



Georgia Highlands College Department of Nursing

RN-BSN Student Handbook

2021-2022

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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 skill. 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 polices 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 discuss your needs confidentially.

Statement Regarding Financial Aid

Students receiving financial aid: Federal regulations state that if a student did not attend classes and received failing grades, 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 details and specific information on the following 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, therapeutic nursing care.
- Apply principles of leadership/management, and evidence-based practice to influence healthcare outcomes.
- Synthesize reliable evidence and research from multiple sources to improve clinical judgments, nursing practice, and patient outcomes.
- Manage care to achieve quality, cost effective outcomes in the delivery of health care for individuals, families and populations.
- Explore the impact of political, financial, regulatory and environmental agencies on

patient-care outcomes and nursing practice.

- Utilize effective communication and collaboration skills within an inter-disciplinary team to provide patient-centered and evidence-based nursing care.
- Develop health promotion and disease prevention strategies to assist individuals, families, groups, and community.

Background Check, Drug Screening, Student Health Records, CPR, Other Requirements

- All students accepted into the program are required to maintain current documentation of 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. Students with expired health records or other required documentation will not be permitted to enroll in RN-BSN nursing courses until all documentation is current. **Note:** If a student is not enrolled in RN-BSN courses for a period of one year, the student will be required to re-apply to the program and meet all requirements as stated on the RN-BSN 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 4404 requires satisfactory completion of the on-site leadership practicum component to successfully complete the course. If a student is denied placement (or continued placement) with a preceptor by a healthcare facility due to results of a criminal background check, drug screen, or any professional or ethical issues, the student will be dismissed from the program and will not be eligible for readmission. Drug screenings may be done randomly at the discretion of the healthcare facility or nursing faculty should questionable behavior occur while a student is engaged in GHC RN-BSN course related activities at a healthcare agency.

Student Uniform Guidelines for Leadership Practicum

The following guidelines are designed to encourage a professional image of the RN-BSN student and promote infection control and safety for patients, families, students, and others. Any student who does

not comply with these guidelines while participating in the preceptorship/practicum will be required to leave the healthcare facility for that day. All practicum hours/time for that day will be forfeited. The student will be required to meet with the course instructor, Program Director and/or Dean of Health Sciences before continuing practicum activities.

- A white laboratory coat is required to be worn by all RN-BSN students when in the healthcare setting. The lab coat should be clean, 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 practicum experiences.
- If the healthcare facility requires the student to obtain and wear a student ID badge representing the facility, the student must comply with request(s) for all course-related 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.
- Artificial nails are not permitted. Jewelry should be limited to a watch, wedding ring, and 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 healthcare setting.
- Tattoos must be covered and not visible while in the healthcare setting.
- Personal hygiene is expected. Students are not permitted to wear perfume, cologne, heavy makeup or artificial eyelashes in the healthcare setting.
- Hair should be neatly groomed and up off shoulders.

NURS 4404 Leadership Practicum (preceptorship)

Setting-up preceptorship is a lengthy 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 (between course sessions, use GHC email with GHC student email account). Students should monitor emails frequently (3 to 4 times per week) during active course sessions. Students are expected to respond to all emails in a timely manner (24 to 48 hours) regarding faculty questions/concerns (applies to any course).

- Changing employment after practicum set-up has begun: Any student changing employment to another hospital/agency after the practicum set-up has begun (set-up begins at least one semester prior to practicum course) should be aware that the previous employer, where preceptorship arrangements were established, may choose not to permit students to participate in practicum activities once employment has terminated. Students should be aware that time constraints may interfere with practicum arrangements with the new employer, which could delay completion of NURS 4404 and program completion. The RN-BSN faculty fully support any student's decision regarding the changing of employers or position. However, in these circumstances, we cannot guarantee practicum placement in a specific course session.
- Reminder: Students who fail to communicate as needed with faculty, clinical coordinator, facility liaison(s), or who fail to maintain current student health documents will not be enrolled in 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 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> 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 and 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 Leadership Practicum-preceptorship (NURS 4404) will not perform direct patient care. Specific instructions will be provided in the course syllabus. Students will maintain a respectful, sensitive, and compassionate relationship with faculty, clients/patients, healthcare facility personnel, and online classmates.

- Students are responsible for their behavior/actions (verbally or written) in online course(s) and healthcare facilities. Any unprofessional or unethical behavior in either setting will not be tolerated. Documentation of students who 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 the RN-BSN faculty. The student will be given an opportunity to share his/her comments. Students who decline to meet with the Dean and faculty will not be allowed to continue in the RN-BSN program and may receive a grade of “F” for the course(s) currently enrolled. The student will not be eligible for readmission to 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 falsifying any program or clinically-related records, possible violation regarding patient or student confidentiality, safe practice in the healthcare setting, or ethical standards will be promptly investigated. The student will first be required to immediately meet with the Dean of Health Sciences and 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>, 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 the suspected impairment of a classmate that could create health/safety risks for the healthcare setting (employees, patients, visitors, other students 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 toward peers, faculty, or others may include (**but is not limited to**) offensive language, criticism of others, unprofessionalism, academic dishonesty, and/or unethical behavior. A student exhibiting inappropriate behavior will be required to meet with the Dean of Health Sciences and the RN-BSN faculty. If the student fails to meet with the Dean of Health Sciences and RN-BSN faculty, the student will be dismissed from the RN-BSN program and will be ineligible for readmission to the program. The student will receive a grade of "F" for the course(s) currently enrolled.

A. Honesty

Refer to Georgia Highlands College Student Handbook, GHC Academic Dishonesty Policy:

<https://www2.highlands.edu/site/academic-integrity-documents>. Honesty is required in both written and electronic communications within online classes and healthcare settings. Possible sanctions resulting from 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 healthcare environment 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 exhibit safe nursing practice at all times. Failure to demonstrate safe nursing 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. Georgia House Bill 280, Campus Carry, legislation became effective July 1, 2017. For more information regarding this law, see <https://www.highlands.edu/campus-safety/campus-carry-information/> or contact the Georgia Highlands College Department of Campus Security at 706-252-4813. For emergencies, dial 911.

- 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: <https://www2.highlands.edu/site/student-rights>.

- The faculty may suspend/dismiss a student from the online class or practicum 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 healthcare 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 prepare for and engage in the prescribed online learning experiences. General schedule for online classes: Each week begins on Monday at 1200 (00:00 am) and ends on Sunday at 1159 (11:59 pm). Exception to this schedule: The first week of some classes that begin mid-semester may start mid-week instead of Monday. In addition, week (8) in some sessions are shorter and may end in mid-week. Students should be cognizant of these differences and should pay attention to all assignment due dates. 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. The Desire to Learn (D2L) system requires regular maintenance and updates, and will not be available during these specified times. Each student is responsible for checking D2L for date/times of scheduled maintenance.

- Attendance is crucial to benefit from the courses in this program, and students are expected to be active participants in course activities. Absences from online classes are discouraged. Students should log into courses several times per week to check for instructor feedback, announcements and email. Discussion board forums, assignments and other learning activities should be submitted by the posted due date and time.
- Students must be proactive in informing the course faculty if an assigned activity cannot be submitted by the due date. The course instructor must be notified via D2L email **prior** to the posted assignment due date. The instructor will determine if the assignment (discussion board or other activity) will be accepted late and/or if points will be deducted, based on the number of days the assignment is submitted past the original due date. Late submissions receive a point deduction of 10% per day, up to seven (7) days, from the assignment grade (see course syllabus).
- Faculty understand that emergencies can arise at any time. However, it is the responsibility of the student to contact the course instructor when there is a legitimate reason for submitting an assignment past the due date. Work obligations are not an acceptable reason for late submission of course assignments.

Grading Policy

All RN-BSN courses require a minimum grade of a “C” to pass the course. The RN-BSN grading scale is as follows: A: 89.5-100; B: 79.5-89.4; C: 75-79.4; D: 65-74.4; F: 64.9 or below. Grades are not released by telephone. In addition to earning a course average of 74.5% (grade of “C”), students enrolled in NURS 4404 (Leadership Practicum) must receive a “satisfactory” performance evaluation from their preceptor to successfully pass the course. An “unsatisfactory” evaluation will result in a course grade of “F” and the student will be required to repeat the course.

- If a grade of “D” or “F” is earned in any RN-BSN course, the course must be successfully repeated (minimum grade of “C”) to remain in the program. The student may not enroll in any

other BSN courses until the repeated course is successfully completed.

- RN-BSN students may have only one incidence of failure (grade less than “C”) for any BSN nursing course in the program. Failure of more than one BSN course (or more than one failure of the same course) will result in dismissal from the program and the student being ineligible for readmission.
- It is the responsibility of each student to monitor expiration dates on health records and other documents required for the program. Students with expired documentation may not enroll in BSN nursing courses until health records and other documents are current.
- Students in NURS 4404, Leadership Practicum, are responsible for any property (ID badge, etc.) issued by the healthcare facility or primary location of the practicum. If the facility has a requirement for return of property after student completes the field experience, the student is responsible to return the property. If the student fails to return facility property, he/she will receive a grade of “F” for not meeting course expectations due to unprofessional behavior. The student will be required to repeat the course, meet all course requirements and must earn a minimum grade of “C” to pass the course.

Appeals Process-Grade Appeal Policy

Georgia Highlands College Department of Nursing shall provide students with a timely process of appeal for grades that the student believes 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 no later than (5) business days after the grade is issued to discuss the grade. If the course coordinator is unable to resolve the issue to the student’s satisfaction, the student should immediately contact the Dean of Health Sciences.

- If the student is still not satisfied with the grade, the student may initiate the appeal process within (3) business days after meeting with the Dean of Health Sciences. A written statement of appeal, including documentation and pertinent information to support the appeal, is submitted 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, including at least one RN-BSN faculty member.
- The DAC will receive all pertinent information relating to the appeal: The student's written appeal, student's academic record, and any other information related to the appeal.
- The DAC will meet to discuss the appeal, set a hearing date, and inform the student of the hearing.
- 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, without the student or instructor, to confer and arrive at a decision. Every effort should be made to reach a consensus decision. If not, then a private ballot shall be taken with the chair of the DAC voting only in the event of a tie. This decision is reported to the Program Director who presents the findings to the student and the instructor.
- If the student or instructor wishes to appeal the DAC decision to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the GHC Process of Appealing a Grade should be followed as written in the Office of Academic Affairs Policies: <http://www.highlands.edu/site/office-of-academic-affairs-grade-appeals>
- If the student appeal involves the leadership practicum (NURS 4404), the student will not be allowed to continue in the practicum until the issue is resolved.

Progression and Readmission

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 is not enrolled in RN-BSN nursing courses for a period of one year (3 semesters), the student will be required to reapply to the nursing program (and GHC if applicable). There is no guarantee of re- admission.

- Not all RN-BSN nursing courses are offered each semester. Students should follow the Plan of Study (POS) chosen at the time of initial enrollment in the program. A change in the student's POS may affect the expected date of program completion. A conference with the Program Director is recommended when a student wishes to change their POS.

Requesting Readmission to the RN-BSN Program

Students who have not enrolled in BSN nursing courses at GHC for a period of one year are required to reapply to the RN-BSN program, and/or Georgia Highlands College.

- There are no guarantees that the program will have openings to accommodate students who are eligible to re-apply to the college and/or RN-BSN program.
- Students who have been dismissed from the RN-BSN program are considered ineligible for readmission to the RN-BSN program at Georgia Highlands College.