

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF NURSING

STUDENT HANDBOOK

GRADUATE PROGRAM



The MTSU School of Nursing graduate program is accredited by:

Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE)

655 K Street, NW, Suite 750

Washington, D.C. 20001

<http://www.ccneaccreditation.org/>

This handbook provides pertinent information to graduate students regarding the School of Nursing. Contents in this document apply to all graduate students currently participating in the MSN program. None of the information contained herein shall be interpreted to create a contract. The information is current as of the time of publication. The University reserves the right to make changes in policy, regulations and fees, as circumstances dictate, subsequent to publication. Additional information is available online at www.mtsu.edu/nursing.

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THE MISSION, PHILOSOPHY, CONCEPTS AND OUTCOMES OF THE MSN PROGRAM

I. MISSION

The mission of Middle Tennessee State University School of Nursing is to provide excellence in nursing education by preparing individuals to meet the dynamic and complex healthcare needs of society. Through robust academic programs, the School of Nursing demonstrates its' commitment to the art and science of nursing.

II. PHILOSOPHY

The Middle Tennessee State University School of Nursing has established an operational framework with five core competencies at the foundation. These are communication, critical thinking, personal and professional relationships, leadership, and the nursing process. From this base, additional concepts emerge to provide interaction with persons, the environment, health, professional nursing and nursing education.

III. PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Graduates receive preparation designed to enable them to:

1. Demonstrate synthesis and application of knowledge from nursing and related disciplines as the basis for clinical judgement and nursing practice to improve care delivery and health outcomes across populations. (MSN Essential I, NP Core [Scientific Foundations])
2. Apply knowledge of organizational and leadership theories within the systems of healthcare using ethical principles to improve outcomes, manage risks, and provide cost-effective care. (MSN Essential II; NP Core [Leadership])

3. Engage in self-reflection that fosters personal well-being, commitment to lifelong learning, nursing expertise, and leadership. (MSN Essential II; NP Core [Leadership; Independent Practice])
4. Utilize principles of safety science and quality to improve care delivery, and to create a culture of patient, provider, and workplace safety. (MSN Essential III; NP Core [Quality])
5. Generate, synthesize, translate, apply, and disseminate knowledge to improve health outcomes, resolve practice problems, and transform health care. (MSN Essential IV; NP Core [Practice Inquiry])
6. Use appropriate technologies to enhance health care services and improve health outcomes. (MSN Essential V; NP Core [Technology and Information Literacy])
7. Develop and promote a professional identity that reflects nursing characteristics, norms, and values while adhering to ethical principles to carry out professional responsibilities. (MSN Essential VI; NP Core [Policy and Ethics])
8. Collaborate effectively across professions, with patients and families, and within communities to enhance care, improve outcomes, and reduce costs. (MSN Essential VII; NP Core [Leadership, Health Delivery Systems; Independent Practice])
9. Identify and engage partners at local, community, regional, and global levels to support and improve population health outcomes consistent with epidemiologic, genetic, and genomic data to design evidence-based approaches. (MSN Essential VIII; NP Core [Health Delivery Systems, Ethics, Leadership])
10. Provide person-centered evidence-based holistic care through continuous evaluation of interventions to improve care delivery and health care outcomes. (MSN Essential IX; II; NP Core [Independent Practice])

IV. CERTIFICATION

The graduate of a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) program is prepared to care for individuals and families across the lifespan. The FNP role includes preventative health care, as well as the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of acute and chronic illness and preventative health care for individuals and families. Family nurse practitioners demonstrate a commitment to family-centered care and understand the relevance of the family's identified community in the delivery of family-centered care (NONPF, 2013). Graduates of the MTSU FNP program are prepared to obtain national certification as FNP.

The graduate of a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) program is prepared to care for individuals and families across the lifespan who are at risk for developing and/or having a diagnosis of psychiatric disorders or mental health problems. The PMHNP provides primary mental health care to patients seeking mental

health services in a wide range of settings. This includes assessment, diagnosis, and management of mental health and psychiatric disorders (NONPF, 2013). Graduates of the MTSU PMHNP program and the PMHNP-Post Masters Certificate (PMC) are prepared to obtain national certification as PMHNPs.

V. NURSING STUDENT HONOR CODE

KNOWLEDGE, INTEGRITY, COMPASSION and SKILL

The School of Nursing (SON) at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) values a strong sense of integrity and ethics among students and faculty alike and strives to facilitate the development of such behaviors through the use of the Nursing Student Honor Code. Students in the SON are held not only to the standards outlined in the MTSU Student Handbook but to the guidelines described below.

Statement of Nursing Student Honor Code

Student conduct in the MTSU SON is expected to demonstrate ethical behaviors that reflect a strong sense of integrity in personal, academic, and professional conduct. The student is guided by the values of truth, justice, and respect for human dignity, as well as professional standards, in the practice of ethical and safe behaviors toward self, fellow students, faculty, staff, and patients when operating in any student capacity on or off University property.

The MTSU SON administration and faculty support the development of behaviors demonstrating integrity and ethics in all student arenas. The Honor Code is explained upon admission to the SON. As students progress through the curriculum, it is the obligation of all students to adhere to the higher ethical, personal, academic, and professional behaviors as outlined in the Honor Code. Each student is required to abide by all components of the Honor Code, including consequences for any violations. All students are ethically responsible for reporting any known or suspected violation of this Honor Code.

Nursing Student Honor Pledge

As a student in the Middle Tennessee State University School of Nursing, I do hereby truthfully pledge not to engage in any acts of academic or professional misconduct during my nursing education. I have read and been given the opportunity to ask questions about the Nursing Student Honor Code System presented in the School of Nursing Student Handbook. I understand the content contained therein, including the disciplinary

processes as referenced in the MTSU Student Handbook, Resources and Rules. As an expectation of my admission to and progression through the nursing program, I will abide by the Nursing Student Honor Code at all times. I understand that any acts of academic or professional misconduct violate the honor code and may result in sanctions as severe as dismissal from the nursing program.

VI. CODE OF CONDUCT

Academic and Professional Conduct

Students enrolled in the nursing program at MTSU will be held accountable for the provisions as stated by the Student Code of Conduct. As with the Nursing Student Honor Code, the Student Code of Conduct is based upon and demands the values of truth, integrity, and ethical behavior within academic and professional settings. Professional settings include those places in which a nursing student is functioning as a representative of the SON and MTSU, on or off campus. Failure to adhere to the provisions of academic and professional conduct of the Student Code of Conduct shall be deemed as misconduct, resulting in academic and/or disciplinary consequences up to and including dismissal from the nursing program. Academic and professional misconduct would include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Plagiarism. The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper acknowledgment.
2. Self-Plagiarism. The US Department of Health and Human Service Office of Research Integrity defines Self-Plagiarism as follows: "Redundant publication has a direct counterpart in the area of academic dishonesty-it is referred to as 'double' dipping'. It occurs when a student submits a whole paper or a substantial portion of paper to fulfill a course requirement, even though that paper had earlier been submitted to satisfy the requirements for another course taught by a different professor. Many college undergraduates and even some graduate students are not aware that this type of practice is a serious offense and constitutes plagiarism".

Source: US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health Office of Research Integrity. (2013). Academic self-plagiarism (double dipping). Retrieved from <https://ori.hhs.gov/plagiarism-13>

3. Cheating. Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise inclusive of online work. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours. Cheating includes but is not limited to receiving or providing answers on a written exam, storing any data within a calculator prior to or during an exam for use in providing responses to an exam, giving signals of any kind during an exam, sending and/or receiving text messages via cell phone with regard

to answers to an exam, the procurement and/or distribution of an exam before or after it is given, including the use of cell phone camera options or copying computer generated assessments in order to reproduce an exam, and group collaboration on any independent assignment. Posting of forms, written papers, and exams to any free or paid-access social networking website(s) is strictly prohibited.

4. Fabrication. Fabrication or invention, either verbal or written, of any information or citation in an academic exercise. This includes, but is not limited to, falsification of any information provided to a faculty or staff member, clinical site staff and preceptors (class-related or clinical); for example, number of clinical hours or number of patient encounters.
5. The use or distribution of publisher test banks.
6. Facilitation. Helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the Code of Conduct.
7. Posting of confidential client or facility information from clinical assignments or experiences to any online forum or webpage is strictly prohibited, as well as a breach of the federal HIPAA regulations.
8. Any behavior that threatens the safety of self, fellow students, faculty, staff, or patients when operating in a student capacity, representing the MTSU SON.
9. Other forms of unprofessional behavior or conduct includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Tobacco use (smoking, E-cigarettes or smokeless tobacco) at clinical sites and/or in nursing student uniform
 - b. Purchasing of alcohol or cigarettes in a nursing student uniform
 - c. Tardiness (clinical, classroom, lab, or simulation experiences)
 - d. Interruptions or inappropriate talking during class
 - e. Intimidation of students and/or faculty or staff (angry, hostile, or violent behavior)
 - f. Use of cellphones or other electronic devices not approved by faculty in class or during online activities, quizzes or tests
 - g. Academic misconduct
 - h. Fabrication of data in class, clinical, Medatrax or other documentation storage site, or other written assignments
 - i. Sleeping in class or clinical
 - j. Sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual comments
 - k. Use of vulgar, obscene, or disrespectful language toward patients, other students, faculty, or staff on social media sites, on campus or at clinical sites
 - l. Any other behavior deemed by faculty as unacceptable

Any and all infractions of the Student Code of Conduct will be handled according to University policy as stated in the University Student Handbook of Resources and Rules. A copy of the University Student Handbook is available online via the official MTSU website.

Grievance Policy Statement

Any student being disciplined for academic misconduct may refer to the MTSU Student Handbook, Resources and Rules, for the grievance policy and procedures.

<http://www.mtsu.edu/information/student-complaints.php>

Graduate nursing students are subject to all of the academic policies set forth in the following:

MTSU Graduate Catalog

<https://www.mtsu.edu/ucat/>

School of Nursing Graduate Admission, Progression, and Retention policy

<https://www.mtsu.edu/nursing/forms/Graduateadmissionspring2023.pdf>

Grade Appeals

Any graduate student grievance concerning grades should be pursued according to the process outlined in the MTSU Student Appeal of Grades Procedure.

<https://www.mtsu.edu/policies/academic-affairs-students/313.php>

VII. Communication Avenues

The SON faculty and administrative team are available to students through many methods. All students will have a faculty advisor assigned to them who is available for career/ professional advice. Please email individual faculty to set up an appointment.

The chain of communication for the MSN program leadership includes:

Order	Name/Role	Email Address
First	Mrs. Grace James, MSN Advisor	Grace.James@mtsu.edu
Second	Dr. Leigh Ann McInnis, FNP Coordinator or Dr. Yvonne Creighton, PMHNP Coordinator	Leighann.McInnis@mtsu.edu Yvonne.Creighton@mtsu.edu
Third	Dr. Cathy Cooper, Associate Director for Graduate Programs	Cathy.Cooper@mtsu.edu

The School of Nursing Director, Dr. Jenny Sauls, is also available by appointment. To schedule an appointment with the Director, please contact her Executive Aide, LJ McAnly at LJ.McAnly@mtsu.edu.

Please see section IX for more information regarding advising.

VIII. Student Resources

Student Service	Description	Location
College of Graduate Studies	Provides services required for admission, transfer and completion of program http://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/index.php	Services available face to face on campus
Graduate Catalog	The University provides guidance to graduate students regarding academics in the graduate catalog http://catalog.mtsu.edu/index.php	Online resource
Financial Aid	Provides students with access to grants, scholarships, and loans http://www.mtsu.edu/financial-aid/graduate.php	Services available online or face to face on campus
Business Office	Provides students with the opportunity to pay college tuition, fees, and fines (if necessary) http://www.mtsu.edu/tuition/index.php	Services available online or face to face on campus
Distance Education	Provides multiple services tailored to the online student http://www.mtsu.edu/university-college/distance/student-services.php	Services available online or face to face on campus
Advising	The School of Nursing has a dedicated academic adviser for MSN students. Phone: 615-898-5252 Email: msnadvisor@mtsu.edu	Services available online or via face to face on campus
Distance Learning Testing Center	Testing services are provided for all online students http://www.mtsu.edu/university-college/distance/testing.php	Services available via face to face on campus
University Writing Center	Writing assistance is available on campus or online. Students seeking assistance with writing or format may use this service. http://www.mtsu.edu/writing-center/index.php	Services available online or via face to face on campus.
Disability Services	The University provides access to Disability Services. http://www.mtsu.edu/dac/	Services on campus and listed in each nursing course syllabi.
Technology Services (ITD)	The University provides access to Information Technology services and education to use the online platform. https://www.mtsu.edu/itd/	Services are available online or via face to face on campus.

Walker Library	The MTSU Walker Library provides access to library resources, tutoring spots, collaborative spaces and library support for online students. https://library.mtsu.edu/home	Services are available online or via face to face on campus.
Health Services	The University provides health services to all students enrolled at the university. http://www.mtsu.edu/healthservices/	On campus service
Counseling Services	The University provides guidance to all students in relation to general health and wellness and counseling http://www.mtsu.edu/countest/	On campus service

IX. Advising Guidelines.

- a. Students should check their Pipeline account under Assigned Advisor to ascertain the name and contact information (phone# and/or email address) for the student's assigned graduate nursing academic advisor and faculty advisor.
- b. To meet with a faculty advisor, please send an email to the faculty requesting an appointment date & time. This appointment can be via phone, in-person or web-based. Allow 3-5 working days for the faculty to respond.
- c. Make and maintain contact with the graduate nursing academic advisor. Do not wait until priority registration to communicate with your advisor as the response time may be extended. Email msnadvisor@mtsu.edu to schedule an appointment with the graduate nursing academic advisor.
- d. The graduate nursing academic advisor's office is located in Room 239 of the Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building should you wish to visit in person.
- e. Students should communicate with the graduate nursing academic advisor by phone, email or in person each semester to review their progress and Program of Study.
- f. The Program of Study outlines the courses required for graduation. Students need to sign and submit the Program of Study to the MSN Advisor before beginning the nursing program. The MSN Program is a Guided Curriculum meaning students take courses in the semester they are listed and will not progress until the courses are successfully completed. If any changes are made, an updated Program of Study must be signed by the student. Students may view their academic progress in DegreeWorks using their MTSU login and password.

X. Transfer Credit

The graduate program may accept a maximum of twelve (12) credit hours of coursework from an accredited university. The student must provide, at minimum, the course syllabus and class schedule for review by the Admissions Committee. Graduate coursework accepted must represent relevant coursework related to the degree.

Students must request a review of any courses they wish to be considered for transfer credit. The review occurs only after the student has been admitted into the graduate nursing program. The university transfer credit policy can be viewed at:

<http://catalog.mtsu.edu/content.php?catoid=22&navoid=3794>

XI. Registration

All students must register for each term. Failure to register for any semester/term constitutes a lapse or break in the program of study requiring readmission to the program. See readmission requirements in the Graduate Program Admission, Progression and Retention Policy.

Newly admitted MSN and PMC students must complete a Program of Study (POS) and submit to the MSN advisor. Registration for classes should occur as soon as permits are issued, or at least 4 weeks prior to the start of each semester. Students not registered for classes during this time are not guaranteed enrollment in any class.

Interruption of Program

Students who do not plan to register for a particular term/semester, or who leave the program, must complete and submit an Interruption of Program (IOP) form to the MSN academic advisor before the end of the current term. Failure to submit the IOP will result in the necessity for reapplying for admission to the program.

Students may also wish to submit a Stop Out form to the College of Graduate Studies (CGS). A readmission application will need to be completed (without being required to submit any additional materials) before enrolling for the next term/semester. This will ensure that the College of Graduate Studies has all current student information and will trigger the process required for re-enrollment. **The CGS Stop Out form does NOT replace the School of Nursing IOP form.**

XII. Program Readmission

Readmission to the graduate program is not guaranteed. Readmission is granted on a space-available basis. Readmitted students fall under the current Admission, Progression and Retention Policy guidelines at the time of their readmission.

To be readmitted to the MSN program the student must:

1. Complete the readmission applications for the School of Nursing and College of Graduate Studies
2. Meet all general admission requirements for the School of Nursing and College of Graduate Studies

3. Update all required health records within the School of Nursing document storage system

Students wishing to change concentrations in the program must go through the readmission process and be admitted to the new concentration.

Students who are readmitted will follow the most recent academic policies in the School of Nursing available at: <https://mtsu.edu/nursing/policies.php>

XIII. Grading Scale.

The School of Nursing graduate program uses a common grading scale as follows:

A=93-100	B=85-92
C=77-84	D=70-76
F=Below 70	

No extra credit will be awarded within any nursing course. Final grades will be rounded according to conventional mathematical rules. Students must attain a minimum grade of “B” (3.00) in all graduate nursing courses.

XIV. Repeating a Course (2-C Policy)/Course Withdrawal/Program Progression

If a student does not successfully complete a nursing course with a “B” or better, the student may repeat the course **one (1) time only** without consequences. The course repeat must be taken in the next academic term. No other courses can be taken during the term. If a student is unsuccessful in the course a second time, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Only two (2) different courses in the program of study may be repeated.

Course Withdrawal

Students may withdraw from a single course one (1) time only.

Only two (2) instances of course withdrawals are permitted without consequences in the MSN program. Withdrawing from one or more courses in the same term is considered one (1) instance of withdrawal.

Students with more than two (2) withdrawals from the MSN program will not be readmitted to the program.

Program Progression

The School of Nursing progression standards apply to MSN degree seeking students and Post-Master's Certificate Students.

Graduate students in the School of Nursing must:

1. Have a "B" or better in all nursing courses, and
2. Have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better at the end of each term.
3. Maintain current required documentation within the School of Nursing document storage system

XV. Specialty Course Exams

An average of 85% must be achieved on quizzes and exams (combined) in all specialty courses to progress in the program. Courses that require this average include **NURS 6011**: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Across the Lifespan; **NURS 6110**: Advanced Health Assessment and Lab; **NURS 6112**: Advanced Pharmacology; **NURS 6210**: Diagnosis and Management and Clinical I; **NURS 6211**: Diagnosis and Management and Clinical II; **NURS 6310**: Psychopharmacology; **NURS 6311**: Psychiatric Mental Health Diagnosis and Management and Clinical I; and **NURS 6312**: Psychiatric Mental Health Diagnosis and Management and Clinical II.

XVI. Financial Need/Scholarships

Limited financial aid is available for graduate students. Students with incomes falling below poverty level may be eligible for grant money. Only students who have registered their financial status and needs with the MTSU Financial Aid Office will be considered.

A few scholarships are available to graduate nursing students. Information about the criteria for these awards and the application form are available on the SON website at:

<https://www.mtsu.edu/nursing/nursing-scholarships.php>

Students must have a current Free Application Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) file (updated every January) for the Student Success Committee to make scholarship decisions and allocate funds. Note also that students must be registered for courses for the following term to be considered for scholarships.

The application for scholarships is completed online and is open between February 1st and April 1st. Applications must be submitted by April 1st to be considered for a scholarship. The Student Success Committee meets during the summer to review

completed applications and select the scholarship recipients. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

XVII. Student Representation on Committees

Although graduate students attend courses in an online format, students in the MSN program and PMC are encouraged to participate on School of Nursing committees. There are three committees that need student representation: Curriculum, Student Success, and Alumni. Students who desire to serve on any, or a specific, committee should notify the Associate Director Graduate Nursing, the graduate nursing advisor or any graduate faculty member no later than the third week of the fall or spring semesters. Participation in committee meetings can be done virtually or in-person.

XVIII. Program Completion

In order to graduate from MTSU with a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), the following criteria must be met:

1. Complete 42 semester hours of graduate nursing courses with a 'B' (3.00) or better in all courses
2. Maintain current documentation within the School of Nursing document storage system.
3. Complete all clinical courses in accordance with specific concentration requirements
4. Submit the required paperwork to the College of Graduate Studies prior to graduation

In order to graduate from MTSU with a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Post Masters Certificate (PMC), the following criteria must be met:

1. Complete 20 semester hours of graduate nursing courses with a 'B' (3.00) or better in all courses
2. Maintain current documentation within the School of Nursing document storage system.
3. Complete all clinical courses in accordance with specific concentration requirements
4. Submit the required paperwork to the College of Graduate Studies prior to graduation

XIX. Other Resources

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational

Rehabilitation Act of 1937. Any student interested in obtaining reasonable accommodations, especially related to testing, can consult the Disability & Access Center (DAC) website on the MTSU website and/or contact the DAC for assistance at 615-898/2783 or dacemail@mtsu.edu.

Professional Writing Format

The School of Nursing utilizes a writing style format adopted from the American Psychological Association (APA). The APA style format is used in all graduate courses. Websites for assistance with APA include:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format>

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

University Writing Center

The University Writing Center offers free assistance for any writing assignment in any class. Please request someone with experience in using APA format. Staff will assist students to develop the skills needed to become confident, competent writers by providing students with one-on-one consultation and access to electronic handouts.

Online services include a grammar hotline for quick questions; an email drop box, as well as a chat room for writing assistance; and a web site with helpful handouts, exercises, and other specific resource links:

<http://www.mtsu.edu/writing-center/>

<http://libraryguides.mtsu.edu/c.php?g=538176&p=3684406>

http://www.mtsu.edu/writing-center/handouts/APA_Citation_Style.php

XX. Handbook Protocol

All graduate students function under the current SON Graduate Student Handbook. The handbook is reviewed annually and updated as needed. Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and complying with the information in the handbook. Clarification or questions should be raised at the time the handbook is reviewed.

Additional School of Nursing policies are available on the official SON website at: www.mtsu.edu/nursing.

This Handbook presents the terms of enrollment in the SON in effect at the time of publication, however, there is no guarantee that provisions will not be changed or revoked. The Handbook is not intended to state contractual terms and does not constitute a contract between the student and the institution or the SON. The SON reserves the right to make changes as required to become effective as determined by the institution or the SON. All changes will apply to new, current, or formerly enrolled students who are readmitted, and enrollment of all graduate students is subject to these conditions.
