



**Georgia Highlands College
Department of Nursing**

RN-BSN Student Handbook

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Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Completion Program (RN-BSN)

This handbook provides information for RN-BSN students regarding policies and guidelines specific to this online program. It serves as a supplement to the Georgia Highlands College (GHC) catalog, which covers institutional policies for all students. Each RN-BSN student is responsible for reviewing this information and should refer to it as needed during enrollment in the program. All information is subject to change at any time. Current students are alerted to changes through the learning management system. Changes are also updated on the nursing web site at <http://www.highlands.edu/site/bsn>. All RN-BSN students must abide by policies identified in this RN-BSN Student Handbook, policies of Georgia Highlands College (<http://www.highlands.edu/site/student-rights>), and when applicable, the USG eMajor® student guidebook (<https://emajor.usg.edu/current-students/student-guide/>).

Program Mission

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.

Program Philosophy and History

The philosophy of the GHC RN-BSN program is to offer a teaching/learning environment that promotes inclusiveness and accessibility and to provide learning opportunities, programs and services of excellence in response to documented needs. This philosophy is congruent with the philosophy of Georgia Highlands College.

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 a 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 commitment is congruent with the core components and competencies as outlined in the *Educational Competencies for Graduates of Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Programs* (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2021).

AACN Essentials for Nursing Education

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2021) sets standards for nursing education with expected competencies for nursing program graduates. The essentials include ten domains, four spheres of care, and eight central concepts. To learn about these educational expectations, visit the *Educational Competencies for Graduates of Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Programs* (AACN, 2021) at <https://www.aacnnursing.org/AACN-Essentials>.

Core Performance Standards

To qualify for admission and to progress through the RN-BSN program, applicants and students must meet these core performance standards:

- 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, effective nursing care.
- Auditory abilities sufficient to assess and provide safe, effective nursing care.
- Tactile ability sufficient to perform physical assessments.

- Visual ability sufficient to perform assessments and provide safe, 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 healthcare provider's release which documents ability to meet the core performance standards before continuing in the program.

Student Support Services, Disability Services, and Financial Aid

The GHC offices of Student Support Services and Financial Aid assist students in a variety of ways. Students in need of academic accommodations related to a disability should make an appointment with Student Support Services at 706-295-6336 to coordinate reasonable accommodation. Once a determination is made, the student must provide documentation from Student Support Services to faculty in each course (GHC and eMajor®) to receive the accommodation. For information on this and other services, contact GHC Student Support Services at 706-295-6336 or visit <https://sites.highlands.edu/student-support-services>.

Students may contact the GHC Financial Aid office to request financial support while in the program. Students should be aware that Federal regulations state if a student does not attend classes and/or receives a failing grade, the grade was not earned, so financial aid will be reduced accordingly. Withdrawing from one or all courses can affect a student's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) status, which could result in the loss of future financial aid eligibility. If a student withdraws from all courses, a portion of the financial aid award might be returned to GHC. For more information, visit the GHC Financial Aid website at <https://www.highlands.edu/financial-aid/> .

Instructional and Technological Requirements and Support

The RN-BSN program is taught online in collaboration with other nursing programs affiliated with eMajor®, a USG online consortium. Courses are delivered in a course management system called GoVIEW. Therefore, having access to reliable internet and correctly configured computer equipment is critical to success. To learn more, visit the eMajor® Computer Support page at <https://eMajor.usg.edu/current-students/student-guide/computer-support>. For assistance with technology, these resources are available:

Technology	Resource
GoVIEW System Check	Performs a system check on computer software. Once logged in, students may take the orientation course to become familiar with this technology. Includes tutorials and practice assignments. https://go.view.usg.edu/d2l/login
D2L Online Support Center	Assists with access and troubleshooting 24/7 Online Help Center
eMajor® Help Desk	Assists with login issues, registration, and/or course support. Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM EST 678-839-6400 or Toll Free 1-855-9EMAJOR® eMajor@ecampus.usg.edu
USG D2L Help Center	Knowledge base of common questions and issues faced by GoVIEW users. Students must mention they are enrolled in an eMajor® course. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Toll Free 1-855-772-0423 https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu
GHC D2L Get Started	Home page for all things related to D2L; links to helpful resources https://highlands.view.usg.edu/shared/Getting%20Started/APage1_GetStart_MyHome.html
GHC D2L Tutorials	Tutorial videos on all things related to D2L https://sites.highlands.edu/elearning/current-online-students/student-guides/ghc-student-d2l-video-tutorials/

Student Learning Outcomes and Plans of Study

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the RN-BSN program, graduates will be able to:

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

Plans of Study

Students may choose one of two plans of study: Full-time or Part-time. Courses are taken in the following order to support success.

FULL TIME	Fall		Spring	
	1st 8 Weeks	2nd 8 Weeks	1st 8 Weeks	2nd 8 Weeks
Summer	NURS 3197	HSCI 3501	NURS 4597	NURS 4497
HSCI Elective	NURS 3397	NURS 3297	NURS 4403	NURS 4404
	7	6	6	5
	13 Credit Hours		11 Credit Hours	

PART TIME	Fall #1		Spring #1	
	1st 8 Weeks	2nd 8 Weeks	1st 8 Weeks	2nd 8 Weeks
	NURS 3197	HSCI 3501	NURS 4597	NURS 4497
	3	3	3	3
	6 hrs		6 hrs	

PART TIME	Fall #2		Spring #2	
	1st 8 Weeks	2nd 8 Weeks	1st 8 Weeks	2nd 8 Weeks
Summer	NURS 3397	NURS 3297	NURS 4403	NURS 4404
HSCI Elective	4	3	3	2
HSIC Elective	7 Credit Hours		5 Credit Hours	

Notes: Courses in green are offered through eMajor®; Courses in orange are offered through GHC; HSCI electives are taken at GHC.

eMajor® Courses

The GHC RN-BSN program is part of a collaborative program which includes students and instructors located throughout Georgia. Five of the eight core courses are taught through eMajor®. Students must log into eMajor® courses within the first week of class, and usually perform a brief assignment to log attendance. The eMajor® academic calendar may vary from the GHC calendar. Check course start dates here: [eMajorCourse Calendar](#).

USG eMajor® courses are taught completely online, however, the RN-BSN courses are highly interactive and require frequent attention to course work and interactions with classmates

and instructors. Students should be aware that RN-BSN courses are not independent study or self-paced courses. Similar to courses taught on campus, individual and group assignments have deadlines which support successful progression. Classmates will count on each other to be active contributors who meet deadlines. Additionally, an orientation quiz is required for each course. Students should carefully read the syllabus and follow the course schedule to be successful.

Students enrolled in eMajor® courses have an additional benefit. A Student Success Team member may reach out when a student is falling behind. Students may also ask for assistance. Throughout the semester, members of the success team will communicate with students through email, telephone, and text message, providing timely reminders and tips for success.

GHC Courses

Students complete three of the eight RN-BSN core courses at GHC plus two electives. Required courses are: HSCI 3501, NURS 4403, and NURS 4404. For information, visit the GHC Catalogue: <https://sites.highlands.edu/academic-affairs/college-catalog/>.

NURS 4404 Leadership Practicum

Students complete a leadership practicum in the final semester of the program. *Careful planning and collaboration are required to ensure timely completion of the course.* Students are responsible for following instructions and meeting deadlines set by GHC staff and faculty and facility preceptors to prepare for a successful practicum.

Pre-planning for the practicum. Preparation for the Leadership Practicum is a lengthy process and requires communication and collaboration between students, course faculty, agency-appointed liaisons, and preceptors. D2L and GHC student email must be used

for all communication related to practicum planning. Personal email will not be used. Students must monitor student emails at least three to four times per week during active course sessions and are expected to reply within 24 to 48 hours.

- Students who schedule the practicum at their place of employment should be aware that a change of employment after practicum preparation has begun might delay completion of NURS 4404. The previous employer may choose to decline the practicum experience once employment has terminated.
- GHC fully supports students' decisions regarding employment changes; however, the program cannot guarantee a practicum replacement during NURS 4404.
- Students participating in NURS 4404 *DO NOT* perform direct patient care.

Facility credentialing requirements. During admission to GHC, the following immunizations or titers are required: Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella, Tetanus-Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Tdap, Td Booster, Hepatitis B. In addition, clinical facilities might require the Flu or other vaccine(s). The University System of Georgia (USG) and GHC do not require the Covid-19 vaccination. However, nursing students attend the Leadership Practicum at a variety of clinical sites and are required to meet credentialing requirements for those clinical partners. Lack of credentialing will prevent students from attending the practicum, which is required for completion of NURS 4404. Students are required to monitor expiration dates on health records and other documents required for the program. Students with expired documentation may not enroll in NURS 4404 until all records are current.

All students must meet credentialing requirements for the facility in which their leadership practicum occurs. These documents must be entered into the system at least three

months prior to the leadership practicum. Depending on individual facility requirements, credentialing documentation may include: Background check, drug screening, health insurance, liability insurance, student health records, CPR certification, proof of unencumbered RN license, proof of negative PPD, vaccinations, and any additional requirements as set by the facility.

Students who have not entered the required documents into the system at least three months prior to the practicum will not be permitted to enroll into NURS 4404 until all documentation is current. 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 RN-BSN courses until all documents are current.

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.

Leadership attire. Students must inquire about and follow attire guidelines as set by the facility for a leadership role. To encourage a professional image, the nursing program requires the minimum guidelines listed below. Any student who does not comply with facility guidelines while participating in the practicum may be asked to leave the healthcare facility for that day. All practicum hours for that day will be forfeited. The student will be required to meet with the course instructor, Director of Nursing, and/or the Dean of Health Sciences before continuing practicum activities.

- A white laboratory coat is optional depending on facility guidelines. If worn, the lab coat should be clean, wrinkle-free, and worn over professional attire.
- No halter tops, shorts, jeans, cut off pants, or open-toe shoes are allowed. Shoes should be appropriate for a leadership role and follow facility guidelines.
- If the healthcare facility requires the student to obtain a facility student ID badge, the student must comply with that request and wear it above the waist.
- Head and facial hair must be neatly trimmed, clean, and well groomed.
- Finger nails should be short, clean, neatly groomed and meet facility requirements.
- Jewelry should be limited to a watch, wedding ring, and one pair of small earrings. No other jewelry is permitted on visible body parts.
- Tattoos must be covered and not visible while in the healthcare setting.
- Personal hygiene is expected. Students are not permitted to wear fragrances or heavy makeup in the healthcare setting.

Successful practicum completion. During the NURS 4404, Leadership Practicum, students are responsible for facility property (ID badge, equipment, supplies, etc.). Students must also adhere to requirements for return of property upon completion of the practicum. If the student fails to return facility property, a grade of “F” will be assigned for not meeting course expectations for professional behavior. To complete the RN-BSN program, the student must repeat the course, meet all course requirements, and earn a minimum grade of “C” in NURS 4404. Additionally, students are responsible for updating expired health records and other documents required for the program. Students with expired documentation may not enroll in RN-BSN nursing courses until health records and other documents are current.

Out-of-state leadership practicums. Students who plan the NURS 4404 Leadership Practicum outside the state of Georgia must follow compliance with state authorizations. The United States Government and individual states mandate that institutions offering distance education have the approval of each state to provide distance education to residents of that state. To meet these requirements, Georgia Highlands College (GHC) participates in the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) and is an approved NC-SARA institution in Georgia. Since GHC does not have a “physical presence” in California (not a NC-SARA state), the college meets the requirements to offer online programs and courses in that state.

While GHC acts in good faith to maintain authorization in all states, the process is dynamic and subject to change. As such, GHC continues to monitor federal and state changes and updates information accordingly. GHC strives to provide accurate information. Due to the timing of changes by states or licensing boards, students are strongly encouraged to check with the state licensing board in which the practicum experience is planned. As a starting point, students may review the [NC-SARA Professional Licensure Directory](#) . For current information on GHC compliance, go to the GHC Home page > eLearning Support Services > About > Compliance with State Authorization:

<https://sites.highlands.edu/elearning/about/compliance-with-state-authorizations/>.

Student Evaluation of Courses

Students are encouraged to provide an optional online course evaluation near the end of each course. This confidential online form provides feedback to the instructor and program designers to improve the teaching and learning environment. Faculty do not receive the evaluation until after the course ends.

Code of Conduct, Policies, and Student Responsibilities

Students enrolled in the RN-BSN program are expected to adhere to the GHC student code of conduct <http://www.highlands.edu/site/student-rights> and policies stated in course syllabi. When taking eMajor® courses, students should also follow the eMajor® student guidelines (<https://emajor.usg.edu/current-students/student-guide/>). Additionally, during the NURS 4404 Leadership Practicum, students must adhere to the facility requirements, regulations, and workplace etiquette. Students will maintain a respectful, sensitive, and compassionate relationship with faculty, classmates, clients/patients, and healthcare facility personnel. Students found to be in violation of any policies will be dismissed from the program, will not be eligible for readmission, and may receive a grade of “F” for enrolled courses.

The GHC Code of Conduct is not a limiting document but serves as a guideline. Any student in possible violation must meet with the RN-BSN faculty. If the problem is not resolved, the student must meet with the Director of Nursing. If the problem requires additional discussion, the student will meet with the Dean of Health Sciences. The student will have the opportunity to share perspectives and insights. Reports of possible violations will be promptly investigated, and GHC policies will be followed to provide the student with a fair hearing. Students who decline to follow this process or who are found to be in violation will not be allowed to continue in the RN-BSN program and may receive a grade of “F” for the currently enrolled course(s). In this case, the student would not be eligible for readmission to the RN-BSN program.

A similar process is followed should a student violate policies in the USG eMajor® student guide <https://eMajor.usg.edu/current-students/student-guide/>.

Attendance

It is critical for RN-BSN students to be active in each GHC and eMajor® course within the first week of class, ideally on the first day of class. All students must log in to each course during the first five (5) calendar days of every eight-week session and complete the mandatory attendance activities as outlined by the instructor in the course syllabus. If a student neglects this task or does not meet the stated deadline, the faculty enters an absence report which administratively drops or withdraws the student from the course. Although students may be dropped from courses for non-participation, students who wish to drop/withdraw should not assume they will be dropped/withdrawn by their institution. The student is responsible for initiating the drop/withdraw process. Additionally, students are responsible for accessing the academic calendars for GHC and eMajor®. NOTE: Semester/session start dates, withdrawal dates, breaks, and end dates vary. Classes may start and end on different dates.

Academic Honesty

During the program, RN-BSN students grow as professionals and scholars. Therefore, honesty is expected. The USG eMajor® student guide summarizes the intent and expectations related to academic honesty.

“As members of the academic community, all students are expected to understand and uphold standards of intellectual and academic integrity. The University System of Georgia assumes as a basic and minimum standard of conduct in academic matters that students be honest and that they submit for credit only the objects of their own efforts and creation. Both the ideals of scholarship and the need for fairness require that all dishonest work be rejected as a basis for academic credit. They also require that students refrain from any and all forms of dishonorable or unethical conduct related to their academic work.” (USG, 2022).

RN-BSN students are expected to discuss with faculty any questions related to this policy and to read about these topics in the University *System of Georgia Student Guide to eMajor®* (<https://eMajor.usg.edu/current-students/student-guide/>): Plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsification, multiple submissions, placeholder submissions, contract cheating.

Communication and Confidentiality

During active online course sessions, GHC student email must be used for all communication related to practicum planning. During course work, some instructors prefer to communicate through D2L student email. Students must monitor student and/or D2L emails at least three to four times per week during active course sessions and are expected to reply within 24 to 48 hours. This agreement between faculty, staff, and students helps protect privacy and fosters effective communication.

Once admitted to the program, personal email will not be used. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of academic records and is a federal statute. The RN-BSN program complies with FERPA which is why personal emails are not used.

Syllabus Level Policies

Students must read and adhere to policies stated in each course syllabus. Every GHC and eMajor® instructor provides a detailed syllabus with guidelines for success in the course.

Visits to Campus

Students are welcome to visit the GHC campus during normal business hours. When on campus, all policies described in the GHC Student Handbook should be followed. Of note: No alcohol, tobacco, or weapons are allowed. Refer to the GHC Student Handbook linked above.

Grading Policies

To view grading policies for RN-BSN courses at GHC and eMajor®, refer to the course syllabus. Grades are posted in the course gradebook and are not released by telephone. All questions related to grades should be directed to the course instructor.

Appeals and Grievance Processes

Georgia Highlands College Department of Nursing shall provide students with a timely appeal process for disputed grades. 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:

1. The student must contact the course faculty no later than (5) business days after the grade is issued to discuss the grade. If the course faculty is unable to resolve the issue to the student's satisfaction, the student should immediately contact the Director of Nursing.
2. 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 Director of Nursing. A written statement of appeal, including documentation and pertinent information to support the appeal, is submitted to the Dean of Health Sciences.
3. 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.
4. 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.

5. The DAC will meet to discuss the appeal, set a hearing date, and inform the student of the hearing.
6. 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 the appeal. The DAC may 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.
7. 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 Director of Nursing who presents the findings to the student and the instructor.
8. 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>
9. 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.

Complaint Process for GHC Distance Education Students

The RN-BSN program staff communicate with online students and faculty to resolve difficulties. The following procedures at GHC support resolution of complaints and can be found at <https://sites.highlands.edu/elearning/current-online-students/withdrawals-appeals-complaints/>

- Grade Appeals

- Student Grievance Policies
- Student Rights and Responsibilities
- State-based Complaint Resolution Offices and Processes for Distance Education Students

Complaint Process for eMajor® Distance Education Students

Students with complaints related to the RN-BSN eMajor® courses should follow the complaint policy described in the USG eMajor student guide (<https://emajor.usg.edu/current-students/student-guide/>).

Progression in the RN-BSN Program

To progress in the RN-BSN program, students must maintain a grade of “C” or better in all nursing core courses and have only one incidence of failure (grade less than “C”) for the GHC nursing progression courses as described in the GHC catalogue. More than one failure of the same course will result in dismissal from the program with no possibility for readmission.

Students should follow the Plan of Study (POS) *chosen at the time of initial enrollment* in the program (full-time or part-time). A change in the student’s POS may affect the expected date of graduation. A conference with the Director of Nursing is recommended when a student wishes to change the POS. When a student is not enrolled in at least one RN-BSN core course over a period of one year (three consecutive semesters), USG policy requires that the student be dismissed from the program. Students who return will complete a new admission process.

Request for Readmission to the RN-BSN Program

Students who have been dismissed from the RN-BSN program for cause are considered ineligible for readmission to the RN-BSN program at GHC. However, students who were dismissed due to non-attendance may be eligible for readmission. In this case, the student must

re-apply to the program and meet all requirements as stated on the current RN-BSN website regarding application. There are no guarantees that the student will be readmitted.

References

- American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2021). *Educational Competencies for Graduates of Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Programs*.
<https://www.aacnnursing.org/AACN-Essentials>
- University System of Georgia. (2022). *The University System of Georgia's Student Guide to eMajor®*. <https://emajor.usg.edu/current-students/student-guide/>