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*Building for Our Next Century  
1906-2006*

Graduate Student Handbook  
College of Nursing  
Valdosta State University

# **College of Nursing**

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## Graduate Student Handbook

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## Welcome

**W**elcome to the College of Nursing. We want you to enjoy your time at Valdosta State University College of Nursing. If you have questions or problems, the faculty and administration of the College are available to assist you in any way that we can.

This handbook was prepared to assist you during your program of studies. It contains policies, procedures and general information relative to the College of Nursing. In addition, you are referred to the *Valdosta State University Graduate Catalog* and the *Valdosta State University Graduate Student Handbook* for other information.

Best Wishes as you progress through the program.

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# THE COLLEGE

## COLLEGE OF NURSING MISSION STATEMENT

The College of Nursing embraces the core characteristics of Valdosta State University as a regional university. The College of Nursing strives to meet the needs of a diverse student population within the framework of the needs of nursing and health care in the region. The College of Nursing pursues excellence in the teaching/learning process and values interdisciplinary collaboration.

The administration, faculty, and staff of the College of Nursing are committed to the creation and development of a student centered, professional, supportive environment in which:

- baccalaureate students, prepared for entry level professional nursing, demonstrate critical thinking in the provision of ethical and holistic health care to individuals, families, and communities. Emphasis is placed on the art and science of nursing, as well as the application of humanities and the physical and behavioral sciences;
- masters students, prepared for advanced professional nursing practice, demonstrate critical thinking in the provision of ethical and holistic specialized health care to individuals, families, and communities;
- continuing education programming and community service activities are provided to meet the needs of the region; and
- faculty provide for the advancement of the educational program and the profession of nursing through excellence in teaching, research, scholarship, and creative work.

## PHILOSOPHY OF THE COLLEGE OF NURSING

Nursing is a caring, client-centered profession, grounded in a body of knowledge based on theory and research, using humanistic values of altruism, equality, justice, and human dignity to care for people. Functioning within a professional community, nursing values evidence-based practice, ethical codes, an interdisciplinary culture, self-regulation, and authority over practice. Providing an important, unique service, the nursing profession uses a body of theoretical knowledge from analytic and engaged ways of knowing applied to practice. Professional registered nurses are inherently concerned with persons as whole beings in continuous interaction within multiple contexts and systems.

Health is defined by individuals, groups, families, and communities within the context of their unique environments. Environment refers to socioeconomic, sociopolitical, physical, psychosocial, and health care changes that create the dynamic world which provides our daily context of living. The essence of nursing is to help persons attain and maintain wellness in every dimension of their being. Professional registered nurses foster healing environments for diverse populations and strive to promote wellness and improve quality of life for people across the lifespan.

As regional leaders for nursing excellence and learner-centered education, we believe education transforms all involved, including a diverse population of learners, faculty, and clients. Nursing education is committed to a technologically-enhanced learning community that promotes learner

success. We believe learners should be actively engaged, self-directed, accountable, and committed to lifelong learning. Faculty members strive for instructional excellence, offer academic assistance, facilitate learning, and provide enrichment for learners by coaching, guidance, and mentorship. Our purpose is to educate and graduate registered nurses who are competent, caring, holistic, and reflective.

Baccalaureate nursing education prepares safe, beginning generalists for entry into professional nursing practice. Among the important roles of professional registered nurses educated at the baccalaureate level are competent care provider, health care coordinator, manager, leader, change agent, and research consumer. Graduate nursing education builds on baccalaureate nursing education and prepares professional registered nurses for advanced nursing practice in specialized clinical and functional roles. Advanced nursing practice demands complex intellectual analysis, effective management and leadership, scholarship, and interpersonal competencies. Graduate nursing education operationalizes the roles of advanced nursing practice and lays the foundation for doctoral study.

## **MSN OBJECTIVES**

1. Synthesize knowledge from a variety of evidence (conceptual models and theories from nursing and related disciplines, practice wisdom and ethics) in advanced nursing practice.
2. Employ scientific inquiry and other ways of knowing to validate, refine, and develop knowledge relevant to advanced nursing practice and the delivery of healthcare services.
3. Effect health policy and promote change through leadership, innovation, and management expertise.
4. Practice advanced nursing in collaborative relationships across disciplines and with communities.
5. Demonstrate healthcare informatics literacy within the context of advanced nursing practice.
6. Promote culturally competent systems that reflect the global context of health.
7. Implement strategies for ongoing personal and advanced professional development through professional involvement, lifelong learning, and fostering an appreciation for doctoral study.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

<p><b>Science</b> A coherent body of knowledge composed of research findings, theories, scientific principles, and laws for a discipline</p>	<p><b>OF</b></p>	<p><b>Processes</b> Journey of reasoned stages to produce desired outcomes</p>
<p><b>Technology</b> Innovative resources for discovery, retrieval, sharing, and application of learning</p>		<p><b>Reflection</b> Contemplation of one's beliefs, assumptions, and experiences</p>
<p><b>Autonomy</b> Self-determination</p>		<p><b>Accountability</b> Legal and moral obligation to answer for one's acts, including delegation and supervision</p>
<p><b>Nursing</b> A caring, patient-centered profession that is grounded in a body of knowledge based on theory and research</p>		<p><b>Competencies</b> Habitual and judicious use of knowledge, clinical reasoning, communication and psychomotor skills, values, and reflection</p>
<p><b>Decision making</b> Reasoned action using engaged and analytical ways of knowing</p>		<p><b>Teaching</b> Outcome oriented process that facilitates learning</p>
<p><b>Art</b> Creative, individualized, and culturally sensitive care</p>		<p><b>Intuition</b> A spontaneous insight or understanding of a situation or pattern of events</p>
<p><b>Research</b> A scientific process that validates and refines existing knowledge and generates new knowledge as a foundation for evidence-based practice</p>		<p><b>Collaboration</b> Sharing of knowledge and ideas in a coordinated effort to meet common goals</p>
<p><b>Development</b> Process of continuous personal and professional growth</p>		<p><b>Eclecticism</b> Use of nursing and interdisciplinary theories for education, practice, and research</p>
<p><b>Safety</b> Security, well-being, and freedom from accidental injury</p>		

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# ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, AND GRADUATION

## ADMISSION

The admission policy of the College of Nursing is congruent with the admission policy of Valdosta State University. Application is made through the Graduate School, which is located at 903 North Patterson Street, phone 333-5694.

To be eligible for consideration applicants must have:

1. graduated from a NLNAC or CCNE-accredited Bachelor of Science in Nursing program;
2. an undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4 point scale;
3. a minimum score of 400 on the verbal section and a minimum score of 3.5 on the analytical writing section of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). A Miller Analogies Test (MAT) score of 400 or higher (or equivalent) will be accepted as an alternative to the GRE;
4. evidence of Georgia licensure as a registered nurse;
5. three letters of recommendation from persons whose observations of the applicant's character and abilities are current. Letters of recommendation must be accompanied by the required General Graduate Recommendation Form; and
6. licensure as a Registered Nurse by the Georgia Board of Nursing.

Please see the Graduate Catalog for information on types of admission, including probationary, non-degree, and transient admission.

For admission to regular graduate status applicants must have successfully completed a statistics course and a course in advanced health assessment. Foreign students are required to pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). See the Graduate Catalog for minimum acceptable scores.

On admission to the graduate nursing program students are assigned a faculty advisor to assist them in developing an individualized program of study. The Plan of Study (POS) form (available from the College of Nursing MSN website) is a contract between the student and the College of Nursing that demonstrates how students will fulfill their degree requirements. A Plan of Study form should be completed and signed by the student and graduate faculty advisor prior to completion of the second semester of graduate study. If changes are needed to the coursework listed on the Plan of Study form it should be re-written by the student and graduate advisor and attached to the original Plan of Study. Changes to the plan of study may result in delay of program completion.

**Students have seven years from admission to the graduate program to complete the requirements for the degree. If the degree is not completed within the seven-year limit, coursework more than seven years old must be repeated.**

## **ADMISSION OF REGISTERED NURSES without the BSN**

The College of Nursing encourages registered nurses (RN) to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing (BSN) and/or a Master of Science degree in Nursing (MSN) at Valdosta State University. To facilitate rapid progression through the baccalaureate program, a state-wide articulation model has been adopted. Registered Nurses wishing to take advantage of this opportunity for educational progression must meet the criteria for the RN-BSN Articulation Model. The College of Nursing also offers a pathway to Registered Nurses who wish to earn both the BSN and MSN in an accelerated program.

In addition to completion of the Core Curriculum, admission criteria include:

1. regular admission to Valdosta State University,
2. successful completion of the total Regents' Testing Program,
3. documentation of completion of a Diploma/ADN program,
4. documentation of successful completion of the NCLEX-RN,
5. having met the criteria for the RN-BSN Articulation Model,
6. verification of accreditation status of the completed Nursing program,
7. earned minimum of "C" in each science course (Science courses may not be repeated more than one time),
8. documentation of current health and accident insurance, and
9. availability of space in clinical practicum sites.

Selection of the Masters track must be made by the second term of RN to BSN study. Students who desire to complete the accelerated BSN and MSN program must make application to the Graduate School during the semester in which all RN Core Semester Courses are successfully completed.

**Candidates should meet with the College of Nursing Graduate Coordinator prior to completing the Graduate School application.**

## **PROGRESSION**

To remain in good standing students must:

1. maintain current malpractice insurance of \$1,000,000/\$3,000,000;
2. maintain current health and accident insurance;
3. maintain current certification in CPR for health professionals;
4. maintain current licensure as a Registered Nurse;
5. provide evidence of current health status, annual TB testing, Hepatitis B vaccination, Varicella titer, MMR, and tetanus;
6. attain a minimum grade of "C" in each nursing course;
7. and maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher for all graduate courses. Students receiving two grades below "C" ("D," "F," "WF," or "U") will be dismissed from the program.

**Proof of all progression requirements is due the first class day of each semester.**

Full time graduate students normally take between 9 and 12 credit hours each term. The program is planned using a hybrid format with in-class meetings on weekends approximately once a month during the semester and the balance of coursework on-line. The program of study can be completed within four semesters, although students completing a thesis frequently take an additional semester. Students wishing to attend part-time need to be aware that they may have delays in obtaining the requisite courses.

There are four basic categories of courses: core, clinical, role, and thesis or project. Please see the *Valdosta State University Graduate Catalog* for specific descriptions. Each student selects a clinical track, a functional role, and either thesis or project. Adult Health courses are offered each year. Maternal-child and Mental Health nursing courses are offered when there is sufficient enrollment. The role courses offered include Nurse Practitioner, Nursing Education, Nursing Administration, and Care Manager.

Thesis or project hours may be taken following the completion of the graduate research course. The thesis is a scholarly, empirical investigation of a phenomenon of concern in nursing. The project is a theory based intervention that addresses a nursing clinical or role problem. Students should discuss their proposed thesis or project with the Graduate faculty member of their choice and, if approved, enroll in thesis or project hours under that faculty member's direction.

During or on completion of the last semester of coursework, each student must successfully pass a comprehensive examination. The comprehensive examination is scheduled once each semester and involves testing in research, theory, the clinical area, and the role area. Nurse Practitioner students must successfully complete a standardized exam in lieu of the comprehensive examination.

**Students may not schedule their thesis or project defense until all comprehensive exams are successfully completed.**

## **READMISSION**

If dismissed from the program, students must wait a minimum of two semesters and obtain approval from the College of Nursing before applying for readmission. Readmission is not guaranteed and prior academic performance and conduct in the program will be considered. If accepted, students have seven years, **including the previously registered terms**, to complete the program of study.

If any courses have been taken at another institution during the non-enrolled period, official transcripts of these courses must be submitted.

## **APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION**

To be eligible for graduation students in the College of Nursing must meet the following requirements in addition to any other requirements mandated by the Graduate School and listed in the *Valdosta State University Graduate Catalog*.

1. MSN candidates must have achieved a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale as well as a C or better in all graduate nursing courses. No course grade below a "C" will be credited toward graduation.
2. Satisfactory completion of the comprehensive or standardized examination.
3. Successful completion of a thesis or project.

Students must submit an application for graduation one semester prior to their expected graduation date. Students are responsible for obtaining the application form from the Office of the Registrar and contacting their College of Nursing faculty advisor to schedule a meeting to review their academic record and complete the application for graduation.

The faculty advisor will photocopy the appropriate curriculum worksheet and other necessary documents from the student record for the Registrar. It is the student's responsibility to submit the completed application for graduation, with all appropriate documentation and fees, to the Office of the Registrar by the required date. Students are expected to be aware of and meet all deadlines for graduation.

## **MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES**

Graduate nursing students will incur expenses throughout the program above the fees identified in the Valdosta State University Bulletin. Listed below are some of the major additional costs.

Transportation to and from clinical practica is the responsibility of the student. Travel to some clinical agencies may require 1 to 2 hours time and public transportation is not available. It is, therefore, necessary that students have (or can arrange for) dependable transportation.

Professional liability insurance must be purchased and maintained throughout the College of Nursing academic program. Proof of this insurance coverage is required before students can participate in clinical experiences.

Certification in Basic Cardiac Life Support (CPR) is also a requirement during the program. The cost of the certification is determined by the offering agency.

There are costs occurring at the end of the program related to graduation. They are:

- Graduation fee - approximately \$40
- MSN hood (optional) – approximately \$30
- Photos (optional) - approximately \$20

Many students discover that a personal computer is an asset to their studies. The University does provide computer labs that can be used; however, for many students, the convenience of having a computer outweighs the additional expense. Most students find that on-line access through an Internet Service Provider (ISP) reduces time and financial demands and facilitates learning.

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# CLASS INFORMATION

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity and honesty are vital to the purposes of the University and the nursing profession. The University policy regarding student conduct and academic irregularity is stated in the *Valdosta State University Student Handbook* and is applicable to nursing students. The College of Nursing has adopted an Honor Code (see Appendix B).

Students should be aware that sanctions in the nursing profession are imposed because of the vital nature of health care as it affects client well-being. Due to the unique nature of the clinical experience in the nursing program and to the relationship of responsibility for the welfare of the client, it is necessary for the College of Nursing to expand upon the University's definition of academic irregularity. While the University relates academic irregularity to behaviors, such as plagiarism or cheating, the College of Nursing must also relate violations to unsafe, irresponsible, and nonprofessional behavior in the clinical setting. Academic irregularity in the clinical setting includes, but is not limited to, failure to assume and/or maintain responsibility for assigned client(s) and the failure to report errors made in providing client care. Students must attend clinical prepared to provide competent care and conform to ethical standards explicit in the ANA Code of Ethics and contained within the guidelines of the Nurse Practice Act. This means that students must provide safe client care during assigned clinical hours unless and until relieved by clinical faculty and are required to notify clinical faculty immediately concerning any error they believe they have made or might have made in the clinical area so that attention may be given to the affected client(s).

**A single violation of academic integrity in the clinical setting may disqualify a student from continuing in the College of Nursing at Valdosta State University.**

## CLASS ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to demonstrate punctual attendance during all classroom experiences. Absence of more than 20% of classroom hours in each course may constitute failure of the course; and excessive tardiness may, at the teacher's discretion, result in a lower grade in the course.

## COLLEGE OF NURSING GRADING SCALE

The grading scale in the College of Nursing for both Graduate and Undergraduate students is:

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 74-79
- D = 66-73
- F = 65 and below

***Grades of D or F are not sufficient for progression in the curriculum.***

## ADA STATEMENT

Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications due to a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in the Farber Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (V/VP) and 219-1348 (TTY).

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The Comprehensive Examination is given during or on completion of the last term of course work. The purpose of this examination is to provide the student with the opportunity to synthesize knowledge of interrelationships of man, environment, health, and advanced professional nursing; and to demonstrate proficiency in complex intellectual activities requiring a high degree of analytic skills which are applicable to practice and functional roles requiring specialized preparation.

Students are expected to submit the Request to Take Comprehensive Examination form (available from the College of Nursing MSN website) to the Graduate Coordinator at the beginning of the term in which they plan to take the test. This request enables the College to notify each student of the date, time, and place the exam will be given. There are four sections to the examination (research, theory, the clinical area, and the role area), and students are given 90 minutes to complete each section. Questions concentrate on global aspects of the areas being tested. Answers should address all aspects of the questions being asked, and authorities should be cited where appropriate. The questions will necessitate organization, problem solving, and conceptualization. Although students are encouraged to answer questions using a computer to work process and print their answers, they have the option to answer questions in writing using a separate Blue Book for each answer.

The examination is graded by faculty as Pass/Fail. In the event of failure in any of the areas, the student may retake the Comprehensive Examination in the deficient area(s) the following semester. In the event of failure on the repeat examination, the student will be required to register for Directed Study in the content area that was failed. On completion, the student may retake the deficient area during the following term. A student who fails the examination on this third attempt must re-take the course(s) before being given a final opportunity to pass the examination.

Nurse Practitioner students complete a Standardized Examination in lieu of the Comprehensive Examination. The passing score is based on norms determined by the test administrator for the semester in which the examination is taken.

## THESIS OR PROJECT

Thesis or project hours may be taken following completion of the graduate research course.

**Students must be enrolled in at least three thesis or project course hours during the semester in which they graduate.** Students choosing the thesis option should review the VSU Graduate School *Thesis and Dissertation Guide*.

Once a thesis or project chair has been chosen by mutual agreement between the student and graduate faculty member, that faculty member will act as faculty advisor for the student during completion of all further graduate studies.

**Students may not schedule their thesis or project defense until all comprehensive exams are successfully completed.**

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# CLINICAL INFORMATION

## **CLINICAL DRESS**

Graduate students are expected to adhere to professional attire and behavior standards. Dress requirements specific to individual clinical courses are included in course syllabi. Students are to wear VSU College of Nursing name badges during all clinical experiences.

## **DRUG TESTING AND CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK**

All students and faculty are subject to the rules and regulations of the clinical facilities with which we affiliate. Students will submit to drug screening and criminal background checks as requested by clinical agencies at their own expense. Information regarding drug screen and criminal background check will be maintained by the requesting agency, who has the right to inform the College of Nursing of a student's eligibility to access that facility for student learning experiences. Inability to access clinical facilities due to drug screening or criminal background check may be grounds for dismissal from the program.

## **HEALTH CARE LICENSES**

Students must maintain current licensure as a Registered Nurse prior to beginning graduate nursing courses and throughout the graduate nursing curriculum. The original license must be presented for visual inspection on the first day of class each semester. In addition, students who hold a license to practice in any other health care capacity, such as LPN, EMT, RT, et cetera, must also present this license for visual inspection on the first day of class each semester. In addition, copies of all licenses (marked "VOID" across the face of the license) needs to be submitted for filing in the student record. Any change in licensure status, including renewal, shall be reported to the Dean's office within 72 hours of occurrence.

## **HEALTH AND ACCIDENT INSURANCE**

All graduate nursing students must enroll in the mandatory Student Health Insurance Plan as required by the Board of regent of the University System of Georgia or **request a waiver each semester**. Students are responsible for the cost of treatment of any accident or injury occurring while a student in the College of Nursing, whether the incident occurs in the classroom, clinical experiences, or personal activities. Students enrolled in clinical nursing courses must maintain personal health/accident insurance. Proof of coverage from a carrier of choice must be presented on the first day of class each semester. Any student without insurance or the required proof will not be allowed to attend clinical until such requirements are met.

## **PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE**

Students must show proof of professional liability insurance, minimum amount of \$1,000,000/\$3,000,000 on the first class day of each semester. Any student without insurance or without the required proof will not be allowed to attend clinical, including mandatory orientations, until this requirement is met. It is the responsibility of the student to maintain coverage throughout

the nursing curriculum and to have the documentation available on request of any appropriate person. Students are encouraged to develop a portfolio of this and related information.

### **BASIC CARDIAC LIFE SUPPORT**

Students enrolled in clinical nursing courses must maintain current certification for basic cardiac life support – adult one and two rescuer, infant, and child CPR and obstructed airway. It is the nursing student's responsibility to acquire this certification and maintain it at all times. Proof of certification for the duration of the semester is required for participation in all clinical practicums. Students must have valid and current documentation of the certification and may be required to successfully demonstrate the ability to give cardiopulmonary resuscitation according to the American Heart Association/American Red Cross criteria. Students must show a current certification card, good for the entire semester, to the nursing instructor or designee on the first day of class each semester and must submit a photocopy of a current certification card to be placed in the student's file in the College of Nursing.

### **TUBERCULOSIS TESTING**

Upon admission to the graduate nursing program, students must have either a negative PPD test or chest X-ray (for previous converters and those with allergies) within the previous 6 months. Appropriate documentation must be presented on the first day of class. Thereafter, students must have TB testing (PPD or chest X-ray as appropriate) annually while they are enrolled in the program. The tests serve to prevent latent TB infection from progressing to clinically active TB, and to reduce the risk of transmission of TB in the health care setting and the University. Testing results are to be shown to the class instructor or designee on the first day of class each semester. Students with a positive test must receive treatment prior to beginning (or continuing) nursing courses. If a student has a positive PPD test prior to entering the nursing program, he/she must receive treatment and medical clearance before beginning the program.

If a student converts to a positive PPD while in the graduate nursing program, the student must receive treatment and present documentation of physician/clinic approval to continue. A student undergoing treatment must also provide the College of Nursing written documentation of all chest X-ray results, recommended follow-up, and evidence of completion of indicated therapy.

### **HEPATITIS B VACCINATION**

All students in the College of Nursing are required to have the Hepatitis B immunization. This vaccination consists of three (3) injections, with the second injection being administered thirty (30) days after the first injection, and the third one being administered six (6) months after the first injection. It is the nursing student's responsibility to obtain AT LEAST the FIRST injection prior to entering the nursing program. Proof of series completion is required within six (6) months of admission.

Students needing second and third injections may obtain them either at the Student Health Center at Valdosta State University at a much-reduced price, or through a private physician. To obtain the injections at the Farber Center students must provide the infirmary with proof of the first HBV

injection and the receipt for payment. Payment for the injection must be made at the VSU Bursary prior to receiving the injection. Documentation that the series has been completed is required.

## **INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

Any students with patient-care responsibilities who know or have reason to believe that they have human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), Hepatitis, Tuberculosis, or any other infectious disease, has the professional responsibility to report this information to the Dean of the College of Nursing. Students must also inform clinical instructors as appropriate.

The College of Nursing conforms to state and federal regulations regarding HIV status disclosure and discrimination toward students or faculty members with HIV infection. All information disclosed by a student or faculty member regarding HIV status will be considered as AIDS Confidential Information (O.C.G.A. 24-9-47).

It is the policy of the College that standard precautions must be utilized by students and faculty at all times.

Students and faculty members must also satisfy clinical agency requirements for disclosure and/or practice restrictions. If a clinical agency has no policy governing practice restrictions for a specific disease or condition, then the current recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *Guideline for infection control in healthcare personnel, 1998*, will be utilized (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/guidelines/InfectControl98.pdf>).

HIV and Hepatitis B work restrictions (CDC Health Care Personnel Guidelines, 1998)

- Do not perform exposure-prone invasive procedures until counsel from an expert review panel which recommends procedures that may be performed.
- If an expert panel is not available at the specific clinical agency or at the local health department, the Dean of the College of Nursing or designee will consult the CDC and obtain an expert recommendation from them for any procedure/practice restrictions.

Tuberculosis work restrictions (CDC Health Care Personnel Guidelines, 1998)

- Active--exclude from duty until proved noninfectious
- PPD converter--no restriction

For all other diseases or conditions, see CDC Health Care Personnel Guidelines, 1998.

## **CLINICAL EXPERIENCES**

Graduate students are expected to plan their clinical experiences with the faculty. The selected experiences must be consistent with the course objectives and should provide the student with unique opportunities to explore how the content can be applied in clinical settings. It is preferred that clinical experiences occur in agencies different from the one in which the student is/has been employed. In no case should students obtain clinical experience within the actual setting (unit, department, clinic, et cetera) in which they currently work. **No time during which students are being reimbursed (employment time) may be counted as clinical time for course credit.**

The College of Nursing maintains memoranda of understanding (MOU) with over 90 clinical agencies. Clinical experiences will be obtained as directed by course faculty.

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN WORKING WITH A PRECEPTOR**

Students are assigned a preceptor for selected clinical experiences. A daily log that records activities and incorporates evaluation of achievement of course/clinical/individual objectives may be required by the faculty. Students are expected to maintain communication between the preceptor and faculty about any unusual circumstances. Students are to meet the responsibilities assigned by the preceptor, to maintain prompt and consistent attendance, and to keep the preceptor fully informed of all clinical activities. Students may not work in the clinical area if the preceptor is not available. The faculty member is responsible for evaluating the experience and will consider input from both the student and the preceptor. Students need to complete an evaluation of the preceptor, the clinical area, and the practicum at the end of the clinical experience.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Students enrolled in the College of Nursing must hold in confidence all patient related information. Failure to protect any patient's right to confidential treatment may result in a failing course grade and dismissal from the College of Nursing. To meet College and clinical agency requirements all students are required to affirm their understanding of the patient's right to privacy and need for confidentiality by signing a Confidentiality Statement. A copy of this statement is in Appendix A of this handbook.

### **HIPAA STATEMENT**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) requires health care providers to abide by the regulations for privacy and confidentiality of protected health information and covers all individually identifiable health information whether the information is electronic, paper or spoken. All students are provided HIPAA guidelines and instructions for conduct regarding protection of patient/client information in each course and are responsible for implementing HIPAA standards and procedures as specified in each clinical setting in which student are placed. Violation of HIPAA may result in dismissal from the nursing program.

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **APPOINTMENTS WITH FACULTY**

Appointments with faculty members should be scheduled in advance. Scheduled office hours for faculty members are posted on their office door. If these posted hours are not convenient the student may request an appointment with the faculty member by email, voice mail on the faculty member's office phone. Please remember that faculty members are scheduled in clinical agencies one or two days a week so it may take some time to receive a response.

### **CHANGE OF ADVISOR**

Students will be assigned an advisor in the College of Nursing. The student's advising folder will be maintained in the Administrative Suite in the College of Nursing. If the student perceives a problem with the assigned advisor, the student will communicate this concern to the advisor and attempt to resolve the problem. If resolution of the problem is not achieved to the student's satisfaction, the student may submit a written request to the Dean for a change of advisor. The student will be notified in writing of the resolution to the request.

Change of advisor may also occur when the thesis or project is approved. Usually the chair of the committee, the major professor, becomes the student's advisor.

### **COURSE AND FACULTY EVALUATION**

Students have the opportunity to evaluate all courses, as well as clinical and classroom instruction, at the end of each semester. Evaluations are part of the overall College evaluation process and faculty will use the student evaluations to plan for appropriate course changes. Faculty will provide instructions to students regarding participation in the evaluation process near the end of the course. All evaluation content will remain anonymous and faculty will be provided with aggregate evaluation data only after submission of all final semester grades for the course being evaluated.

### **DRUG FREE SCHOOLS AND WORKPLACE**

The College of Nursing adheres to the policies established by Valdosta State University and specified in the Drug Free Workplace (6/91), Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (9/90), and the Drug and Alcohol Prevention Program (9/90).

In accordance with Valdosta State University's Drug Free Workplace Policy, the College of Nursing has a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for faculty, staff, and students. Faculty, staff, and students are prohibited from the use, distribution, sale, personal possession, manufacture, or purchase of illegal drugs or alcohol while at work, or in class on the University premises, or while at clinical experience sites.

The Valdosta State University College of Nursing is dedicated to maintaining a drug free work place and learning environment. An impaired faculty member, staff member, or student constitutes a potential threat to faculty, staff, student, and client safety. Faculty, staff, and students who are suspected to be drug dependent or have an addiction problem are encouraged to seek diagnosis, counseling, and treatment from qualified professionals.

The VSU Counseling Center will treat requests for evaluation or therapy confidentially and will provide short-term assistance (5 sessions). Long-term counseling or therapy is the individual's responsibility.

An impaired faculty member, staff member, or student's completion of a program for rehabilitation and treatment facilitates the possibility of return to work or to class following release from treatment.

The inappropriate use of drugs or alcohol is not condoned. Any faculty member, staff member, or student reporting to work, class, or clinical experience sites exhibiting signs/symptoms of alcohol or substance abuse will be requested to submit to a blood and/or urine test for chemical analysis to determine the presence of toxic, hazardous, illegal, or foreign substances. Any faculty member, staff member, or student who declines to submit to testing for reasonable cause will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge or expulsion.

Reasonable suspicion of inappropriate use of drugs or alcohol may come from supervisory observation, co-worker or classmate reports, performance decline, attendance or behavioral changes, or involvement in a workplace, classroom, clinical, or vehicular accident. Suspicion must be verified by at least two witnesses.

A faculty member, staff member, or student suspected of inappropriate use of drugs or alcohol will be escorted to the VSU Student Health Center (if on campus) or to the hospital or agency laboratory (if at a clinical site) where testing will be done according to established protocol. Such testing will be done at the expense of the individual.

Faculty members, staff members, and students charged with a drug violation by law enforcement authorities will be suspended from employment, class, and clinical experience sites. If the charges are dropped, or the involved individual is ruled innocent, the individual may return to employment, class, and clinical experience sites as appropriate.

If the involved individual is convicted of a drug violation, the individual is subject to termination or expulsion. If a faculty member or staff member is convicted of violating any criminal drug statutes the faculty or staff member must notify the Personnel Office within five calendar days of conviction. Students convicted of violating any criminal drug statutes must notify the Dean, College of Nursing within five calendar days.

## **GRIEVANCES**

### ***Conduct Grievance***

Disciplinary hearings at Valdosta State University are hearings to arrive at decisions regarding student behavior. These decisions affect the involved students and their relationship with the University. The administration of discipline is an educational process and the procedures will be determined by educators. Such procedures will give cognizance to the test of fairness, justice, truth, and the requirements of due process. The procedures to be followed by all disciplinary committees are specified in the *Valdosta State University Student Handbook*.

### ***Academic Grievance***

Students in the College of Nursing must adhere to the student regulations as outlined in the *Valdosta State University Student Handbook*. Individual faculty members retain primary responsibility for assigning grades and evaluations. The faculty member's judgment is final unless compelling evidence

is presented. The College of Nursing encourages students to seek open discussion and resolution to grievance by applying the following procedure:

1. The nursing student with a problem is obligated first to seek a resolution to the problem with the involved faculty member.
2. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the student should submit a written request for review with supporting evidence to the Graduate Coordinator within the College of Nursing.
3. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached between the student and the Graduate Coordinator, the student may appeal in writing to the Dean of the College of Nursing.
4. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached between the student and the Dean of the College of Nursing, the student can appeal in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School. If no compromise is reached, an appeal in writing is made to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
5. Records of the grievance and resolution will be prepared by each faculty involved. The student's complaint and the faculty's response will become part of the student's record.

### **STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COLLEGE GOVERNANCE**

Graduate students are encouraged to participate in the governance of the College. They may participate through the course, faculty, and clinical evaluations done each semester. They may also meet with the Dean during Open Hours that are scheduled once or twice each semester. Additionally, students may participate through the formal committee structure. The committees that have student representation are listed below.

COMMITTEE	OVERVIEW	STUDENT REPRESENTATION
Nursing Academic	Monitors development, implementation, coordination, and evaluation of the curricula and the programs. Responsible for educational resources	1 undergraduate 1 RN to BSN 1 graduate
Nursing Student Affairs	Recruitment, student policies & handbook, student well-being, and school-sponsored programs	4 undergraduate 1 SDS 1 RN to BSN 1 graduate
Faculty Organization	Conducts the official business of the College	2 undergraduate 1 SDS 1 RN to BSN 1 RN to MSN 1 graduate
College of Nursing Honor Council <i>Special eligibility requirements apply</i>	Considers alleged violations of the Honor Code	2 Juniors 3 Seniors 2 graduate

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# THE HONOR CODE

## HONOR CODE

An honor code was developed by students of the College of Nursing with the assistance and approval of the faculty. The code was developed to instill a body of trust within the students and faculty of the College of Nursing. Through abiding by this code, students and faculty contribute to their own personal success, as well as the success of all those who are affiliated with the College of Nursing (adapted from Georgia Baptist College of Nursing). The Honor Code is located in Appendix B; all students are expected to sign a copy of this code for their student record and to abide by the code.

The following guidelines are established as definitions of expected or unacceptable behavior for those students enrolled in the VSU College of Nursing:

## EXPECTED BEHAVIOR

### Maintaining Ethical Relationships

All students are expected to exhibit appropriate, responsible behavior consistent with nursing profession codes of conduct. Responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

1. nursing students will provide nursing care in a prompt, safe, compassionate, and professional manner;
2. no student will attempt to perform a procedure/intervention without the approval of the clinical instructor or preceptor;
3. students will avoid willful or intentional physical or emotional harm to clients or any other persons involved in assigned duties; and,
4. students are directed to report any known or suspected deviations from policies and procedures to faculty and other proper authority.

## UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

### Plagiarism

Using the words, ideas, or conclusions of another person without giving proper credit is a form of intellectual dishonesty known as plagiarism. This behavior has been and still is unacceptable and dishonest. Exact quotes must be cited according to the APA Style Manual (6th Ed.) (Refer to the APA Style Manual Index to locate more detailed information.) Paraphrasing means to restate; therefore, the wording must be completely changed. "Altering a few words or phrases is not sufficient. . . the entire passage must be restated in your own words" (Tomberlin, 1995). Also, if you use five or more words in a row from someone else's work, you must use that material as a direct quote.

### Cheating

Using unauthorized information, as defined by faculty in the course, obtained from students or other sources that may be used to gain academic advantage through false representation or pretense. If the student is in doubt about what constitutes unauthorized information, the student must seek clarification about the matter with the faculty member responsible for the course.

### Falsification of Data

Gross negligence or dishonesty in collecting, analyzing, or reporting data in any setting where information is considered pertinent in the accomplishment of the nursing student responsibilities.

### Aiding and Abetting Dishonesty

Providing unauthorized information or assistance to another person that may consequently result in grade enhancement or other advancements.

### Breaching Confidentiality

Sharing private information and includes, but is not limited to, sharing personal access codes to WebCT.

## **PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING INFRACTIONS OF COLLEGE OF NURSING HONOR CODE**

### Reporting

1. As a student, you have a responsibility to yourself and your fellow students to help uphold the Honor Code at Valdosta State University. If you witness behavior which you suspect might be an Honor Code violation, you must address the problem in any one of three ways. You must:
  - a. personally warn the student; OR
  - b. inform the course instructor of your suspicions and identify the parties involved if possible; and
  - c. if a suspected occurrence is outside of a particular course assignment, you must seek help from a supervising faculty member.
2. Reporting by faculty/staff/clinical instructor/preceptor of suspected infraction should be reported to the faculty member in charge of the course. It may be necessary for the faculty member to report the infraction to the Dean of the College of Nursing.

### Preliminary Inquiry

The person to whom the report is made will initiate a preliminary inquiry into the suspected infraction. The preliminary inquiry is initiated between involved student(s) and faculty member(s). This inquiry will include discussion with all persons involved.

If, based upon the preliminary inquiry, it is determined that an honor code infraction may have occurred, and the matter is not resolved within the student-teacher relationship, then the matter is referred for peer review.

### Peer Review

The College of Nursing Honor Council (CNHC) will notify the student five working days prior to the hearing by a hand delivered letter or a certified letter with return receipt. The letter will notify the students of their opportunity to appear at a hearing pursuant to the procedure outlined below. The notice shall include the date, time, location, nature of the charge, hearing procedures (including right of appeal and right to bring witnesses and an advisor), and possible sanctions (also see VSU Student Handbook, Student Code of Ethics, Appendix B, Section 1, Rights of Students).

### Hearing

The hearing shall be conducted by a five party panel comprised of CNHC members (of these five, there will be at least three student representatives and one faculty representative). Also see VSU Student Handbook, Student Code of Ethics, Appendix B, Sections I - V.

1. Students shall have an opportunity to appear before the hearing panel and present their case. The involved student(s) may review all documents considered by the panel and may question any witnesses who appear before the panel. The student(s) may present their own information and witnesses; however, the panel may limit testimony based on redundancy or lack of relevance.
2. Advisors to the student may not participate directly in the proceedings.
3. The involved faculty/staff/clinical instructor/preceptor may provide relevant information and make recommendations regarding sanctions.
4. The panel will deliberate in private.
5. If the student fails or declines to appear before the panel, the panel will proceed to hear the case and make findings and recommendations without the student's participation.

After reviewing the case, the panel will submit a report and recommendations for sanctions, if any, as well as a notice of the appeals process. The decision on sanctions will be made by a majority vote of the CNHC members. The student may submit a statement that will be appended to the report.

### Appeal

The student may appeal the CNHC decision by using the student formal review process outlined in the student handbook (Appendix B of VSU Student Handbook).

### Recording

A report of all findings shall be submitted to the Dean and other involved parties. If there is a finding that a student has committed an Honor Code infraction recommendations for sanction shall be submitted to:

1. The faculty member
2. Dean of the College of Nursing
3. Dean of the Graduate School (if applicable)
4. Director of Judicial Affairs
5. Academic advisor
6. Sanctioned student

Depending upon the quality of the information and severity of the offense it may be recommended that the student lose privileges (ex. use of the computer lab after hours). The most serious offenses shall be referred to the Director of Judicial Affairs, Valdosta State University.

## **COMPOSITION OF THE COLLEGE OF NURSING HONOR COUNCIL (CNHC)**

The CNHC is composed of:

1. Five undergraduate student members (three seniors and two juniors) and two graduate student members, each of whom must maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 for undergraduates and 3.5 for graduate students during their tenure on the Council; and,
2. Three faculty members.

## **SELECTION OF MEMBERS**

1. Student members shall be nominated by faculty and elected annually by students enrolled in nursing courses. Elections shall occur during the first three weeks of the fall term (except the first student members must be elected as soon as possible after adoption of the Honor Code).
2. Student members shall elect from their number a student chairperson and student vice-chairperson of senior class or graduate standing.
3. Should a vacancy occur in the student membership, student members shall select a student to fill the vacancy.
4. A CNHC co-chairperson shall be appointed from the faculty by the Dean of the College of Nursing for a three-year term.
5. Two other CNHC members shall be elected by the faculty of the College of Nursing to one-year terms.
6. Faculty members of the CNHC shall elect from their number a Recording Secretary.
7. If faculty members cannot serve out their terms, they shall be replaced as they were elected/appointed.

## **HEARING COMMITTEE**

### Function

The CNHC sits as a hearing panel that acts as an impartial review body between a student accused of violating the Honor Code and his or her accuser(s). The hearing panel shall weigh the information presented during the hearing and reach a decision as to whether or not the accused student has violated the Honor Code.

### Disqualification

A member of the CNHC shall disqualify self if said person believes that they cannot act on the weight of the information without bias or prejudice. If a student member of the CNHC disqualifies self prior to the hearing, the student chairperson may appoint a replacement selected from the class of the disqualified CNHC member. If a faculty member of the CNHC disqualifies self prior to the hearing, the faculty chairperson may appoint a replacement faculty member. The CNHC may by two-thirds vote, disqualify one of its members from sitting on a hearing panel, if the best interest of the student, College of Nursing, or University would be served by removal of said person.

### Quorum

A quorum for a hearing panel is three members (at least two students and one faculty) of the CNHC.

(Excerpts were taken from the University of Michigan School of Nursing Student Code of Academic Conduct and the Constitution of the Baylor University Honor System.)

# APPENDIX A

## Valdosta State University College of Nursing

### CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

In accordance with the Law (Official Code of Georgia, Annotated, Sections 37-3,37-4,377) every patient's right to confidential treatment must be protected.

As a student and/or provider of care, I understand that the patient's right to privacy must be protected and treatment must remain confidential. While providing care, I may become knowledgeable of certain patient related information. This information may include patient identity, information related to a patient's treatment, diagnosis, or to other services received.

I understand that at all times I am restricted from discussing or transmitting any information pertaining to a patient with anyone other than VSU College of Nursing faculty, clinical instructors, or hospital personnel directly responsible for the patient's care. I understand this includes other students outside of post conference.

Personally identifying information is any information which is readily used to identify a particular patient including but not limited to: name, address, room number, diagnosis, Social Security number, physical description, names of family members, and photographs. I further understand that if I do discuss patient information I subject myself to civil liability and may be subject to a failing course grade and dismissal from Valdosta State College of Nursing.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX B

## Valdosta State University College of Nursing

### THE HONOR CODE

Adapted from Georgia Baptist College of Nursing

As a member of the Valdosta State University (VSU) College of Nursing community, I am bound by honor to uphold standards of honesty and integrity; to pursue intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and moral development; and to accept my personal, academic, and professional responsibilities in the community. To attain these ideals, I embrace this Honor Code as my way of life.

By my signature I acknowledge my responsibility and accountability to uphold this code of honor.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_