

**AUBURN UNIVERSITY/AUBURN UNIVERSITY
MONTGOMERY SCHOOLS OF NURSING**

**GRADUATE STUDENT
HANDBOOK**



Welcome

The faculty and staff welcome you to the AU & AUM Joint MSN Program. We realize that this is an enormous decision in your professional and personal development.

This handbook is designed to give you some basic information and resources as you progress in the program. Like any document not all questions may be answered. If you do not find an answer to your questions please contact your faculty advisor, the director of the MSN program, or the Dean's office.

We hope you find your experience as a graduate nursing student productive and rewarding! It will require dedication and time management but you will find that it is an important step in realizing your goals.

Sincerely,

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Dean AU & AUM Schools of Nursing

Anita C. All, PhD, RN
Professor and Director AU & AUM Joint MSN Program
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INTRODUCTION

The information in this handbook addresses some of the most common concerns of graduate students. The SONs reserves the right to update the handbook as needed. Students will be notified in a timely manner of any changes to the handbook. Students are responsible for information in the handbook and for policies of the Auburn University and Auburn Montgomery Graduate Colleges contained in the bulletins and the websites.

Faculty in the AU/AUM Joint MSN Program believe that no one person or entity is solely responsible for high-quality graduate education, but that high quality graduate education is a partnership between faculty, students, and administrators.

Students in the joint MSN program will be prepared to provide health services to diverse populations in multiple settings in a dynamic health care environment. Therefore, students focus on developing advanced knowledge and skills in the role of educator with an advanced clinical specialty in adult health, gerontology, or pediatrics.

Another primary area of study in this program is diversity. Although this concept is not new to students, most will not have had significant course work related to this area. This topical area is intended to expand the students' knowledge and skills in providing care for diverse populations. Students will be exposed to disparities in health in our society by exposure to issues related to culture, gender, age, religion, geographical location and other differences. Students will develop advanced expertise in working with diverse populations as a critical component of their role development. As students progress through the program, they will also gain advanced knowledge and skills that will culminate in an educational practicum and an evidenced-based practice project or thesis.

The product of this program will be a nurse with competencies as an educator and in each of the spheres of influence in the CNS role. Graduates of this MSN program will be eligible to take the NLN Nurse Educators Certification examination and ANCC Clinical Nurse Specialist Certification examination in adult health, gerontology, or pediatrics.

Specific Nursing Graduate Program Outcomes

The graduate will:

1. Provide health-related advance practice services to diverse populations.
2. Engage in culturally competent, ethical, and competent teaching/learning processes.
3. Develop an appreciation for diversity in educating various individuals and in providing health-related services.
4. Use evidence-based teaching/learning practices in the education of diverse populations.
5. Advocate for healthcare policy at the local, state, and national level to promote access to cost effective, quality healthcare in diverse populations.

6. Use appropriate strategies that include an array of distance learning methods in the provision of educational and health-related services to diverse populations.
7. Identify and apply theories and evidence-based interventions in the development of comprehensive programs that promote and maintain health in diverse populations.
8. Articulate the role of the educator and advance practice nurse in influencing health-related services.
9. Identify and apply various data sources to support decisions that improve evidence-based nursing practice.
10. Value the role of advanced education at the doctoral level.

MSN ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Admission to the program is competitive and enrollment is limited. Interviews may be required of those applicants who meet the minimum requirements.

Minimum requirements include:

- A bachelor's of science in nursing from an accredited college or university
- Good academic standing from the last university attended
- Successful completion (C or better) of an undergraduate statistics course
- Overall GPA of 3.0
- Unencumbered Alabama license as a registered nurse
- Acceptable GRE scores
- Three letters of professional reference
- Current resume/CV
- Written essay on the reason for seeking the MSN and goals for the future

Full-time students are admitted in the fall and summer semesters. Part-time students are admitted all semesters. Application deadlines for admission are: (1) fall- June 1, (2) spring- November 1, and (3) summer- April 1.

To be considered for full-time study, students must have practiced full-time as a registered nurse for a minimum of six months. Full-time study can be completed in four semesters and a summer term. Part-time students program completion times will vary based on necessary pre-requisites for some courses. Individualized plans of study will be completed for part-time students. Students with less than six months of practice are considered for part-time admission only and admission is contingent on continued part-time employment as a registered nurse.

Probationary Admission

Students may be admitted under probationary status in certain circumstances. Students admitted on probation to the Graduate program will remain in probationary status until they have completed 8 hours of graduate credit with a grade point average

(GPA) of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. Students will be notified when the credit hour GPA requirement has been successfully or unsuccessfully completed.

International Students

TOEFL - Written and oral communication is extremely important to academic success and clinical proficiency. The School of Nursing reserves the right to require evidence of written and oral proficiency. International students whose first language is not English or who has obtained a degree from outside of the United States must present a TOEFL score of 600, a score of a 250 on the computer-based test (CBT), or a score of 100 on the internet-based test (IBT).

Programs Of Study

Fall I

NSG 6671	Advanced Pathophysiology [Troy]	3
NSG 6692	Data Analysis Techniques [Troy]	2
NURS 7210	Role of the CNS for Advanced Practice	1
NURS 7310	Theoretical Foundations for Teaching Learning	3

Total 9 credit hours

Spring I

	Advanced Pharmacology	3
NURS 7110	Applied Clinical Concepts I [60 hours of Clinical practicum]	4
NURS 7250	Public Policy & Healthcare Financing	2
NURS 7320	Development and Evaluation of Educational Programs	3

Total 11 credit hours

Summer I

NURS 7230	Human Diversity	2
NURS 7220	Principles of Ethics for the Health Professional	1
	Interdisciplinary elective	3

Total 6 credit hours

Fall II

NURS 7120	Applied Clinical Concepts II [120 hours of Clinical practicum]	4
NURS 7240	Health Parity in Diverse Populations	2
NURS 7270	Evidence-Based Nursing Practice	2
NURS 7930	Directed Studies [Optional]	1-6

Total 8-14 credit hours

Spring II

NURS 7910	CNS Practicum in Education [320 hours of Clinical practicum]	7
NURS 7980	EBP Project	3

Total 10 credit hours

Students have an option of the non-thesis project, which in this program is NURS 7980 EBP Project or a thesis. Students choosing a thesis will need to work closely with the chair of the thesis committee since a proposal a course

requirement. All students will need to complete course requirements for NURS 7270 even if they have chosen the thesis option.

Variable credit options are available for Directed Studies [NURS 7930] and Thesis [NURS 7990, minimum 4 hours, maximum 6 hours total for graduation].

Students would have to take a minimum of 1 hour of directed studies [NURS 7930] during the 2nd fall semester in order to total 9 hours. Directed readings would be negotiated and contracted with faculty as per university policy.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Academic Advisor/Graduate Committee

Each student is assigned a major academic advisor by the graduate director upon admission to the graduate program. The role of the advisor is to direct the student in the development of her/his plan of study and to provide academic counseling when needed. Students will be assigned a comprehensive examination committee and will select a research or evidence-based project committee. Any requests for a change of academic advisor or any committees must be made by the student to the MSN Program Director.

Plan of Study

All students in the MSN Program must file a Plan of Study with the Auburn University Graduate College. This plan of study should be developed in consultation with the student's academic advisor.

For full and part-time MSN students, the Plan of Study must be submitted no later than the end of the first semester in Graduate School. Notification of all changes must be provided before the beginning of the final semester. One to three changes may be made by using the simplified "Change in Existing Plan of Study Form" available at the Graduate School or on the web. Four or more changes require a new Plan of Study. The student is responsible for carrying out the planned program and for asking the academic advisor to assist in making necessary changes.

No student will be permitted to graduate who fails to submit a Plan of Study and a graduation check to the Graduate School prior to the semester of expected graduation. Graduation day is the official last day of each semester and, therefore, is the deadline for submitting Plans of Study and graduation checks for graduation the following semester.

Any conflicts between the academic advisor and the student should be presented to the MSN Program Director in writing for remediation.

Master's Degree Time Limit

All graduate work toward a master's degree must be completed within a period of five calendar years.

STUDENT REGISTRATION PROCESS

Each student is responsible for knowing the registration process and for registering for courses each semester. Registration will be done on the Auburn campus. Students are sent information about registration and email from the Auburn University Graduate College upon acceptance into the MSN program. Questions about this process should be directed to the Graduate School at 334-844-4700.

Student Tuition and Fees

Please go to the Graduate School Bulletin to see the most up-to-date information on tuition costs at <http://www.auburn.edu/bulletin/> under the heading of "Financial Information." Nonresident fees do not apply to out-of-state students receiving a one-fourth- time or greater appointment as a graduate teaching assistant, research assistant, or extension assistant.

Students will need to check with Troy University-Montgomery for current information on fees for courses offered by Troy University.

In addition students are responsible for costs associated with student-related projects (including, but not limited to, poster presentations, brochures and handouts) in individual courses.

Student ID Cards and Name pins

Auburn University Student IDs can be obtained in the Foy Student Union Food Court. School of Nursing name pins are required for all students during practicum experiences. Students will be informed in the first clinical course on the procedure for obtaining these pins.

COMMUNICATION POLICIES

Email

Email (Tigermail) is the official means of communication for graduate students. Course email use will be detailed in specific courses. First-time users can get their login name and password once they are registered for courses by following the protocol at http://www.auburn.edu/oit/support/students/accounts/ht_getting_aun.php. Once you have your name and password, you can access directly at <http://tigermail.auburn.edu> or via the Auburn student website (<http://www.auburn.edu/main/currentstudents.html>).

Questions about the information technology and Tigermail at Auburn can be answered by calling the OIT Help Desk at (334) 844-9400, or viewing the online "Help for Students" page at <http://www.auburn.edu/oit/support/students/index.php>. To access the full features of wireless internet at Auburn, you will need to download and install the Cisco VPN from the AUInstall Page. Users of Windows and Linux, use the main AUInstall page, while Mac users should use the page at http://www.auburn.edu/academic/science_math/apple.

Confidentiality of Classroom & Electronic Communications

Information that is discussed in the classroom or on web-based assignments should be viewed as confidential and not shared with anyone not enrolled in the class. Clinical assignment information is considered confidential. Students will abide by HIPAA guidelines.

Lines of Authority in Communication

Lines of authority and communication are depicted in the Schools of Nursing organizational chart.

If an academic question or problem arises, the student should pursue the matter in the following sequence:

- a. Course faculty
- b. The student's faculty advisor
- c. Director of the Nursing Graduate Program
- d. Dean of the Schools of Nursing
- e. Dean of the Graduate School

If a non-academic question or problem arises, the student should pursue the matter in the following sequence:

- a. The student's faculty advisor
- b. Director of the Nursing Graduate Program

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

Classes offered in the MSN program will require use of computer and web technology. Keyboard skills, knowledge in the use of Windows, MS Office, and word processing are required. Some courses will be completely on-line while other courses will utilize a combination of face-to-face interaction and on-line learning. Various strategies will be employed in the on-line portion of courses that include but are not limited to email, assignment submissions, bulletin board discussions, chat rooms, and threaded discussions.

Students must be able to download and print documents in Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat formats from the web. They must also be able to construct documents in several formats, including Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft FrontPage.

The Schools of Nursing provides computer labs on both the Auburn and Montgomery campuses. However, students often like to use their own computers when possible. Students will be provided specific information on technology requirements upon admission. This information and technology requirements will be updated as needed.

Equipment and Learning Materials

Equipment and learning materials are loaned to students for use in meeting curriculum objectives. The student who checks out equipment and learning materials is responsible for their timely return. In the event of loss or damage, charges to the student for costs of repair and/or replacement of equipment and learning materials will be forwarded to the Bursar's Office of Auburn University. Holds will be placed on the student's enrollment, transcript, and/or diploma until restitution for damaged or lost equipment and learning materials is made.

MSN GENERAL POLICIES

Admission

Upon admission to the MSN Program specific information will be needed. An informational packet and forms will be sent to each student upon admission. Students must return the required information before the first day of class or they may be administratively withdrawn from courses.

Professional Liability and Malpractice Insurance

All students in the Graduate Program must be covered by malpractice and comprehensive general liability insurance. Proof of current insurance must be filed in your student record.

Background Checks

Some clinical agencies may require criminal background checks. If a student desires an experience in such an agency the student is responsible for obtaining the background check and the subsequent cost of the background check.

Substance Use/Abuse Policy

This policy pertains to all graduate students in the AU/AUM MSN Program. The policy of the Schools of Nursing is consistent with university policies related to alcohol or substance use or abuse.

These Policies are:

- Chemical Substance Testing (testing required by clinical agencies). Consistent with agency contracts, all MSN students will be required to submit to and pass drug testing prior to participation in clinical practica.
- Reasonable Suspicion Testing. Any student covered under this policy will be subject to mandatory testing for the presence of illegal or legally controlled substances and/or alcohol if and when there is reason to conclude that the student is impaired as a result of chemical substance abuse, or that he or she may be abusing chemical substances, even if not obviously impaired.
- Refusal of the student to submit to testing in these circumstances will be grounds for immediate removal from practicum courses, and possible dismissal from the Schools of Nursing. The cost of chemical substance testing undertaken as a result of reasonable suspicion of substance abuse and or impairment will be borne by the Schools of Nursing.
- Further Actions and Consequences. Upon confirmation of chemical substance use, students will be removed immediately from practicum courses by the Director of the Graduate Program. They will then be referred to Auburn University's Counseling and Psychological Services for evaluation and counseling.
- The cost of chemical substance testing performed as part of a treatment program, including maintenance monitoring, will be considered to be part of the cost of the program to be paid by the student, and not by the School of Nursing.
- After completion of the evaluation and counseling process, the student may apply to the Graduate Admission Committee for reinstatement in a practicum course upon a showing of facts which support the conclusion that the student is no longer at risk of chemical substance abuse.

Blood and Body Fluids Exposure Procedure

Each student and clinical faculty member should be aware of the policies for Blood and Body Fluid Exposure Procedure. This policy is available upon requests at the Schools of Nursing.

Clinical Competency Policy

Students may be required to complete a basic assessment and clinical skills examination in the first clinical course and in any other course if the faculty needs confirmation of the student's clinical competency. Any student who has not taken another clinical course for 12 months after completing NURS 7110 may be asked to demonstrate clinical competency by completing a basic assessment and clinical skills examination.

CLASSROOM AND EVALUATION POLICYS

Attendance

Absences may seriously affecting a student's success in a course should be reported by the faculty to the Director of the Graduate Program and after consultation with the student an administrative withdrawal from the course may be initiated. Clinical absences must be made up if the reason for the absence is acceptable. This make up time will be negotiated between the course faculty, preceptor and agency.

Unacceptable excuses for clinical absences may result in failure of the course. Each student must complete a required number of clinical hours to be eligible to the ANCC advance practice examinations.

Attendance and participation in class are expected with online and face-to-face course meetings. Anticipated absences from University for professional functions are to be discussed with the course faculty in advance and they may or may not approve the absence. If students miss course material, it is their responsibility to acquire the missing content.

Tardiness in any type of course interaction is rude and disruptive to the course. Excessive tardiness may result in failing the course. Students will be counseled on an individual basis for tardiness as needed.

Student Papers

Student papers must be prepared in accordance with the American Psychological Association (APA), (5th ed.). Exceptions to the APA format may be found in individual courses. Students should always be sure they are clear about APA policies in each course.

In most cases students will not be able to redo graded assignments. Exceptions to this may be made by individual faculty based on any special circumstances deemed as appropriate by the faculty.

Late Papers

Students are expected to complete and submit classroom, laboratory, and practicum assignments on time. Students submitting late work, unless previous arrangements have been made with course coordinator, may be penalized either by receiving a lower grade or no credit for the assignment. Consequences for late work will be detailed in each course's syllabus.

Evaluation Of Courses And Teaching

Upon completion of each course, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course and faculty. Provision will be made for anonymity of responses.

Faculty use this information for formative and summative evaluation and modification of the course and the learning strategies. A representative sample of student evaluations is also used by faculty in their own self-evaluation and in preparing dossiers for promotion and tenure.

Courses are also reviewed by the Schools of Nursing Curriculum Committee and changes are monitored by the Graduate and University Curriculum Committees. General input is also solicited by the SON Evaluation Committee on curriculum from alumnae and their employers. Faculty also seek input from peers, supervisors, and other qualified to judge their expertise and teaching in their individual evaluations.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Policy and Procedure for Comprehensive Examination

The purpose of this examination is to demonstrate competency in program outcomes and to satisfy the Graduate College requirement for graduation.

Schools of Nursing Comprehensive examination:

Policy:

1. Students in the Joint AU/AUM MSN Program will complete a comprehensive examination during their final semester of course work.
2. Comprehensive examination committees will be appointed and generally consist of the student's academic advisor [chair] and other Schools of Nursing graduate faculty member(s) assigned by the MSN Program Director.
3. The examination will consist of comprehensive questions [usually 1-2] that focus on application of knowledge.
4. Students will have a limited time to complete the question(s).
5. The grading will be S/U.
6. Students will receive the evaluation criteria with the question (s).
7. New questions will be developed by the MSN Curriculum committee yearly.
8. Students may retake the examination only one time and the examination must be repeated within one academic year from time of failure.
9. All committee members must have graduate faculty appointments at AU or AUM.

Procedure:

1. Students will take the examination during the final semester of course work.
2. Students will receive the question(s) on the first official semester day [noted on the graduate academic calendar].
3. Students will receive the question(s) by tiger email.
4. Students will have one week to complete the question. The date the question is to be returned to the chair of the comprehensive examination committee chair will be listed on the question and noted in the email.

5. Before or upon receiving the examination question(s) students will be given the evaluation criteria and the names of committee chair and the committee member.
6. The examination will be turned in to the chair of the comprehensive examination committee and he/she will distribute the answers to the other committee member (s).
7. All examinations must be typed.
8. Students will be notified within two weeks of their satisfactory or unsatisfactory completion of the comprehensive examination.
9. In cases where there is not consensus between the committee chair and the committee member on student's satisfactory completion of the comprehensive examination the student will be asked to have an oral interview with the committee. The MSN Program director will be present during the oral interview.

10. In the case of failure the procedure will be:

- 10.1. The student may finish the final semester courses in which they are enrolled.
- 10.2. The student and the committee chair will develop a contract of learning activities to be completed to help the student successfully complete the comprehensive examination the second time.
- 10.3. The student will be advised by the committee chair about his/her readiness to retaking the examination at the end of the semester or if they need to take it the next semester.
- 10.4. Students may need to enroll in 1-2 hours of directed studies if they are not enrolled in any other courses the semester they repeat the comprehensive examination.
- 10.5. Students who fail the comprehensive examination must retake the examination for the second time within one calendar year of failing the first attempt.
- 10.6. For any comprehensive examination failures every attempt will be made to keep the same committee chair and committee members.
- 10.7. Any examination appeals will follow the standard appeal process.
- 10.8. Students who fail the comprehensive examination the second time will not be allowed to take the examination a third time and will not graduate.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE ON EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE PROJECT OPTION

Policy

1. The Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Project is one of three methods that a student can choose as a capstone experience in the AU/AUM Joint MSN Program. It is expected that this will be the choice for students not desiring an original or mentored traditional research experience.
2. Students choosing the EBP project will register for NURS 7980 during the semester the project is implemented and evaluated.
3. An evidence-based practice project involves the application of current research literature in a selected client population/aggregate. This involves project design, implementation and evaluation.
4. The project will provide evidence that the graduate student has engaged in scholarly and creative work and is able to address a problem relevant to the student's clinical specialization and/or practice population (patients/care providers/nursing students).
5. Students will begin development of this project proposal during NURS 7270 according to the course guidelines.
6. After the student has successfully completed NURS 7270 the project will need to be presented to the student's selected EBP committee for final approval. In most cases the project prepared for NURS 7270 will need additional refinement as required by the student's EBP project committee before beginning implementation.
7. After the EBP committee has approved the EBP project the student will be informed and guided in the necessary next steps of approval.
8. The student's committee will consist of a chair and one other graduate faculty member. This committee will be selected by the middle of the semester that the student is enrolled for NURS 7270. The procedures outlined below are intended to assist students in the preparation of a project that is consistent with the scholarship standards expected of a graduate of a Master of Science in Nursing Program.

Procedure

1. The student will be asked to choose a chair of the committee. It is the student's responsibility to discuss this with the faculty member and work with this faculty member to choose the second committee member.
2. Comprehensive examination committees are not the same as project committees, although the committee composition is not prohibited from being the same.
3. If the student is unable to decide on a committee chair or if one can not be found then the student must notify the MSN Program Director and the director will assign the chair and the committee member.

4. It is the student's responsibility to provide to the MSN Program Director a written agreement of the committee chair and member to serve on the student's project committee.
5. Students must meet the prerequisite requirements for NURS 7980.
6. The project will be developed according to the guidelines provided by the student's committee chair and committee.
7. The project is a scholarly endeavor and must be of a quality appropriate to graduate studies.
8. The student must submit a written paper that includes all elements of the project as determined by the student and the EBP committee. This paper is to be prepared in APA 5th edition style. Timelines will be arranged by the student and the committee.
9. Students need to be aware that the project's chair and the committee may need to review numerous drafts before the project's final approval to proceed with implementation is received.
10. The project must pass a final defense of the project to the student's committee before the student can graduate.
11. It is the student's responsibility to be informed of deadlines for submission of paperwork relevant to graduation and to plan the time accordingly.
12. Copies of completed projects and reports are retained on file at the School of Nursing for future reference by students and faculty.
13. The student will provide one copy of the project with the original signed approval page to the Graduate Program Director **no later than one month** before the last day of the semester in which the student plans to graduate.
14. Final reports that do not meet the specifications outlined above may be rejected by the Director of the Graduate Program.
15. The student may also be asked to provide a copy to their project advisor.
16. In addition to a written defense of the project, the student will be asked to present the project orally to fellow students and SON faculty. This presentation is scheduled **AFTER** the project advisor has indicated the Project is satisfactory.

RESEARCH/THESIS OPTION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy

Students completing a research project or a thesis must adhere to the guidelines of the Auburn Graduate College. These guidelines can be found at http://www.grad.auburn.edu/cs/thesis_guide.html.

A thesis is a research study designed by the graduate student in an area of interest. It involves a research hypothesis, Internal Review Board approval, data collection, data analysis, and application. The student choosing this option will need to work closely with a selected faculty chairperson since the MSN curriculum does not have the student write a research proposal.

The research project is a mentored research experience and in most cases involves working with a graduate faculty member and his/her current research project. It is very similar to a thesis and in most cases a thesis will be the preferable option for the student.

Thesis Procedures

1. The student is responsible for selecting the thesis chair and committee membership, negotiating with faculty to serve on the committee, and scheduling of the thesis defense. The thesis committee is composed of three faculty members with Graduate School appointments. Students may select one member from outside the School of Nursing as a committee member if that faculty has a regular or temporary Graduate School appointment.
2. The chair of the thesis committee is responsible for completion of necessary forms, grade assignment, and notification of the Graduate School and the Director of the Graduate Program, School of Nursing, of the anticipated thesis defense date.
3. Following initial enrollment in NURS7990, Research in Master's Thesis, the student must continue to enroll in thesis every subsequent semester until the thesis is completed. Enrollment in NURS7990 is required during the semester the thesis is completed. A minimum of 4 hours of credit must be obtained for graduation but no more than 6 credits of NURS 7990 will be counted as required credits for graduation.

Guidelines for Developing your Thesis

1. Consult with your thesis advisor and your thesis committee. Following development of your proposal, the committee will meet with you to discuss it. It is your responsibility to coordinate a meeting time.
2. At that meeting, the committee will review your proposal, make suggestions and accept your plans. You must have your committee's approval prior to filing your IRB and proceeding with your project.

3. Your final defense will be scheduled following approval of your thesis chairperson. Use The Guide to Preparation and Submission of Dissertation and Theses located on the Graduate School website at: http://www.grad.auburn.edu/cs/thesis_guide.html to assist you. Information may also be found in the Graduate School section of the Auburn University Bulletin, either the printed version or the website at http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/bulletin_06-07 . IRB approval must be obtained from all appropriate institutions.

Changing from Research/Thesis Option to Evidence-Based Practice Project Option

Students may withdraw/change from the thesis option to the Evidence-Based Practice Project before the second enrollment in NURS7990 or prior to submission of a proposal to any institutional review board, whichever occurs first, without petitioning for the change. If students who have completed more than one semester of thesis hours or submitted a proposal to an institutional review board wish to withdraw from the thesis option, they must submit a petition to the thesis committee for permission to change to the evidence-based practice option. The thesis chair or faculty academic advisor must notify the SON Graduate Program Director of an approved change. Students must realize that this change may result in a change in the planned graduation date

A student may change from the Evidence-Based Practice Project Option to a Research/Thesis Option at any time after consultation with his/her faculty advisor. Students must realize that this change may result in a change in the planned graduation date. The faculty advisor must notify the SON Graduate Program Director of an approved change.

Approval Page of Thesis

Any thesis written at AU/AUM SON must contain the following sentences on the approval page: "Except where reference is made to the work of others, the work described in this thesis is my own or was done in collaboration with my advisory committee. This thesis does not include proprietary or classified information."

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Each graduate student's progress toward degree completion is monitored by the student's advisor and the Director of the MSN Program. Issues of professional and personal development may be considered.

While failure to maintain academic standards merits automatic dismissal, a student also may be dropped from the MSN Program if progress is unsatisfactory in other areas, e.g. clinical competency issues. In such cases, the advisor and Director of the MSN Program will prepare a statement of deficiencies and/or grievances and discuss it in a meeting with the student.

The student will be notified in writing of corrective measures that must be taken or standards that must be met within a specified time to avoid action that might result in dismissal. The advisor and the program director will determine the period of time allowed for correction. Copies of the statement of action needed and a summary of the meeting will be provided to the student, the MSN Program Director, the Dean of the Schools of Nursing and the graduate dean within one week of the meeting.

If the deficiency is not corrected within the time allowed in the statement, a statement reiterating the grievance and recommending dismissal should be sent to the Director of the MSN Program.

The MSN Program Director after review will forward this recommendation with his/her recommendation to the Dean of the Schools of Nursing. The Dean of the Schools of Nursing will evaluate the recommendations and forward them with his/her recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate College.

The graduate dean will give the student an opportunity to respond and will make a final determination. The student and the advisory committee will be notified.

The action taken will not appear on the student's official transcript, and release of information is restricted under the University's policy on the confidentiality of student records.

Grades

The grades A, B, C, D and F are used in computing grade point averages. A, B, C and S are the only passing or satisfactory grades. Grades of D or F are failing. Students who receive a D or F grade in a required course must register for the required course the next time it is given. A course may be re-taken only once and if a passing grade is not received in the second attempt students will be considered not progressing in the program and will be dismissed. Grades are calculated as follows: A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = below 60.

Since all courses may not be offered each semester, course failure could result in not finishing the program when planned or graduation may be affected by the student's time clock in the program.

The grade of S (satisfactory) is a neutral passing grade. The grade of U (unsatisfactory) is used to indicate that no credit will be given for the course.

The grade of I (incomplete) is a neutral grade. It is not an alternative to a grade of F, but is intended as a temporary grade to be used when a student who, for reasons satisfactory to the Faculty and MSN Program Director, is unable to complete certain identifiable requirements of a course and who cannot be assigned any

other grade. The I grade is typically used in situations in which illness or other extenuating circumstances prevent the student from completing course requirements. A grade of I in a course which is a prerequisite for other courses will prevent the student from enrolling in those courses. A grade of I must be removed within the following six months or it will be recorded permanently as an F and the course will have to be repeated. This applies regardless of the student's enrollment status. A student not enrolled during the following six months is not exempt from this rule. A student may not graduate until "incomplete" and "no record" grades are removed, and the removal must be completed at least three weeks before the date of graduation, regardless of whether the course is included on the Plan of Study.

A written warning is issued by the appropriate faculty at mid-semester to any student failing a course. The warning includes specification of unacceptable performance and actions the student must take in order to pass the course.

The grade of AW may be assigned to indicate that a student has been "involuntarily" withdrawn by the institution during the designated semester for disciplinary or financial reasons or inadequate attendance.

Examples of instances in which the grade of AW may be recorded are:

- Disciplinary - Violation of alcohol and drug abuse and racial or ethnic harassment policies.
- Financial - Failure to pay fees/tuition before the last day of a current term. A student may be reinstated for a term by paying all fees, tuition, and penalties owed, if paid within one year of the last day the term for which charges remain outstanding. Upon reinstatement within one year, grades originally assigned will be included on the student's transcript.
- Attendance - Absences seriously affecting a student's class are reported by faculty to the Director of the Graduate Program and an administrative withdrawal from the course may be initiated after consultation with the student and the School of Nursing Dean.

Degree Requirements

To receive a graduate degree from the Joint MSN Program a student must maintain cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale on all courses carrying graduate credit. No more than nine hours beyond the student's Plan of Study is allowed in obtaining the cumulative graduate GPA (CGGPA).

No grade below C (including unsatisfactory grades for courses taken under the S/U option) is acceptable for credit toward a graduate degree. Each graduate course in which a grade lower than a C is received must be repeated whether or

not it is listed on the student's Plan of Study. Both the original grade and the grade for the repeated course will be counted in calculating the CGGPA. Course credits transferred from another institution may not be used to satisfy this requirement. Courses retaken will not count against the nine-hour limit beyond the student's Plan of Study in obtaining the minimum CGGPA.

The student must also successfully complete any comprehensive/competency examinations required by the MSN Program. The student must successfully complete the research/thesis or the evidence-based practice [non-thesis option] project.

Academic Probation

Only grades in courses approved for graduate credit and the student's plan of study will be used in determining the overall GPA for continuation in the Graduate School.

If at the end of any semester the cumulative graduate GPA (CGGPA) falls below 3.0, the student will be placed on academic probation. If the CGGPA remains below 3.0 after the next nine credit hours of graduate enrollment (both graded and not graded), the student will be placed on academic suspension.

A student may be readmitted only after completion of a remediation plan recommended by the academic unit and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

No course work taken as part of the remediation plan may count toward the student's degree or CGGPA. Graduate-level courses for which grades below C were earned may not be repeated during the remediation period.

Important Dates For Graduation

Specific deadlines are published by the graduate school for each semester. It is each student's responsibility to know these dates and submit the needed forms/paperwork on time. Late forms/paperwork may result in delayed graduation.

1. All graduation check requests are due no later than the last day (graduation day) of the semester PRIOR to the semester of graduation.
2. Use the PRELIMINARY LIST during the semester before the current term to determine who has submitted a graduation check request.
3. Use the ALPHABETICAL LIST during the semester of graduation to see who remains on the graduation list.
4. Do not expect an accurate ALPHABETICAL LIST until after the 15th class day of each term. The Graduate School cannot check the registration status of

graduator until after the 15th class day because departments can and do still register students until the 15th class day.

5. Students will drop off the ALPHABETICAL LIST following the 15th class day as they fail to meet deadlines, fail to correct previously identified problems, or as the Graduate School is notified to remove them.
6. All final projects or research work must meet deadlines published by the graduate college and the MSN program for an on-time graduation. Failure to meet the published deadlines may result in delayed graduation.

Graduation Requirements

No student will be permitted to graduate who does not have an approved Plan of Study on file in the Graduate School or who fails to submit a graduation check request to the Graduate School prior to the semester of expected graduation.

Graduation day is the official last day of each semester and, therefore, is the deadline for approved plans of study and graduation checks for graduation the following semester.

It is the responsibility of graduate students to check records for compliance with graduation requirements. Students who have completed a Plan of Study and graduation check for a previous term must notify the Graduate School of pending graduation before the 15th class day of subsequent semesters. Graduate degrees are awarded at the end of each semester. Candidates wishing to graduate in absentia must inform the Office of Records and Admissions.

Students who have in a previous term completed all requirements for the degree, upon receipt of a "certificate of completion" form from the Graduate School, will not be required to register in a future term if their graduation is delayed or postponed.

STUDENT CONDUCT

All students in the graduate program are expected to comply with legislative standards in accordance with the State Laws Regulating Practice of Registered and Practical Nursing. Failure to comply with these standards may be cause for denial of license to practice as a registered nurse. **Failure to comply with state standards and laws while in the MSN program constitutes grounds for dismissal from the program.**

Patient Confidentiality

Patient confidentiality at clinical facilities is expected for the successful completion of any nursing course. Students have read and signed the confidentiality agreement and they will be held accountable. Any breach of a

patient's confidentiality by a student will result in disciplinary action against the student and may result in their dismissal from the graduate program.

Academic Honesty

The Joint MSN Program at Auburn University and Auburn University Schools of Nursing Oath:

Whereas, the Schools of Nursing pride themselves as a top tier institute of higher education and acknowledges the need for integrity in such an environment, and Whereas, in striving to maintain its due accreditation and success, the University's pledge to set the example within the Southeastern Conference and throughout the nation as a University grounded in the principles of duty and honor; and

Whereas, we as a University and Family are proudly bound to such authenticity set forth in the Creed by stating, "I believe in Honesty and Truthfulness, without which I cannot win the respect and confidence of my fellow men;" and

Whereas, an exciting honor code presides over each University student, yet lacks the visibility, respect and obligation carried by an Oath of Honor; and

Whereas, the Intent of such an Oath is simply to instill a code of conduct so rich in honor and integrity that one's walk with virtue not stall upon graduation, but rather propel him or her into society as an example of those principles the University men and women hold most dear; therefore, be it

Resolved, first, through the consent of the Student Senate, as a representative and protective body over the rights of each student, the following be adopted as the University Oath of Honor:

Resolved, second, that the presence of the Oath be made known to all students; and

Resolved, third, that each student sign the Oath upon presentation of the individual syllabus by each instructor at the beginning of the semester, and that the signing further be encouraged at the instructor's discretion on any other test, paper, or related assignment.

"In Accordance with those virtues of Honesty and Truthfulness set forth in the Auburn Creed, I, as a student and fellow member of the Auburn family, do hereby pledge that all work is my own, achieved through personal merit and without any unauthorized aid. In the promotion of integrity, and for the betterment of Auburn, I give honor to this, my oath and obligation."

Signed

Date

Your signed oath must be turned in to the MSN Program Director no later than two weeks after beginning your first graduate course.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes, but may not be limited to, (1) cheating, using unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise or on national board examination, plagiarism, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of examinations, intimidation and any and all other actions that may improperly affect the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement; (2) assisting others in any such act; or (3) attempts to engage in such acts.

Plagiarism

The AU/AUM MSN Program has adopted a zero tolerance policy on plagiarism. Therefore, if an assignment is considered to be plagiarized, it will be brought to the student's advisory committee and MSN Program Director. The minimum penalty is a grade of zero (0). The student may also be subject to additional consequences based on the recommendations of the advisory committee and The MSN Program Director. A Critical Incident Report will be placed in the student's permanent file.

Plagiarism is defined as the practice of (dishonestly) claiming or implying original authorship of material which one has not actually created, such as when a person incorporates material from someone else's work into his own work without attributing it. Within academia, plagiarism is seen as academic dishonesty and is a serious and punishable academic offense. (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism>).

Academic Appeals

See university policies on Academic Appeals.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Computer Labs

Both Schools of Nursing have state-of-the-art computer labs. The AU lab is located 226 Miller Hall. The AUM lab is located in the Nursing Resource Center on the 2nd floor.

Libraries

Students will be able to use libraries and library services on both the AU campus and the AUM campus.

Photocopying

Services are available on both campus or at many local copy stores.

Financial Aid

A variety of scholarships and student loans are available to graduate nursing students. All applications for financial assistance must be made through the University Financial Aid Office located in 203 Mary Martin Hall. The priority deadline for applications for financial aid is April 15. Application forms are available there on February 1. Various Nursing Scholarships are available for students in the Professional Program and Graduate program. Application forms are available in the Office of the Academic Advisor on first floor.

Many hospitals offer scholarships/loans with the agreement of employment by the hospital for a specified length of time. Individual hospitals should be contacted for information.

Graduate students are also eligible for employment as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs). GTAs are employed 10 - 20 hours per week to assist with teaching in the baccalaureate program. GRAs are employed 10 hours per week to assist faculty with research studies. Students interested in employment as GTAs or GRAs should contact the MSN Program Director.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Student Governance

Students will be notified of opportunities to be a part of standing committees and graduate student activities via the tiger email system. Students may be asked by the MSN Program Director or by the graduate faculty to participate in various activities. Refusal to participate will not impact any course grades or any standing in the MSN program.

Sigma Theta Tau, Theta Delta (Au)/Kappa Omega (AUM) Chapters

Sigma Theta Tau is the international honor society for nursing. The purposes of the organization are to support research, recognize leadership and scholarly achievement, and strengthen commitment to the ideals and purposes of the profession of nursing.

Graduate Students of the Joint AU/AUM MSN Program who are not already members will be notified of their eligibility when they completed at least 1/4 of the nursing curriculum, have a minimum 3.5 GPA and meet the expectation of academic integrity. Eligible MSN students may choose either chapter or hold dual membership in the chapters listed above.

Phi Kappa Phi

The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi is the oldest and most selective academic honor society dedicated to the recognition and promotion of academic excellence in all fields of higher education. Membership is by invitation only and is offered to the top five percent of graduating students in each college and school.

Omicron Delta Kappa

Graduate students nearing completion of their programs of study are eligible to be nominated to chapters of Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK), a national leadership honor society. Nominations are made by faculty members and students who agree to be nominated may be asked to provide biographical data.

Professional Organizations

Many professional organization are available that may offer reduced membership rates for graduate students. Graduate students are encouraged to become an active member of organizations of their choice. Some organizations that students might consider are:

- American Nurses Association/Alabama State Nurses Association
- Chi Eta Phi Sorority
- National Association for Clinical Nurse Specialist
- National League For Nursing/ Alabama League For Nursing
- Southern Nursing Research Society

Alumni Association

All graduates of the School of Nursing are members of the Auburn University Alumni Association and the Alumni Associations of the Schools of Nursing.

The Nursing Alumni Associations of both Schools of Nursing promote the goals and purposes of the school; encourage interest in the school among graduates, students and friends, and foster good fellowship among graduates.

Honors Day

The Schools of Nursing recognize outstanding students at an annual honor's day late in the spring semester. Donors and supporters of the Schools of Nursing are

also recognized at this event.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Name and Address Changes

Students, whose name, address and/or phone number changes while enrolled in MSN Program, should notify their Academic Advisor and the Registrar's Office.

Certification Exams

Upon completion of the program of study, students are eligible to take ANCC CNS Examination in Adult Health, Gerontology, and Pediatrics. Graduates also meet the eligibility for the NLN Nurse Educator Examination after two years of employment as nursing faculty.

Services For Students With Disabilities

The MSN Program endorses the AU and AUM policies regarding students with disabilities. The MSN program provides accessible programs, services and activities and reasonable accommodations for any student with a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Faculty work to ensure that students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to pursue an education.

Nursing is a practice discipline with cognitive, sensory, affective, and psychomotor performance requirements. Qualified individuals are those who satisfy admission requirements and who can perform essential functions of a nursing program with or without reasonable accommodation or modification. Definitions of essential functions will be provided upon request to the MSN Program Director.

To be eligible for program accommodation, students must present disability documentation to the Director of the Program for Students with Disabilities, who will forward eligibility status to the MSN Program Director. It is the student's responsibility to initiate any requests for accommodation. If essential nursing functions can not be performed after appropriate accommodations are done; the faculty, in consultation with the MSN Program Director, RESERVES the right to withdraw the student from clinical courses.

This policy is adopted from the Southern Council on Collegiate Education for Nursing (SCCEN) and the University Program for Students with Disabilities. It is congruent with the skills presented in the document entitled Essentials of College and University Education for Professional Nursing.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Services may be available at either campus. Students needing these services should seek guidance in finding the appropriate resources from the academic advisor or the MSN Program Director. All such request will be confidential.

Writing Help

Online writing and other academic helps may be found at:
<http://www.cla.auburn.edu/clastudents/academicassistance>