

NURSING STUDENT HANDBOOK

2024-2025




MERCY COLLEGE
OF HEALTH SCIENCES

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Statement of Responsibility

Each student is responsible for knowing the current academic regulations, general and specific requirements, and operational policies contained within the Mercy College of Health Sciences Undergraduate Nursing Student Handbook, college catalog, and all other official documents or announcements from the College.

Additionally, college administrators reserve the right to revise or modify any of the following policies at any time based on the best interest of students or institution.

Students will be notified via email of changes to the student handbook or college catalog and are expected to regularly check their school email account.

Information Policy

Mercy College reserves the right to make changes as necessary, including changes in requirements, programs, policies, and fees. Changes shall go into effect whenever appropriate, with such notice as is reasonable under the circumstances. Students may be notified of changes and updates via their student email, Canvas, and/or the College website.

Letter from the Dean

Welcome to Mercy College of Health Sciences and the Nursing Department.

We are honored to serve you during the completion of your nursing degree. Our goal is to provide an environment for collaboration and personal growth for all students enrolled in a Mercy College nursing program. The Nursing Department values the unique experiences, skills, and talents each of you bring to the learning environment. Your experiences enrich learning and provide context for the application and development of skills as you progress through your program of study.

Clinical experiences at Mercy College of Health Sciences are carefully planned to provide you with the best experience possible. Students will work with faculty members from a variety of practice backgrounds to cultivate the spirit of inquiry and develop their personal capacity to contribute to the nursing profession. We look forward to our graduates leading the charge to create better care experiences for patients across the healthcare continuum.

The purpose of the Nursing Student Handbook is to provide an orientation to the nursing programs and your responsibilities as a Mercy College of Health Sciences student. Please read the following contents carefully and seek guidance from your advisor if you have questions at any time.

All members of the Nursing Department are here to support you as you complete your program of study. Please reach out to any of us whenever you have questions. It will be our pleasure to assist you.

Congratulations on your decision to advance your education!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kristen Bryan Wessel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "B".

Dr. Kristen Bryan Wessel PhD, MSN, RN

Dean of Nursing

Mission and Philosophy Statement of Nursing Programs

At Mercy College of Health Sciences, our Mission states that we "prepare graduates for service and leadership" by "integrating our core values" throughout our philosophy of education, which guides our vision of "transforming students into healthcare professionals who live out and extend our ministry of healing."

We demonstrate these core values of Knowledge, Reverence, Integrity, Compassion and Excellence in all that we do, but we have received them through this "ministry of healing" because we are "rooted in the heritage of the Sisters of Mercy." That heritage not only guides our actions toward students once they arrive in our classes but calls us to seek out students in a manner commensurate with the ministry of healing demonstrated by Mother Catherine McAuley and the religious order she founded.

As the Sisters declare on their website: "Catherine recognized the many needs of people who were economically poor in early nineteenth-century Ireland and determined that she and women like her could make a difference." She and her Sisters sought out those people who were in the margins of Irish society, and paid particular attention in their educational endeavors to prepare the economically disadvantaged to make a dignified living. This historical heritage is reflected in today's world by the "Five Critical Concerns" of the Sisters of Mercy, and in particular their concern regarding Women, for whom the Sisters "give special attention to women's education, health, and spirituality through our legislative advocacy, our schools, healthcare institutions, and spirituality centers.

Nursing Student Rights & Responsibilities

The Mercy College of Health Sciences Student Handbook outlines policies on student rights, responsibilities, conduct and discipline for all college students. While in harmony with these policies, entry into the nursing program entails further clarification and expansion of these general expectations to the healthcare environment and professional nursing standards. These include professional responsibilities for safe and accountable practice, respect for self and others, and active participation in the learning process. Classroom behavior and clinical evaluations are based on application of knowledge from previous and concurrent courses and include, but not limited to those listed below.

1. Assumes responsibility for own learning and development by:

- a. Being prepared for class, lab, and clinical activities and assignments.
- b. Regularly attending class, lab, and clinical as scheduled and within attendance guidelines.
- c. Actively participating in learning activities.
- d. Completing assignments on time with written work being done legibly and in proper format.
- e. Accepting constructive criticism and supervision by others, utilizing suggestions for growth/improvement.
- f. Making arrangements for and completing make-up assignments within specified time frames after any class, lab, or clinical absence.
- g. Monitoring own progress in meeting course objectives and seeking out needed learning experiences and instructor assistance.
- h. Using appropriate resources and references to increase knowledge base and improve performance.
- i. Scheduling appointments with instructor(s) for assistance with class work, assignments, and other materials.
- j. Checking and responding to Mercy E-mail and Canvas daily.

2. Accepts accountability for own judgments, actions, or failure to act.

3. Safeguards the client by:

- a. Recognizing self-limitations.
- b. Seeking out the instructor when unsure of self or when unable to follow directions/guidelines given.
- c. Reporting errors, mistakes, or injuries in care and following through with the needed action for remedy.
- d. Arranging for clients needs to be met before leaving the unit for breaks, lunch, etc. Students and faculty are NOT permitted to leave the facility for lunch or breaks during the scheduled clinical time.
- e. Researching and preparing one's own assignments for class and clinical as directed (meds, treatments, diagnostic tests, pathophysiology, psychopathology, and social dynamics).
- f. Adhering to College, Program, agency policies, procedures, and routines.
- g. Accurately recording and reporting patient care data while respecting

confidentiality guidelines.

- h. Maintaining and providing documentation for immunizations and CPR recertification through CastleBranch immediately upon update.

4. Completes assigned nursing care, including charting and reporting, as designated by instructor and within clinical hours.

5. Demonstrates professional conduct, integrity, and respect for one's self and others by:

- a. Protecting the client's right to privacy in accordance with HIPAA by always maintaining strict confidentiality. ****This includes refraining from discussing patient information in any public place.*
- b. Respecting the human dignity and uniqueness of others regardless of social or economic status, personal attributes, or nature of health problems.
- c. Conducting therapeutic relationships with clients.
- d. Listening attentively and courteously when others are speaking.
- e. Putting client's needs before those of self.
- f. Verifying facts and information before making judgments or drawing conclusions.
- g. Exercising poise, tact, and self-control when communicating with others.
- h. Expressing oneself clearly and accurately both verbally and in written work.
- i. Offering assistance to others rather than waiting to be asked.
- j. Notifying appropriate people (instructors, staff, peers, and clients) when unable to keep commitments made to them.
- k. Projecting a professional image/attitude during class, lab, and clinical activities.
- l. Reporting acts of dishonesty and professional misconduct.
- m. Performing invasive procedures on another person(s) only under the supervision of a Mercy Nursing faculty or designated preceptor.

Student Conduct

All nursing students should demonstrate respect and a professional demeanor in order to reinforce civility and uphold the professional Code of Ethics (ANA, 2015a). Best practices of civility that will be expected include the following:

- a) Demonstrate use of clear, courteous, and professional verbal, nonverbal, and written communication. This includes but is not limited to emails, text messages, and other electronic communications.
- b) Treat others with respect, dignity, collegiality, and kindness in the classroom, lab, clinical, and online setting. This includes not only college web programs but also social media.
- c) Consider how personal words and actions affect others.
- d) Avoid gossip and spreading rumors.
- e) Rely on facts and not conjecture.
- f) Collaborate and share information when and where appropriate. When appropriate demonstrates use of clear, courteous, and professional verbal, nonverbal, and written communication. This includes but is not limited to emails, text messages, and other electronic communications and where appropriate, is demonstrated with attention to protecting student and patient confidentiality.
- g) Offer assistance when needed, and, if refused, accept refusal gracefully.
- h) Take responsibility and be accountable for one's individual actions both on campus, off campus, as well as in online presence.
- i) Recognize that abuse of power or authority is never acceptable.
- j) Conflict should be addressed in a constructive, professional manner with the individual party.
- k) Demonstrate openness to other points of view, perspectives, experiences and ideas.
- l) When appropriate, be polite and respectful, and apologize when indicated.
- m) Encourage, support, and mentor others, including new nursing students in the program.
- n) Listen to others with interest and respect.

Definitions:

Incivility- rude and discourteous actions such as name-calling, using a condescending tone, and public criticism (ANA, 2015a)

<https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/nursing-excellence/official-position-statements/id/incivility-bullying-and-workplace-violence/>

Bullying- repeated, unwanted harmful actions intended to humiliate, offend and cause distress in the recipient (ANA, 2015a)

<https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/nursing-excellence/official-position-statements/id/incivility-bullying-and-workplace-violence/>

Conflict Resolution

There may be times when students have concerns regarding testing, clinical evaluation, program/course policies, faculty or staff, or conditions of the learning environment that are adversely affecting learning. When students and/or faculty are under stress or in conflict, a nonproductive learning environment results. It is important for students to learn to use a timely and professional process to resolve concerns/conflict in a constructive manner. Problems must be addressed promptly at the time the concern becomes evident. Most issues are relatively easy to resolve when two individuals of goodwill sit down to discuss issues. As an issue moves up the chain of command, all persons involved will be included in the decision-making process.

Follow the chain of command: It is important for students to learn to use a timely and professional process to resolve concern/conflict in a professional manner. Problems must be addressed **PROMPTLY** at the time the concern becomes evident. As an issue moves up the chain of command, all persons involved will be included in the decision-making process.

- Student: Strive to solve the problem at the lowest level possible
- Instructor
- Program Chair
- Associate Dean of Nursing
- Dean of Nursing
- Special Assistant to the Provost
- Provost
- President of the College

Clinical Compliance

When seeking admission to an academic program which requires completion of clinical, preceptorship, or internship opportunities, students have to establish an account with CastleBranch, a background screening and credential portal service. CastleBranch account instructions can be found at <https://www.mchs.edu/castlebranch>. Once the account is established by the student, the student will be required to pay the necessary fees for background checks and to submit health records as a part of program admission. Students who are unable to fulfill the clinical standards of the profession may not be admitted to a nursing program.

A national criminal background check and child and dependent adult abuse checks will be conducted for each student seeking admission to an academic program that includes a clinical placement, preceptorship, internship, or similar experiences that require patient interaction. Students are also required to provide documentation of current immunizations and personal health information as required.

Students are responsible for maintaining their records in CastleBranch. Students are not permitted to attend clinical, preceptorship, practicum, internship or related opportunities until their records are up to date. **It is the student's responsibility to ensure that required items are completed and cleared by the deadline prior to each semester start.**

Documentation of the following are required for Clinical Compliance:

- 1. Background Check** is requirement of admission to all nursing programs.
- 2. Drug Testing** is required of all students of Mercy College of Health Sciences. All students enrolled in a program with a clinical component will need to submit to a drug screen upon admission to the program.
- 3. CPR Certification** - current certification in American Heart Association Basic Life Support Provider or American Red Cross
- 4. Iowa Mandatory Reporter Training (completion certificate):**
<https://hhs.iowa.gov/report-abuse-fraud/mandatory-reporters>
 - a. Mandatory Reporter: Child Abuse
 - b. Mandatory Reporter: Dependent Adult Abuse
- 5. HIPAA training certificate**
- 6. OSHA training certificate**
- 7. N-95 Mask Fit Test** - must be completed prior to the start of the final term inclusive of critical care clinical and nursing preceptorship. Students are responsible for attending a fit testing clinic at the partner institution per the options provided during the prior semester. Documentation must be uploaded to the vendor site (eg: CastleBranch) no less than 10 days prior to the first day of the final semester.
- 8. Immunizations:**
 - a. *Two-step TB skin testing within the past year; then one-step TB skin test yearly after admission.* Acceptable alternatives to TB skin testing are a negative T-spot blood test OR a negative QuantiFERON Gold blood test. If a positive skin test or a history of positive tests, a negative chest-ray report administered within the past 12 months is required; then a TB Questionnaire completed yearly after admission

- b. **Hepatitis B: Completion of series (three doses)**, OR initiation of the Hepatitis B series (if series is in process, student must meet all immunization deadlines per CDC guidelines to remain in clinicals or practicums), OR a positive titer showing full immunity.
- c. **Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR): Completion of series (two doses)** OR positive titers of all three diseases showing full immunity.
- d. **Chicken Pox (Varicella): Completion of series (two doses)**, OR positive titer showing full immunity, OR proof of disease by medical provider documentation.
- e. **Tdap or Tdap**: completion of series, must be renewed every 10 years
- f. **COVID**: initial series
- Pfizer/BioNTech: 2 dose series administered 21 days apart **or**
 - Moderna: 2-dose series administered 28 days apart
- g. **Seasonal vaccinations are required annually** to participate in courses that include a clinical rotation; this includes both:
- Influenza annual vaccination **&**
 - COVID annual booster

**The requirements for clinical compliance are subject to change based on clinical site requirements. Students will be notified of any changes at the earliest opportunity.*

Clinical Compliance Deadline

All clinical compliance documentation must be submitted and approved/cleared no later than 10 days prior to the term start.

Failure to complete any of the requirements for the major may delay or end the enrollment process and result in delayed academic progression.

Clinical Reporting Policy

Students must first contact their clinical instructor as soon as possible to report suspected patient abuse or other witnessed inappropriate conduct in a clinical setting.

Clinical Responsibility and Compensation Restrictions Policy

In a clinical setting/session, students must not take the responsibility for or the place of qualified staff. Students may be employed in a clinical setting outside regular educational hours, provided the work does not interfere with regular academic responsibilities.

Students may not receive credit for clinical, practicum, or related academic activities while fulfilling work obligations for an employer.

Confidentiality of Patient Information Policy/Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Students must always maintain patient confidentiality. Students are required to comply with regulations contained in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Students are legally responsible for maintaining patient confidentiality and are personally liable for any and all breaches of patient confidentiality. A breach of patient confidentiality is considered a Student Code of Conduct violation and falls under that policy.

Students must follow these confidentiality rules:

- Do not discuss clients off the unit. This means anywhere off the unit (e.g., other locations in the medical center, in the cafeteria, in the elevator, in the student's car, in other public places, at a second place of employment, in the mall, at home with family or friends, in the classroom, and/or any other settings.)
- Do divulge a client's name off the unit for any reason..
- If a student knows a client or the client's family, notify the instructor or the contact person immediately (e.g., neighbor, classmate, friend, current or former colleague at work, family, etc.).
- If a student knows a client or the client's family on a professional basis (has taken care of them in another medical setting), notify the instructor or the contact person immediately.
- Students should not acknowledge a client outside the unit or at a later date in any other setting (e.g., church, the mall, in the medical center, party, school, etc.). Do not nod, smile, greet, or acknowledge the client even casually in any way, unless the client first nods, smiles, or greets the student. Limit interaction to a polite acknowledgement.
Do not discuss anything with the client related to his/her hospital stay anywhere off the unit, even if the client initiates the conversation. Students should indicate that they can't discuss it off the unit for confidentiality reasons.
- Do not discuss clients with an instructor, other than the instructor on the unit.
- Do not send information about clients via email. This includes sending assessments, care plans, or journals.
- Do not use client names or their families' names in assessment care plans.
- Do not use client names with other clients or with their peers. If a student is approached by a client who wants to discuss another client, refer them to staff immediately.

Illness & Infectious Disease

Documentation of a class/lab/sim/clinical absence is required within 48 hours of the absence, provided to Student Services/Dean of Students. Documentation must be from a healthcare provider demonstrating that they were seen on the day of the absence and that they are cleared to return to clinical. The absence must be made up in a manner determined appropriate by each course lead in alignment with the course syllabus. See also the Attendance Policy.

Concerning infectious diseases, the College will follow the MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center Infectious Control Policy during class and lab and will follow the specific clinical site's policy during clinical. The student is responsible for the cost of any treatments or medications prescribed.

Student Injury or Exposures to Blood-borne Pathogens Procedure

All employees and students will follow standard precautions to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials. All blood or other potentially infectious materials will be presumed infectious, regardless of the perceived status of the source individual.

Students sustaining an illness, injury, or accidental percutaneous (puncture wound) and/or mucous membrane exposure to blood or body fluids or bloodborne pathogens shall comply with the following guidelines.

Students who are injured or exposed to bloodborne pathogens in a clinical setting should follow the clinical site policies governing such injuries or exposures. If a student is injured or exposed to bloodborne pathogens during the clinical experience, the student must report the injury or exposure immediately to the faculty member supervising the clinical experience.

Injuries or exposures shall include but are not limited to actual bodily injury as well as exposure to bloodborne and/or communicable diseases occurring on the premises of the clinical site while the student is in the clinical setting or coming to/leaving the clinical site. Students who incur injuries and/or exposures at a clinical facility must comply with that facility's policy and procedure pertinent to the injury/exposure. This compliance includes completing all required documentation and reporting as required by the clinical site where the injury and/or exposure occurred.

At a minimum, all student injuries or exposures must be reported via MIDAS event reporting, which can be located on TH ZENWorks.

The faculty member responsible for the student shall ensure that the student receives appropriate medical attention, and the IRIS report is completed immediately following the injury or exposure. In the case of a serious injury, the faculty member must immediately contact the Academic Dean/Associate Dean.

In the event of serious or life-threatening injury or illness, treatment should be implemented at the clinical facility if emergency treatment is available. If emergency treatment is not available on-site, emergency personnel should be summoned without delay and the student should be transported to the nearest medical facility for emergency treatment.

If the clinical facility does not provide care indicated for the injury/exposure or if it is a non-emergent injury/exposure, the student should seek medical treatment at either a MercyOne Urgent Care or the MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center Medical Center Emergency Department, depending on the outlined criteria below.

Mercy College is not responsible for student healthcare costs. Students are responsible for their own healthcare insurance and/or costs related to healthcare treatment, whether an injury/exposure occurs on campus or in a clinical setting.

All employees and students will follow Standard Precautions to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials. All blood or other potentially infectious materials will be considered infectious, regardless of the perceived status of the source individual.

Students sustaining an accidental percutaneous (puncture wound) and/or mucous membrane exposure to blood or body fluids or blood borne pathogen shall comply with the following guidelines.

Clinical Site:

- Administer first aid immediately after exposure. Cleanse the wound and surrounding area with soap and water (for a needle stick), or flush eyes, nose, or mouth with copious amounts of tap water (for a splash to the face).
- Faculty and students shall follow the clinical site's policies regarding OSHA's bloodborne pathogen and other infection control/isolation policies.
- Students shall promptly contact the faculty in charge of the clinical or laboratory setting following injuries or exposures to blood-borne pathogens. This contact shall be done at the time of the injury/illness/exposure or as soon as the injury/illness/exposure is suspected. Students under the supervision of a preceptor when a clinical faculty is not physically present at the site shall notify their assigned preceptor as well as the lead faculty for the clinical course.
- If exposure/injury occurs at a MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center Des Moines Medical Center Clinical site Monday-Friday, between 7:30AM-3:30PM, the student will report to MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center Medical Center Employee Health Services.
- If exposure/injury occurs after hours or when Employee Health Services is closed, the House Supervisor should be contacted for further instructions and assessment.
- Any time the exposure/injury occurs at a location other than MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center Clinical Site the student should be directed to follow the clinical site's policy. If the clinical site refuses to care for the student, the student should be directed to the nearest MercyOne Urgent Care Clinic.
 - MercyOne Urgent Care Clinics have varying hours of operation. For more information on specific clinics and hours visit:
<https://www.mercyone.org/desmoines/find-a-service-or-specialty/urgent-care>.
 - Any student injured when MercyOne Urgent Care Clinics are closed should report to MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center Emergency Department for further evaluation and treatment.

The student and faculty will work together to enter details of the incident into the designated incident reporting system (eg: MIDAS). The incident report should be completed as if the incident were regarding a visitor; in the report, it can be specified that the individual is a student.

Classroom or Lab:

- Administer first aid immediately after exposure. Cleanse the wound and surrounding area with soap and water (for a needle stick), or flush eyes, nose, or mouth with copious amounts of tap water (for a splash to the face).
- Students shall promptly contact the faculty in charge of the classroom or laboratory setting following injuries or exposures to blood-borne pathogens. This contact shall be made at the time of the injury/illness/exposure or as soon as the injury/illness/exposure is suspected.
- Any time exposure or injury occurs during a classroom or lab setting the student should be directed to the nearest MercyOne Urgent Care Clinic.
 - MercyOne Urgent Care Clinics have varying hours of operation. For more information on specific clinics and hours visit:
<https://www.mercyone.org/desmoines/find-a-service-or-specialty/urgent-care>.

Any student injury occurring not during MercyOne Urgent Care Clinic hours of operation should report to MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center Emergency Department for further evaluation and treatment.

The student and faculty will work together to enter details of the incident into the designated incident reporting system. The incident report should be completed as if the incident were regarding a visitor; in the report, it can be specified that the individual is a student.

Security Incident Reporting

Students should promptly report any vandalism or security incidents to the Facilities Manager. Between the hours of 4 p.m. and 7 a.m., incidents should be reported directly to the MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center Public Safety Office, (515) 247- 3111.

Additional requirements and expectations are outlined in the respective handbook sections for pre-licensure and post-licensure programs.



Pre-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook

Preface

Pre-Licensure Nursing Policies are specific to the **PN/ASN, traditional and accelerated BSN degree programs**. Nursing students must abide by these policies in addition to the Mercy College of Health Sciences policies found in the College Catalog and College Handbook.

Contact Information

Current contact information is found on the [Mercy College of Health Sciences Directory](#)

Dr. Kristen Wessel, PhD, MSN, RN
Dean of Nursing
Kristen.Wessel@mchs.edu; 515-643-6731

Ashley Hoff, MSN, RN, CNE
Associate Dean of Undergraduate Nursing
Ashley.Hoff@mchs.edu; 515-643-6734

Attendance

Regular attendance and consistent study habits are essential to success in college and are expected of all nursing students at Mercy College of Health Sciences. Absenteeism and tardiness interfere with the learning process and can contribute to academic failure.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled class, lab, simulation, and clinical sessions for the full scheduled duration. Regular attendance and participation provide students an opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills most current in the nursing profession and to practice using those skills. In the classroom and lab, faculty have the opportunity to assess student learning and assist students before knowledge and skills are used in the actual health care setting.

Any absence interferes with the learning process. Therefore, attendance will be monitored in class, lab, and clinical sessions. Sleeping during class, lab, simulation, or clinical is not considered attendance and the student may be asked to leave.

Attendance Policy

Attendance at all regularly scheduled meetings of a course lab, simulation, and clinical is expected. A student shall be permitted to make-up required assignments, examinations, and clinicals missed due to absences when these are authenticated. Students who are absent because of religious observances are excused without penalty and will be allowed to make up work missed because of such absences. A student will not be excused from lab, simulation, and/or clinical for other reasons such as an appointment, vacation, or sports games/practices/meets. The Clinical/Lab/Simulation makeup fee will be applied to the student's account for unexcused absences.

The President of the College or an official appointed by him or her is authorized to cancel classes at the College or any part thereof in the event that weather conditions so dictate. When classes have been canceled by the College, all nursing program classes, including clinical classes are canceled.

A student arriving more than 5 minutes late to an in-class exam will not be permitted to begin the exam. An alternative time must be scheduled with the instructor to make up the exam outside of class time. To preserve exam integrity, make up exams given may be a different version of the exam, per individual instructor discretion.

It is the expectation in a course with a lab component that the student will be willing to participate in skills practice with another student in the lab setting. Students are assigned a section and it is expected students will attend the assigned section. If needing to attend another section, the student must get permission from both course coordinators and late testing/attendance rules may apply.

The recognized grounds for absences in the classroom and clinical setting are:

1. Illness requiring medical attention: a provider note needs to be provided.
2. Recognized religious holidays.
3. Severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions.
4. If a student is having any symptoms of illness, including COVID symptoms, this should be taken seriously, and the student should not attend clinical until cleared by a provider.

Clinical, Simulation & Skills Lab Attendance

Students are expected to begin at the appointed start time. Students arriving five minutes past the start time will be counted as tardy.

- After 30 minutes the student will be counted absent and unable to attend the learning experience that day. Two tardies per course equals one absence, and each tardy thereafter will be counted as an absence.
- Attendance is mandatory for the total scheduled time. **Students will be counted absent if they leave for any reason before the end of the session.**
- Two absences, including missing scheduled make-up sessions, will result in failure of the course.

Student Absence from Clinical, Simulation, or Lab

Students are expected to attend every session of a clinical/simulation/lab practicum. Should one absence occur, the student must make up the missed time on the designated clinical/lab make-up day and will be assessed a \$150 make-up fee. The specific nature of the make-up assignment is at the discretion of the faculty member or preceptor. Arrangements for making up clinical/simulation/lab time are based on availability of the clinical/lab site, faculty, specific learner needs, and student availability. Progression to the next level may be delayed until these accommodations can be made.

Students must personally notify the clinical/lab faculty/preceptor, **prior to the scheduled start time**, if an absence from a clinical day is necessary. Specifics of this notification process will be supplied by the clinical/lab faculty. Missing more than one clinical/simulation/lab day in a term will result in course/clinical failure or incomplete.

No Call/No Show Policy

An incident of not notifying lab/simulation/clinical instructor of an absence prior to the start of the lab/clinical session (as described above) constitutes a breach of *Professional and Ethic Conduct* as described in the Student Handbook under the *Student Code of Conduct and Discipline Policy and Procedures*. Students will be subject to the *Student Discipline Procedure* identified in the Student Handbook. Occurrences of no call/no show are cumulative throughout the nursing program, and will not start over each semester, and will be carried throughout their Mercy College enrollment. The Program Chairs and Clinical Coordinator will be notified of the no call/no show and they will track occurrences of No Call/No Show incidences.

An incident of not calling or attending lab/clinical will result in the following consequences, and will be required for successful completion of the course. Students must contact the course coordinator to schedule a meeting within 48 hours of scheduled absence. Failure to contact the course coordinator within 48 hours of absence will result in failure of the course.

First occurrence: The student will meet with the Course Coordinator and write a 3-5-page reflective paper on the ethics of professional accountability. Guidelines for the paper are as

follows:

- Discuss breach of ethical conduct as it relates to patient care and future career in nursing.
- Discuss how the incident impacts the assignment/work group in the clinical area.
- Discuss how the incident conflicts with the nursing program objectives/learning outcomes.
- Discuss how the incident conflicts with the core values of Mercy College.
- APA format is required. Reference citations are required and should relate to ethical conduct as stated in the Student Handbook as well as other sources on professionalism.

Second occurrence: Will result in failure of the course.

Tardiness

Tardiness is defined as arriving five minutes or more after the posted start time of a class, simulation, lab, or clinical based on the instructor's cell phone clock.

- If a student arrives thirty or more minutes late to clinical, the student will not be allowed to stay, and this will result in an unexcused absence.
- When a student is tardy twice within one semester, it will be counted as one absence. The clinical absence will require payment of the \$150 (refer to Student Absence from Clinical/Lab policy).
- Every subsequent tardy following the first two will be considered one clinical/simulation/lab absence.
- **Greater than one clinical/simulation/lab absence will result in failure of the course/clinical.**

Weather-Related Change or Cancellation Procedure

Please refer to the College Handbook for weather-related policy and procedures.

Dress Code

Grooming and uniform dress code policies are based on the three following standards:

1. **Client safety:** Tissue Integrity- patients are to be protected from tissue damage from fingernails, jewelry, etc. Infection Control- patients are to be protected from known sources of infection, actual or potential.
2. **Professional Demeanor:** Nursing students are expected to represent themselves, Mercy College, and nursing in a professional manner.
3. **Compliance:** The students and faculty have an obligation to comply with the dress code standards of any of the agencies with which Mercy College contracts for experiences.

When attending class it is expected that students will dress in a business casual fashion with closed-toed shoes. No t-shirts, tank tops, shorts, sweats, low cut tops or similar clothing will be allowed. All tops need to be long enough at the waist and high enough at the neckline to provide adequate coverage of the abdomen, back and chest at all times. Undergarments must not be visible through clothing or seen above the waistline of the pants.

Laboratory, Simulation, Clinical, or Practicum Settings

- a. Students are required to wear Mercy College scrubs with black scrub pants to **all skills lab sessions**. Students who arrive to lab/simulation/clinical not wearing the approved uniform will be sent home and receive an unexcused absence. For students entering the first nursing skills lab course, scrubs must be purchased and worn no later than midterm.
- b. For clinical experiences the student is required to wear a standardized uniform consisting of black scrub pants with a purple scrub top with white embroidered College logo. No other uniform styles (including Mercy Medical Center scrubs) are acceptable.
- c. A clean uniform should be worn each day, should be wrinkle free and not drag on the floor. Alterations to the uniforms are for fitting purposes only and not to change the style.
- d. All tops need to be long enough at the waist and high enough at the neckline to provide adequate coverage of the abdomen, back and chest at all times.
- e. Undergarments must not be visible through clothing or seen above the waistline of the pants.
- f. Solid colored shirts, tops or turtlenecks in the colors of black, white, off white, tan, or gray may be worn under a uniform top and cannot be seen below the bottom of the uniform top.
- g. Student ID badge visible and above the waist.
- h. Watch with second sweep hand (NO smart watch)
- i. NO cell phones in the clinical area
- j. Shoes must match and be of a non-permeable material.
- k. Shoes must not have holes or mesh. No slippers, flip-flops, or crocs are allowed.
- l. Offensive tattoos must be covered.
- m. Hair that is longer than shoulder length needs to be pulled back, off shoulders, and out of the face.
- n. Facial hair must be clean and trimmed.
- o. Perfumes, colognes, and scented body lotions are prohibited. Students should not smell of cigarette smoke or offensive body odor.
- p. Up to two pierced earrings per ear lobe allowed – no dangles or hoops. All other visible body piercings (including tongue, nose, lip, and eyebrow piercings) are not permitted. Students may use a clear spacer if the piercing cannot be removed completely.
- q. **No** artificial nails/extendors allowed including but not limited to acrylic nails, porcelain, tips, acrylic coating, silk/fiber wraps, gel nails and extendors, stickers/decals/nail jewelry and other artificial nail trends.

- r. Natural nails are clean and short and should be maintained no longer than ¼ inch in length. No nail polish is accepted.
- s. Refer to the Community Health and Mental Health course syllabi for variations in the dress code.

Student Learning Plans

Student Learning Plans are given to alert students to possible situations or behaviors that, if continued, may cause the student to be in jeopardy in a course or in the program. Learning plans will be initiated for unsatisfactory class, lab, simulation, and/or clinical performance, or if the instructor is unable to evaluate the student's performance due to absenteeism. When a learning plan is given, the initiating instructor will collaborate with the student in the development of remediation measures in order to promote student success. Students are expected to complete remediation requirements and communicate progress as directed. Documentation will be placed in the student file and shared with the Dean of Nursing. Failure to meet the outcomes outlined in the learning plan may result in failure of the course.

Laboratory, Simulation, and Clinical Policies

Medication Calculation Proficiency

Nursing students must achieve 95% proficiency to meet medication calculation benchmarks for dosage and calculation in designated courses.

Any student's participation in clinical experience requires that they meet the academic and professional standards of behavior that ensure patient comfort and safety.

PROCEDURE:

Students in the nursing program will take a medication calculation exam during the semester and must achieve 95%. The following criteria apply:

1st attempt: If the student is unsuccessful on the first attempt the student will be remediated with the instructor/math tutor prior to the next attempt. Students must meet with the SSC prior to the 2nd attempt.

2nd attempt: If the student is unsuccessful on the second attempt the student will receive further remediation with the instructor/math tutor prior to the third and final attempt.

3rd attempt: If the student is unsuccessful on the third attempt, the student will not be permitted to progress to the next nursing course with a clinical component and will be required to complete additional math remediation during the "off" term. Before enrolling in the next nursing course with a clinical component, the student must show proficiency in the medication calculation exam by achieving a 95%.

The medication calculation proficiency exam does not affect the student's course grade in the current course. For example, failure to meet 95% proficiency by the 3rd attempt does not result in failure of the course (C-).

Lab, Simulation, & Clinical Expectations

- a. Students will be oriented to and follow the guidelines of the lab/clinical site.
- b. Students are required to provide their own transportation to and from the lab/clinical site.
- c. Students are responsible for checking Canvas, email, and TEAMS for communication regarding lab/clinical.
- d. There will be specific check offs with clinical instructors throughout the clinical experience.
- e. Failure to complete these check-offs successfully will result in a course failure.

Clinical Skills Evaluation

Student evaluations will be completed by clinical instructors each semester and documented and maintained in the student's file and in Dropbox for each specific course. Students will be evaluated upon completion of skills in preparation to safely implement said skills at the clinical site caring for patients. There will be specific skills checkoffs by faculty and clinical instructors throughout the lab/clinical experience. **Failure to successfully complete all skills in a given course will result in failure of the course.** Please refer to the course syllabus for details.

Students must meet ALL clinical performance expectations to pass the course.

These include:

Client Safety

- o Performs skills with competency and appropriate supervision.
- o Does not place a client at risk or in a dangerous situation.
- o Administers medications competently per clinical evaluation standards.

Nursing Process

- o Performs ongoing assessments of the client(s).
- o Recognizes and communicates changes in client condition.
- o Appropriately prioritizes client needs at the expected program level.
- o Applies theory to practice.

Critical Thinking

- o Demonstrates core critical thinking skills (interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation and self-regulation).
- o Demonstrates sound clinical judgment.
- o Demonstrates competency in written and oral communication.
- o Maintains client confidentiality.
- o Accurately records information into the client's record.
- o Receives client report; provides report of client's condition to instructor and co-assigned nurse.

Verbal and/or Nonverbal Behaviors

- o Demonstrates professional behavior at all times.
- o Demonstrates responsibility and accountability.
- o Demonstrates preparation for clinical rotations (paperwork is completed, medications have been researched, procedures have been reviewed, etc.).
- o Collaborates with members of the healthcare team.
- o Demonstrates professional behaviors when interacting with clients.

Honesty

- o Assumes responsibility for one's own actions.

Lab, Simulation, or Clinical Cancellation

In the event that an instructor does not arrive for a scheduled lab/clinical experience the students will complete the following procedure:

- a. If the clinical/lab instructor does not arrive, or has not communicated with students, within 15 minutes of the clinical start time, a student representative will notify the course coordinator.
- b. The course coordinator will organize clinical/lab coverage and notify students.
- c. If there has been no communication from either the instructor or the course coordinator 30 minutes after contacting the course coordinator, the students may leave the clinical/lab site.

Lab, Simulation, or Clinical Makeup

- a. Students will follow the course syllabus regarding notification of the lab/clinical in the event of an absence. **Notification must be given at least one hour prior to the scheduled clinical time.**
- b. There will be a **charge of \$150** for each lab, simulation, or clinical makeup day, payable to the business office at the College. This fee must be paid prior to each makeup session or prior to the end of the semester. Once a student is scheduled for the makeup session, the fee will be charged whether or not the student attends the session. Student transcripts will be held for nonpayment of makeup fees.
- c. Lab & simulation makeup is individually scheduled with the Lab Coordinator or designated faculty.
- d. Clinical makeup for specialty courses could result in the student making up those hours on the Medical/Surgical floor.
- e. Clinical makeup is a full clinical day regardless of how many hours were actually missed.**
- f. Students are expected to make up clinical absences during the designated clinical makeup sessions per the course syllabus or as identified on the course calendar.
- g. Students are expected to meet the clinical requirements as stated in the course outline as though it were a regular clinical day.
- h. In the event of an absence for a scheduled lab or clinical makeup session, students must notify the clinical or lab makeup instructor at least one hour prior to the start of the makeup session.
- i. Clinical makeup paperwork, if required, will be submitted to the clinical instructor or Course Coordinator within **seven days** of the makeup session.

Clinical Preceptorship Placement for Pre-licensure Nursing Students

During the semester preceding the preceptor experience, faculty will determine student placement on a medical-surgical clinical site. Students who meet the nursing program established benchmark on selected standardized assessments will have the opportunity to ask for placement on specialty units.

Students are not allowed to contact clinical sites or preceptors to arrange placement. All sites are subject to availability of the clinical site and preceptor. In addition, there needs to be an existing affiliation agreement between Mercy College of Health Sciences and the site.



Post-Licensure Nursing Student Handbook

Preface

Post-Licensure Nursing Policies are specific to the **RN-BSN degree completion program** and **Graduate Nursing programs**. Nursing students must abide by these policies in addition to the Mercy College of Health Sciences policies found in the College Catalog and College Handbook.

Contact Information

Current contact information is found on the [Mercy College of Health Sciences Directory](#)

Dr. Kristen Wessel, PhD, MSN, RN
Dean of Nursing
Kristen.Wessel@mchs.edu; 515-643-6731

Dr. Jane DeGooyer, EdD, MSN, RN, CNE
Associate Dean of Graduate Nursing
Jane.DeGooyer@mchs.edu; 515-643-6737

RN-BSN Mission Statement

See undergraduate section: [Nursing Mission Statement](#)

Graduate Nursing Mission Statement

Following in the traditions of the Sisters of Mercy, Mercy College of Health Sciences prepares graduate nurses to lead and serve patients, populations, and systems in Iowa and globally. Graduates will use advanced nursing knowledge guided by research and ethical behavior to support nursing practice.

Disclosure of offenses post-background check completion

Current, full-, and part-time students are required to immediately report to the Associate Dean or Dean of Nursing any criminal activity including arrests, criminal charge or conviction after the background check was completed, and during the remaining course of the program. Required disclosures also include any allegations, investigations and/or disciplinary action from any licensing board or agency.

Maintaining Immunization and Certification Requirements

All students must maintain current documentation within the electronic data management system. If a student fails to provide updated documentation of requirements, the student will not be allowed to begin/continue clinical course work and/or register for additional courses.

See also [Clinical Compliance Policy](#).

Preceptorship Rotations

Specific requirements are found in the program-specific *Nursing Preceptorship Manual*.

Preparing for Certification

Those who graduate from a Nursing Graduate School program are encouraged, but not required, to participate in national certification for all concentration specialty areas. Refer to each concentration for this requirement. Additional information on the applicable certification examination will be provided for each concentration prior to graduation.

Practicum Experiences

Real-world practicum experiences are embedded within designated courses as a means of meeting program outcomes, *Essentials of Nursing Education* (AACN, 2021), and preparation for translation to the dynamic healthcare workforce.

Please refer to course descriptions in the College Catalog for program specifics.

Practicum / Immersion Experiences

Application of program knowledge and skills culminate in real-world practice capstone experiences under the guidance of a qualified nurse preceptor in the field.

Student Requirements

The student must complete the following steps once provided guidelines for selection of a practicum site and preceptor qualifications:

- 1) find and secure approval from practicum site, as appropriate
 - letter of agreement signed by qualified representative of the facility or
 - official affiliation agreement obtained
- 2) obtain qualified preceptor willing to provide oversight of the student experience
 - submit completed preceptorship agreement (see Preceptorship Handbook)
- 3) obtain approval from the Course Faculty before beginning practicum – This is a **REQUIRED** step before proceeding!
- 4) establish practicum schedule in collaboration with approved preceptor
- 5) Track actual practicum hours and project deliverables – submit via Canvas by designated deadlines (initial, midterm, and final) and as needed/requested by faculty

The faculty will:

- provide approval of project or “Immersion Proposal”
- review, approve or deny practicum site and preceptor
- retain full responsibility for student evaluation and grading
 - Preceptors do not evaluate student performance, only provide feedback to the student and the faculty

Essential Preceptorship Handbook Contents:

- Immersion Proposal
- Preceptor Role
- Role of the Faculty
- Expectations of Student
- Practicum Schedule
- Preceptorship Agreement
- Course Learning Outcomes Self Evaluation
- Preceptor Feedback of Student
- Student Evaluation of Preceptor and Site

Acknowledgement of Nursing Student Handbook

First & Last Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Program: _____

Students are expected to read the regulations and policies in Mercy College of Health Sciences College Catalog, the Mercy College Student Handbook and the Mercy Nursing Student Handbook. It is the student's responsibility, not the College or a member of the faculty or staff, for knowing and abiding by the regulations and policies, and for meeting the requirements for a nursing degree. After reading the policies contained in the areas noted above and this handbook, students are to sign this acknowledgement form acknowledging that all policies have been read and return it to the course faculty.

My signature below denotes that I acknowledge that I have read the policies in the documents noted:

1. College Catalog
2. Mercy College Student Handbook
3. Mercy Nursing Student Handbook

I understand that I am responsible for the policies and procedures stipulated and I am responsible for reviewing all contents on an annual basis. If I have questions, I will contact the appropriate nursing program representative or the Dean of Nursing.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

The signed form will be retained in the student's permanent file.