



COLLEGE *of* NURSING
& HEALTH SCIENCES

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

**Valdosta State University
School of Nursing
Graduate Student Handbook**

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**The College of Nursing and Health Sciences develops regional leaders for
health care excellence.**

“No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, creed, national origin, age, veteran status, or handicap, be excluded from employment or participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia or any of its several institutions now in existence or hereafter established.” (The Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia, Sec 401.2, p. 1)

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CONHS Introduction

About the College of Nursing & Health Sciences

One of the goals of Valdosta State University's College of Nursing & Health Sciences is to promote community engagement to help build South Georgia's future. Activities directed toward accomplishing this goal involve mutually beneficial collaboration with our partners in health care. Through these projects, faculty members and students engage in teaching to enable learning beyond the campus walls while providing direct benefit and service to the community.

Our simulation labs provide state-of-the-art learning opportunities for students. Pre-programmed scenarios allow students to practice providing realistic care without risk of harm to the patient. Scenarios also allow all students the opportunity to practice assessing, diagnosing, and treating patients with appropriate care for patients with high-acuity, low-frequency conditions, that they might not have the opportunity to care for in the outpatient care settings. Scenarios enhance critical thinking skills and clinical judgement and during scenarios, faculty act as facilitators to guide the learning experience and ensure that students achieve learning objectives.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

VSU College of Nursing and Health Sciences wishes to ensure access to its facilities, programs, and services is available to all students, including students with disabilities (as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008) and all students can study and practice nursing with or without reasonable accommodation. VSU's School of Nursing provides reasonable accommodation. VSU's School of Nursing provides reasonable accommodations to all students on a nondiscriminatory basis consistent with legal requirements as outlined in the above cited acts. To be eligible for accommodation, a student must have a documented disability of (a) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual, (b) a record of such impairment, or (c) be regarded as having such a condition.

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 verbal. All students are provided with 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 students are placed. Violation of HIPAA may result in dismissal from the nursing program.

VSU College of Nursing & Health Sciences Mission and Vision

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Valdosta State University College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CONHS) is to educate and prepare outstanding healthcare professionals who are committed to meeting healthcare needs of local and global communities through dedicated service, advocacy, and continued professional development.

VISON STATEMENT

To improve, transform, and sustain health and well-being through innovative teaching and learning, expert clinical practice, research, community service, and social action.

VSU Core Values

The College of Nursing and Health Sciences develops regional leaders for health care excellence. Our core values integrate the Blazer Creed with Excellence & Success.

Civility – a Blazer shows courtesy and compassion, as well as respect, for the dignity of every human being.

Integrity – each Blazer is responsible for his or her own actions, and our community is stronger when we contemplate the context of our decisions and uphold the principles of trust and honesty.

Citizenship – each Blazer has an interest in the community and, therefore, a duty to stay informed to make positive contributions and to support those who need help.

Excellence – each CONHS Blazer is dedicated to creating a culture where transformation is embraced and reflected in evidence-based teaching and learning and is achieved by both faculty and students. All stakeholders value and benefit from exemplary scholarship, service, teaching, and practice.

Success – each CONHS Blazer pursues growth through life-long learning, goal attainment, and collaborative partnerships among all stakeholders who serve to optimize the health of the regio

Overview

THE VSYOU DIFFERENCE

Valdosta State University's Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) and Post-Master's certificate programs allow students to choose from two advanced practice nursing tracks: the Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) and Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) tracks. The MSN program uses an online model though there will be times where on-campus visits are required (i.e. New Student Orientation, OSCEs, Exit Exam) during the semester. Both programs are approved by the Georgia Board of Nursing and accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program allows students to choose from three tracks: the BSN-DNP with concentration in Family Practice, the DNP/MBA dual degree, and the Post-Master's DNP degree. The BSN-DNP program uses an online model during Master's level coursework. Be advised that there will be times where on-campus visits are required (i.e. New Student Orientation, OSCEs, Exit Exam) during the semester. Doctoral courses are offered solely online. The Post-Master's DNP is open to all APRNs, regardless of certification track.

WHAT STUDENTS WILL LEARN

Students take a common core that includes Advanced Pathophysiology, Advanced Health Assessment, and Advanced Pharmacology. Students also participate in Objective Structured Clinical Exams (OSCEs) experiences, synthesizing and applying the clinical and academic dynamics of advanced nursing practice education. At the MSN and PM levels, an Exit Exam is utilized to demonstrate successful program completion.

DNP students expand upon the Master's level competencies and prepare nurses in the areas of scientific underpinnings for practice, informatics, organizational and systems leadership, clinical prevention and population health, evidence-based practice, health policy, interprofessional collaboration, and advanced nursing practice. DNP students complete a DNP project to demonstrate an analytical approach to programmatic, administrative, policy, or practice issues in a format that supports the synthesis, transfer, and utilization of knowledge.

CAREERS

- **Doctor of Nursing Practice**
- **Family Nurse Practitioner**
- **Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner**

Graduate Nursing Faculty & Staff Directory

Dr. Kate Warner, Ph.D. Interim Dean, College of Nursing & Health Sciences kwarner@valdosta.edu	Dr. Paige Krispin, Ph.D. Associate Dean, College of Nursing & Health Sciences apkrispin@valdosta.edu
Dr. Lois Bellflowers, MSN, EdD Department Head, School of Nursing labellflowers@valdosta.edu	Dr. Michelle Ritter, DNP Graduate Nursing Director, School of Nursing mewingbr@valdosta.edu
Dr. Knicole Lee, DNP DNP Program Coordinator, School of Nursing knlee@valdosta.edu	Dr. Lisa Batten, DNP FNP Program Coordinator, School of Nursing labatten@valdosta.edu
Dr. Kelly Lowery, DNP PMHNP Program Coordinator, School of Nursing krcowart@valdosta.edu	Dr. Michelle Carter, DBA Clinical Experience Coordinator, School of Nursing lmstrickland@valdosta.edu
Dr. Dee Ott, DNP Associate Professor, School of Nursing ldott@valdosta.edu	Dr. Lori Henderson, DNP Assistant Professor, School of Nursing lthenderson@valdosta.edu
Dr. Alene Dasher, DNP Lecturer, School of Nursing kabowser@valdosta.edu	Dr. Lisa Lowe, DNP Assistant Professor, School of Nursing lilowe@valdosta.edu
Dr. Julene Smith, DNP Lecturer, School of Nursing julensmith@valdosta.edu	

MSN and Post-Master's Students

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.

Program and Track Overview

The MSN and PM curriculum is designed to prepare professional registered nurses for advanced practice (APRN) roles as defined by the AACN Essentials of Nursing Education (2021). All MSN students are required to take Advanced Pathophysiology, Advanced Health Assessment, and Advanced Pharmacology in accordance with the AACN guidelines. Full-time graduate students in the MSN and PM programs normally take between 6-12 credit hours each semester. The program is planned using an online format with occasional on-campus meetings on weekends approximately once during the semester.

The MSN program offers the following tracks:

1. Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP)
2. Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP)

The PM certificate program offers the following tracks:

1. Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP)
2. Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP)

MSN Admissions

Admission to the MSN and PM certificate programs is competitive. The School of Nursing admits students into both programs each fall and spring semester. The application is available online through the Graduate School. All admission application materials must be received by May 15th for admission consideration to the fall cohort and by September 15th for consideration in the spring cohort.

To be considered for admission to the MSN program, an applicant must have:

1. Graduated from an NLNAC or CCNE accredited BSN program.
2. A GPA of 3.0 or higher on the 4.0 scale.
3. Evidence of a valid, unencumbered licensure as a Registered Nurse.
4. 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.
5. VSU Medical form.

PM Admissions

In addition to the MSN criteria listed above, applicants who have a Master's degree in Nursing and graduated with at least a 3.0 GPA may be admitted to the Post-Master's certificate program. Because these certification programs utilize past learning experiences to satisfy some course requirements, programs of study are highly individualized and tailored to the needs of each student. Therefore, the applicant must meet with the School of Nursing's Graduate Nursing Program Directors to complete a GAP analysis (Appendix D) and design a program of study for PM requirements. Out-of-state applicants should become familiar with their state's regulations governing distance accessible programs.

Types of Admission

Please refer to the Valdosta State University Graduate Catalog for information on types of admission, including probationary, non-degree, and transient admission.

Foreign students are required to pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam. See the Graduate Catalog for minimum acceptable scores

BSN-DNP and MSN-DNP Students

Objectives

1. Present opportunity for seamless transition to advanced nursing practice and leadership.
2. Prepare advanced practice nurses for an increasingly complex practice, education, and leadership role.
3. Improve the quality of healthcare by advancing nursing education through evidence-based practice and quality improvement initiatives.
4. Prepare advanced practice nurses with communication skills to foster intra- and interprofessional teams in consulting and collaborating to enhance patient outcomes, including vulnerable populations, and to create change in complex healthcare delivery systems in response to local, regional, and/or global community needs.
5. Prepare to develop, integrate, synthesize, and evaluate scientific underpinnings for advanced nursing practice in the DNP role.
6. Synthesize system theories, health economics, and ethics resulting in improved quality and health outcomes.
7. Critically appraise research findings to design, implement, and evaluate evidence-based practice that results in safe and effective, culturally competent clinical outcomes for individuals and populations in the DNP role.
8. Employ information systems and patient care technologies, applying ethical, regulatory, and legal principles, to facilitate system interoperability and transform patient care to maximize healthcare outcomes.

Program and Track Overview

The DNP program offers the following tracks:

1. BSN-DNP with concentration in Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP)
2. MSN-DNP (Post-Master's)
3. DNP/MBA dual degree

The BSN-DNP track offered at VSU is an 11-semester, 80 credit hour program of study that is a pathway for students who have completed their BSN degree and desire to complete their MSN and DNP degrees. The track offers a seamless transition to obtaining both the FNP and DNP. Full-time BSN-DNP students in the FNP track typically take between 6-10 credit hours each semester. The program uses an online format with occasional on-campus meetings (i.e. New Student Orientation, OSCEs, and Exit Exam). The online format for the DNP courses allows APRNs the flexibility to continue their education while working and following the guidelines of the AACN Essentials. The DNP graduate is prepared and equipped for advanced nursing practice and leadership in an increasingly complex healthcare system.

The BSN-DNP track offers an MSN opt-out option after semester 6 for those students desiring certification upon the completion of the MSN degree requirements. Upon the opt-out declaration, the student will be granted provisional status admission to the MSN-DNP track until certification is acquired by examination through the certifying body of the student's choice. If a student chooses to exercise this option, they may continue their doctoral studies the semester immediately following graduation from the MSN program if requested two semesters before graduation. If a student opts out of the BSN-DNP program to receive the MSN degree, they have three years to return to complete the DNP program requirements without academic penalty.

The MSN-DNP (Post-Master's) track is a 5 semester, 38 credit hour program of study. The DNP program prepares APRNs for leadership roles in an increasingly complex healthcare system utilizing evidence-based practice to design, implement, and evaluate change for improved health outcomes. With its online format, the PM DNP option allows APRNs the flexibility to continue their education while working.

The DNP/MBA dual degree is offered through collaboration with the Langdale College of Business. The program consists of 15 MBA credit hours in combination with 15 credit hours of the DNP program of study, both completed via an online format. The DNP program is currently 38 hours (5 semesters) and the MBA is 15 hours (with the dual program). The DNP/MBA students earn six hours of electives in the College of Business and continue after the DNP degree is confirmed for an additional nine hours of coursework in the College of Business to earn the MBA degree.

DNP Admissions

Admission to the DNP program is competitive. Applications are available online and made through the Graduate School. The School of Nursing admits students into the DNP program each fall semester. The admission policy of the School of Nursing Graduate Program is congruent with the admission policy of Valdosta State University. All admission application materials must be received by May 15th for consideration to the fall cohort.

To be considered for admission to the DNP program, an applicant must have:

1. Graduate application
 - a. Application fee (credit or debit card and E-check accepted)
 - b. Apply online
2. BSN from a regionally-accredited institution
 - a. Transcripts must include certification that the applicant has received a BSN from a regionally-accredited institution and state a calculated cumulative GPA.
 - b. A cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.
 - c. Official transcripts from the BSN-granting college or university and from any graduate coursework.
 - d. Transcripts of coursework completed in-residence at VSU will be obtained by the Graduate

School.

- e. Official international transcripts must have a foreign course-by-course credential evaluation by an independent evaluation service that is a member of the AACN.
3. MSN from a regionally accredited institution (for PM applicants only).
 - a. Transcripts must include certification that the applicant has received an MSN degree from a regionally accredited institution and state a calculated cumulative GPA.
 - b. A cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale from an MSN program.
 - c. Official transcripts from the MSN-granting college or university and from any graduate coursework. Transcripts from undergraduate coursework are not required.
 - d. Transcripts of coursework completed in-residence at VSU will be obtained by the Graduate School.
 - e. Official international transcripts must have a foreign course-by-course credential evaluation by an independent evaluation service that is a member of the AACN.
4. Evidence of a valid, unencumbered RN license
 - a. Applicants may upload a copy of their license to fulfill this requirement or a print-out from your state's licensing body website documenting the valid and current license.
5. Clinical hour verification (for PM applicants only)
 - a. Required verification of graduate clinical and practice hours via a certified document from the MSN-granting program to include clinical hours completed (500 hours minimum).
6. Three letters of recommendation
 - a. From individuals knowledgeable of the applicant's professional, intellectual, and academic abilities.
 - b. If graduated within the last five years, one of the three letters must be from one of the applicant's professors.
 - c. Letters must be accompanied by the required form or submitted through the online recommendation system.
7. A curriculum vitae or resume
 - a. Including education, work experience, professional development, professional and/or community activities, research, and publications.
8. Career goal statement
 - a. 1-2 page paper addressing career goals related to advanced nursing practice and the attainment of the DNP.
9. Interview
 - a. Applicants will be required to participate in an interview with a standardized rubric-evaluation tool. The department will contact applicants for interview information.
10. VSU Medical form
 - a. Must be completed and signed by the applicant.

- b. Must be received prior to enrollment, NOT prior to admission.
- c. Applicants who are currently enrolled or those who have attended VSU in the past are not required to resubmit the form.

11. Verification of lawful presence

- a. For applicants who believe they qualify for in-state tuition or a residency waiver.
- b. Not required for individuals who do not qualify for in-state tuition or a residency waiver.
- c. Must be received prior to enrollment, NOT prior to admission.
- d. Citizenship documentation is needed for any applicant who wishes to be considered for in-state tuition.
- e. Complete list of accepted documents and information on residency.

International Applicants

This is an online program, but on-campus days will be required at times for the BSN-DNP students. All students will have a project defense on-campus at the end of the program. Non-resident tuition will be assessed for anyone who does not qualify for Georgia residency. Please review the information below for specific information and guidelines for students who were educated outside the U.S. or whose native language is not English.

Important Program Information

Unless otherwise indicated, all required documents must be received on or before the admission deadline for your file to be reviewed. It is the applicant's responsibility to allow adequate time for document delivery and to ensure receipt of documents. Please allow at least 7-10 days for delivery by mail.

Graduate Admission, Progression, and Graduation

Transfer Credit

Courses considered for transfer credit must:

1. Be no more than 5 years of age at the time of admission, unless otherwise approved by the program.
2. Be earned at an institution that is regionally accredited.
3. Be graduate-level courses, appropriate to program.
4. Not exceed specific program limitations on total number of transfer credit hours.

A maximum of 9 credit hours of graduate level nursing credits may be applied to the MSN, PM, and DNP programs. All transfer requests are subject to approval by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research. The Graduate catalog may be found at <http://catalog.valdosta.edu/graduate/>.

To remain in good academic standing, students must:

1. Attain a minimum grade of “B” in each nursing course.
2. Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher for all graduate courses.
3. Students receiving two grades of “C” or below will be dismissed from the program.

In addition, students must present and maintain documentation of clinical requirements. These can be found in the Graduate Student Clinical Handbook.

Program Progression

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

Program Readmission

Students dismissed from the Graduate Nursing program due to academic and/or clinical performance, progression, and/or unprofessional behavior meet the criteria for sanctions and/or dismissal. If the student is dismissed from the nursing program, the student may appeal to the VSU Graduate School per policy. If the dismissal is upheld, the student’s right to continue enrollment in the nursing program will be permanently terminated. Dismissed students will not be considered for readmission. Dismissal from the nursing major does not affect the ability of the student to progress in the university in another major.

Application for Graduation

To be eligible for graduation, students in the graduate program 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. Candidates must have achieved a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale as well as a “B” or higher in all graduate nursing courses. **No course grade below “B” will be credited toward graduation.**
2. Satisfactory completion of the comprehensive or standardized Exit Exam and/or DNP project.

Students must apply 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 School of Nursing faculty advisor to schedule a meeting to review their academic record and complete the graduation application.

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.**

Post-Master’s program students do not complete a graduation application. They will be awarded a certificate from the School of Nursing.

Miscellaneous Expenses

Graduate nursing students will incur expenses throughout the program in addition to the fees identified in the VSU Graduate Catalog. Listed below are some of the major additional costs.

- Transportation to and from clinical practice is the responsibility of the student. Travel to some clinical agencies may require several hours’ time and public transportation is not available. It is, therefore, necessary that students have or may arrange for dependable transportation.
- Professional Liability Insurance must be purchased and maintained throughout the student’s time in the program. Proof of insurance coverage is required before students can participate in clinical experiences.
- American Heart Association certification in Basic Life Support is also required during the program. The cost of the certification is determined by the certifying agency.
- Cost of books and course-required resources, including Fitzgerald Amplify.
- Immunization tracker (Castle Branch).
- Electronic portfolio (Typhon).
- Name tag (purchased from VSU bookstore).
- White lab coat (VSU logo may be purchased from bookstore).
- Exit Exam
- Graduation application fee
- Graduation regalia

Many students discover that a personal laptop and/or iPad is an asset to their studies. The University provides computer labs, however, for many students, the convenience of having a computer outweighs the additional expense. Students will be required to follow policies related to using Blazeview, email, and computing resources on campus. Information related to requirements for using Blazeview may be found on the VSU Distance Learning website and the Information Technology website.

Course 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 integrity is stated in the VSU Student Handbook and is applicable to nursing students. The School of Nursing has adopted its own Honor Code. See Appendix B.

Students should be aware that sanctions in the nursing profession are imposed because of the vital nature of healthcare as it affects client well-being. Due to the unique nature of the clinical experience and to the relationship of responsibility for the welfare of the client, it is necessary for the CONHS to expand upon the university's definition of academic irregularity. While the university relates academic irregularity to behaviors, such as plagiarism or cheating, the CONHS must also relate violations to unsafe, irresponsible, and unprofessional 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 may 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 result in dismissal from the graduate nursing program.

Class Attendance

Students are expected to demonstrate punctual attendance during all classroom and clinical activities. A student who does not participate in more than 20% of the scheduled online course activities may constitute failure of the course. Excessive tardiness at clinical practicum, on-campus activities, or synchronous online activities, may, at the instructor's discretion, result in a lower or failing grade in the course. **Students are expected to check their Outlook email and log onto Blazeview daily.**

Students will be required to come to campus for New Student Orientation, OSCEs, and the Exit Exam. Students

will also be required to come to campus to complete their DNP projects.

Grading Scale

The grading scale in the College of Nursing for graduate students is as follows:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = <60

Graduate students are expected to earn course grades of at least “B” in all graduate courses per the School of Nursing and Graduate School policies. Grades “C”, “D”, and “F” are not sufficient for progression in the curriculum. CONHS has a “no rounding” grades policy. *No exceptions.*

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 and in course syllabi. If these posted hours are not convenient, the student may request an appointment with the faculty member by email or phone. Faculty are expected to respond to student inquiries within 72 hours.

Academic Advising

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), which is available from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences website, demonstrates how students will fulfill their degree requirements. An advising form identifying the POS should be completed and signed by the student and graduate faculty advisor prior to the completion of the second semester of graduate study. If changes are needed to the coursework listed on the POS, it should be rewritten by the advisor and signed by the student and uploaded into the student’s file.

Changes to the POS may result in delay of program completion.

Graduate faculty advisors will assist students with class registration issues, course sequencing, graduation procedures, academic progression, and utilizing existing university facilities. Each student is responsible for meeting with their advisor (in person or virtually) prior to each registration period. The purpose of the meeting is to inform the student of current offerings in the nursing program and to review the student’s progress in the degree plan. Students should consult their corresponding program coordinator in the event that their ability to

complete courses, progress through the program, or complete registration is affected. Each student is responsible for awareness and successful completion of all degree requirements.

Change in Advisor

Graduate students are assigned an advisor in the School of Nursing. The students' advising folders are securely stored and are maintained by the SON administrative staff. If the student perceives a problem with their assigned advisor, it is the student's responsibility to 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 Graduate Nursing Chair for a change of advisor. The student will be notified in writing of the resolution request.

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 semester. All evaluations will remain anonymous and faculty will be provided with aggregated data only after submission of all final semester grades for the course being evaluated.

Drug Free Schools and Workplace

The College of Nursing and Health Sciences 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 VSU's Drug Free Workplace policy, the CONHS 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 CONHS is dedicated to maintaining a drug free workplace and learning environment. An impaired faculty member, staff member, or student constitutes a potential threat to faculty, staff, students, 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 for free (up to five sessions). Long-term counseling or therapy will be the responsibility of the affected individual.

An impaired faculty member, staff member, or student who completes a program for rehabilitation and treatment facilitates the possibility of return to work or school 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 sites exhibiting signs/symptoms of alcohol or substance abuse will be asked to submit to a drug screen to determine the presence of toxic, hazardous, illegal, or foreign substances. Any faculty member, staff member, or student who refuses to submit to drug testing for reasonable cause will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal 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 or to the hospital or agency laboratory where testing will be done according to established protocol. Such testing will be done at the expense of the individual.

Faculty members, staff members, or 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, or 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 member or staff member must notify Human Resources within five calendar days of conviction. Students convicted of violating any criminal drug statutes must notify the Dean of the CONHS within five calendar days.

Conduct Grievance

Disciplinary hearings at VSU are hearings to arrive at decisions regarding student behavior. These decisions affect the involved students and their relationship to 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 VSU's Graduate Student Handbook.

Grade Appeal

Students in the CONHS must adhere to the student regulations as outlined in the VSU Graduate Student Handbook. Students have the right to appeal their grades, however, they should do so within thirty (30) days of the grade's posting on Banner. To appeal their grades, the student should pick up a grade appeal form from the Registrar's office. The student should complete the form and speak with the professor about the change. Individual faculty members retain primary responsibility for assigning grades and evaluations. The faculty member's judgement is final unless compelling evidence is presented. The CONHS encourages students to seek open discussion and a resolution. If the professor and student do not resolve the situation, the student may then proceed to appeal to the Department Head and the Dean.

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
Graduate Nursing Faculty Committee	Monitors the development, implementation, coordination, and evaluation of the graduate nursing curricula.	One graduate nursing student from each track.
Student Affairs	Facilitate student self-governance, student scholarly activities, and student participation in the activities of the CONHS.	Two undergraduate nursing students and one graduate nursing student.

Ethics

Disposition Policy

The purpose of the Disposition Policy process is for faculty to identify students who may need intervention to successfully complete both the pre-professional and professional requirements for their program of study. Dispositions are the values, qualities, and professional ethics that influence one's behavior toward students, families, colleagues, and communities. Dispositions can affect student learning, motivation, and development of personal and professional growth.

Dispositional expectations of students are as follows:

1. Demonstrates ethical behavior as defined by the profession via the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics found at <https://www.nursingworld.org/coe-view-only>.
2. Demonstrates professional behaviors as defined by each program in the CONHS.
3. Adheres to university, class, and clinical policies. Classroom examples include punctuality, adhering to schedules, and observing classroom structure as outlined in the course syllabi. Clinical examples include adhering to policies of student's program of study, adhering to workplace policies of various clinical sites, punctuality, and meeting the expectations of clinical sites.
4. Exhibits appropriate and professional interactions with faculty, staff, preceptors, and peers. Examples include demonstrating the ability to work with diverse individuals, demonstrating courtesy and respect for all, commitment to diversity, open-mindedness and support of others, and willingness to accept constructive criticism from preceptors and faculty of the student's program of study.

5. Maintains professional appearance, communication, and mannerisms. Examples include dressing appropriately for the situation and learning environment, exhibiting competence and professionalism in oral, written, social media, and electronic communication, exhibiting fair and equitable treatment of all, maintaining confidentiality of client records, correspondences, and conversations, demonstrating truthfulness as well as honesty, and working collaboratively with peers, faculty, and staff.
6. Exhibits appropriate level of preparedness in classroom and clinical settings. Examples include communicating with professors and instructors regarding absences, being prepared to contribute to class discussions on the selected topic, being respectful and attentive in class and at clinical sites, fulfilling course and clinical obligations, completing assignments in a timely manner, exhibiting critical thinking skills, providing ongoing and competent client/patient care, willingness to approach tasks in an organized and skillful manner, and demonstrating self-reflection and the ability to make improvements based on preceptor and faculty feedback.
7. Demonstrates a collaborative approach with peers, students, faculty, clinical preceptors, and administration when seeking solutions to problems. Students demonstrate problem solving skills in the classroom, among peers, and at clinical sites. Examples include asking questions when a student is unsure about content material or ongoing patient care, sharing thoughts and ideas in order to better problem solve, and interacting positively with others in order to create a team-oriented, patient-centered approach to solving the problem.
8. Displays qualities of lifelong learning through engagement in completion of course requirements, continuous professional development, and academic preparedness. Lifelong learning is a term that applies to continuing one's education through university, community-based, or profession-based programs.

Examples of actions necessitating completion of disposition forms include but are not limited to the following:

1. Excessive absences or tardiness for class or clinical assignments.
2. Lack of professional dress or demeanor when interacting with other students, patients, preceptors, or faculty as defined by the student's department.
3. Disruptive behavior toward faculty, staff, preceptors, peers, or guest speakers. This includes classroom disruptions. This extends to patients and preceptors when students are in a clinical setting affiliated with their program of study.
4. Inability to contribute effectively in a group setting.
5. Lack of proficiency and/or professionalism in written and/or oral language skills, including electronic forms of communication.
6. Lack of professionalism, responsibility, respect for others, confidentiality, and accountability on social media.
7. Lack of content/clinical knowledge, including appropriate skill progression, in any content area at the student's current level. Appropriate content knowledge and skill progression is important when working with patients.
8. Removal from a clinical experience.
9. Plagiarism or cheating on any graded activity.

10. Dishonesty.
11. Breach of confidentiality.
12. Compromising the well-being of a patient or colleague.
13. Harassment of patients, preceptors, peers, faculty, or staff.
14. Any other disposition issues outlined by the student's major or field of study.

A student's professional dispositions will be assessed during class, clinical, and in the community. The instructor or preceptor who identifies a deficiency or behavior inconsistent with established dispositions will follow the procedures below:

1. Upon student's action which necessitates the completion of a disposition report, the instructor or preceptor will schedule an informal meeting. The purpose of the meeting with the student is to discuss the area of concern and offer possible solutions and remedies.
 - a. The date of the meeting, the instructor's specific concerns, and potential solutions will be documented on the Disposition Report form (Appendix A) and placed in the student's file.
 - b. Both instructor and student will receive a copy of the completed form.
 - c. The faculty member must complete either a VSU Student Conduct Incident Report or a VSU Academic Integrity Report if applicable.
2. If a second meeting becomes necessary, based on the same deficiency or additional behaviors of concern, through completion of a second disposition form, the following steps will be implemented.
 - a. The instructor will schedule a meeting to include the student and an ad hoc committee consisting of the student's advisor, the Department Head, program coordinator, and the instructor. Students have the option to request an additional committee member outside of the student's program of study, if desired.
 - i. In the event that the program director is the person bringing the second disposition issue forward, another committee member must be secured.
 - ii. In the event that the program director and the advisor are the same person, another committee member must be secured.
 - b. The faculty member scheduling the formal meeting must complete either a VSU Student Conduct Incident Report or a VSU Academic Integrity Report if applicable.
 - c. This meeting must occur within five university business days of the reported deficiency or behavior. At this time, the instructor who completed the second disposition report will review the prior behavioral concerns recorded in the student's file, as well as the continued or additional concerns that initiated the second disposition report. The student will have the opportunity to explain his/her position and provide additional relevant information. The Department Head or Program Coordinator will determine whether additional faculty, staff, or school personnel are required to support or refute the observed behavior and will meet with those persons to gather the information.
 - d. The result of this meeting may be a recommendation that the student be allowed to continue in the program, development of a remediation plan, or a determination to remove the student from

the program. The Department Head or Program Director will make the final recommendation that the student be allowed to continue in the program, development of a remediation plan, or a determination to remove the student from the program. The Department Head or Program Coordinator will make the final recommendation with input from the committee and ensure the decision is delivered to the student within five university business days of the meeting occurring. Documentation of the meeting's content, including any written agreements or action plans, will be placed in the student's file. Each attendee will receive a copy.

- e. The student has the right to appeal in writing to the Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. The Dean will review the request and all related documents in the student's file, will meet with the student, instructor, and Department Head as needed to review the appeal, and will render a decision in writing.
 - f. If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, graduate students may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School.
3. Upon receipt of three dispositions, or any single incident considered a significant violation of ethical or professional behavior, the student may be dismissed from their program of study. Ethical and professional behaviors are referenced above and are defined by each profession in the CONHS.
- a. The faculty member completing the third disposition form must complete either a VSU Student Conduct Incident Report or a VSU Academic Integrity Report if applicable.

Honor Code

The following guidelines are established as definitions of unacceptable behavior of those students enrolled in the VSU College of Nursing and Health Sciences. The Honor Code is developed and enforced through VSU CONHS Disposition policy. All students are expected to sign a copy of this Honor Code for their student record and to abide by the code.

Unacceptable Behavior (Including but not limited to the following):

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, current edition.

Cheating: Cheating is defined as using unauthorized information 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: Defined as 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: Defined as providing unauthorized information or assistance to another person that may consequently result in grade enhancement or other advancements.

Breaching Confidentiality: Defined as the sharing of private information, and includes, but is not limited to, sharing personal access codes to Blazeview.



Name of Instructor/ Preceptor Initiating Disposition Form:_____

4. Action plan (if applicable):

5. The department head, faculty member, and student must sign the appropriate statement below.

Department Head: Statement: I have met with the student and faculty member to discuss this concern and an action plan has been outlined and discussed with the faculty member and the student.

Department Head Signature _____ Date Met: _____

Faculty Statement: I have met with the student and discussed the concern(s).

VSU Faculty Signature _____ Date Met: _____

Student statement: I understand that failure to comply with the outlined action plan may result in my not completing my program of study.

Student: Signature _____ Date: _____

Distribute copies of this form to the Student Advising Folder; Department Head, and Faculty Member.



Valdosta State University School of Nursing Honor Code

As a member of the Valdosta State University (VSU) School of Nursing community, I recognize that I am entering into a profession bound to the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and behavior. Therefore, I am honor bound by to uphold the standards of honesty and integrity and behavior as befits the character of a professional nurse.

I commit to pursue intellectual, ethical, and professional excellence. I accept my personal, academic, and professional responsibilities in the community as outlined in the CONHS Disposition Policy*. To attain these ideals, I embrace this Honor Code as my way of life.

By my signature I acknowledge that I understand my responsibility and accountability to uphold this Honor Code and the high standards of professional nursing.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

*The full responsibilities of the Disposition Policy can be found on the Student Resources Page of the School of Nursing Website

<https://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/nursing-and-health-sciences/documents/disposition-policy.pdf>



Valdosta State University

School 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 and Health Sciences 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 and Health Sciences.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

GAP ANALYSIS FOR POST-GRADUATE NP STUDENT

Name of Candidate: _____

New National NP Certification Sought: _____

NP National Certification Previously Completed: _____ School: _____ Yr: _____

Instructions:

A gap analysis form is completed for students who are nationally certified NPs seeking partial credit or waiver of coursework towards completion of a Post-Master's certificate in another NP practice area. The form provides an analysis of completed coursework and clinical experiences compared with the program requirements and national NP competencies necessary for certification in the second NP population-focused area of practice.

- Column 1 lists the courses for the standard required program of study for preparation in the DESIRED NP area of practice.
- Column 2 list courses from the student's transcript that will be used to waive courses from column 1.
- Column 3 identifies and describes clinical hours and experiences needed to meet the required competencies for the new or desired area of NP practice. Students must meet the clinical course requirements of the program of study using both clinical courses previously taken and indicated on the transcript and courses to be completed.
- Column 4 lists all coursework to be completed for the certificate (all courses from column 1 not waived). This column, in combination with column 3, will constitute the student's individualized program of study.

GAP ANALYSIS FOR POST-GRADUATE NP/DNP STUDENT

List Required Courses for the DESIRED NP area of practice	List Courses from Transcript that Satisfy Required Courses listed in Column 1	Type and Number of Clinical Experiences Needed by Student	Coursework to be Completed by the Student for the Certificate