their final semester in the program.

1. Students whose graduate grade point average falls between a 3.50 and 4.00 are eligible to apply for this award.
2. Eligible students will submit the following documents:
   a. A cover letter addressing the criteria
   b. A current curriculum vitae
   c. At least one supporting letter from a preceptor
   d. At least one supporting letter from a faculty member who is not a voting member of the Graduate Committee.
   e. Other relevant documents
3. The Graduate Committee will review applications and make recommendations.

Participation in the University Community

University-Level Committees
Graduate students are invited to serve on a number of committees at the University level in order to provide the unique perspective of the graduate nursing student to the group's work. If you have interest in serving on a university-level committee, please contact the Director of Nursing programs at josie.doss@gcsu.edu.

School of Nursing Committees
Several standing and ad hoc committees exist to enable much of the work of the College of Health Sciences and the Nursing Program. If you are interested in serving on the Nursing Faculty Organization (NFO), please contact the Director of Nursing at josie.doss@gcsu.edu.

*Student representatives will be excluded during admission/progression deliberations.
**Ad Hoc committees may be established by any standing committee or the Director and continue to function until their assignment is complete.

Information for Accessing Certification Applications

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<th>American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Family NP</td>
<td>8515 Georgia Avenue; Suite 400</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silver Spring, MD 20910</td>
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<td></td>
<td>800.274.4ANA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>American Academy of Nurses Practitioners (AANP) Certification Program, Inc.</td>
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<td>P.O. Box 12926</td>
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References


Appendix

If these or any of the links found within this handbook are broken or do not direct you to the correct documentation, please notify: nursing@gcsu.edu.

A. Programs of Study:
   - Full Time FNP
   - Part Time FNP
   - Full Time PMHNP
   - Part Time PMHNP
   - Full Time WHNP
   - Part Time WHNP
   - Full Time Nurse Educator
   - Part Time Nurse Educator

B. Exam Absence Form: This form is shown as an appendix to policy # 5012
Student Handbook Receipt

I have read the Georgia College Graduate Student Handbook and agree to adhere to the policies stated herein.

Student Name (Please Print):

________________________________________________________________________

Student Signature:

________________________________________________________________________

Student Signature Date:

________________________________________________________________________