RN-BSN
Nursing Student Handbook

Georgia Highlands College
Department of Nursing
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GEORGIA HIGHLANDS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING

Introduction

The Georgia Highlands College Nursing Department has prepared this handbook to inform the RN-BSN students of the policies and guidelines specific to this online nursing program. This handbook serves as a supplement to the Georgia Highlands College catalog, which covers the general institutional policies as they relate to all students.
It is the responsibility of each nursing student to review the handbook independently and to refer to it as needed during his/her enrollment in the nursing program. All statements in the RN-BSN Nursing Student handbook or announcements of present Nursing Program policies are subject to change at any time without notice. Changes will be posted on the nursing web site at http://www.highlands.edu/site/bsn.

Mission Statement

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

Philosophy

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

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.

ADA Statement

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

Background Check, Drug Screening, Liability Insurance, Student Health Records, CPR

- Background check and drug screening is required for clinical practice by most health care institutions utilized by the nursing program. Students will be required to complete a background check prior to admission to the RN-BSN program and prior to scheduled clinical or field experiences if the institution requires an additional check. A satisfactory background check must be submitted to the Dean of Health Sciences prior to acceptance into the program. Any background check cost is at the expense of the student. Some health care institutions are only accepting background checks and drug screenings from AdvantageStudents (**www.advantagestudents.com**). Drug screenings may be done randomly at the

discretion of the health care agency or nursing faculty should questionable behavior occur in student behavior in the clinical setting.

- Required student health records, background check, drug screening, liability insurance are valid for only one (1) from date on individual record; CPR valid for two (2) years from date on issued card. Responsibility is with each student to monitor expiration dates of records. If student health records expire during any course (clinical or non-clinical), student is not eligible to remain in the course and therefore will receive an "F" *

Student Uniform Guidelines During Clinical

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

- A white laboratory coat is required to be worn by all RN-BSN students when in the clinical setting. The lab coat should be clean and wrinkle free and worn over appropriate clothing (business casual) and with proper shoes (business casual). No halter tops, shorts, jeans or cut off pants or open-toed shoes should be worn. Proper attire is business casual.
- GHC ID badge with student's picture and name must be clearly visible and worn on the lab coat during all clinical experiences.
- During any clinical, facial hair must be neatly trimmed, finger nails should be short, polish-free, and not extending beyond the tips of the fingers. No artificial nails are allowed. Jewelry should be limited to a watch, one pair of small, stud earrings. No other jewelry permitted on visible body parts. Multiple earrings in the ears or eyebrows, lips, or nose jewelry are not acceptable in the clinical setting.
- Tattoos must be covered and not visible while in the clinical setting.
- Personal hygiene is expected. Students are not allowed to wear perfume, cologne, heavy makeup or artificial eyelashes in the clinical setting.
- Hair should be neatly groomed and up off shoulders.

- If the clinical setting (agency/hospital/facility) requires the student to obtain and wear a student ID badge representing the facility, the student must comply with request at all clinical experiences acquired with the facility.
- Specific information regarding NURS 4404 Clinical Leadership Practicum (preceptorship):
    - Setting-up preceptorship is a lengthy, step process and requires communication/collaboration between students, course faculty, agency-appointed liaison, and potential preceptor. During active online course sessions, the required avenue of communication is via D2L email (if between sessions/no active courses, then use GHC email). Students are required to check/monitor emails at least five (5) times weekly during active course sessions. Students are required to respond to emails in a timely manner (within 24 hours) regarding faculty questions/concerns (applies to any course). Students who do not respond to email as required: Three (3) or more occurrences the course faculty may discontinue preceptorship set-up. The student will then need request NURS enrollment in a future session. *
    - Any student changing employment to another hospital/agency/workplace after the course coordinator has begun the preceptorship set-up (preceptorship set-up begins the semester prior to student's scheduled NURS 4404 course), please be aware that previous place of employment where preceptorship set-up was initiated and/or completed may not allow students to participate in preceptorship since changing employment sites. Therefore, there may not be enough time to set up a preceptorship experience/identify a preceptor at your present job. Although RN-BSN faculty fully support any student's decision regarding the changing of employers or jobs, there are no guarantees of an opportunity for preceptorship experience for a specific course session. Therefore, the outcome will most likely require the student to request enrollment in a future semester/session of NURS 4404. *

Code of Conduct

Students enrolled in the Health Sciences Programs at Georgia Highlands College are expected to adhere to a professional standard of conduct presenting a professional image, demeanor, and behavior/etiquette in the healthcare facilities and within the online classes. The Code of Conduct is based on policies and procedures that are supported by Georgia Highlands College http://www.highlands.edu/site/student-rights and various clinical agencies and not limited to the following:

- Students are always required to perform client care in a lawful, safe and effective manner. Students participating in Clinical Leadership Practicum-preceptorship (NURS 4404) or Community Health Nursing (NURS 4401) will not be performing direct patient care; specific requirements will be noted in each clinical course syllabus. Students will maintain a respectful, sensitive, and compassionate relationship with faculty, clients/patients, and online classmates.
- Students are not only responsible for their actions in online courses and clinical setting but also responsible for notifying the appropriate person, department, and faculty if they have knowledge of any unprofessional or unethical online or clinical conduct of fellow classmates. It is the student's responsibility to report any impairment that he or she may experience or any knowledge of an impaired classmate in the clinical setting as this could be a safety risk for clients or others.
- Students documented to have demonstrated unethical unsafe, or unprofessional conduct are at risk of probation or dismissal from the Health Sciences Programs at Georgia Highlands College. The Code of Conduct is not a limiting document but serves as a guideline.
- Any student in possible violation of above Code of Conduct will immediately be required to meet with the Dean of Health Sciences and RN-BSN faculty. The student will be provided with an opportunity to share his/her report/comments. If the student declines to counsel with the Dean and faculty, the student will not be allowed to continue in the RN-BSN program and therefore, will receive an "F" for the course:
    - Reports of possible violation regarding the Code of Conduct as described in the RN-BSN handbook or violation of GHC's Code of Conduct policies, dishonesty, intent of falsification of any program or clinically-related records, and/or possible violation regarding patient or student confidentiality, safe practice in the clinical setting, or ethical standards will be promptly investigated. The student will first be required to immediately meet with the Dean of Health

Sciences and/or nursing faculty to provide an opportunity for the student to offer information to his/her defense. If the outcome of the meeting provides more evidence of a violation of GHC's **Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Code** https://www.highlands.edu/site/student-rights then the issue will be referred to appropriate avenues per GHC policy to provide the student with a fair hearing.

If the student declines or refuses to initial meeting with the Dean of Health Sciences and/or RN-BSN faculty then the student will not be eligible to remain in his/her current course (s) and will receive an "F" for current course work. The student will not be eligible to remain in the RN-BSN program due to the potential negative impact the reported possible behavior. The student will not be eligible for future readmission to the RN-BSN program.

- Behavior representing any of the above mentioned is unacceptable and may negatively impact the RN-BSN program, and/or put others at risk in addition to jeopardizing GHC and community relationships.
- Any report or noted inappropriate conduct within any online nursing course will not be tolerated. Inappropriate conduct may include **but not limited to** sarcasm directed towards peers or faculty, offensive language, criticism of peers or faculty, academic dishonesty, unprofessionalism, and/or unethical behavior. A student exhibiting inappropriate behavior will be required to meet with the Dean of Allied Health Sciences and RN-BSN faculty. If the student refuses to meet with the Dean of Allied Health Sciences and RN-BSN faculty., then the student at that time will be considered dismissed from the RN-BSN program and will forfeit any opportunity in the future to return as a student in the RN-BSN program. The student will receive an "F" for the clinical course(s).

A. Honesty

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

B. Confidentiality

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

C. Safe Practice

RN-BSN students are expected to demonstrate safe practice behavior at all times in the clinical setting. Failure to demonstrate safe practice can result in sanctions determined by the faculty and/or dismissal from the program.

D. Weapons

Refer to Georgia Highlands College Student Handbook, No Weapons Policy: http://www.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.

E. Drug and Alcohol Policy

- The faculty will dismiss a student from the online class or clinical facility if there is a suspicion of substance abuse.
- 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.
- Violation of the substance Drug and Alcohol Policy is grounds for dismissal from the nursing program.
- Students are responsible for adhering to the policies of Georgia Highlands college: http://www.highlands.edu/site/policy-and-procedure-manual-section-5-x

Attendance Policy

- RN-BSN students are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities presented for interaction with faculty and classmates in the online courses. Students are expected to be prepared for each online experience in the RN- BSN courses. This online class week begins each Monday at 0700 (7:00 am) and

ends on Sunday 2400 (12:00 pm), 7 days per week). Please note that the D2L system will designate maintenance/updates and therefore, the D2L system will not be available during specified times. Each student is responsible for checking the date/times for D2L schedule/maintenance.

- In order to obtain maximum benefit from this course, attendance is crucial. Absences from online classes are discouraged. Students are expected to participate each designated week in discussion forums and complete online activities and assignments according to the posted deadlines within the online course.
- Students must be proactive with informing the faculty member teaching the course if a discussion response or assignment cannot be submitted on time. The course faculty must be notified via D2L email **prior** to the designated due date of assignment/discussion response. A decision will be made by the course faculty if the assignment/discussion will be accepted late or if late points will apply, and/or the number of points to deduct.
- Faculty understands that emergencies can arise at any time. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the course faculty if there is a legitimate reason if a post discussions/assignments cannot be submitted within the designated timeframe/due date. The course faculty's approval for late submissions must be given in order to avoid late penalties. The determination of assigning late points will be solely at the discretion of the faculty teaching the course.
- If a discussion is not required for a specific week, each student is required to log-in to the discussion forum for that specific week, and enter attendance information (unless a designated holiday). Example: If there are no discussion, however, direction to continue working on a future dropbox assignment, then the student is required to log-on to that week's discussion forum with a post statement similar to: "I am logging in for attendance purposes. I am continuing to work on the designated upcoming dropbox assignment. Signed (your name)."
- If a student fails to meet this requirement, he/she will be considered "absent" from the course for that specific week. More than a total of four (4) absences during a 16-week semester or more than a total of two (2) absences during an 8-week semester, the student may automatically be unenrolled from the D2L course by the course faculty unless the student communicates with the course coordinator within two (2) days of the missed week; the course coordinator/faculty will determine if an absence will be excused and excluded from the category of day(s) absence. If a student is "unenrolled" from the course due to attendance

violation, the student will receive an "F" (unless student elects to withdraw and within the due date for withdrawal without academic). If a student is unenrolled from D2L prior to GHC's 'withdrawal deadline without penalty timeframe', it is still the student's responsibility to withdraw according to GHC's policy, notifying the appropriate department. There are no exceptions to this requirement unless a student has a valid emergency, determined by the course faculty. If an emergency arises, the student must notify the course faculty as soon as possible. The course facilitator may request that the student supply proper documentation to excuse an absence. In order to receive the maximum educational benefits from D2L courses, attendance is essential.

- Note: The course faculty may require specific documentation to support student absence or absences.

Grading Policy

A. Grading scale for RN- BSN Students is as follows: (No grades are released by telephone) A: 89.5-100 B: 79.5-89.4 C: 74.5-79.4 D: 59.5 – 74.4 F: 59.4 or below.

- Students must achieve a minimum final average of 74.5% or a grade of "C" in NURS 4401 Community Health Nursing and 4404 Clinical Leadership and Management and achieve a "satisfactory" evaluation of clinical performance to be considered successful in the course. An "unsatisfactory" evaluation of clinical performance will result in an F for the course and the student will be required to re-apply for admission to both Georgia Highlands College and to the RN-BSN program at the next application due date (March 31st) if the following applies: *
- If a "D" is earned in a course, then the course will course must be repeated with an earned "C" or better before enrollment in any additional course(s).
- The student will be required to re-apply for admission to both Georgia Highlands College **and** to the RN-BSN program at the next application due date (March 31st) if the following applies: *
  - Earns an "F" in any RN-BSN course.
  - GPA falls below 2.5 while in the RN-BSN program
  - Required health records expire (records valid for only 1 year from date noted on individual records). Responsibility is with each student to monitor expiration dates of records. If student

health records expire during any course (clinical or non-clinical), student is not eligible to remain in the course and therefore will receive an "F". *

- Any student exhibiting inappropriate behavior will be required to meet with the Dean of Allied Health Sciences and RN-BSN faculty (refer to above Code of Conduct). If the student refuses to meet as required, the student at that time will be considered dismissed from the RN-BSN program and will forfeit any opportunity in the future to return as a student in the RN-BSN program. The student will receive an "F" for presently enrolled course(s).
- If the hospital/agency/facility or primary place where student participates in clinical (leadership practicum/preceptorship or community clinical) has requirements for return of property after student completes clinical, then student is responsible for property. If the student does not return property hospital/agency/facility, the student will be considered unsuccessful in the course and not completely meeting course expectations or requirements and therefore will result in an "F" for the course. The student will be required to re-apply for admission to both Georgia Highlands College **and** to the RN-BSN program at the next application due date (March 31st). The student will also be required to meet with the Dean of Health Sciences and RNBSN faculty to discuss student's previous decisions/choices leading to an "F" and property return to hospital/agency/facility or primary place of clinical/practicum/preceptorship.

Appeals Process-Grade Appeal Policy

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

Procedure

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

- The student must contact his/her course coordinator after the grade is issued (no later than 5 business days from the issuance of the grade) to discuss the grade. If the course coordinator is unable to resolve the issue to the student's satisfaction, the student should then contact the Dean of Health Sciences.
- If the student is still not satisfied with the awarded grade, the student may then initiate the appeal process within 3 business days after meeting with the Dean of Health Sciences and provide a written statement of

appeal. The student should include necessary documentation and pertinent information to support the appeal. The student should return the completed written appeal to the Dean of Health Sciences.

- Upon receipt of the student's written appeal, the Dean of Health Sciences will appoint a Division Appeals Committee (DAC) composed of three nursing faculty members with at least one of those being RN-BSN faculty.
- The DAC will receive all pertinent information relating to the appeal: The written student appeal, student's academic record, and any other pertinent information related to the appeal.
- The DAC will meet to discuss the appeal and will set a hearing date to meet
- The DAC will meet with the student at the appointed hearing date and time. At this hearing, the student will have an opportunity to present his/her appeal. The DAC will have the opportunity to ask questions of the student to clarify information. The student and instructor have the right to be present at all meetings where evidence is presented. The DAC chair will be responsible for recording the session.
- The DAC will meet privately, exclusive of the student, to confer and arrive at a decision. Every effort should be made to reach a consensus finding. If not, then a private ballot shall be taken with the chair of the DAC voting only in the event of a tie vote. This decision is reported to the Program Director who presents the findings and the decision to the student and the instructor.
- If the student or instructor wishes to appeal to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, he/she should follow the GHC Process of Appealing a Grade as written in the Office of Academic Affairs Policies: http://www.highlands.edu/site/office-of-academic-affairs-grade-appeals
- If the student appeal includes a clinical issue, the student will not be allowed to continue in the clinical experience until the issue is resolved.

Progression and Readmission

In order to progress in the RN-BSN program, the student must maintain a C or better in all nursing courses (refer to 'Grading Policy' section of the handbook). If a student leaves the program for any reason and is not enrolled in nursing courses for one semester or more, the student must reapply to the nursing program. There is no guarantee of re-admission.

- Students will be required to re-apply for admission to the RN-BSN program at the next available application due date (March 31st) if the following applies: *

- "Withdraws" from any RN-BSN course
- Request a change to his/her formulated Plan of Study (POS). Once students agree to a POS and the plan begins implementation, all students are required to remain with the identified POS. Any student requesting a change in the POS will be required to apply for re-admission to the RN-BSN program to reflect any possible requested changes.

- Students will be required to re-apply for admission to both Georgia Highlands College **and** to the RN-BSN program at the next application due date (March 31st) if the following applies: *
  - Earns an "F" in any RN-BSN course.
  - GPA falls below 2.5 while in the RN-BSN program
  - Required health records expire (records valid for only 1 year from date noted on individual records). Responsibility is with each student to monitor expiration dates of records. If student health records expire during any course (clinical or non-clinical), student is not eligible to remain in the course and therefore will receive an "F".

Any student exhibiting inappropriate behavior will be required to meet with the Dean of Allied Health Sciences and RN-BSN faculty (refer to above Code of Conduct). If the student refuses to meet as required, the student at that time will be considered dismissed from the RN-BSN program and will forfeit any opportunity in the future to return as a student in the RN-BSN program. The student will receive an "F" for presently enrolled course(s).

*There are no guarantees that the program will have openings to (1) accommodate students that are eligible to re-apply to the college and/or RN-BSN program or (2) accommodate re-enrollment to clinical courses as a result regarding previous preceptorship set-up or other clinical cancelled due to student's non-compliance of course/programs/handbook guidelines.