RN-BSN
Nursing Student Handbook

Georgia Highlands College
Department of Nursing
2017
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GEORGIA HIGHLANDS COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF NURSING

Introduction

The Georgia Highlands College Nursing Department has prepared this handbook to inform the RN-BSN students of the policies and guidelines specific to this online nursing program. This handbook serves as a supplement to the Georgia Highlands College catalog, which covers the general institutional policies as they relate to all students.

It is the responsibility of each nursing student to review the handbook independently and to refer to it as needed during his/her enrollment in the nursing program. All statements in the RN-BSN Nursing Student handbook or announcements of present Nursing Program policies are subject to change at any time without notice. Changes will be posted on the nursing web site at http://www.highlands.edu/site/bsn.

Mission Statement

To provide educational opportunities designed to produce a baccalaureate graduate nurse who demonstrates professional, ethical and accountable behaviors, interpersonal communication, comprehensive assessment, clinical decision-making and collaboration skills, teaching and learning capabilities, and incorporates evidence-based practice and leadership in diverse and complex health care settings.

Philosophy

The philosophy of the Georgia Highlands College RN-BSN Program is congruent with the philosophy of Georgia Highlands College to maintain an online teaching/learning environment which promotes inclusiveness and provides educational opportunities, programs and services of excellence in response to documented needs. The RN-BSN online program was started in the fall of 2013 to enable ASN and diploma graduates with an RN license in the state of Georgia to obtain their BSN in an accessible, affordable and valuable environment. The RN-BSN faculty is dedicated to preparing
BSN graduates to practice as competent, caring professionals with effective communication and collaboration skills. This is congruent with the core components and competencies as outlined in the Educational Competencies for Graduates of Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Programs. All nursing students must abide by the policies identified in the RN-BSN Student Handbook and policies of Georgia Highlands College: http://www.highlands.edu/site/student-rights

ADA Statement

Any student in need of accommodation based on the impact of a disability should make an appointment with the Student Support Services at 706-295-6336 to coordinate reasonable accommodation. Please contact your course faculty to confidentially discuss your needs.

Statement Regarding Financial Aid

Students receiving financial aid: Federal regulations state that if a student did not attend classes and received failing grades, then the grades were not earned and financial aid needs to be reduced accordingly. Withdrawing from one or all of your courses can affect your Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Status which could result in the loss of future financial aid eligibility. If you withdraw from all of your courses, you may also be required to return a portion of your financial aid award to GHC.

Please visit the Financial Aid website at https://www.highlands.edu/financial-aid/ for information regarding details and specifics on topics:

- Check My Aid Status
- Checklist
- Deadlines
- FAFSA 101
- FAQ
- Federal Student Aid
- Federal Work Study
- Forms
- Grants
- Helpful Resources
- HOPE Scholarship
- Loans
- Policies
- Satisfactory Academic Progress
- Scholarships
- State Student Aid
Transfer Students
Transient Students
Verification

Core Performance Standards

Nursing applicants to the RN to BSN program must meet the following standards for admission and progression to the nursing program:

- Critical Thinking ability sufficient for clinical judgment.
- Interpersonal abilities sufficient to interact with individuals, families or groups from a variety of social, cultural and intellectual backgrounds.
- Gross and fine motor abilities sufficient to provide safe and effective nursing care.
- Auditory abilities sufficient to assess and provide safe and effective nursing care.
- Tactile ability sufficient to perform physical assessments.
- Visual ability sufficient to perform assessments and provide safe and effective nursing care.

If a physical or mental health condition arises that interferes with the student being able to meet the core performance standards, the student must submit a physician’s release documenting his/her ability to meet the core performance standards before continuing in the program.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Integrate knowledge gained from the arts, sciences and nursing to deliver safe, ethical, and therapeutic nursing care.
- Apply principles of leadership/, management, and evidence-based practice to positively impact healthcare outcomes.
- Synthesize reliable evidence and research from multiple sources to improve practice, make clinical judgments and positively influence patient outcomes.
- Manage care to achieve quality, cost effective and ethical outcomes in the delivery of health care for individuals, families and populations.
- Explore the impact of political, financial, regulatory and environmental agencies on quality patient care outcomes and nursing practice.
- Analyze effective communication and collaboration skills within an inter-professional team to provide patient-centered and evidence-based nursing care.
- Apply health promotion and disease prevention strategies to assist individuals, families, groups, and community.

**Background Check, Drug Screening, Liability Insurance, Student Health Records, CPR, other Additional Requirements**

- All students accepted into the program are required to continually update and submit all health forms, background check, drug screening, health insurance, liability insurance, student health records, CPR certification, proof of unencumbered RN license, proof of negative PPD, influenza vaccination, and any additional requirements at time of acceptance into the program and updated on a yearly basis. Each student is responsible for keeping and maintaining records and update as required. Students non-compliant with updating required documents will not be allowed to continue in the RNBSN program and therefore will be required to request enrollment at a later date and/or request re-enrollment into the program. If student health records or other required documents expire during any course (clinical or non-clinical), student is not eligible to remain in the course and therefore will be unenrolled in the course and receive an “F”. Note: If a student has not been actively enrolled in RNBSN courses for at least two consecutive semesters, then the student will be required to re-apply to the program and meet all requirements as stated on the RNBSN website and application. There are no guarantees that student will be re-enrolled in a course or program (depends on space available in program).
- NURS 4401 and NURS 4404 cannot be completed without satisfactorily completing the clinical component of the course(s). Should a student be denied clinical placement (or continued clinical
placement) by a clinical facility related to results on a criminal background check, drug screening, or any unprofessional or unethical issues, the student will be dismissed from the program with no opportunity for readmission. Drug screenings may be done randomly at the discretion of the health care agency or nursing faculty should questionable behavior occur in student in a clinical setting.

- **Student Uniform Guidelines During Clinical**

The following guidelines are designed to encourage a professional image of the RN-BSN student and promote infection control and safety for patient care, families, students, and others. Any student non-compliant with guidelines while participating in the preceptorship/practicum clinical or a community clinical/observation will be required to leave the clinical setting for that day. All hours/time obtained in the clinical setting for that day will be forfeited. The student will not have permission to return to the clinical/preceptorship area until the student meets with course faculty and/or program director, and/or dean of health sciences.

- A white laboratory coat is required to be worn by all RN-BSN students when in the clinical setting. The lab coat should be clean and wrinkle-free and worn over appropriate clothing (business casual). No halter tops, shorts, jeans or cut off pants. Proper shoes (business casual) required; no open-toed shoes allowed.

- GHC ID badge with student’s picture and name must be clearly visible and worn on the lab coat during all clinical experiences.

- If the clinical setting (agency/hospital/facility) requires the student to obtain and wear a student ID badge representing the facility, the student must comply with request(s) at all clinical experiences acquired with the facility.

- Facial hair must be neatly trimmed, finger nails should be short, polish-free, and not extending beyond the tips of the fingers.
➢ No artificial nails are allowed. Jewelry should be limited to a watch, one pair of small, stud earrings.

➢ No other jewelry permitted on visible body parts. Multiple earrings in the ears or eyebrows, lips, or nose jewelry are not acceptable in the clinical setting.

➢ Tattoos must be covered and not visible while in the clinical setting.

➢ Personal hygiene is expected. Students are not allowed to wear perfume, cologne, heavy makeup or artificial eyelashes in the clinical setting.

➢ Hair should be neatly groomed and up off shoulders.

**NURS 4404 Clinical Leadership Practicum (preceptorship) and NURS 4401 Community Health Nursing:**

Setting-up preceptorship or clinical is a lengthy, step process and requires communication/collaboration between students, course faculty, agency-appointed liaison, and potential preceptor. During active online course sessions, the required avenue of communication is via D2L email (if between sessions/no active courses, then use GHC email site using GHC student email account). Students are required to check/monitor emails at least five (5) times weekly during active course sessions. Students are required to respond to all emails in a timely manner (within 24 hours) regarding faculty questions/concerns (applies to any course).

➢ Any student changing employment to another hospital/agency/workplace after the preceptorship set-up has begun (preceptorship set-up begins the first semester enrolled in the program), please note that previous place of employment where preceptorship set-up was initiated and/or completed, may not allow students to participate in preceptorship since changing employment sites. Therefore, there may not be enough time to set up a preceptorship experience/identify a preceptor at your present job facility. Hospitals/facilities require due dates for student placement request for clinical. Although RN-BSN faculty fully support any student’s decision regarding the changing of employers or jobs, there are no guarantees of an opportunity for preceptorship.
experience for a specific course session. Therefore, the outcome will most likely require the student to request enrollment in a future semester/session of NURS 4404.

- Students non-compliant in communicating with faculty, clinical coordinator, or liaison(s) and/or with updating required student health records/documents may not be enrolled in NURS 4401 or NURS 4404.

**Code of Conduct**

- Students enrolled in the Health Sciences Programs at Georgia Highlands College are expected to adhere to a professional standard of conduct presenting a professional image, demeanor, and behavior/etiquette in the healthcare facilities and within the online classes. The Code of Conduct is based on policies and procedures that are supported by Georgia Highlands College [http://www.highlands.edu/site/student-rights](http://www.highlands.edu/site/student-rights) and various clinical agencies and not limited to the following. Any student in violation of any aspect of the Code of Conduct policy will be dismissed from the program. The dismissed student will not be eligible for readmission to the nursing program.

- Students are always required to perform nursing related activities in a lawful, safe and effective manner. Students participating in Clinical Leadership Practicum-preceptorship (NURS 4404) or Community Health Nursing (NURS 4401) will not be performing direct patient care; specific requirements will be noted in each clinical course syllabus. Students will maintain a respectful, sensitive, and compassionate relationship with faculty, clients/patients, and online classmates.

- Students are responsible for their behavior/actions (verbally or written) in online course(s) and clinical setting. Any unprofessional or unethical behavior (online or clinical setting) will not tolerated. Students documented to have demonstrated unethical, unsafe, or unprofessional conduct are at risk of probation or dismissal from the Health Sciences Programs at Georgia Highlands College. The Code of Conduct is not a limiting document but serves as a guideline. Any student in possible violation of above Code of Conduct will immediately be required to
meet with the Dean of Health Sciences and RN-BSN faculty. The student will be provided with an opportunity to share his/her report/comments. If the student declines to receive counseling with the Dean and faculty, the student will not be allowed to continue in the RN-BSN program and therefore, may receive an “F” for the course(s) currently enrolled. The student will not be eligible to remain in the RN-BSN program due to the potential negative impact of the reported behavior.

➢ Reports of possible violation regarding the Code of Conduct as described in the RN-BSN handbook or violation of GHC’s Code of Conduct policies, dishonesty, intent of falsification of any program or clinically-related records, and/or possible violation regarding patient or student confidentiality, safe practice in the clinical setting, or ethical standards will be promptly investigated. The student will first be required to immediately meet with the Dean of Health Sciences and/or nursing faculty to provide an opportunity for the student to offer information to his/her defense. If the outcome of the meeting provides more evidence of a violation of GHC’s Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Code https://www.highlands.edu/site/student-rights then the issue will be referred to appropriate avenues per GHC policy to provide the student with a fair hearing.

➢ It is the student’s responsibility to report any impairment that he/she is experiencing or suspected impairment of a classmate that could create health/safety risks for the facility/hospital/clinical setting (employees, patients, visitors or other student and/or physical environment).

➢ Any report or noted inappropriate conduct within any online nursing course will not be tolerated. Inappropriate conduct (in any form) directed towards peers, faculty, or others that include (but not limited to) offensive language, criticism of others, academic dishonesty, unprofessionalism, and/or unethical behavior. A student exhibiting inappropriate behavior will be required to meet
with the Dean of Allied Health Sciences and RN-BSN faculty. If the student refuses to meet with the
Dean of Allied Health Sciences and RN-BSN faculty, then the student at that time will be considered
dismissed from the RN-BSN program and will forfeit any opportunity in the future to return as a
student in the RN-BSN program. The student will receive an “F” for the course(s) for which the
student is currently enrolled.

A. Honesty

Refer to Georgia Highlands College Student Handbook, GHC Academic Dishonesty Policy:
http://www.highlands.edu/site/irc-academic-integrity  Honesty is required in both written and electronic
communications within online classes and clinical settings. Sanctions that may be imposed as a result of
dishonesty include but are not limited to expulsion, academic probation, suspension, and/or failure in the
course.

➢ Any student in violation of this policy will be dismissed from the program. The dismissed student
will not be eligible for readmission to the nursing program.

B. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is required in the clinical setting and in the online learning platform. Students are required
to adhere to patient/client confidentiality including but not limited to written, printed, verbal or observed
information and status. No patient name or hospital/facility identifiers/ information should appear in
online discussions or assignments as this would be in violation HIPPA or confidentiality.

➢ Any student in violation of this policy will be dismissed from the program. The dismissed student
will not be eligible for readmission to the nursing program.

C. Safe Practice

RN-BSN students are expected to demonstrate safe practice behavior at all times in the clinical setting.
Failure to demonstrate safe practice can result in sanctions determined by the faculty and/or dismissal
from the program.
➢ Any student in violation of this policy will be dismissed from the program. The dismissed student will not be eligible for readmission to the nursing program.

D. Weapons

Refer to Georgia Highlands College Student Handbook, No Weapons Policy:
http://www2.highlands.edu/site/policy-and-procedure-manual-section-5-xxix Students are responsible for reading this policy. Any questions related to this policy or potential concerns of anyone in violation of the policy should immediately contact GHC Security and/or Human Resources.

➢ Any student in violation of this policy will be dismissed from the program. The dismissed student will not be eligible for readmission to the nursing program.

E. Drug and Alcohol Policy

The nursing faculty reserves the right to require, at the expense of the student, a drug test or other appropriate test if there is a suspicion of substance abuse. Students are responsible for adhering to the policies of Georgia Highlands college: http://www.highlands.edu/site/policy-and-procedure-manual-section-5-x

➢ The faculty may suspend/dismiss a student from the online class or clinical participation if there is a suspicion of substance abuse.

➢ Violation of the substance Drug and Alcohol Policy is grounds for dismissal from the nursing program.

➢ Any student in violation of this policy will be dismissed from the program. The dismissed student will not be eligible for readmission to the nursing program.

F. Tobacco Use

Georgia Highlands College has a tobacco-free campus policy. The use of tobacco products is limited to personal vehicles. Tobacco products include, but are not limited to, cigarettes, snuff, and chewing tobacco.
The guidelines for tobacco usage follow the policies of Georgia Highlands College and the clinical facilities.

Any student in violation of this policy will be dismissed from the program. The dismissed student will not be eligible for readmission to the nursing program.

**Attendance Policy**

RN-BSN students are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities presented for interaction with faculty and classmates in the online courses. Students are expected to be prepared for each online experience in the RN-BSN courses. Online classes: Each week begins on a Monday at 0700 (7:00 am) and ends on Sunday 2400 (12:00 pm). [Exception: First week may begin few days earlier prior to a Monday, and therefore mandate specific assignments prior to the Monday of week one.] It is the responsibility of each student to access GHC’s academic calendar for semester/session start dates, withdrawal dates, end dates, and any recognized student holidays. Please note that the D2L system will designate maintenance/updates and therefore, the D2L system will not be available during specified times. Each student is responsible for checking D2L for date/times for D2L schedule/maintenance.

In order to obtain maximum benefit from this course, attendance is crucial. Absences from online classes are discouraged. Students are expected to participate each designated week in discussion forums and complete online activities and assignments according to the posted deadlines within the online course. Online discussion weeks that do not have a designated graded discussion, please note that each student is required to log into the discussion forum area with name (student name) in order to be counted as attending for that specific week (log in time is due by Wednesday 11:59 pm, EST). If a discussion is not required for a specific week, each student is required to log-in to the discussion forum for that specific week, and enter attendance information of name and brief sentence of “logging into the course for attendance” (unless a designated holiday). Or student may post something similar to: “I am logging in for attendance purposes. I am continuing to work on the designated upcoming dropbox assignment” and type your name.
Students must be proactive with informing the faculty member teaching the course if a discussion response or assignment cannot be submitted within the timeframe stated. The course faculty must be notified via D2L email **prior** to the designated due date of assignment/discussion response. A decision will be made by the course faculty if the assignment/discussion will be accepted late or if late points will apply, and/or the number of points to deduct.

Faculty understand that emergencies can arise at any time. However, it is the responsibility of the student to contact the course faculty if there is a legitimate reason if a post/discussion/assignment cannot be submitted within the designated timeframe/due date. The course faculty’s approval for late submissions must be given in order to avoid late penalties. The determination of assigning late points will be solely at the discretion of the faculty teaching the course.

If a student fails to meet this requirement, he/she will be considered “absent” from the course for that specific week. More than a total of four (4) absences during a 16-week semester or more than a total of two (2) absences during an 8-week semester, the student may automatically be unenrolled from the D2L course by the course faculty unless the student communicates with the course coordinator within two (2) days following the absent period. The course coordinator/faculty will determine if an absence will be excused and excluded from the category of day(s) absence. If a student is “unenrolled” from the course due to attendance violation, the student will receive an “F” (unless student elects to withdraw and within the due date for withdrawal without academic penalty). If a student is unenrolled from D2L prior to GHC’s ‘withdrawal deadline without penalty timeframe’, it is still the student’s responsibility to withdraw according to GHC’s policy, notifying the appropriate department. There are no exceptions to this requirement unless a student has a valid emergency, determined by the course faculty. If an emergency arises, the student must notify the course faculty as soon as possible. The course facilitator may request that the student supply proper documentation to excuse an absence.

In order to receive the maximum educational benefits from D2L courses, attendance is essential.
Grading Policy

A. Grading scale for RN-BSN Students is as follows: (No grades are released by telephone) A: 89.5-100
   B: 79.5-89.4   C: 74.5-79.4   D: 59.5 – 74.4   F: 59.4 or below. All RNBSN courses require a minimum of at least a “C” to be considered successful in course(s).

- Students must achieve a minimum final average of 74.5% or a grade of “C” in NURS 4401 Community Health Nursing and 4404 Clinical Leadership and Management and receive a "satisfactory" evaluation of clinical performance to be considered successful in the course. An “unsatisfactory” evaluation of clinical performance will result in an F for the course and the student will be required to re-apply for admission to both Georgia Highlands College and to the RN-BSN program.

- If a “D” or “F” is earned in NURS 3301 Concepts of Professional Nursing, the student must re-take the NURS 3301 (cannot enroll in additional courses during second enrollment in NURS 3301). If a “D” or “F” is earned on the second attempt, student will not be allowed to continue in the RNBSN program and at that time will be dismissed from the program.

- If a "D" or “F” is earned in any course, then the course must be repeated with an at least an earned “C” or better before enrolling in any additional course(s). A student repeating any course (second attempt) and receives a “D” or “F”, please note that student will be dismissed from the program.

- The student will be dismissed from the RNBSN program if following occurs:
  - Required health records or other required documents expire and student does not update records. Responsibility is with each student to monitor expiration dates of records. If student health records or other required documents expire during any course (clinical or non-clinical), student is not eligible to remain in the course and therefore will receive an “F”.
If the hospital/agency/facility or primary place where student participates in clinical (leadership practicum/preceptorship or community clinical) has requirements for return of property after student completes clinical, then student is responsible for property. If the student does not return property hospital/agency/facility, the student will be considered unsuccessful in the course and not completely meeting course expectations or requirements and therefore will result in an “F” for the course and dismissed from the program as this demonstrates unprofessional and dishonest behavior. The student will not be allowed to re-apply to the RNBSN program.

**Appeals Process-Grade Appeal Policy**

Georgia Highlands College Department of Nursing shall provide students with a timely process of appealing grades which they believe were incorrectly determined.

**Procedure**

The Grade Appeal Procedure is the method by which a student may challenge a grade issued by an instructor in the Georgia Highlands College Department of Nursing. The following procedure is required:

- The student must contact his/her course coordinator after the grade is issued (no later than 5 business days from the issuance of the grade) to discuss the grade. If the course coordinator is unable to resolve the issue to the student’s satisfaction, the student should then contact the Dean of Health Sciences.

- If the student is still not satisfied with the awarded grade, the student may then initiate the appeal process within 3 business days after meeting with the Dean of Health Sciences and provide a written statement of appeal. The student should include necessary documentation and pertinent information to support the appeal. The student should return the completed written appeal to the Dean of Health Sciences.

- Upon receipt of the student’s written appeal, the Dean of Health Sciences will appoint a Division Appeals Committee (DAC) composed of three nursing faculty members with at least one of those being RN-BSN faculty.
➢ The DAC will receive all pertinent information relating to the appeal: The written student appeal, student’s academic record, and any other pertinent information related to the appeal.

➢ The DAC will meet to discuss the appeal and will set a hearing date to meet

➢ The DAC will meet with the student at the appointed hearing date and time. At this hearing, the student will have an opportunity to present his/her appeal. The DAC will have the opportunity to ask questions of the student to clarify information. The student and instructor have the right to be present at all meetings where evidence is presented. The DAC chair will be responsible for recording the session.

➢ The DAC will meet privately, exclusive of the student, to confer and arrive at a decision. Every effort should be made to reach a consensus finding. If not, then a private ballot shall be taken with the chair of the DAC voting only in the event of a tie vote. This decision is reported to the Program Director who presents the findings and the decision to the student and the instructor.

➢ If the student or instructor wishes to appeal to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, he/she should follow the GHC Process of Appealing a Grade as written in the Office of Academic Affairs Policies: http://www.highlands.edu/site/office-of-academic-affairs-grade-appeals

➢ If the student appeal includes a clinical issue, the student will not be allowed to continue in the clinical experience until the issue is resolved.

**Progression and Readmission**

In order to progress in the RN-BSN program, the student must maintain a C or better in all nursing courses (refer to ‘Grading Policy’ section of the handbook). If a student leaves the program for any reason and is not enrolled in nursing courses for the following two semesters, then the student will be required to reapply to the nursing program (and GHC if applicable). There is no guarantee of re-admission.

➢ Students may be required to re-apply for admission to the RN-BSN if the student requests a change in his/her chosen Plan of Study:
A requested change in the student’s Plan of Study (POS) may affect student’s expected date of completing the program as all courses are not offered each semester. Students are expected to follow the POS chosen at the time of initial enrollment in the program. Students may be allowed to change POS only if extenuating circumstances exist (this will be determined by the course faculty and director of RNBSN program).

Requesting Readmission to the RNBSN Program:

There are no guarantees that the program will have openings to (1) accommodate students that are eligible to re-apply to the college and/or RN-BSN program or (2) accommodate re-enrollment to clinical courses as a result of student’s non-compliance with communication with faculty, clinical coordinator, liaisons or others required for preceptorship set-up or if clinical cancelled due to student’s non-compliance of course/programs/handbook guidelines.