FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Nursing

RN to BS Nursing Track

2026 – 2027

RN to BS Nursing Track 2026 – 2027

Accreditation and Approval Status

The baccalaureate degree in nursing and master's degree in nursing at Fitchburg State University are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) (http://www.ccneaccreditation.org).

Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
655 K Street NW, Suite 750
Washington, DC 20001
Telephone: (202) 887-6791

The Department of Nursing has full approval status from the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Board of Registration in Nursing
239 Causeway Street, Suite 500, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02114
Telephone: (617) 973-0900 or (800)-414-0168

In addition, the Department of Nursing is a member of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the Massachusetts Association of Colleges of Nursing (MACN).

Fitchburg State University is accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE).

Letter from Chairperson

Fall 2026

Dear Fitchburg State University Nursing Student:

Welcome to the Department of Nursing at Fitchburg State University! This handbook provides students with information about the department, the curriculum, and departmental academic policies.

The policies in the Fitchburg State University Catalog apply to all students (with the exception of a few instances that are outlined in this handbook). Thus, the Fitchburg State University Catalog and this student handbook will serve as references while students are enrolled in the RN to BS track at Fitchburg State University. The policies and practices presented in this handbook are subject to annual review and revision.

Deborah Benes, PhD, RN, PNP-R
Chairperson
Department of Nursing

Fall 2026

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Disclaimer Statement

Fall 2026

Please Note:

The rules, regulations, policies, courses of study, and academic requirements that appear in the Fitchburg State University catalog and this RN to BS in Nursing Student Handbook were in effect at the time of this publication. Just as with all content within the catalog or handbook, they are published for informational purposes only, and they do not constitute a contract between the University or the Department of Nursing and any student, applicant for admission, or other person.

Whether noted elsewhere in the catalog or the handbook or not, the University and the Department of Nursing reserve the right to change, eliminate and /or add to any existing (and introduce additional) rules, regulations, policies, courses of study and/or academic requirements.

Whenever it does so, the University or the Department of Nursing will give as much advance notice as it considers feasible or appropriate, but it reserves the right in all cases to do so without notice.

Deborah Benes, PhD, RN, PNP-R
Chairperson
Department of Nursing

Philosophy of the Nursing Faculty

1. Professional nursing is an applied science and art based on concepts from the natural and behavioral sciences, and humanities, which are integrated into a unique configuration both in theory and practice. The delivery of professional nursing care requires critical thinking. It involves a systematic approach to meeting clients' health needs, the application of skilled practice activities in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, relationships characterized by the therapeutic use of self, and accountability for nursing actions and decisions. Professional nursing is dynamic in its approach to practice and has a responsibility to: identify society's evolving health needs; influence society's concept of health while remaining sensitive to different approaches to health and health care; initiate and participate in the planning and delivery of health services; and, improve nursing practice through scholarly pursuits. The environment for the practice of professional nursing extends to any setting where the health needs of society must be met.

2. Undergraduate nursing education prepares a nurse generalist and leads to the first professional degree. It prepares the practitioner to provide direct and indirect care to individuals, families, and groups, and to assume beginning leadership roles. Graduate nursing education builds upon the knowledge and competencies acquired in baccalaureate nursing education using a curriculum specific to the area of nursing specialization. It prepares the practitioner to assume advanced leadership in the community and the health care system, and to contribute to the development of nursing science and the improvement of health care.

3. Education is a process of teaching and learning in which growth occurs. The goal of education is to assist humankind as learners towards self-actualization and to enhance their ability to be responsible members of society. Teaching involves determining learning objectives, creating an environment that offers a multiplicity of experiences, guiding the development of the learner's potential according to individual needs, and evaluating and affirming the achievement of learning objectives. Opportunities for advanced placement in the curriculum are provided through validation of previously acquired academic and clinical competencies. Learning is an active ongoing process requiring motivation. Individuals learn

throughout life that which has meaning and value to them. Learners have the right and responsibility to participate in the planning and evaluation of their educational program.

4. The role of the faculty member at the undergraduate level is guidance of the learner's personal growth and their attainment of competencies commensurate with the role expectations of entry-level professional nursing practice. This is accomplished by developing and implementing a curriculum that promotes integration of knowledge from a broad range of disciplines with professional study. The role of the faculty member at the graduate level is to facilitate creative inquiry and achievement of specialized role competencies. This is accomplished through application of principles of adult education: self-direction, commitment to lifelong learning, and participation in and evaluation of learning activities.

Vision and Mission

Vision Statement

As a center of excellence in baccalaureate nursing education, the Fitchburg State University Department of Nursing prepares students to assume healthcare leadership roles in the global society of the 21st century. The Department uses continuous program evaluation and innovation to maintain an educational culture that fosters social responsibility, service commitment, client advocacy, and lifelong learning. Graduates are nurse generalists who use critical thinking and current evidence to solve problems using integrative care to meet the evolving healthcare needs of populations and environments.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Fitchburg State University Department of Nursing is to prepare professional nurses capable of meeting societal healthcare needs in a variety of settings. In their teaching, the faculty nurtures respect for diversity, social responsibility, and a commitment to excellence. Collaborative and interactive teaching methods foster the use of critical thinking to build a strong foundation for the practice of holistic nursing. Legal, ethical and professional standards guide the faculty in teaching the art and science of nursing.

Key Nursing Program Policies

Admissions

RN to BS in Nursing Program

For information on admission to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program refer to the Department of Nursing.

Progression

- All RN to BS students must have successfully completed ENGL1100 Writing I; ENGL1200 Writing II; PSY 1100 Introduction to Psychological Science; SOC 1100 Introduction to Sociology before beginning nursing courses. The following courses must also be completed and require a minimum grade of 2.5 :BIOL 1200 Anatomy & Physiology I; BIOL 1300 Anatomy & Physiology II; and BIOL 2700 Medical Microbiology.
- MATH 1700 Applied Statistics is a prerequisite for NURS 3710 Evidence-Based Practice. NURS 3710 Evidence-Based Practice is a prerequisite for all NURS 4000 level nursing courses.

Nursing Courses

- Students in the RN to BS program must achieve a minimum grade of 2.5 or better in each nursing (NURS) course. Should a student fail a course, that course can be repeated only one time. The student must achieve a grade of ***2.5 or higher*** in the repeated course in order to move forward in the nursing program. Any failure to achieve a minimum grade or 2.5 in any subsequent nursing course will result in dismissal from the nursing major.
- Students have the ability to withdraw from a course based on University policy. A repeated pattern of withdrawal (>3) from courses will be reviewed by the chairperson and the RN to BS coordinator to determine student continuation in the nursing program.

Attendance and accountability

Students are expected to participate in all classes, discussion boards and complete all assignments in course syllabi. Missing coursework due to work conflicts will not be accepted.

Course Exemption

Course exemptions are made through Advanced Placement, university testing, military transcripts and transfer credit for previously taken college courses. RN to BS students receive a minimum of 30 transfer credits for nursing courses completed in their initial RN program. Credit transfer occurs during the admissions process. Fitchburg State University Department of Nursing policies for course exemptions are congruent with those of the University.

All remaining nursing courses must be taken at Fitchburg State University according to the plan of study for the RN to BS in Nursing program. For more information refer to the university policy.

Advanced Placement

Undergraduates in the Nursing program who have been awarded advanced placement credit on the basis of a College Level Examination Program (CLEP) or an Advanced Placement (AP) examination administered by the College Board will be granted no grade for these credits. Official transfer credit evaluations are conducted by the Registrar's Office when a student is admitted to the university. For more information, refer to the university policy.

Advanced placement within the Nursing program may occur in two ways for Registered Nurses:

- Must hold a current Registered Nurse License in good standing.
- Must be a Graduate of an accredited registered nurse program with a Grade Point Average of 2.5.
- A maximum of 88 credits composed of nursing and liberal arts and science courses taken at another accredited two or four year educational institution, if evaluated by the Registrar as equivalent to those offered at Fitchburg State University, are acceptable in transfer. Fitchburg State University Department of Nursing follows the Massachusetts Nursing Education Transfer Compact.

Educational Mobility

The faculty of the Department of Nursing support educational mobility and stand ready to assist students in achieving their academic goals. The department supports the American Association of

Colleges of Nursing Educational Mobility Position Statement and the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing Position Statement.

Readmission to the Nursing Department

- Students who withdraw from the Department or University in good standing must request readmission. The application first goes to the Registrar, who then consults with the Chairperson of the Department of Nursing. Readmission depends on space availability. If it has been longer than two years, the student must reapply to the program.
- Students who have left the Department or University and are not in good standing at the time of departure are not guaranteed readmission to the University or to the Department. The student must first gain readmission to the University.
- If the student left due to academic difficulty, to be considered for re- admission to the Department, a written letter is required. The letter should include information which describes the reason for the academic difficulty, and what has been done to assure that the difficulty will not reoccur.
    1. The letter is considered by the Student Policies Committee, who recommends action to the Department Chairperson.
    2. The final decision rests with the Department Chairperson. Readmission also depends on space availability.
- No student will be re-admitted if they have failed two or more nursing courses.
- Students who are not readmitted to the Department of Nursing are eligible for re-admittance to the University. Please refer to the University Catalog.

Graduation

To graduate from Fitchburg State University, students must meet the following criteria:

- Achieve a minimum grade of ***2.5 or better*** in each nursing (NURS) course.
- Obtain 120 credits including 32 credits in Nursing.
- Meet all department of Nursing requirements.
- Complete all elective Liberal Arts and Science requirements.

*For additional requirements, see academic progression policy.

Student's Rights & Grievances

Formal Complaint within the Nursing Program

The FSU Department of Nursing defines a formal complaint as a signed letter that specifically expresses concern from any member of the program's community of interest about issues related to a student's experience in the nursing program. The formal complaint should be made by the end of the semester in which the concern began.

The formal complaint should include:

- The basis of the complaint
- The steps taken to resolve the complaint
- The intention of the formal complaint

Once a signed formal complaint letter is received in the Department of Nursing, the Department Chairperson forwards the formal complaint documentation to the appropriate committee or person(s) for review. The review committee's comments/recommendations are forwarded to the Department Chairperson who then provides a response to the originator of the written formal complaint.

Formal Complaints are tracked via a Formal Complaint Log that includes:

- Tracking number designated by year and complaint # for that year (i.e. 2020-1)
- Date the letter was received by department
- Reviewing committee or person(s) conducting review
- Date formal complaint was 'closed'

Source documentation for each formal complaint is kept on file in the Department of Nursing Administrative Office.

Academic & General Policies

Curriculum

The undergraduate nursing curriculum is designed to progress in complexity, and to integrate prior knowledge and skills. The curriculum builds on a freshmen foundation of required liberal arts and science courses which provide the knowledge necessary to begin the nursing curriculum.

Undergraduate Terminal Outcomes

Upon completion of the nursing program, the graduate will:

1.Integrate knowledge from the liberal arts, natural and social sciences, and nursing as a foundation for safe, client-centered care to diverse populations.
2. Deliver evidence-based person-centered care that is holistic, equitable, respectful, compassionate, and coordinated to diverse populations.
3. Engage in initiatives to promote health and prevent/manage disease to advance equitable population health outcomes.
4. Integrate research and evidence-based practice in the nursing care of clients across a variety of populations to improve practice and associated health outcomes.
5. Participate in improvements to advance and support safe practice environments.
6. Participate in the nursing role as a member of multidisciplinary teams through collaboration and effective communication.
7. Coordinate resources across complex systems of health care to proactively provide safe, quality, and equitable care to diverse populations.
8.Use information and communication technologies, and informatics processes to plan and deliver care.
9. Demonstrate professionalism and behaviors reflective of nursing's characteristics and values.
10. Participate in activities and self-reflection that foster personal and professional growth

The Nursing Major

Courses in the nursing major address the areas of Client, Health, Nursing and Environment. As the student progresses in the major, these concepts increase in scope and complexity.

Patient/Client

Courses in the RN to BS in Nursing curriculum focus on the client as individual, family and community. Individual courses examine care of the client within these definitions.

Health

Students have opportunities to apply their knowledge of health promotion, risk management, and illness care, and to learn new concepts related to health and illness.

Throughout the curriculum, students focus on care of specialty populations, and community health, where health promotion, risk management, disease prevention, and services are key to the health of communities.

Nursing

The curriculum emphasizes higher level application of nursing care components, such as the therapeutic use of self, and communication. The incorporation of evidence based practice is stressed. The senior level focuses on a collaborative role and task competence, and the increasing use of leadership and management principles.

Environment

Environmental influences on health and access to health care, including historical, social, economic, political, and cultural factors, are integrated in all nursing courses with varying emphasis. Environment in the context of social justice is explored.

The Fitchburg State University Department of Nursing faculty members believe that learning is an active, on-going process requiring motivation. Individuals learn throughout life that which has meaning and value for them on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor levels.

References

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Bloom, B. S., Englehart, M. B., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, the classification of educational goals – Handbook I: Cognitive Domain. New York: David McKay Company, Inc.
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New General Education Curriculum

The curriculum has been updated to provide students with the knowledge needed to become active and informed members in today's society. To that end, the degree requires that approximately half of the curriculum credits derive from General Education requirements as described below.

Civic Learning: Civic Learning means acquisition of the knowledge, the intellectual skills and the applied competencies that citizens need for informed and effective participation in civic and democratic life; it also means acquiring an understanding of the social values that underlie democratic structures and practices.

Diverse Perspectives: Exploring Diverse Perspectives requires the ability to recognize the origins and influences of one's cultural heritage and identity in order to engage and learn from perspectives and experiences different from one's own. The goal of Diverse Perspectives is to develop the capacity to understand the interrelationships between multiple perspectives, such as personal, social, cultural, disciplinary, environmental, gendered, economic, local, and global.

Ethical Reasoning: Ethical reasoning is a *way of thinking* about ethical issues and ethical perspectives. The point of instruction in ethical reasoning is to prepare students to think more clearly, carefully, and productively *about* ethical issues and perspectives.

Fine Arts Expression and Analysis: The arts must be emphasized in today's college curriculum. The disciplines of music, theater, and visual arts develop critical thinking and analysis skills around

forms of expression that impact our daily lives and carry vital social, historical, and cultural meanings.

Historical Inquiry and Analysis: Understanding the historical background of our own society and current world events can enhance the understanding of our clients' backgrounds and their world perspectives. Exploring the history of different societies and cultures can be useful in broadening one's repertoire of responses to those of different backgrounds.

Information Literacy: Information literacy is "the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning" (ACRL, 2015, p. 8). These skills are essential for nurses as they evaluate evidence to support safe quality nursing practice.

Integrative Learning: The aim of Integrative Learning is to help students connect their learning across fields, and also to integrate classroom work with experiences in larger campus and community contexts. FSU nursing students will integrate and apply knowledge from different disciplines and experiences to solve problems.

Literary Inquiry and Analysis: Literature can give us a window into the human experience both in the past and the present. Literary Inquiry and Analysis helps teach students to understand and evaluate literary texts to understand the ways in which different literary genres and approaches can communicate ideas and information, explore timeless themes of the human experience, inspire our imaginations and better comprehend our human past.

Personal Wellness: Personal Wellness is "the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health" (https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/). This requires developing an evidence-based understanding of the factors that promote or negatively impact physical and psychosocial well-being, as well as the ability to assess one's current state of physical and psychosocial wellness, set goals for improving well-being, and implement a plan to achieve those goals.

Procedural and Logical Thinking: Courses addressing problem solving within the Gen Ed curriculum teach a variety of interrelated but distinct skills, including quantitative reasoning, scientific inquiry and analysis, and constructing and analyzing logical arguments to generate a solution; we identify this latter skill as Procedural and Logical Thinking.

Quantitative Reasoning: The Quantitative Reasoning requirement reflects our commitment to prepare nursing students who are able to make sense of quantitative data to address real world problems. Quantitative Reasoning is used in all phases of nursing as evidence by the need for calculating accurate dosage and flow rates, planning staff patterns, budgeting for necessary staff and supplies, and interpreting statistics and their significance.

Reading: Reading is one of the foundational learning outcomes for our General Education curriculum and is essential to nursing practice. Nursing students will learn to extract and construct meaning through interaction and involvement with written language and other media.

Scientific Inquiry and Analysis: Many elements of modern society are built on hundreds of years of scientific advances that have transformed our world. The pace of change and discovery is only increasing and the students of today will face profound impacts from science and technology that are already underway. While it is impossible to prepare students for, or even to fully anticipate all the scientific impacts in the years ahead, it is critical to equip students with the skills to effectively evaluate scientific claims using evidence.

World Languages Speaking and Listening: Effective speaking and listening in any language involves prepared, purposeful communication designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors. It is essential that professional nurses strive to individualize patient care by acknowledging the cultural dimension of health and illness. It is also essential that nurses explore communication and interaction strategies that will enhance plans of care and promote patient outcomes.

Writing: Good writing skills are essential for the professional nurse. Nurses are frequently called upon to write reports, submit proposals for institutional change and monetary support, or perhaps to develop patient education materials.

Fitchburg State University
Department of Nursing
RN-BS in Nursing Track

RN - BS in Nursing Online Curriculum

A maximum of 88 credits composed of nursing and general education courses taken at another accredited two or four year educational institution, if evaluated by the Registrar as equivalent to those offered at Fitchburg State University, are acceptable in transfer. Fitchburg State University Department of Nursing follows the Massachusetts Nursing Education Transfer Compact.

Graduates of RN programs receive a minimum of 30 credits for their nursing courses taken at accredited programs.

General Education electives can be taken before the Nursing course sequence begins, concurrently with the Nursing course sequence, or upon completion of the Nursing course sequence.

Course	Credits	Course	Credits
General Education: Foundation	**Credits**	**General Education: Exploration**	**Credits**
Reading and Information Literacy (R and IL): First Year Experience *	**3**	Civic Learning (CV) **Community-Based Nursing**	**3**
Writing (W): Writing I	**3**	Diverse Perspectives (DP) .**Introduction to Sociology**	**3**
Writing and Information Literacy (W and IL): Writing II	**3**	Ethical Reasoning (ER) **	**3**
Quantitative Reasoning (QR) (MATH)……Applied Statistics	**3**	Fine Arts Expression and Analysis (FA)	**3**
World Languages, Speaking and Listening (WS)	**3**	Historical Inquiry and Analysis (HI)	**3**
		Literary Inquiry and Analysis (LI)	**3**
		Personal Wellness (PW)	**3**
		Procedural and Logical Thinking (PL) **Anatomy & Physiology I**	**3**
		Scientific Inquiry and Analysis (SI)	**3**

Course	Credits	Course	Credits
General Education: Integration (Nursing) *9 credits AIA (3 of which must be Integrative High Impact Practice - IHIP)* **BIOL 2700 – Medical Microbiology (AIA)** **NURS 3710 – Evidence Based Practice in Nursing (AIA)** **NURS 4600 RN to BS Capstone (IHIP)**	**Credits** **4** **3** **4**	***Nursing majors are required to take a Philosophy course to fulfill the Ethical Reasoning requirement:* **Choose 1 of the following 4 Philosophy courses: (ER)** PHIL 2001– Medical Ethics PHIL 2500 – Contemporary Ethical Problems PHIL 2600 – Philosophy of Human Nature PHIL 3610 – World Religions	-

Mathematics & English Readiness

English: Placement Exam **OR** Writing I

Math Readiness Requirement is required of all transfer students. RN to BS students have this requirement met through the Statistics course.

Students who have completed an Associate's degree, or who transfer 90 or more credits

If students transfer in at least 34 credits of general education-quality courses (general courses that satisfy the breadth of the LA&S General Education), their LA&S General Education requirements are considered fulfilled, similar to the current Mass-Transfer Pathway agreements.

*First Year Experience is not required for students who have completed an Associate's degree or who transfer 90 or more credits.

Students who have completed a Bachelor-level degree or their transcript indicates that they have completed the institution's general education program requirements.

Completion of 120 credits required for graduation (62 Nursing / 58 LA&S). PLEASE NOTE: *Courses in bold typeface require a minimum grade of 2.5 to progress*

Financial aid is available to SOGCE students if registered for 6 credits or more per 15 week semester.

Nursing Courses

Courses	Credits
NURS 3500 Role Transition to Baccalaureate Nursing	3
NURS 3600 Health and Physical Assessment	3
NURS 3710 Evidence Based Practice	3
NURS 4010 Community Based Nursing	4
NURS 4020 Social Justice and Advocacy in Nursing	3
NURS 4030 Genomics for Nursing Practice	3
NURS 4040 Healthcare Policy and Finance for Nursing Practice	3
NURS 4500 Nursing in a Global Community	3
NURS 4520 Caring for Forensic Populations	3
NURS 4600 RN to BS Capstone	4
Total Credits	**32**

Each nursing course is delivered online in a 7 week format. Students may take nursing courses in any order, with the following exceptions:

1. NURS 3500 Role Transition must be taken first.
2. Statistics is a pre-requisite to NURS 3710, and NURS 3710 is a pre-requisite to all 4000 level nursing courses.
3. NURS 4600 RN to BS Capstone must be taken last after all other nursing courses have been completed.
4. Two courses, NURS 4010 and NURS 4600 are four credits each, which includes a clinical practice experience.

Evaluation Policies

Fitchburg State University Grading System

Fitchburg State Grade	Letter Grade Equivalency	100% Point Equivalency
95 - 100	A	4.0
92 - 94	A-	3.7
89 - 91	A- / B+	3.5
86 – 88	B+	3.3
83 - 85	B	3.0
80 – 82	B-	2.7
77 - 79	B- / C+	2.5
74 – 76	C+	2.3
71 – 73	C	2.0
69 – 70	C-	1.7
67 – 68	C- / D+	1.5
64 – 66	D+	1.3
60 – 63	D	1.0
0 - 59	F	0.0

Academic and Professional Conduct

- Nursing has a strong moral basis. Fitchburg State University Department of Nursing subscribes to the American Nurses Association's Code of Ethics for Nurses (Appendix B) and the Standards of Nursing Practice. The Code is based on the fundamental principle of respect for persons. Other ethical principles underlying the Code are autonomy, beneficence, non-malfeasance, veracity, confidentiality, fidelity, and justice.
- One of this nursing program's main objectives is that nursing students and graduates will exhibit professional behavior of responsibility and accountability for individual nursing judgments and actions that is consistent with the profession's ethical Code. Nursing faculty and nursing students must maintain high standards of integrity and respect for one another in the academic and professional settings.
- Faculty and students have a responsibility to take appropriate action when they detect any form of academic or professional dishonesty. Students should bring concerns to the attention of the course faculty or clinical instructor.

- A student can be barred from class, clinical practice, laboratories, and examinations for unethical, unprofessional behavior, or persistent unsatisfactory behavior that includes, but is not limited to absence, dishonesty, plagiarism, harassment /bullying and/or failure to produce assignments to the satisfaction of the instructor. Students so barred will fail the course and can be dismissed from the nursing program and/or University.
- Students enrolled in the nursing program are required to follow the guidelines set forth by the Office of Student Conduct and the Department of Nursing in order to create an environment which promotes academic honesty and integrity. Academic integrity requires that students submit their own work on examinations, papers and other academic assignments and that other sources of information or knowledge be appropriately credited and cited. No form of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or collusion will be condoned.
- A student who is unclear about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity on a course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. A student's lack of understanding of the academic integrity policies is not a valid defense to a charge of academic dishonesty.
- The Department of Nursing follows the Office of Student Conduct guidelines, procedures and processes put forth concerning Academic Integrity on pages 4 to 6 of the FSU Code of Conduct and Discipline Process Handbook.

Some examples of violations of the academic integrity and professional conduct policy include, but are not limited to:

<u>Unprofessional Behavior</u>

Includes, but is not limited to, falsifying data; demonstrating a pattern of lateness and/or absences; inappropriate professional dress and appearance; and/or dishonesty; stealing; engaging in nursing practice under the influence of drugs, alcohol or other substances; and delivering unsafe care within the realm of nursing standards appropriate to the expected level of practice.

<u>Academic Dishonesty</u>

The Department of Nursing follows the guidelines, procedures and processes put forth concerning Academic Integrity on pages 4 to 6 in the FSU Code of Conduct and Discipline Process Handbook,

Code of Conduct and Discipline Process Handbook. Students will be subject to one or more of the sanctions outlined in the handbook. Academic dishonesty can result in a grade of 0.0 for the exam or assignment and/or failure of the course; and/or dismissal from the nursing program. Academic dishonesty includes:

Cheating

Is the intentional use or attempted use of deceit, trickery, artifice, fraud, and/or violation of rules and/or misrepresentation of one's academic work in any academic exercise. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- Copying from others during an examination.
- Using notes or other resources not authorized by the instructor.
- Submitting substantial portions of the same academic work for credit in more than one course, without consulting the instructors involved.
- Allowing others to do the research and writing of an assigned paper (for example, using the services of an online paper service).
- Submitting a purchased or downloaded paper or other works written by another person, including those obtained through an online paper service.

Plagiarism

Refers to the use of another's ideas or words without proper attribution or credit. Academic integrity requires that all work by another author must also be identified (for example, anonymous articles or web pages).

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Copying word for word from a source (printed, electronic, or oral) without properly citing or crediting the source.
- Paraphrasing without proper attribution.
- Failing to properly cite or credit sources, whether the material is a direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary.
- Failing to identify direct quotations through the use of quotation marks.
- Failing to acknowledge and properly cite information obtained through printed, electronic, or oral sources.

- Incorporating into one's own work graphs, tables, drawings, photographs, diagrams, and other non-textual material from other sources without proper attribution.

Fabrication

Is the intentional and unauthorized falsification and/or invention of any information or citation in any academic exercise. Fabrication includes but is not limited to:

- Falsifying data or results from research or fieldwork.
- Selectively omitting or altering data that do not support one's conclusions.

Collusion

Refers to the agreement or cooperation between students to commit an act of academic dishonesty. Any student who knowingly or intentionally helps another student to perform any act of cheating or plagiarism is subject to discipline for academic dishonesty. There is no distinction between those who cheat and plagiarize and those who willingly allow it to occur.

Collusion includes but is not limited to:

- Taking an examination for another person.
- Asking or allowing another person to take an examination for you.
- Allowing another person to copy one's own work or exam.
- Collaborating with another person before a quiz or examination in order to develop methods of exchanging information during the quiz or examination.
- Distributing an examination from an unauthorized source prior to an examination.

Strategies for Success

Strategies include:

- Exploring and utilizing the resources in the Academic Success Center / Tutor Center throughout their undergraduate studies (See the "Resources" section in this handbook).
- Taking the initiative to address health or personal concerns that impact academic and clinical success before their standing in the program is jeopardized.
- Addressing academic and/or clinical performance concerns with their course faculty in a timely way throughout the academic year.
- Contacting their academic advisors throughout the academic year for additional guidance with promoting success in the program.

Professional Communication

Social Media Policy

FSU nursing students are required to adhere to the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing policies in the Use of Social and Electronic Media by Nurses document published in July 2012. Any student who violates these policies will be subject to disciplinary action, which can result in termination from the nursing program. A copy of the policy is included in Appendix C.

Email Etiquette Guidelines

The FSU nursing faculty uses e-mail regularly to communicate information to nursing students. The FSU e-mail address should be used for all collegiate communication. Students should check their FSU e-mail inboxes twice daily and respond in a timely manner to foster quick resolution of questions and concerns.

In accordance with standards of professional communication, students should use the follow guidelines when initiating or responding to an e-mail:

- The e-mail should start with a formal salutation. For example: Dear Professor_____,
- The need or purpose of the e-mail should be clearly and respectfully identified.
- Any attachment(s) should be referenced in the body of the e-mail.
- Proper grammar should be incorporated into the e-mail. In other words: proper spelling, punctuation, and well-written sentences.
- The e-mail should be proofread and spell-checked.
- The e-mail should conclude with the student's full name

Course Policies: Classroom

Class Attendance and Class Behavior

- Students are expected to participate in all classes. No exceptions of missing classes due to work conflicts will be accepted. Students are expected to be respectful to instructors and other students in the online environment.

Papers and Other Written Assignments

- Students must use the most current American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual style guidelines for all papers required in the Department of Nursing.
- All written assignments are due on the scheduled date unless other arrangements were made with the course faculty.
- Papers can be submitted in electronic and/or hardcopy form per the discretion of the faculty.
- Non-scholarly references, including but not limited to Wikipedia, cannot be used in any scholarly work.

Examinations

- Students are required to take examinations on the scheduled dates and times.
- Students should read their NURS course syllabi carefully for information related to course-specific make-up exam policies.
- Students who are absent from a scheduled examination without prior permission will receive 0.0 for that examination.

Avenues for Addressing Concerns

University Policy

Please refer to the University Catalog for details about student concerns related to any University policy and /or becoming involved in changing University policies.

Nursing Department Policy

The department's student policies are developed by a departmental Student Policies Committee. Students may communicate concerns or suggested changes about current student policies to the Student Policy Committee chairperson.

Nursing majors with concerns about the program or personal experiences therein have a number of avenues by which to address their concerns:

Concerns About Curriculum

Students have access to the Nursing Department's Curriculum Committee either through direct representation or by written communication or petition. Extensive evaluation of the students' perceptions of courses, agencies and curriculum objectives is conducted by the faculty on a routine basis, and students should take advantage of the opportunity offered by this process to contribute their ideas, concerns and criticisms. Students need to understand that curriculum change is a process that is not undertaken lightly or without substantial evaluation of problems. The faculty encourages any and all dialogue regarding the need for change in the program.

Concerns about Faculty

The University mandates a procedure for student evaluation of faculty in every class for which the student is registered. Even though the effects of their anonymous ratings will not always be immediately evident to students, the evaluations are considered a vital part of any faculty member's personnel action process.

Addressing Issues with Faculty

In cases of disagreement between faculty and student during an academic semester (i.e. course requirements, grading, and clinical evaluation etc.,) the student is advised to address the issue using the identified steps as follows:

1. Attempt to resolve the issue through direct communication with the faculty member involved. Students should consult with their advisor for assistance in this process. If the issue to be resolved involves the course faculty team, communication with the course coordinator will be necessary.
2. If the issue remains unresolved, the student should seek recourse from the Department Chairperson. This involves making an appointment with the Department Chairperson and discussing the issue with or without the respective faculty and /or advisor present.
3. If resolution of the issue is still not achieved after steps 1 and 2 have been followed, the student should request a review of the issue by the Dean of Health and Natural Sciences. Procedures for this appeal must be followed as identified in the current University Student Handbook and Catalog.

Nursing Program Resources

Department Contact Information

Department of Nursing Office: Thompson Hall 324

Name and Title	Email	Telephone
Deborah Benes, Chairperson	dbenes@fitchburgstate.edu	978-665-3325
Linda McKay, RN/LPN to BS in Nursing Program Chair	mckay@fitchburgstate.edu	978-665-3108
Kimberly Clarke, Administrative Assistant	kclarke7@fitchburgstate.edu	978-665-3221
Deborah Gifford, Administrative Assistant	dgiffor1@fitchburgstate.edu	978-665-3023
Nicole Lajoie, Nursing Coordinator (Office: Thom-213)	ndesche1@fitchburgstate.edu	978-665-3252

The Administrative Assistants, Kimberly Clarke and Deborah Gifford are available in the main nursing office. If they do not know the answer to your question, they can find someone who does. They can provide most departmental forms and know most departmental regulations. In addition, they can facilitate contact with faculty members as needed.

Advising

Each nursing student has an advisor in the department of nursing throughout the program of studies. Advisors guide their advisees with course selection, provide guidance with regards to academic issues brought to them by an advisee, and they can refer advisees to appropriate student services. Students should contact their advisor directly to arrange for an advising appointment.

Faculty Offices

Nursing Faculty offices are located on the second and third floors of Thompson Hall.

Websites for Support

The Department of Nursing website can be found at www.fitchburgstate.edu/nursing. The site features Faculty and Student Nurses Association information, links to other websites and is regularly updated with current departmental and university news.

Library

Information about the wealth of library resources here on campus can be obtained through the Library website at www.fitchburgstate.edu/library or by visiting the library and speaking directly with a librarian.

Student Support Services

The University maintains a number of academic and personal support services for all students. Information can be found at the Fitchburg State University website for the Student Support Services at www.fitchburg state.edu. The following is a list of these programs:

- Student Development/Student Services: engages students through interactive learning, diversified events & activities, leadership experiences, volunteerism, and employment opportunities
- Career Services and Advising Center: Provides career advising and preparation including resume and cover letter support, mock interviews, workshops, career fairs, and networking events. See all events on Handshake or call or email the office at 978-665-3151, careercenter@fitchburgstate.edu to set up an appointment.
- Disability Services: for support services for undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities enrolled in the day or evening division
- TRIO Student Support Services (formerly known as Expanding Horizons): a federally funded program for first generation undergraduate university students, low income students, or students with disabilities
- International Education Office: for study abroad opportunities, and to support undergraduate and graduate international students, and to provide cultural awareness programs
- Academic Coaching and Tutoring Center: provides online tutoring for most classes; provides academic coaching to support success skills like studying and time management; and administers required placement tests. Find appointments or drop-in for tutoring and coaching on SSC/NAVIGATE (Navigate360: Your Student Support Hub) or email tutorcenter@fitchburgstate.edu for help.

Activities and Organizations

Department of Nursing Committees

The Faculty organization of the Department of Nursing has a number of committees to foster the mission of the department: Student Policies, Admissions, Bylaws, Curriculum, and Liaison/Nominations. Students are encouraged and very welcome to serve on the Curriculum Committee (one student per level) which develops and evaluates the program's offerings toward the degree in nursing. Students can bring their concerns and suggestions regarding the program of study to the Committee and have a vote in their resolution. The Liaison/Nominations Committee works with the Nursing Student Association and also recommends students for departmental awards at Honors Convocation. Students who are interested in serving on the Curriculum Committee should forward a request to the department chairperson.

Professional Organizations

The American Nurses Association is an organization that helps set standards (see Appendix B for the Code of Nurses) and is involved in political action toward quality nursing and health care.

Financial Awards

Various scholarships are awarded to qualified nursing students each year – including some scholarships specifically for nursing students. Please refer to the Financial Aid Department for details on these scholarships.

Appendix A: Technical Standards for Admission, Progression and Graduation

Fitchburg State University Department of Nursing has both academic and technical standards that must be met by students in order to successfully progress through the program. To assist in meeting those requirements, the department provides reasonable accommodations to all students on a nondiscriminatory basis consistent with legal requirements as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. To be eligible for accommodations, a student must submit to Disability Services, evidence of a documented disability of (a) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (b) a record of such impairment; or, (c) be regarded as having such a condition.

Marks, B. & Ailey (2014.) White Paper on Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Nursing Educational Programs for the California Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities [CCEPD]

Requirements	Standards	Examples
Acquiring fundamental knowledge	1. Ability to learn in classroom and educational settings 2. Ability to find sources of knowledge and acquire the knowledge 3. Ability to be a life-long learner 4. Novel and adaptive thinking	• Acquire, conceptualize and use evidence-based information from demonstrations and experiences in the basic and applied sciences, including but not limited to information conveyed through online coursework, lecture, group seminar, small group activities and physical demonstrations • Develop health care solutions and responses beyond that which is rote or rule-based
Developing communication skills	1. Communication abilities for sensitive and effective interactions with patients (persons, families and/or communities) 2. Communication abilities for effective interaction with the health care team (patients, their supports, other professional and non-professional team members 3. Sense-making of information gathered from communication 4. Social intelligence	• Accurately elicit or interpret information: medical history and other info to adequately and effectively evaluate a client or patient's condition • Accurately convey information and interpretation of information using one or more means of communication (verbal, written, assisted (such as TTY) and/or electronic) to patients and the health care team • Effectively communicate in teams • Determine a deeper meaning or significance in what is being expressed • Connect with others to sense and stimulate reactions and desired interactions

Requirements	Standards	Examples
Interpreting data	1. Ability to observe patient conditions and responses to health and illness 2. Ability to assess and monitor health needs 3. Computational thinking 4. Cognitive load management	• Obtain and interpret information from assessment maneuvers such as assessing respiratory and cardiac function, blood pressure, blood sugar, neurological status, etc. • Obtain and interpret information from diagnostic representations of physiologic phenomena during a comprehensive assessment of patients • Obtain and interpret information from assessment of patient's environment and responses to health across the continuum • Obtain and interpret for evaluation information about responses to nursing action • Translate data into abstract concepts and to understand data-based reasoning

For further information regarding services and resources to students with disabilities and/or to request accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services.

Appendix B: Code of Ethics for Nurses

American Nurses Association (ANA), Updated 2015

Provision 1

The nurse practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person.

Provision 2

The nurse's primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, community, or population.

Provision 3

The nurse promotes, advocates for, and protects the rights, health, and safety of the patient.

Provision 4

The nurse has authority, accountability, and responsibility for nursing practice; makes decisions; and takes action consistent with the obligation to promote health and to provide optimal care.

Provision 5

The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, maintain competence, and continue personal and professional growth.

Provision 6

The nurse, through individual and collective effort, establishes, maintains, and improves the ethical environment of the work setting and conditions of employment that are conducive to safe, quality health care.

Provision 7

The nurse, in all roles and settings, advances the profession through research and scholarly inquiry, professional standards development, and the generation of both nursing and health policy.

Provision 8

The nurse collaborates with other health professionals and the public to protect human rights, promote health diplomacy, and reduce health disparities.

Provision 9

The profession of nursing, collectively through its professional organizations, must articulate nursing values, maintain the integrity of the profession, and integrate principle of social justice into nursing and health policy.

References

American Nurses Association, Code of Ethics for Nurses (2015). http://nursingworld.org/DocumentVault/Ethics-1/Code-of-Ethics-for-Nurses.html

American Nurses Association (2015). Code of Ethics for Nurses. Retrieved from http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/EthicsStandards/CodeofEthicsforNurses

Appendix C: *Use of Social and Electronic Media by Nurses*

Massachusetts Board of Registration for Nursing

Web-based communication platforms and applications such as email, text messaging, personal blogs, online chat rooms, networking forums, and photo and video-sharing sites are playing an increasingly prominent role in health care (1, 2). Nurses and other health care providers as well as health care organizations and professional nursing associations use Facebook®, LinkedIn®, Snapchat®, Twitter and other forms of social and electronic media to promote patient and consumer health and education, enhance communication with patients, foster collaborative relationships and facilitate continuing professional education (1, 2, 3 and 5).

Social and electronic media venues are also used by nurses to share challenging or emotional workplace experiences, to encourage and support colleagues, and to seek advice from what can ultimately be a wide ranging audience of Internet users (2). However, the inappropriate or malicious use of social and electronic media venues poses a risk to patient safety and can negatively impact the effectiveness of the health care team
(1, 2, 6 and 7).

When using any type of social and electronic media, whether for a professional or personal purpose, every nurse licensed by the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing (Board) must consider professional practice concepts that include, but are not limited to: privacy, confidentiality, dignity, respect, professional boundaries and trust of the profession. The Board reminds all licensed nurses that they should be aware of, and consider and comply with the Board's regulations whenever using social and electronic media. These regulations require a nurse to:

- safeguard a patient's dignity and right to privacy (*244 CMR 9.03 [17]: Patient Dignity and Privacy*);
- safeguard patient information from any person or entity ,or both, not entitled to such information and to share appropriate information only as required by law or for the protection of the patient (*244 CMR 9.03 [16]: Patient Confidential Information)*;
- establish and observe professional boundaries with respect to any patient with whom he or she has a nurse/patient relationship and to continue to observe professional boundaries with

his or her former patients who may be vulnerable by virtue of emotional status, age, illness, or cognitive ability *(244 CMR 9.03[24]: Professional Boundaries);*

- comply with M.G.L. c. 112, §§ 74 through 81C, as well as with any other laws and regulations related to licensure and practice. This includes the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Massachusetts Fair Information Practices Act (FIPA) and their corresponding regulations as applicable to health care providers and other federal and state laws concerning the protection of confidential or personal information *(244 CMR 9.03 [6]: Compliance with Laws and Regulations Related to Nursing);*
- engage in the practice of nursing in accordance with accepted standards of practice *(244 CMR 9.03 [5]: Adherence to Standards of Nursing Practice);* and be responsible and accountable for his or her nursing judgments, actions, and competency *(244 CMR 9.03 [9]: Responsibility and Accountability).*

In addition, other applicable Board regulations specify that a licensed nurse will not:

- abuse, neglect, mistreat, abandon, or otherwise harm a patient (244 CMR 9.03 [15]: Patient Abuse, Neglect, Mistreatment, Abandonment, or Other Harm);
- have sexual contact with any patient with whom he or she has a nurse/patient relationship or with any former patient who may be vulnerable by virtue of emotional status, age, illness, or cognitive ability (244 CMR 9.03 [23]: Sexual Contact); and initiate or maintain a nurse/patient relationship that is likely to adversely affect the nurse's professional judgment (244 CMR 9.03 [25]: Relationship Affecting Professional Judgment).

To assist nurses in appropriately using social and electronic media, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, in its White Paper: A Nurse's Guide to the Use of Social Media (2011), has identified the following guidelines:

- First and foremost, nurses must recognize that they have an ethical and legal obligation to maintain patient privacy and confidentiality at all times.
- Nurses are strictly prohibited from transmitting by way of any electronic media any patient-related image. In addition, nurses are restricted from transmitting any information that may be reasonably anticipated to violate patient rights to confidentiality or privacy, or otherwise degrade or embarrass the patient.

- Do not share, post or otherwise disseminate any information, including images, about a patient or information gained in the nurse-patient relationship with anyone unless there is a patient care related need to disclose the information or other legal obligation to do so.
- Do not identify patients by name or post or publish information that may lead to the identification of a patient. Limiting access to postings through privacy settings is not sufficient to ensure privacy.
- Do not refer to patients in a disparaging manner, even if the patient is not identified.
- Do not take photos or videos of patients on personal devices, including cell phones. Follow employer policies for taking photographs or video of patients
- for treatment or other legitimate purposes using employer- provided devices.
- Maintain professional boundaries in the use of electronic media. Like in- person relationships, the nurse has the obligation to establish, communicate and enforce professional boundaries with patients in the online environment. Use caution when having online social contact with patients or former patients. Online contact with patients or former patients blurs the distinction between a professional and personal relationship. The fact that a patient may initiate contact with the nurse does not permit the nurse to engage in a personal relationship with the patient.
- Consult employer policies or an appropriate leader within the organization for guidance regarding work related postings.
- Promptly report any identified breach of confidentiality or privacy.
- Be aware of and comply with employer policies regarding use of employer- owned
- computers, cameras and other electronic devices and use of personal devices in the work place.
- Do not make disparaging remarks about employers or co-workers. Do not make threatening, harassing, profane, obscene, sexually explicit, racially
- derogatory, homophobic or other offensive comments.
- Do not post content or otherwise speak on behalf of the employer unless authorized to do so and follow all applicable policies of the employer.

(Reprinted with permission from National Council of State Boards of Nursing.)

References

Anderson, J., & Puckrin, K. (2011). Social network use: A test of self-regulation. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 2(1), 36-41.

Cronquist, R., & Spector, N. (2011). Nurses and social media: regulatory concerns and guidelines. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 2(3), 37-40.

Eysenbach, G. (2008). Medicine 2.0: Social networking, collaboration, participation, apomediation and openness. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 10(3), e22. Retrieved 4/13/26 from Journal of Medical Internet Research, National League of Medicine.

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2011). *White paper: A nurse's guide to the use of social media*. Retrieved 4/13/26 from White paper: A nurse's guide to the use of social media

Prinz, A. (2011). Professional social networking for nurses. *American Nurse Today*, 6(7). Retrieved 4/13/26 from American Nurse, Professional Social Networking for Nurses

Appendix D: *Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for Students of Nursing**

National Student Nurses Association (NSNA)

The Fitchburg State University Nursing Student Association has endorsed this document.

1. Students should be encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and engage in a sustained and independent search for truth.

2. The freedom to teach and the freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom: Students should exercise their freedom in a responsible manner.

3. Each institution has a duty to develop policies and procedures which provide and safeguard the students' freedom to learn.

4. Under no circumstances should a student be barred from admission to a particular institution on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, marital status, lifestyle, disability, or economic status.

5. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.

6. Students should have protection through orderly procedures against prejudices or capricious academic evaluation, but they are responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled.

7. Information about student views, beliefs, and political associations which instructors acquire in the course of their work should be considered confidential and not released without the knowledge or consent of the student, and should not be used as a basis of evaluation.

8. The student should have the right to have a responsible voice in the determination of his/her curriculum.

9. Institutions should have a carefully considered policy as to the information, which should be a part of a student's permanent education record and as to the conditions of this disclosure.

10. Students and student organizations should be free to examine and discuss all questions of interest to them, and to express opinions publicly and privately.

11. Students should be allowed to invite and hear any person of their choosing within the institution's acceptable realm, thereby taking the responsibility of furthering their education.

12. The student body should have clearly defined means to participate in the formulation and application of institutional policy affecting academic and student affairs, e.g., through a faculty-student council, student membership or representation on faculty committees.

13. The institution has an obligation to clarify those standards of behavior which it considers essential to its educational mission, its community life, or its objectives and philosophy.

14. Disciplinary procedures should be instituted only for violations of standards of conduct formulated with significant student participation and published in advance through such means as a student handbook or a generally available body of institutional regulations. Grievance procedures should be available to every student.

15. As citizens and members of an academic community, students are subject to the obligations which accrue to them by virtue of this membership and should enjoy the same freedoms of citizenship.

16. Students have the right to belong or refuse to belong to any organization of their choice.

17. Students have the right to personal privacy in their living space to the extent that the welfare and property of others are respected.

18. Adequate safety precautions should be provided by nursing programs, for example, adequate street lighting, locks, and other safety measures deemed necessary by the environment.

19. Dress code, if present in school, should be established with student input in conjunction with the school director and faculty, so the highest professional standards are maintained, but also taking into consideration points of comfort and practicality for the student.

20. Grading systems should be carefully reviewed periodically with students and faculty for clarification and better student-faculty understanding.

21. Students should have a clear mechanism for input into the evaluation of nursing faculty.

*The NSNA Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities was initially adopted in 1975. The document was updated by the NSNA House of Delegates in San Antonio, Texas (1991); and item #4 was revised by the NSNA House of Delegates in Baltimore, Maryland (2006).