

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY**

**SCHOOL OF NURSING**

**STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**GRADUATE PROGRAM**



The MTSU School of Nursing graduate program is accredited by:

Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE)

655 K Street, NW, Suite 750

Washington, D.C. 20001

<http://www.ccneaccreditation.org/>



This handbook is intended to provide graduate students pertinent information in relation to the School of Nursing. Contents in this document apply to all graduate students currently participating in the MSN program. None of the information contained herein shall be interpreted to create a contract. The information included is up-to-date as of the time of publication. The University reserves the right to make changes in policy, regulations and fees, as circumstances dictate, subsequent to publication. Additional information is available online at [www.mtsu.edu/nursing](http://www.mtsu.edu/nursing).

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**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF NURSING**  
**GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**THE MISSION, PHILOSOPHY, CONCEPTS AND OUTCOMES OF THE MSN PROGRAM**

**I. MISSION**

The mission of Middle Tennessee State University School of Nursing is to provide excellence in nursing education by preparing individuals to meet the dynamic and complex healthcare needs of society. Through robust academic programs, the School of Nursing demonstrates its' commitment to the art and science of nursing.

**II. PHILOSOPHY**

The Middle Tennessee State University School of Nursing has established an operational framework with five core competencies at the foundation. These are communication, critical thinking, personal and professional relationships, leadership and the nursing process. From this base, additional concepts emerge to provide interaction with persons, the environment, health, professional nursing and nursing education.

**III. PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

Graduates receive preparation designed to enable them to:

1. Demonstrate synthesis and application of knowledge from nursing and related disciplines as the basis for clinical judgement and nursing practice to improve care delivery and health outcomes across populations. (Essential I, NP Core [Scientific Foundations])
2. Apply knowledge of organizational and leadership theories within the systems of healthcare using ethical principles to improve outcomes, manage risks, and provide cost-effective care. (Essential II; Domain 7; NP Core [Leadership])

3. Engage in self-reflection that fosters personal well-being, commitment to lifelong learning, nursing expertise, and leadership. (Essential II, Domain 10; NP Core {Leadership; Independent Practice})
4. Utilize principles of safety science and quality to improve care delivery, and to create a culture of patient, provider, and workplace safety. (Essential III; Domain 5; NP Core [Quality])
5. Generate, synthesize, translate, apply, and disseminate knowledge to improve health outcomes, resolve practice problems, and transform health care. (Essential IV; Domain 4; NP Core [Practice Inquiry])
6. Use appropriate technologies to enhance health care services and improve health outcomes. (Essential V; Domain 8; NP Core [Technology and Information Literacy])
7. Develop and promote a professional identity that reflects nursing characteristics, norms, and values while adhering to ethical principles to carry out professional responsibilities. (Essential VI; Domain 9; NP Core [Policy and Ethics])
8. Collaborate effectively across professions, with patients and families, and within communities to enhance care, improve outcomes, and reduce costs. (Essential VII; Domain 6; NP Core [Leadership, Health Delivery Systems; Independent Practice])
9. Identify and engage partners at local, community, regional, and global levels to support and improve population health outcomes consistent with epidemiologic, genetic, and genomic data to design evidence-based approaches. (Essential VII; Domain 3; NP Core [Health Delivery Systems, Ethics, Leadership])
10. Provide person-centered evidence-based holistic care through continuous evaluation of interventions to improve care delivery and health care outcomes. (Essential IX; II; Domain 2; NP Core [Independent Practice])

#### IV. CERTIFICATION

The graduate of an FNP program is prepared to care for individuals and families across the lifespan. The FNP role includes preventative health care, as well as the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of acute and chronic illness and preventative health care for individuals and families. Family nurse practitioners demonstrate a commitment to family-centered care and understand the relevance of the family's identified community in the delivery of family-centered care (NONPF, 2013). Graduates of the MTSU FNP program are prepared to sit for national certification as FNPs.

The graduate of a PMHNP program is prepared to care for individuals and families across the lifespan who are at risk for developing and/or having a diagnosis of psychiatric disorders or mental health problems. The PMHNP provides primary mental health care to patients seeking mental health services in a wide range of settings. This includes assessment, diagnosis, and management of mental health and psychiatric

disorders (NONPF, 2013). Graduates of the MTSU PMHNP and the PMHNP-PMC are prepared to sit for national certification as PMHNPs.

## V. NURSING STUDENT HONOR CODE

### **KNOWLEDGE, INTEGRITY, COMPASSION and SKILL**

The School of Nursing (SON) at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) values a strong sense of integrity and ethics among students and faculty alike and strives to facilitate the development of such behaviors through the use of the Nursing Student Honor Code. Students in the SON are held, not only to the standards outlined in the MTSU student handbook, but to the guidelines provided below.

#### **Statement of Nursing Student Honor Code**

Student conduct in the MTSU SON is expected to demonstrate ethical behaviors that reflect a strong sense of integrity in personal, academic, and professional conduct. The student is guided by the values of truth, justice, and respect for human dignity, as well as professional standards, in the practice of ethical and safe behaviors toward self, fellow students, faculty, staff, and patients when operating in any student capacity on or off University property.

The MTSU SON administration and faculty support the development of behaviors demonstrating integrity and ethics in all student arenas. The Honor Code is explained upon admission to the SON. As students progress through the curriculum, it is the obligation of all students to adhere to the higher ethical, personal, academic, and professional behaviors as outlined in the Honor Code. Each student is required to abide by all components of the Honor Code, including consequences for any violations. All students are ethically responsible for reporting any known or suspected violation of this Honor Code.

#### **Nursing Student Honor Pledge**

As a student of the Middle Tennessee State University School of Nursing, I do hereby truthfully pledge not to engage in any acts of academic or professional misconduct during my nursing education. I have read and been given the opportunity to ask questions about the Nursing Student Honor Code System presented in the School of Nursing Student Handbook. I understand the content contained therein, including the disciplinary processes as referenced in the MTSU student Handbook, Resources and Rules. As an expectation of my admission to the progression through the nursing program, I will abide

by the Nursing Student Honor Code at all times. I understand that any acts of academic or professional misconduct violate the honor code and may result in sanctions as severe as dismissal from the nursing program.

## VI. CODE OF CONDUCT

### Academic and Professional Conduct

Students enrolled in the nursing program at MTSU will be held accountable for the provisions as stated by the Student Code of Conduct. As with the Nursing Student Honor Code, the Student Code of Conduct is based upon and demands the values of truth, integrity, and ethical behavior within academic and professional settings. Professional settings include those places in which a nursing student is functioning as a representative of the SON and MTSU, on or off campus. Failure to adhere to the provisions of academic and professional conduct of the Student Code of Conduct shall be deemed as misconduct, resulting in academic and/or disciplinary consequences up to and including dismissal from the nursing program. Academic and professional misconduct would include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Plagiarism. The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper acknowledgment.
2. Self-Plagiarism. The US Department of Health and Human Service Office of Research Integrity defines Self-Plagiarism as follows: "Redundant publication has a direct counterpart in the area of academic dishonesty-it is referred to as 'double' dipping'. It occurs when a student submits a whole paper or a substantial portion of paper to fulfill a course requirement, even though that paper had earlier been submitted to satisfy the requirements for another course taught by a different professor. Many college undergraduates and even some graduate students are not aware that this type of practice is a serious offense and constitutes plagiarism".

Source: US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health Office of Research Integrity. (2013). Academic self-plagiarism (double dipping). Retrieved from (link opens in a new window): <https://ori.hhs.gov/plagiarism-13>

3. Cheating. Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise inclusive of online work. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours. Cheating includes but is not limited to receiving or providing answers on a written exam, storing any data within a calculator prior to or during an exam for use in providing responses to an exam, giving signals of any kind during an exam, sending and/or receiving text messages via cell phone with regard to answers to an exam, the procurement and/or distribution of an exam before or after it is given, including the use of cell phone camera options or copying computer generated

assessments in order to reproduce an exam, and group collaboration on any independent assignment. Posting of forms, written papers, and exams to any free or paid-access social networking website(s) is strictly prohibited.

4. **Fabrication.** Fabrication or invention, either verbal or written, of written, of any information or citation in an academic exercise. This includes, but is not limited to, falsification of any information provided to a faculty or staff member, clinical site staff and preceptors (class-related or clinical); for example, number of clinical hours or number of patient encounters.
5. The use or distribution of publisher test banks.
6. **Facilitation.** Helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the Code of Conduct.
7. Posting of confidential client or facility information from clinical assignments or experiences to any online forum or webpage is strictly prohibited, as well as a breach of the federal HIPAA regulations.
8. Any behavior that threatens the safety of self, fellow students, faculty, staff, or patients when operating in a student capacity, representing the MTSU SON.
9. Other forms of unprofessional behavior or conduct includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Tobacco use (smoking, E-cigarettes or smokeless tobacco) at clinical sites and/or in nursing student uniform
  - b. Purchasing of alcohol or cigarettes in a nursing student uniform
  - c. Tardiness (clinical, classroom, lab, or simulation experiences)
  - d. Interruptions or inappropriate talking during class
  - e. Intimidation of students and/or faculty or staff (angry, hostile, or violent behavior)
  - f. Use of cellphones or other electronic devices not approved by faculty in class or during online activities, quizzes or tests
  - g. Academic misconduct
  - h. Fabrication of data in class, clinical, Medatrax or other written assignments
  - i. Sleeping in class or clinical
  - j. Sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual comments
  - k. Use of vulgar, obscene, or disrespectful language towards patients, other students, faculty, or staff (social media sites, on campus or at clinical sites)
  - l. Any other behavior deemed by faculty as unacceptable

Any and all infractions of the Student Code of Conduct will be handled according to University policy as stated in the University Student Handbook of Resources and Rules. A copy of the University Student Handbook is available online via the official MTSU website.

### **Grievance Policy Statement**

Any student being disciplined for academic misconduct may refer to the MTSU Student Handbook, Resources and Rules, for the grievance policy and procedures.

<http://www.mtsu.edu/information/student-complaints.php>

Graduate nursing students are subject to all of the academic policies set forth by the following:

**MTSU Graduate Catalog**

<http://catalog.mtsu.edu/content.php?catoid=22&navoid=3794>

**School of Nursing Graduate Admission and Progression policy**

<http://w1.mtsu.edu/nursing/forms/GraduateAdmissionProgression2016.pdf>

**Grade Appeals**

Any graduate student grievance concerning grades should be pursued according to process outlined in the MTSU Student Appeal of Grades Procedure.

<http://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/student/suspension.php>

**Communication Avenues**

The SON faculty and the administrative team are available to students through many methods. All students will have a faculty advisor assigned to them who is available for career/professional advice. Faculty are often available by appointment. Please email individual faculty to set up an appointment.

The chain of communication for the MSN program leadership include:

Order	Name/Role	Email Address
First	Mrs. Grace James, MSN Advisor	<a href="mailto:Grace.James@mtsu.edu">Grace.James@mtsu.edu</a>
Second	Dr. Leigh Ann McInnis, FNP Coordinator or Dr. Yvonne Creighton, PMHNP Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Leighann.McInnis@mtsu.edu">Leighann.McInnis@mtsu.edu</a>  <a href="mailto:Yvonne.Creighton@mtsu.edu">Yvonne.Creighton@mtsu.edu</a>
Third	Dr. Richard C. Meeks, Associate Director	<a href="mailto:Richard.Meeks@mtsu.edu">Richard.Meeks@mtsu.edu</a>

The School of Nursing Director, Dr. Jenny Sauls, is available by appointment. To schedule an appointment with the Director, please contact LJ McAnly at [LJ.McAnly@mtsu.edu](mailto:LJ.McAnly@mtsu.edu).

Please see section VII for more information regarding advising.

## VII. Student Resources

Student Service	Description	Location
College of Graduate Studies	Provides services required for admission, transfer and completion of program <a href="http://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/index.php">http://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/index.php</a>	Services available face to face on campus
Graduate Catalog	The University provides guidance to graduate students regarding academics in the graduate catalog <a href="http://catalog.mtsu.edu/content.php?catoid=22&amp;navoid=3794">http://catalog.mtsu.edu/content.php?catoid=22&amp;navoid=3794</a>	Online resource
Financial Aid	Provides students with access to grants, scholarships, and loans <a href="http://www.mtsu.edu/financial-aid/graduate.php">http://www.mtsu.edu/financial-aid/graduate.php</a>	Services available online or face to face on campus
Business Office	Provides students with the opportunity to pay college tuition, fees, and fines (if necessary) <a href="http://www.mtsu.edu/tuition/index.php">http://www.mtsu.edu/tuition/index.php</a>	Services available online or face to face on campus
Distance Education	Provides multiple services tailored to the online student <a href="http://www.mtsu.edu/university-college/distance/student-services.php">http://www.mtsu.edu/university-college/distance/student-services.php</a>	Services available online or face to face on campus
Advising	The School of Nursing has a dedicated academic adviser for MSN students. Phone: 615-898-5252 Email: <a href="mailto:msnadvisor@mtsu.edu">msnadvisor@mtsu.edu</a>	Services available online or via face to face on campus
Distance Learning Testing Center	Testing services are provided for all online students <a href="http://www.mtsu.edu/university-college/distance/testing.php">http://www.mtsu.edu/university-college/distance/testing.php</a>	Services available via face to face on campus
University Writing Center	Writing assistance is available on campus or online. Students seeking assistance with writing or format may use this service. <a href="http://www.mtsu.edu/writing-center/index.php">http://www.mtsu.edu/writing-center/index.php</a>	Services available online or via face to face on campus.
Disability Services	The University provides access to Disability Services. <a href="http://www.mtsu.edu/dac/">http://www.mtsu.edu/dac/</a>	Services on campus and listed in each nursing course syllabi.
Technology Services (ITD)	The University provides access to Information Technology services and education to use the online platform. <a href="https://www.mtsu.edu/itd/">https://www.mtsu.edu/itd/</a>	Services are available online or via face to face on campus.
Walker Library	The MTSU Walker Library provides access to library resources, tutoring spots, collaborative spaces and library support for online students. <a href="https://library.mtsu.edu/home">https://library.mtsu.edu/home</a>	Services are available online or via face to face on campus.
Health Services	The University provides health services to all students enrolled at the university. <a href="http://www.mtsu.edu/healthservices/">http://www.mtsu.edu/healthservices/</a>	On campus service
Counseling Services	The University provides guidance to all students in relation to general health and wellness and counseling <a href="http://www.mtsu.edu/countest/">http://www.mtsu.edu/countest/</a>	On campus service

## VIII. Advising Guidelines.

- a. Students should look on their Pipeline account under Assigned Advisor to ascertain the name and contact information (phone# and/or email address) for the student's assigned nursing academic advisor and faculty advisor.
- b. In order to meet with a faculty advisor, please send an email to the faculty for an appointment time. This appointment can be via phone, in-person or web-based.
- c. Students should allow 3-5 working days for the faculty to respond as some faculty are frequently off campus supervising undergraduate students in clinical settings.
- d. Make contact early in the semester with your academic advisor- do not wait until the last minute (priority registration time) to communicate with your advisor as response time may be extended. Email [msnadvisor@mtsu.edu](mailto:msnadvisor@mtsu.edu) to schedule an appointment with your academic advisor.
- e. The academic advisor's office is located in Room 250 of the Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building should you wish to visit in person.
- f. Students should communicate with their academic advisor by phone, email or in person each semester to review their progress.
- g. The degree plan outlines courses required for graduation. This plan is completed in DegreeWorks via your MTSU login and password. The academic advisor must approve any changes to the degree plan.

## IX. Transfer Credit

The graduate program may accept a maximum of twelve (12) credit hours of coursework from an accredited university. The student must provide, at minimum, a course syllabus and schedule for review by the Admissions Committee. Graduate coursework accepted must represent relevant coursework related to the degree.

<http://catalog.mtsu.edu/content.php?catoid=22&navoid=3794>

## X. Registration

Class registration should occur at least 4 weeks prior to the start of each semester. Students not registered for classes during this time are not guaranteed a seat in any class.

### **Reinstatement/Extension**

Both full-time and part-time students must register for each term (fall, spring, and summer). Failure to register for any semester/term constitutes a lapse in the program of

study requiring readmission to the program. See readmission requirements in the Graduate Program Admission, Progression and Retention Policy

Students who do not plan to register for a particular term/semester must complete and submit an Interruption of Program (IOP) form to the MSN academic advisor before completing the current term. Failure to submit the IOP will result in the necessity for reapplication.

*Note that students may wish to submit a Stop Out form to the College of Graduate Studies and will need to fill out a readmission application form (without being required to submit any additional materials) before enrolling for the next term/semester. This will ensure that the College of Graduate Studies has all current student information and will trigger the process required for re-enrollment.*

## XI. Program Readmission

It is expected students attend classes each semester (Fall, Spring, Summer). If a student must interrupt their program of study or exit the program an Interruption of Program (IOP) Form must be submitted to the MSN academic advisor during the semester the request is made.

Readmission to the graduate program is not guaranteed. Readmission is granted on a space-available basis. Readmitted students fall under the current admission guidelines at the time of their readmission.

To be readmitted to the MSN program the student must:

1. Complete all readmission applications within the School of Nursing and Graduate Studies
2. Meet all general admission requirements for the School of Nursing graduate program
3. Update all required health records within the School of Nursing document storage account

Students wishing to change tracks in the program must go through the readmission process and be admitted into the specified track.

Students who are readmitted will follow the most recent academic policies in the School of Nursing. <http://mtsu.edu/nursing/forms.php>

## XII. Grading Scale.

The School of Nursing graduate program uses a common grading scale as follows:

A=93-100      B=85-92

C=77-84      D=70-76  
F=Below 70

No extra credit will be awarded within any nursing course. Final grades will be rounded according to conventional mathematical rules. Students must attain a minimum grade of “B” (3.00) in all graduate nursing courses.

### XIII. Repeating a Course (2-C Policy)

If a student does not successfully complete a nursing course with a “B” or better, the student may repeat the course ***one (1) time only*** without consequences. The course repeat must be taken in the next academic term. No other courses can be taken during the term. If a student is unsuccessful in the course a second time, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Only two (2) different courses in the program of study may be repeated.

#### **Course Withdrawal**

Students may withdraw from a single course one (1) time only.

Students with two (2) withdrawals from a single course will not be readmitted to the MSN program.

Only two (2) instances of course withdrawals are permitted without consequences in the MSN program. Withdrawing from one or more courses at the same time is considered one (1) instance of withdrawal.

Students with more than two (2) withdrawals from the MSN program will not be readmitted to the program.

#### **Program Progression**

The School of Nursing progression standards apply to MSN degree seeking students and Post-Master’s Certificate Students.

Graduate students in the School of Nursing must:

1. Have a “B” or better in all nursing courses, and
2. Have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better at the end of each term.
3. Maintain current documentation within the School of Nursing document storage account

### **Specialty Course Exams**

An average of 85% must be achieved on exams in all specialty course to progress in the program. Courses that require this average include NURS 6110-Advanced Health Assessment; NURS 6210-Diagnosis and Management I and NURS 6211-Diagnosis and Management II; NURS 6311-Psychiatric Mental Health Diagnosis and Management I; and NURS 6312- Psychiatric Mental Health Diagnosis and Management II.

## **XIV. Financial Need/Scholarships**

Limited financial aid is available for graduate students. Students with incomes falling below poverty level may be eligible for grant money as available. Only students who have registered financial status and needs with the MTSU Financial Aid Office will be considered.

There are a few scholarships available to graduate nursing students. Information about the criteria for these awards and application form are found on the SON website. <http://www.mtsu.edu/nursing/scholarships.php>

Students must have a current Free Application Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) file (updated every January) for the Student Success Committee to make scholarship decisions and allocate funds. Students must be registered for courses prior to obtaining scholarships.

Students can apply for foundation scholarships between February 1 and April 1. These applications must be received by the School of Nursing by April 1 in order for the student to be considered for a scholarship. The Committee will meet and review all submitted applications for foundation scholarships; money is awarded at the beginning of fall semester. Incomplete scholarship packets will not be considered. <https://www.mtsu.edu/nursing/scholarships.php>

### **Americans with Disabilities Act.**

ADA Compliance at MTSU

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1937. Any student interested in reasonable accommodations can consult the Disability & Access Center (DAC) website on the MTSU website and/or contact the DAC for assistance at 615-898/2783 or [dacemail@mtsu.edu](mailto:dacemail@mtsu.edu).

## XV. Student Representation

Graduate students attend courses in an online format. Students in these programs are encouraged to participate on committees. If they desire to work on any specific committee they may solicit this through personal contact with the Director, the online advisor or any graduate faculty member. This must be done no later than the second week of the fall or spring semesters.

## XVI. Program Completion

### **Graduation Policy**

In order to graduate from MTSU with a Master of Science in Nursing, the following criteria must be met:

1. Completion of 42 semester hours of graduate nursing courses with a 'B' (3.00) or better in all courses
2. Maintain current documentation within the School of Nursing document storage account
3. Complete a practicum in accordance with concentration requirements
4. Submit the required paperwork to College of Graduate Studies prior to graduation

## XVII. Other Resources

### **University Writing Center**

The University Writing Center (see them at the MTSU website-Writing Center page) offers free writing assistance for any writing assignment in any class. Please request someone with APA experience. The staff of English graduate assistants will help students to develop the skills needed to become a confident, competent writer by providing students with one-to-one consultations and helpful handouts.

The center offers many online services including a grammar hotline for quick questions; and email drop box, as well as a chat room for writing assistance; and a web site filled with helpful handouts, exercises, and resource links for individual work.

<http://www.mtsu.edu/writing-center/>

### **Professional Writing Format**

The School of Nursing utilizes a writing format adopted from the American Psychological Association (APA). This style format is utilized in all courses.

<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>

<http://libraryguides.mtsu.edu/c.php?g=538176&p=3684406>

[http://www.mtsu.edu/writing-center/handouts/APA\\_Citation\\_Style.php](http://www.mtsu.edu/writing-center/handouts/APA_Citation_Style.php)

## XVIII. Handbook Protocol

All graduate students function under the current SON Student Handbook. The handbook is reviewed annually by the Student Success Committee and updated as required. Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and complying with the material in the SON handbook. Clarification or questions should be raised at the time the handbook is received. Additional School of Nursing guidance policies are found at the official nursing website [www.mtsu.edu/nursing](http://www.mtsu.edu/nursing). Individual faculty members will answer other questions as they arise.

This Handbook presents the terms of enrollment in the SON in effect at the time of publication, but there is no guarantee that provisions will not be changed or revoked. The Handbook is not intended to state contractual terms and does not constitute a contract between the student and the institution or the SON. The SON reserves the right to make changes as required to become effective whenever determined by the institution or the SON. These changes will govern current and formerly enrolled students. Enrollment of all students is subject to these conditions.

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