



**Alvernia University**

**John and Karen Arnold School  
of Nursing**

**Master of Science in Nursing  
Student Handbook**

**2026-2027**

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## Introduction

The Master of Science Degree in Nursing (MSN) Handbook is designed to supplement the Alvernia University Graduate Catalog. It has been prepared with policies specific to the John and Karen School of Nursing.

The policies contain essential requirements in the preparation of nurses in leadership and education roles both academically and clinically in accord with the Mission of Alvernia University, the outcomes of the MSN Program, and the outcomes proposed by professional nursing standards.

The contents of this Handbook are provided for the information of the student. It is accurate at the time of printing but is subject to change as deemed appropriate by the University in order to fulfill its role and mission or by a professional nursing organization specifically impacting the MSN Program. Changes may be implemented without prior notice and without obligation, and, unless specified otherwise, are effective when made. Any changes will be promptly communicated to all students through Alvernia email and other means as appropriate.

Students are required to read this Handbook each academic year while the MSN Program.

[Graduate Catalog](#)

# Organization

## Accreditations and Approvals

The MSN Program has approval from the Department of Education for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and meets all accreditation standards for the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The masters degree in nursing at Alvernia University is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education <https://www.aacnnursing.org/ccne-accreditation>

## Nursing Department Mission Statement

The John and Karen Arnold School of Nursing programs are designed to function within the overall educational framework and in accord with the Mission Statement of Alvernia University. The Programs provide students with an education in the Catholic intellectual tradition, combining liberal arts, professional education, and ethical values. Learning takes place within a caring Franciscan environment, emphasizing respect for the dignity of all human beings and the call to serve others. Christian values are blended with the professional competence to provide the student with knowledge and skills to serve in health care settings with diverse populations. Faculty and students work together to increase understanding of each other and clients with different cultural backgrounds and perspectives. Graduates are prepared to be reflective practitioners with high moral integrity, engaged in lifelong learning.

## Alvernia Nursing Program Outcomes

- Prepare learners for evidence-based, clinically competent professional practice that serves diverse populations within a rapidly changing healthcare practice and delivery system.
- Develop professional nurses to contribute to the discipline through practice, research, education, and leadership.
- Serve regional communities by educating nurses at the general or graduate levels.
- Demonstrate Catholic Franciscan values through community leadership and service opportunities.

## Program Tracks: Nursing Education and Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration

The MSN graduate is prepared for expanded roles in nursing education or administration positions. The *Nursing Education* track prepares the MSN graduate to practice as a nurse educator in a health-care facility or a pre-licensure educational program at baccalaureate, associate degree, and hospital diploma-based programs. Students develop expertise in curriculum development and implementation, instructional skills and strategies, the development and use of educational technology, and educational assessment and evaluation.

The *Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration* track prepares the MSN graduate to practice as a nurse manager or executive in the healthcare system. Students develop competencies in understanding the delivery of healthcare from a regional, national, and global perspective, key concepts of business management, budgeting processes, management of human resources, tools and strategies to manage quality initiatives, and how to develop and implement a strategic plan to attain performance excellence.

Specific knowledge, skills and attributes of the MSN program are organized into seven outcome areas:

- Evidence-based nursing theory and practice
- Information management and technology skills
- Organizational leadership
- Quality and performance improvement
- Health policy and advocacy
- Ethical considerations in practice, leadership and education roles
- Interprofessional communication and collaboration

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

- Demonstrate specialized knowledge as nurse educators or nurse administrators.
- Apply research and theory to develop, implement, and evaluate evidence-based practice that informs health care decision making.
- Integrate ethical standards across a wide range of practice, leadership and education roles and settings.
- Demonstrate characteristics of effective leadership in nursing education or administrative settings.
- Communicate effectively to a variety of audiences and settings.

### **Alvernia University Graduate Outcomes**

Students should be aware that the outcomes of John and Karen Arnold School of Nursing graduate program align with those outcomes expected of all Alvernia University students obtaining graduate degrees. The following learning outcomes are consistent with the specific nursing outcomes and are listed in the Graduate Catalog. [Graduate Catalog](#)

Specific knowledge, skills, and values inherent as outcomes in Alvernia Graduate programs are organized into five competency areas:

- Interprofessional collaboration
  - Relationship management
  - Decision making based upon theoretical concepts
- Knowledge of discipline
  - Evidence based knowledge and practice
  - Continuous quality improvement to achieve outcomes
  - Professional behaviors
- Effective Communication
  - Advanced scholarly writing and oral communication
  - Information management and technology skills
  - Information literacy
- Ethical considerations and leadership
  - Advocacy - individual, organization, community, global
  - Ethical and moral leadership
  - Social justice
- Research Skills
  - Quantitative and/or qualitative methods

### **Professional Standards and Guidelines**

The MSN Program is based on national standards as outlined in the following documents: *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education* (AACN, 2021, revised 2026); *The Scope of Practice for Academic Nurse Educators* (NLN, 2026); *AONL Nurse Leader Core Competencies* (2026) and, *Code of Ethics for Nurses*(ANA, 2025).

## Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct Standards

The MSN Program adopts the American Nurses Association (ANA, 2025) *Code of Ethics for Nurses and the Professional & Vocational Standards (Title 49, Chapter 21), Pennsylvania Code* (July 4, 2015) as a guide for professional nurse behavior. These standards are based on an understanding that to practice nursing as an MSN student is an agreement to uphold the trust with which society has placed in us.

The statements of the code and standards provide guidance for the MSN student in the personal development of an ethical foundation. They are not limited strictly to the academic or clinical environment, but can assist in the holistic development of the person.

## Core Franciscan Values of Alvernia University

Alvernia's mission and Franciscan identity are the source of the five Core Values service, humility, peacemaking, contemplation, and collegiality.

They are rooted in the traditional values of the Gospel even as they speak to our culture and time. They have continued throughout the centuries to inform a way of life, a view of the world, and a definition of our relationship with God and others that is perhaps more relevant in our society than ever before. At Alvernia, these values build a foundation for ethical decision-making, for curriculum development, for thoughtful reflection, and for personal relationships as we pursue our goals in higher education. As members of the Alvernia community, each of us can live these values and be transformed, discovering a life of meaning, purpose, and eternal promise.

## Honor Code

The Alvernia University Honor Code is followed in all Nursing Courses. The Honor Code is available in Canvas (Help and Resources, University Policies) and the University Course Catalog <https://www.alvernia.edu/coursecatalog>

## Use of Artificial Intelligence in the School of Nursing

### Purpose

This policy establishes guidelines for the appropriate use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools within the nursing program. AI may be used to support learning; however, its use must uphold academic integrity, promote clinical competence, and ensure patient safety. AI is a supplemental resource and **must not replace independent nursing judgment or professional accountability.**

### Guiding Principles

- Patient safety and professional accountability are the highest priorities
- Students must demonstrate independent clinical reasoning and decision making
- AI is a support tool - not a substitute for knowledge, skills, or judgment
- Transparency in AI use is required in all permitted contexts

### Levels of AI Use

#### Level 1: No AI (Independent Practice)

AI use is strictly prohibited.

**Applies to:** Examinations (theory and clinical), skills assessments, clinical and simulation, medication calculations, and competency evaluations.

**Expectations:**

- All work must be completed independently
- Use of AI constitutes academic misconduct

**Level 2: AI Planning (Pre-Task Support)**

AI may be used for preparation only and not for submitted work.

**Examples:**

- Brainstorming ideas
- Reviewing disease processes or concepts
- Organizing assignments or study materials

**Expectations:**

- Final submissions must reflect the student's own work and understanding
- Students must be able to explain all content independently

**Level 3: AI Collaboration (Guided Assistance)**

AI may be used with critical evaluation and revision.

**Examples:**

- Drafting written assignments or care plans
- Editing for clarity, grammar, and organization
- Generating practice questions

**Expectations:**

- Students must critically review and substantially revise AI-generated content
- All clinical information must be verified using course materials and approved nursing sources
- AI use must be clearly disclosed

**Level 4: Full AI Use (Directed Use)**

AI may be used extensively with instructor guidance.

**Examples:**

- Developing patient education materials
- Research synthesis and project development

**Expectations:**

- Students must demonstrate clinical reasoning and justify all decisions
- AI should enhance, not replace, professional judgment
- All AI use must be documented

### **Level 5: AI Exploration (Innovation & Co-Design)**

AI is used for advanced, creative, or research-based work, typically under faculty supervision.

#### **Examples:**

- Quality improvement initiatives
- Research and innovation projects

#### **Expectations:**

- Active collaboration with faculty
- Emphasis on innovation, ethics, and professional responsibility

### **Clinical Practice Restrictions**

The following apply at all levels:

- AI must **not** be used for real-time patient care decision-making during clinical or simulation
- AI outputs must never replace instructor, preceptor, or clinical judgment
- Confidential or patient-identifiable information must **never** be entered into AI tools

### **Academic Integrity and Disclosure**

Students are required to:

- Clearly disclose when and how AI tools were used
- Verify all information using credible nursing and clinical sources
- Demonstrate the ability to explain and defend all submitted work

#### **Example Disclosure Statement:**

"I used AI to assist with brainstorming and organization. All content was reviewed, revised, and verified using course materials and clinical guidelines."

Failure to comply with this policy may result in academic misconduct proceedings in accordance with institutional policy.

#### **Examples of how to cite and reference AI use:**

Google. (2025). Gemini 3 Flash [Large language model].  
<https://gemini.google.com>opens in new window

OpenAI. (2025). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>opens in new window

Perplexity AI. (2026). Perplexity [Large language model].  
<https://www.perplexity.ai>opens in new window

Parenthetical citations: (Google, 2025; OpenAI, 2025; Perplexity AI, 2026)

Narrative citations: Google (2025), OpenAI (2025), and Perplexity AI (2026)

#### [AI references](#)

## Summary

AI can be a valuable tool in nursing education when used responsibly. This policy ensures that students develop the knowledge, skills, and clinical judgment necessary for safe, ethical, and professional nursing practice.

## Reference:

Perkins, Furze, Roe & MacVaugh. (2024). The AI Assessment Scale. [https://www.canva.com/design/DAGPfnleXV8/E2oTbyjScUiJ9JaT56Clvw/viaw?utm\\_content=DAGPfnleXV8&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview](https://www.canva.com/design/DAGPfnleXV8/E2oTbyjScUiJ9JaT56Clvw/viaw?utm_content=DAGPfnleXV8&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview)

## Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society

Graduate Membership Criteria for Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) Upsilon Zeta Chapter #460 at Alvernia University is by invitation. For the graduate student, membership eligibility is determined by participation in an accredited program of post-baccalaureate study in nursing including master, post-master, doctoral and post-doctoral studies, and/or through nursing leadership within the community. Students must have a demonstrated record of academic achievement, academic integrity and professional leadership potential. Those who have achieved such excellence and would be eligible for membership as determined by the current By-Laws of STTI and Chapter #460 will be notified during the annual Upsilon Zeta induction cycle and may accept membership at that time by following the membership application procedure.

Further information on Sigma Theta Tau may be found online at <https://www.sigmanursing.org>

# Curriculum

Information about the MSN Curriculum can be found in the Alvernia University [Graduate Catalog](#)

## Program Structure: Nursing Education Track

The 33-credit **MSN Program Nursing Education** track is designed for professional nurses who are seeking a career in nursing education. In this track students will learn about instructing pre- licensure nursing students in classroom, clinical, and nursing simulation lab settings, teaching new and experienced RNs new skills in staff development positions, and planning innovative strategies to facilitate the learning process. An in-depth study in the area of nursing education and a selected clinical practice focus are required. Application of theory and research principles to a focused educational issue or problem of special interest to the student is evidenced in a capstone project.

Course descriptions for each course can be found in the Graduate Course Catalog. <https://www.alvernia.edu/coursecatalog>

| Interdisciplinary Course                                           |                                                                                    |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| COR 520                                                            | Ethics and Moral Leadership                                                        | 3 Online Modules |
| Nursing Practice Courses (6 credits)                               |                                                                                    |                  |
| NUR 530                                                            | Advanced Health Assessment                                                         | 3 credits        |
| NUR 540                                                            | Advanced Pathophysiology/Pharmacology                                              | 3 credits        |
| Nursing Education Courses (9 credits)                              |                                                                                    |                  |
| NUR 560                                                            | Policy and Curriculum                                                              | 3 credits        |
| NUR 630                                                            | Measuring Educational Outcomes                                                     | 3 credits        |
| NUR 640                                                            | Evidence-Based Teaching Practice                                                   | 3 credits        |
| Core Nursing Education and Nursing Leadership Courses (18 credits) |                                                                                    |                  |
| NUR 550                                                            | Professional Nursing Theory and Research                                           | 3 credits        |
| NUR 570                                                            | Healthcare Informatics                                                             | 3 credits        |
| NUR 611                                                            | Interprofessional Collaboration: Leadership Skills to Increase Cultural Competency | 3 credits        |
| NUR 633                                                            | Evidence-Based Practice to Improve Population Health                               | 3 credits        |
| NUR 643                                                            | Application of Advanced Nursing Strategies: Practicum                              | 3 credits        |
| NUR 651                                                            | Nurse Educator Role Synthesis: Capstone*                                           | 3 credits        |
| *Take in final 12 credits                                          |                                                                                    |                  |

## Program Structure: Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration Track

The 33-credit **MSN Program Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration** track is designed to develop qualities and skills to be effective nursing leaders within local, regional, or national healthcare settings. Students in this track are prepared to be an integral member and leader of decision-making teams. An in-depth study in the area of nursing leadership and administration is required. Application of theory and research principles is evidenced in a capstone project.

Course descriptions for each course can be found in the [Graduate Course Catalog](#)

|                                                                              |                                                                                    |                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Interdisciplinary Course</b>                                              |                                                                                    |                  |
| COR 520                                                                      | Ethics and Moral Leadership                                                        | 3 Online Modules |
| <b>Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration Courses (15 credits)</b> |                                                                                    |                  |
| NUR 515                                                                      | Effective Leadership in Healthcare Organizations                                   | 3 credits        |
| NUR 525                                                                      | Financial Management for Healthcare Leaders                                        | 3 credits        |
| NUR 535                                                                      | Human Resources Management in Healthcare Organizations                             | 3 credits        |
| NUR 625                                                                      | Leadership in Advanced Administrative Practice Roles                               | 3 credits        |
| NUR 635                                                                      | Health Policy, Politics and Advocacy                                               | 3 credits        |
| <b>Core Nursing Education and Nursing Leadership Courses (18 credits)</b>    |                                                                                    |                  |
| NUR 550                                                                      | Professional Nursing Theory and Research                                           | 3 credits        |
| NUR 570                                                                      | Healthcare Informatics                                                             | 3 credits        |
| NUR 611                                                                      | Interprofessional Collaboration: Leadership Skills to Increase Cultural Competency | 3 credits        |
| NUR 633                                                                      | Evidence-Based Practice to Improve Population Health                               | 3 credits        |
| NUR 643                                                                      | Application of Advanced Nursing Strategies: Practicum                              | 3 credits        |
| NUR 652                                                                      | Nursing Leadership Role Synthesis: Capstone*                                       | 3 credits        |
| *Take in final 12 credits                                                    |                                                                                    |                  |

## Explanation of the Direct and Indirect Care Component

To address The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education students in all tracks of the Graduate Nursing Program complete 100 hours of a direct care component. Faculty designated the following courses as having a direct care component either through assignments or practicum experiences: NUR 550 (Core Course) NUR 633 (Core Course), NUR 530 (Nursing Education Course), NUR 540 (Nursing Education Course). The direct care hours are in addition to the focused practicum (100 hours) allocated to NUR 643, Application of Advanced Nursing Strategies Practicum.

Direct and indirect care components provide opportunities for students to demonstrate a greater depth and breadth of knowledge and a greater synthesis of data of a topic within their own area of clinical specialty. Faculty operationalized direct care hours as the following: two hours of direct care is equal to one hour of class time.

According to the AACN (2024, page 4) .“direct care refers to a professional encounter between a nurse and patient (individual, family, groups, community or aggregate), either face to face or virtual that is intended to achieve specific health goals or achieve selected health outcomes.” Indirect care includes “nursing decisions, actions or interventions that are provided through or on behalf of individuals, families or groups. These decisions or interventions create conditions under which nursing care or self-care may occur. Nurses might use administrative decisions, population or aggregate health planning, or policy development to affect health care outcomes in this way.” (AACN, 2024, page 4)

# Guidelines and Policies

## Matriculation

A matriculated MSN student is one who has been accepted officially into the MSN Program. Students with full graduate status may opt for full-time or part-time enrollment.

A non-matriculated student is one who is taking a course for credit but has not yet been officially accepted into the MSN Program. A non-matriculated student may take up to six (6) credits in the MSN Program prior to matriculation.

## Maintenance of Matriculation

A matriculated MSN student is required to enroll in at least two (2) semesters (fall, spring, or summer) per calendar year. Students who do not apply for a leave of absence and have not completed at least one (1) course in two (2) semesters during a calendar year will be dropped from the program. Students may petition for readmission by submitting a letter of intent.

## Leave of Absence

Matriculated MSN students meeting the Maintenance of Matriculation policy must submit a written request for a leave of absence, with rationale to the Graduate Program Coordinator. The student and Graduate Program Coordinator will document the leave, revised plan of study and intent to complete the MSN Program. If a student is on a leave of absence for one calendar year, then he/she must reapply (submit an application) to re-matriculate into the MSN Program, following the process outlined in the Graduate Course Catalog (Graduate Program Academic Policies, Re-Entry Admissions Process). Any curriculum changes during the absence would impact the returning student.

## Time Limit

The maximum timeframe for MSN Program completion is six years. If a student is on a documented leave of absence, the six-year limit continues; however, a student may petition the Graduate Program Coordinator for additional time.

## Transfer of Graduate Credit

Students who are matriculated in another nursing graduate program and wish to transfer will be considered on an individual basis. A maximum of two (2) approved courses (6 credits) or the equivalent will be accepted. Transfer courses must be from an accredited college and the student must have earned a minimum grade of a "B" to receive transfer credit. Transfer credits do not count towards the cumulative GPA at Alvernia University.

After matriculation, students requesting to take a course off campus for transfer credit must receive written approval from the Graduate Program Coordinator.

## Academic Advisement

All students are assigned a faculty advisor upon formal acceptance to the MSN Program. An important strategy for success is meeting with a faculty advisor to review the program of study and develop a plan for completion. It is the student's responsibility to meet with his/her faculty advisor within two months of receiving the acceptance letter. The faculty advisor will serve the student throughout the course of the program and clarify concerns or questions as they arise.

## Academic Notice/Academic Dismissal

The policy for Academic Notice and Academic Dismissal is available in the Graduate Catalog (Graduate Program Academic Policies, Academic Notice/Academic Dismissal) on the Alvernia University website. The Graduate Catalog can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.alvernia.edu/coursecatalog>

## Student Appeals and Grievance Procedures

The policy for student appeal of a grade or dismissal and academic grievances can be found in the Graduate Course Catalog (Academic Information, Student Appeals, Graduate Academic Grievance Procedures). <https://catalog.alvernia.edu/index.php?catoid=5>

## Clinical and Practicum Experiences

### Required Clinical Practice Clearances

Information about required clearances is available on Canvas. All required documents must be submitted before a practicum experience is started.

All health clearances must be submitted to Complio. Students will be provided information on how to use Complio and set up an account. Students may upload documents in their possession that may have been needed for employment.

## Clinical Observation and Practicum in NUR 643, Application of Advanced Nursing Strategies: Practicum

The following guidelines will be followed:

### **NUR 643: Application of Advanced Nursing Strategies: Practicum**

- All practicum experience must be performed outside of Alvernia University.
- In collaboration with Course Faculty, the student is responsible for arranging a practicum preceptor and completing accompanying paperwork.
- MSN students **MUST** complete all clinical clearances **prior to the beginning** of NUR 643.
- MSN students **MUST** wear an Alvernia University student ID card in plain sight at all times during clinical observations and practicum. Students are expected to follow Professional Decorum as outlined in this handbook.
- It is essential that students know and follow fair use laws, copyright laws, code/s of ethics, HIPAA regulations, and good conduct guidelines to be an appropriate representative of Alvernia University and, specifically, the Nursing Programs. Refer to the “**Statement on the Use of Social Media**”

### Procedure for Obtaining Practicum Preceptors

- Faculty and student collaborate in making arrangements for a practicum preceptor. The preceptor(s) must have MSN and at least two years experience in nursing education if in the Nursing Education track and leadership or administration if in the Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration track.
  - If in the Nursing Education track, teaching experiences must occur in a pre- license program; however, other teaching experiences may be incorporated. If in the Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration track, the majority of the practicum must be with a nurse who is in a leadership position within a healthcare

organization.

- A copy of the preceptor's resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV) must be submitted to the course faculty
  - The agency leadership, such as Graduate Program Coordinator or Chief Nursing Officer approves the preceptor
  - The preceptor arrangements must be completed prior to the course start-date; including all contractual paperwork
- An introductory visit is made by the student for the purpose of operationalizing the course content and expectations.
  - A course syllabus must be shared with the preceptor with a framework of expectations, dates, course outcomes, and evaluation methods.
- Two copies of the preceptor agreement (See Appendix A) must be signed by the student, preceptor, course faculty and the Graduate Program Coordinator. One (1) copy is maintained in the Alvernia University Nursing Department student file and the second copy is held by the preceptor.
  - The preceptor's resume or CV will be filed with the Letter of Agreement.

**All required health documents and clearances must be uploaded into Complio prior to the students starting their practicum.**

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Preceptor**

A preceptor is an experienced MSN clinician or educator (if in the Nursing Education track) or experienced nurse leader (if in the Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration track) with current expert knowledge. The preceptor must provide a copy of current resume or CV to Alvernia University John and Karen Arnold School of Nursing. The role of the preceptor is to assist the MSN student to synthesize previously obtained knowledge and skills, while examining and applying set practicum objectives in the current setting. Specific activities may include:

- Orient the student to the agency/school
- Assist the student to meet practicum and personal objectives
- Assist the student in scheduling activities or assignments
- Supervise the student directly or indirectly
- Assume a liaison role in clarifying the expectations of students as learners rather than expectations of employees
- Consult with Alvernia course faculty, as necessary
- Evaluate the learning process collaboratively with the student
- Complete a systematic evaluation of the student's performance and submit the feedback to course faculty.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Alvernia University**

- Give final approval of clinical site and preceptor
  - Meet with the preceptor and student as necessary to provide support and clarification
  - A minimum of one visit during semester
    - An orientation or final evaluation visit may be performed via telephone or video conferencing
  - Provide the preceptor with the course syllabus and evaluative measures
  - Assist the student in identifying specific learning needs
  - Verify that all required documents have been submitted to the Academic Compliance Office and are not expired.

- Conduct the final evaluation of the student applying the evaluation to the final course grade.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the MSN Student:**

- Follow all agencies' health, safety, and legal regulations and professional code of ethics
- and conduct. Submit all clearances to the Complio platform as required by Alvernia University policy.
- Wear an Alvernia University student ID card in plain sight at all times. Follow the Professional Decorum information
- Complete personal learning objectives and outcome measures
- Notify the preceptor/agency to report unavoidable absence as soon as possible
- Promptly report an error of omission or commission to agency and faculty member. Follow agency guidelines for incident reporting
- Promptly report any illness or accident incurred during practicum experience to the agency and preceptor. The student is financially responsible for emergency treatment rendered
- Assume all responsibility for any personal items taken to the clinical setting
- Meet regularly with preceptor to discuss practicum progress
- Communicate regularly with course faculty about clinical activities as prescribed in the syllabus

### **Ethical Confidentiality**

All FERPA and HIPAA regulations must be followed at all times. MSN students may have access to student, client and facility records. This is confidential information and may not be used for anything except to enhance the student learning experience. Information used for journaling or case studies shall carry only the initials of the student/client and physician.

This information is to be shared only with the preceptor, course faculty, and in the classroom setting, if appropriate.

## **Capstone Requirement**

### **Purpose and Description**

The purpose of the Capstone is to complete a major synthesis project that applies theory and skills acquired during coursework. The Capstone encompasses three aspects: 1) project, 2) accompanying scholarly paper, and 3) professional presentation to faculty and peers.

This guided, multi-disciplinary Capstone begins with a theoretical framework and comprehensive literature review, proceeds through an implementation phase, and concludes with an analytical outcome measurement. All three aspects of the Capstone are supported by the integration of principles from the disciplines of education and nursing and reflect the MSN Program and Student Learning Outcomes.

The project and its accompanying paper are completed in NUR 651: Nurse Educator Role Synthesis Capstone or NUR 652: Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration Role Synthesis Capstone and taken during the last 12 credit hours of MSN Program coursework.

## Examples of Types of Projects for the Nursing Education Track

From a **Nursing Education** Perspective:

- Outcome assessment using existing data from Alvernia University or current workplace (with permission). Examples include
  - Longitudinal demographic trends and student success
  - Longitudinal curriculum content area performance using ATI, National Benchmarks, etc.
- Fully developed grant proposal with nursing education focus
- Development and testing of an innovative teaching strategy or methodology (i.e.: technology)
  - Student volunteer subjects
  - IRB approval
  - Evaluation of data
- Development of an innovative continuing education or college course
  - Syllabus, examples of two fully developed presentations, content rubrics, and faculty evaluation measures
  - External validation from an expert with written documentation
- Create, implement and evaluate a high-fidelity clinical simulation scenario
  - Student volunteer subjects
  - IRB approval
  - Evaluation of data
- Evidence based project and development of a protocol/policy with an education focus. Collaborate with agency to meet mutual goals
- Publishable manuscript submitted to a peer reviewed nursing journal
- Other with approval from Graduate Program Coordinator

## Examples of Types of Projects for the Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration Track

From a **Nursing Leadership** perspective:

- Design, use, and examine healthcare performance databases to retrieve information for decision-making, planning, analysis, and improvement from current workplace or governmental agency
- Analyze policy: Appraise evidence and make recommendations of adapting administrative policy guidelines within a healthcare organization
- Quality Improvement project to develop and implement effective measure(s) to improve patient outcomes or patient and/or staff satisfaction
- Proposal to improve coordination of care within a healthcare organization
- Design and implement innovative uses of technology to improve and/or enhance patient/community/population outcomes
- Fully develop a grant proposal with a nursing leadership focus
- Analyze legislative healthcare policy and based on evidence make recommendations for support/non-support of legislative policy
- Other: with approval of Graduate Program Coordinator

***NOTE:*** It is strongly recommended that only existing research/measurement instruments with published validity and reliability are accepted for outcome assessment. Self-created survey instruments may be used only after careful consideration by Capstone Facilitator and student.

## **Capstone Timeline**

Students will be asked to indicate their intent to register for NUR 651 or NUR 652 midway through the semester prior to completing the Capstone course. The Graduate Program Coordinator will facilitate the pairing of students and faculty facilitators based on Capstone topics and faculty expertise/workload by the end of the semester prior to taking NUR 651 or NUR 652. The Graduate Program Coordinator reviews and gives final approval.

If the project requires IRB approval, the application should be submitted to the IRB at least three months prior to the beginning of the semester in which NUR 651 and NUR 652 are scheduled.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Student**

- As soon as a Capstone Facilitator is determined, students contact their Capstone Facilitator for guidance in finalizing the Capstone topic and creating an implementation timeline
- Register for NUR 651 or NUR 652
- Complete approval form See Appendix B and obtain required signatures by the end of the semester prior to or at the start of the semester for NUR 651 and NUR 652
- Acquire appropriate approvals such as IRB and facility permissions by the 2nd week of the semester in which NUR 651 and NUR 652 is scheduled
- Maintain self-direction to meet timeline and quality expectations
- Accept and respond to ongoing constructive feedback and work in collaboration with Capstone Facilitator
- Adhere to Alvernia University policies for academic honesty and ethical standards.
- Participate in a process evaluation of Capstone experience, if requested by Graduate Program Coordinator
- Achieve at least 100 hours completing Capstone. Keep track of the time spent on Capstone related activities
- Prepare and present project to a minimum audience of nursing faculty and peers

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Capstone Facilitator**

- Conduct an initial meeting for guidance in finalizing the Capstone topic
- Approve Capstone timeline
- Provide ongoing guidance and feedback related to all aspects of the Capstone, including IRB
- Have a minimum of two contacts per month with student
- Support the student in maintaining timeline for implementation
- Give student advice and support related to logistics of implementation
- Preview, approve, and attend presentation at MSN Capstone Presentations
- Assign course grade based on MSN Capstone Program Assignment Rubric (See Appendix C).

Additional University Policies that affect students are found in the following documents  
<https://www.alvernia.edu/coursecatalog> [Graduate Catalog](#)

## Academic Grievance Policies

### Student Appeal of Grades

Grade disputes are addressed under Alvernia's School of Graduate academic procedures. As noted in the Graduate Catalog, students may appeal course grades. Procedures for "Student Appeals" and "Graduate Academic Grievance Procedures" can be found in the [Graduate Catalog](#)

### Statement on the Use of Social Media

Students are reminded that the standards for professionalism are the same online as in any other circumstance. Based on the current evidence, the following "best practices" for Social Media use outlined in the [Student Handbook](#) are suggested

#### References:

American Nurses Association. (2011). *ANA's principles for social networking and the nurse*.  
<https://www.nursingworld.org/globalassets/docs/ana/ethics/social-networking.pdf>

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2024). A nurse's guide to the use of social media.  
<https://www.ncsbn.org/brochures-and-posters/nurses-guide-to-the-use-of-socialmedia>

### Professional Decorum

Graduate students are expected to adhere to professional attire and behavioral standards which reflect a professional level of responsibility. The graduate nursing student is a representative of the nursing profession and the Alvernia University MSN Program. As such, the maintenance of a professional appearance and demeanor is expected for graduate students in all courses, within the School of Nursing, and at university related activities. This includes but is not limited to: campus observations of class, simulation, or clinical activities; participation in practica as part of coursework to meet program requirements; and MSN Program/course activities and conferences outside of the Alvernia University campus. MSN students should also act as role models for students and health care professionals.

Students should dress in a professional manner. Jeans/shorts/capris, sweatpants and shirts, sandals, and casual accessories are not considered appropriate in settings as described above. Lab coats should be worn at all clinical sites, as appropriate. The program identification/name tag **MUST** be worn at clinical or practicum sites.

# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Graduate Nursing Program Clinical Preceptor Agreement

This agreement is for the purpose of providing a clinical learning experience for the Alvernia University student enrolled in the following course-

\_\_\_\_ NUR 530- Advanced Health Assessment- see Course Syllabus

\_\_\_\_ NUR 540-Advanced Pathopharmacology- see Course Syllabus

\_\_\_\_ NUR 550- Professional Nursing Theory and Research- see Course Syllabus

\_\_\_\_ NUR 633- Evidenced Base Practice to Improve Population Health-see Course Syllabus

\_\_\_\_ NUR 643- Nursing Administration/Education Strategies-Practicum- see Course Syllabus

\_\_\_\_ NUR 651- Nursing Education- Capstone- see Course Syllabus

\_\_\_\_ NUR 652- Nursing Administration- Capstone- see Course Syllabus

Roles and Responsibilities of the Preceptor:

A preceptor is an experienced MSN clinician with current expert knowledge of practice. The role of the preceptor is to assist the MSN student to synthesize current clinical knowledge and skills at the advanced level.

The preceptor must provide a copy of a current resume or Curriculum Vita to course faculty.

Specific activities may include:

- Orient the student to the agency
- Assist the student to meet practicum and personal objectives
- Supervise the student directly or indirectly
- Assume a liaison role in clarifying the expectations of students as learners rather than expectations of employees
- Consult with Alvernia course faculty as necessary
- Evaluate the learning process collaboratively with the student
- Complete a feedback form of the student's performance and submit to the course faculty.

Roles and Responsibilities of Alvernia University:

- Give final approval of clinical site and preceptor
- Meet with the preceptor and student, as necessary, to provide support and clarification
- An orientation or final evaluation visit may be performed via telephone or video conferencing
- Provide the preceptor with the course syllabus and evaluative measures
- Assist the student in identifying specific learning needs
- Maintain record of student's immunizations, clearances, malpractice insurance, and completion of HIPAA, CPR, Bloodborne Pathogen, and Fire/Electrical Safety programs if applicable to the course.
- Conduct the final evaluation of the student applying the feedback from the preceptor as appropriate.

**Roles and Responsibilities of the MSN Student:**

- Follow all agencies' health, safety, and legal regulations, and professional code of ethics and conduct
- Wear an Alvernia University student ID card in plain sight at all times
- Complete personal learning objectives and outcome measures
- Notify the preceptor/agency to report unavoidable absence as soon as possible
- Promptly report an error of omission or commission to agency and faculty member
- Follow agency guidelines for incident reporting
- Promptly report any illness or accident incurred during practicum experience to the agency and preceptor. The student is financially responsible for emergency treatment rendered
- Assume all responsibility for any personal items taken to the clinical setting
- Communicate regularly with course faculty about clinical activities as prescribed in the syllabus.

The preceptor and/or agency may request Alvernia University to withdraw a student for any reason that may have a detrimental effect on the service to students/clients. In addition, Alvernia University may withdraw any student from a preceptor experience should the preceptor/agency prove incompatible with the educational objectives developed for student learning.

The student, preceptor and agency agree to indemnify from all actions, suits, claims, damages and costs for damage to persons or property resulting from neglect or intentional acts or omissions of the student/preceptor resulting while participating in the practicum experience.

Student Name\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Agency Name\_\_\_\_\_

Preceptor Name/Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Phone\_\_\_\_\_

**Approved for Alvernia University**

Signature\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

Course Faculty

## Appendix B

### MSN Program Capstone Project Approval

**Student Name:**

**Student Contact Information:**

**Address:**

**Work Phone #:**

**Home Phone #:**

**Cell Phone #:**

**Topic/Title:**

**Timeline:**

*List target dates for priority components of the Capstone project, such as drafts of the paper, presentation and project resources.*

**IRB Approvals needed (if applicable):**

**Faculty Signature:**

**Date:**

**Student Signature:**

**Date:**

**Approval Granted**    ☐ Yes                      ☐ No

**Graduate Program Coordinator Signature:**

**Date:**

## Appendix C

### Capstone Assessment Rubric

| Outcomes                                                                                                                                                        | Competent<br>(B to B+)                                                                                                                              | Expert<br>(A- to A)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>PROJECT</b>                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Topic Selection congruent with<br><b>Nursing and Educational Theory and Practice or Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration Theory and Practice</b>    | Identifies a focused and manageable topic that addresses relevant aspects of nursing education or nursing leadership                                | Identifies a creative, focused, and manageable topic that addresses potentially significant yet previously less- explored aspects of the topic                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>PAPER</b>                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Design process congruent with topic, Nursing and Educational Theory and Practice or Nursing Leadership and Healthcare Administration Theory and Practice</b> | Appropriately developed critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework; however, more subtle elements are ignored or unaccounted for | Skillfully developed all elements of the methodology and theoretical framework                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Ethics</b>                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                     | <p>Demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and /or proprietary information</p> <p>Conducts all educational research and clinical activities with honesty and integrity; reflects behavior that is congruent with the value and dignity of every human being</p> <p>Independently applies ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question; accurately, and is able to consider full implication of the application</p> |

|                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Research Skills</b>                              | Presents in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Synthesizes in-depth information for relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Communication Skills:</b><br>Written             | Correctly uses 80-90% of the following using guidelines established by APA: use of citations and references, choice of paraphrasing, summary or quoting, using information in ways that are true to original context                                                                                                                                                 | Correctly uses all of the following using guidelines established by APA: use of citations and references, choice of paraphrasing, summary or quoting, using information in ways that are true to original context                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                                     | Communicates and organizes information from sources. The information is somewhat synthesized.<br><br>Intended purpose is achieved                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Communicates, organizes, and synthesizes information from sources to fully achieve the project purpose, with clarity and depth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>PRESENTATION</b>                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Communication Skills:</b><br>Oral                | Demonstrates an organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body and transitions) that is clearly and mostly observable within the presentation<br><br>Exhibits deliver techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressions) that make the presentation understandable, and speaker appears comfortable | Demonstrates an organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body and transitions) that is clearly and consistently observable and is skillful making the content of the presentation cohesive<br><br>Exhibits delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressions) that make the presentation compelling; speaker appears polished and confident |
| <b>PROFESSIONALISM AS A NURSE EDUCATOR/LEADER</b>   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Leadership, Communication, and Collaboration</b> | Works somewhat effectively in among leadership structures in academic and practice settings in order to achieve project goal<br><br>Needs reminded to adhere to timeline outlined on Capstone project approval form<br><br>Identifies and acknowledges                                                                                                               | Works highly effectively among leadership structures in academic and practice settings in order to achieve project goal<br><br>Consistent adherence to timeline as listed on Capstone approval form                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                       | conflict and stays engaged with it<br><br>Treats individuals with dignity and respect<br><br>Serves as a role model for professional nursing or education | Addresses conflict in constructive way, helping to manage/resolve it in a way that strengthens relationships, cohesiveness and future effectiveness<br><br>Treats individuals with dignity and respect<br><br>Serves as a role model for professional nursing or education |
| <b>COMMENTS</b>                       |                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>FINAL GRADE FOR THE COURSE</b>     |                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>CAPSTONE FACILITATOR SIGNATURE</b> |                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>DATE</b>                           |                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

**Reference:**

American Association of Colleges and Universities [AAC&U] (2010). Value: Valid assessment of learning in undergraduate education.