



GEORGIA BAPTIST
COLLEGE OF NURSING

Graduate Student Handbook
PhD Student Handbook
2024—2025

*Additional information regarding general policies and procedures can be found in the [Mercer University Student Handbook](#)

*GBCN makes every effort to publish correct and current information for our students. However, this Handbook should not be viewed as a legal or binding contract with GBCN.

It is the purpose of Mercer University to adhere to the rules and regulations, course offerings, and financial charges as announced in this handbook or in other publications. The University, nevertheless, hereby gives notice that it reserves the right to withdraw any subject, to change its rules affecting the admission and retention of students, or the granting of credit or degrees, or to alter its fees and other charges, whenever such changes are adjudged by it to be desirable or necessary. Attendance at Mercer University is a privilege which may be forfeited by anyone whose conduct is adjudged as not consistent with the traditions, policies, and regulations of the University.

Table of Contents

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing of Mercer University6
 Vision Statement6
 Mission Statement.....6
 Core Values.....6
 Diversity Statement6
Mercer University Health Science Center7
 Vision7
 Mission7
 Goals.....7
 Core Values.....7
Academic Calendar 2024-2025.....8
Mercer University Student Handbook9
College Catalog9
Rights & Responsibilities.....9
 Standards of Conduct9
 Academic Integrity.....9
 Social Responsibility9
Minimum College Standards (as related to the Nursing Profession).....10
Student Bill of Rights.....11
Code of Practice.....11
ACCESS and Accommodations Services for Students12
FERPA: Release and Consent to Disclosure of Student Education Records12
Religious Observance Policy12
Pregnancy Disclosure Policy.....13
Children and Guests Policy13
Health Insurance Requirement.....13
Required Immunizations and Credentials for Clinical Agency Compliance.....14
 AdvantageStudents.com17
Official Communication18
 MyMercer18
 Mercer Live (Email Access)18
 Canvas & Zoom.....18
Campus Network Identification19
Mercer Identification Number19
Grading Scale for Graduate Nursing Courses.....19
Policy for Successful Completion of Nursing Courses.....20
General Testing Guidelines20
 Classroom Testing Guidelines.....20
 ExamSoft Testing20
 Examplify with ExamID and ExamMonitor21
 Online Testing Guidelines.....21
Guidelines Related to Student Conduct in Online Learning Experiences22
Guidelines for Scholarly Work Related to Graduate Study.....23
 General Guidelines and Requirements.....23
 Guidelines and Requirements for Submitting Grants/Scholarships24
 Guidelines for authorship/co-authorship24
Policies and Procedures Specific to the Learning Resource Center25

Learning Resource Center	25
General Information	25
Course Evaluations.....	25
Academic Status.....	26
Assigning Grades in Cases of a Breach in Academic Integrity.....	26
Make-Up Policy for Canceled Classes	26
Classroom Expectations	26
Dress Code: General Campus.....	27
Food in Classroom.....	27
Student Resources	27
Academic Advisor	27
Center for Nursing Excellence	27
Re-enrollment and Readmission.....	27
Students in Good Standing	27
Students Not in Good Standing	27
Limitation in Completion of Degree Requirements	28
Distance Learning.....	28
Technology Requirements	28
Minimal Technology Specifications	29
Computer Requirements	29
Interprofessional Education.....	30
Graduate Student Activities.....	30
Recognized Student Organizations.....	31
Student Groups Currently Recognized by Georgia Baptist College of Nursing.....	31
Phi Kappa Phi.....	31
Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing - Pi Gamma Chapter	31
Student Generated Communications	31
Orientation.....	31
White Coat Ceremony.....	31
Graduation.....	32
Hooding Ceremony	32
Commencement	32
Academic Awards.....	32
ALMA MATER.....	33
University Policies and Procedures.....	33
Academic Grievances and Appeals.....	33
Nonacademic Grievances	34
Mercer University Student Code of Conduct.....	37
Graduate Honor System	38
Mercer University Social Media Guidelines.....	38
Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy	38
Ph.D. Degree Program Section.....	41
Ph.D. Program Description.....	42
Ph.D. Student Learning Outcomes.....	42
Academic Advising	42
Formation of Scholars.....	42
Qualifying and Comprehensive Examinations	43
Policies and Procedures for Dissertation Preparation and Filing.....	44

Introduction.....	44
Selecting a Dissertation Committee	45
Selecting a Dissertation Topic.....	45
Process for Proposal Development	46
Demonstrating Satisfactory Progress toward Dissertation Completion	46
Obtaining University Institutional Review Board Approval for Dissertation Research.....	47
Final Oral Defense of Dissertation.....	47
Ph.D. Dissertation Completion Timeline.....	48
Limitation in Completion of Degree Requirements	49
Nurse Faculty Loan Program Information.....	49
Important Information for Applicants and Recipients.....	49
Highlights for 2024-2025	49
Role of the College of Nursing & Office of Student Financial Planning	50
Criteria for NFLP Eligibility & Continuation of Funding.....	50
Promissory Note	50
Who is not eligible to apply to the NFLP	51
What are the responsibilities of NFLP recipients.....	51
Acceptable Educational Program Options	51

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing of Mercer University

Vision Statement

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing of Mercer University will be nationally recognized for academic excellence and the development of professional nurses committed to scholarship, leadership, practice, research, and service.

Mission Statement

The mission of Georgia Baptist College of Nursing is to excel in teaching, scholarship, leadership, practice, research, and service, while embracing the core values of the College.

Core Values

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing embraces the following core values:

Excellence – Diligent pursuit of distinction

Christian Caring – Value and support all persons

Compassion – Response to suffering that motivates one to help

Civility – Respectful behavior toward others

Integrity – Steadfast adherence to honesty and fairness

Collaboration – Work cooperatively to achieve shared goals

Social Responsibility – Commitment to act for the benefit of society

Diversity Statement

A diverse campus environment enhances teaching and learning, workforce preparedness, civic engagement, and social responsibility. Georgia Baptist College of Nursing (GBCN) graduates are intentionally prepared to enter the nursing workforce with the competence and confidence to advocate for the healthcare needs of a diverse population.

We adopt a definition of diversity that embraces all people regardless of age, biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, cultural background, nationality, education, socioeconomics, politics, religion, ability, and beliefs. In keeping with this definition and with the GBCN core values, we seek to recruit, nurture, and retain highly qualified students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

GBCN is committed to maintaining an inclusive environment of mutual respect and dignity. We encourage and support a thriving and diverse community of students, faculty, staff, clinical partners, and clients. An environment of inclusiveness, equal opportunity, and acceptance for the similarities and differences in our community provides direct educational benefits and is essential for excellence in the fulfillment of our mission.

Mercer University Health Science Center

Vision

The Mercer University Health Sciences Center will be recognized nationally for its excellence, leadership, and innovation in health sciences education, research, scholarship, patient care, practice, and service.

Mission

The mission of Mercer University Health Sciences Center is to promote and improve the health and quality of life in local, regional, national, and global communities through excellence in education, research, patient care, practice, and service.

Goals

To achieve this mission, the Health Sciences Center embraces the following goals:

- Prepare students in the health sciences for successful careers in health care, research, and teaching.
- Teach, practice, and encourage (suggest changing encourage to promote) the effective delivery of health care.
- Advance the discovery of knowledge through basic, applied, and translational research.
- Provide opportunities for collaborative initiatives in health care education and research.
- Align strategically with health systems for clinical education for all Mercer University Health Sciences Center programs.
- Support diversity and mutual respect for all members of the Mercer University Health Sciences Center.

Core Values

The Mercer University Health Sciences Center bases its educational program and position in the health care community upon certain core values. The core values of Mercer University Health Sciences Center are:

- Excellence
- Scholarship
- Integrity
- Compassion
- Collaboration
- Service
- Professionalism
- Social responsibility



Georgia Baptist College of Nursing of Mercer University

Academic Calendar 2024-2025

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing reserves the right to make changes to this calendar

Fall Semester 2024

August 19	Tuition and Fees Due for Fall 2024
August 19	First Day of Classes
August 19-26	Late Registration and Drop/Add Period
September 2	Labor Day -No Classes
October 21	Last Day to Withdraw and Receive a "W"
November	Spring 2025 Advisement and Registration Opens
November 25-27	Fall Break
November 28 & 29	Thanksgiving Holiday – No Classes
December 6	Last Day of Classes
December 9-13	Final Examinations
December 17	Grades Due at noon

Spring Semester 2025

January 6	Tuition and Fees Due for Spring 2025
January 6	First Day of Classes
January 6-13	Late Registration and Drop/Add period
January 20	Martin Luther King Holiday - No classes
March 3-7	Spring Break - No Nursing Classes
March 19	Last Day to Withdraw and Receive a "W"
April	Summer & Fall 2025 Advisement and Registration Opens
April 18	Good Friday Holiday – No Classes
April 25	Last Day of Classes
April 28-May 2	Final Examinations
May 6	Grades Due at noon
May 8	Pinning & Hooding Ceremony for Graduating Students
May 11	Commencement Ceremony

Summer Semester 2025

May 19	Tuition and Fees Due for Summer 2025
May 19	First Day of Classes
May 19-27	Late Registration and Drop/Add Period
May 26	Memorial Day – No Classes
June	Fall 2025 Advisement and Registration Opens
July 4	Independence Day Holiday – No Classes
July 11	Last Day to Withdraw and Receive a "W"
July 25	Last Day of Semester
July 30	Grades Due at noon

Mercer University Student Handbook

All students are responsible for viewing the [Mercer University Student Handbook](#). The *Mercer University Student Handbook* applies to all students, regardless of academic program of study or geographic location (including distance learning students) and is available as a pdf for printing. The online version supersedes any printed version. The *GBCN Graduate Student Handbook* (considered a Supplemental Handbook) provides additional content and policies that apply solely to graduate nursing students. Please note that the *Mercer University Student Handbook* supersedes information found in the *GBCN Graduate Student Handbook*.

College Catalog

All students are responsible for viewing the [Mercer University Cecil B. Day Campus 2023-2024 Catalog](#) on the registrar's website.

Rights & Responsibilities

Standards of Conduct

Enrollment in Georgia Baptist College of Nursing and Mercer University is a privilege. As members of the University community, students are obligated to participate in and facilitate the achievement of the program's mission.

In keeping with the mission of educating students to be professional nurses, the College has an obligation to maintain a campus atmosphere that will facilitate educational achievement and personal growth of its students and employees. Essential to this purpose is a climate of academic integrity, social responsibility, and professionalism that reflects a commitment to the philosophical values and educational mission of the College.

Three areas of conduct identified include: academic integrity, social responsibility, and minimum college standards as it relates to the nursing profession.

Academic Integrity

Honesty, integrity, and high ethical standards are central to the purpose of educating students to take their place within society, as well as within the profession of nursing. In order for such education to succeed, each student at the College of Nursing must be committed to upholding the high standards that are inherent in our Graduate *Honor System*, which includes a student's obligation to report violations of the honor code. Students can report a violation to (1) the professor in whose class the violation occurred, (2) to the program track coordinator where the course resides, (3) to the associate dean where the course resides, or (4) to the dean. Students reporting violations should do so in writing. Additional procedures related to the Graduate *Honor System* can be found on the [Provost website](#).

Social Responsibility

Social responsibility involves recognition of the rights of others and a commitment to the maintenance of mutual and personal rights as outlined by law and College policies. Social responsibility also includes a commitment to maintenance of the quality reputation for the College, its programs, and its personnel. As such, each individual's personal standards of attitude, behavior, and words are expected to adhere to public laws, to edify the College and to enhance holistically the well-being of self, other members of the College community, and society.

Expectations of the College include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Legal responsibility – students shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws.
2. Respect the rights, well-being, and property of others and self.
 - a. Students shall not present a physical presence that is perceived as abusive.
 - b. Students shall not engage in actions that are disruptive of any aspect of institutional activities or campus life.
 - c. Students shall not take or destroy others' property.
 - d. Students shall not possess offensive weapons of any kind on campus or at any college function.
 - e. Students shall not use abusive language in communicating with others.
 - f. Students shall not possess, use, and/or distribute alcohol on campus or at any college function.
 - g. Students shall not smoke on campus or at college functions except in those limited areas designated by the institution for such purposes.
3. Respect for the authority of the College.
 - a. Students shall maintain a physical appearance that is in harmony with philosophical values of the college and the university and with the accepted standards for professional nursing.
 - b. Students shall adhere to established policies and procedures governing all activities of the college and university.
 - c. Students shall observe restrictions in use of classrooms, residence hall, parking lots, and other campus facilities.
 - d. Students shall use college forms, documents, records, and identification cards in an appropriate and lawful manner.
 - e. Students shall comply with the reasonable requests of any college official acting in the performance of their duties.
 - f. Students shall use respectful and courteous communication to any college official.
 - g. Students shall represent the college, its programs, and its personnel to the community in a positive way.
 - h. Students shall provide accurate and timely information to college personnel as required.

Minimum College Standards (as related to the Nursing Profession)

1. Recognizes the legal limits of nursing practice.
 - a. Acknowledges the limits of their skills and knowledge and seeks assistance from appropriate sources when needed.
 - b. Recognizes legal implications related to charting and the administration of medication and treatments.
2. Recognizes ethical responsibilities.
 - a. Refrains from any behavior that would be harmful to another individual.
 - b. Practices in a non-judgmental, non-discriminatory manner.
 - c. Maintains confidentiality consistent with ANA Code of Ethics.*
 - d. Adheres to the Honor Code of the institution.
3. Accepts responsibility and accountability for professional practices.
 - a. Recognizes the appropriateness of orders for medications and treatments.
 - b. Confirms by validating with authority any orders in question.
 - c. Alters environment to provide for safety of patients.

- d. Accepts responsibility for assigned patients.
- e. Reports pertinent data to all aspects of practice.
- f. Displays honesty in all aspects of practice.
- g. Adheres to dress code consistent with expectations of clinical agencies and College of Nursing.
- h. Adheres to attendance policy and maintains professional demeanor in the clinical area.

Student Bill of Rights

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 with responsibility and accountability.
3. The institution has a duty to develop policies and procedures that provide and safeguard the students' freedom to learn. It is the responsibility of the student to know these policies and procedures.
4. Consideration for admission will not be denied to an applicant on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, or national origin. Consideration will also be offered to applicants with disabilities in the event reasonable accommodations can be made.
5. Students should be free to take reasonable exception to the data or views offered in any course, but they are responsible for maintaining academic performance standards for each course in which they are enrolled.
6. Students should have, through orderly procedures, protection against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation.
7. Students should have the right to have a responsible voice in the determination of their curriculum.
8. The institution should have a carefully considered policy as to the information which should be a part of a student's permanent educational record and as to the conditions of this disclosure.
9. Students and student organizations should be free to examine and discuss all questions of interest to them, and to responsibly express opinions publicly and privately.
10. The student body should have clearly defined means to participate in the formulation and application of institutional policy affecting academic and student affairs.
11. The institution has an obligation to communicate those standards of conduct that it considers essential to its educational mission and its community life.
12. Disciplinary proceedings should be instituted only for violations of standards of conduct that are published in advance through such means as a student handbook. It is the responsibility of the student to know such standards of conduct.
13. As citizens and members of an academic community, students are subject to the obligations that accrue to them by virtue of this membership and should enjoy the same freedoms of citizenship.
14. Students have the right to belong to or refuse to belong to any organization of their choice.

Code of Practice

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing faculty endorses the American Nurses Association *Code of Ethics for Nurses* (2015) as a basis for students' professional practice.

The *Code of Ethics for Nurses* (2015) may be viewed on the [American Nurses Association website](#).

ACCESS and Accommodations Services for Students

Mercer University is committed to making all of its programs, services, and activities fully accessible to qualified students with disabilities. Students requesting to be recognized as a person with a disability or requesting accommodations for a diagnosed physical, medical, psychological or learning disability must first self-identify by registering with the Office of Accessibility, Consultation, Collaboration, and Education, Support Services (ACCESS) and Accommodation. Appropriate and reasonable accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis upon review of the submitted documentation. The Office of ACCESS and Accommodation for students also offers voter registration information and assistance. Policies and procedures can be found on the [ACCESS and Accommodations website](#).

Please report any problems for physical access, such as non-working elevators, to the Office of ACCESS and Accommodation immediately. Students who believe they have been discriminated against or denied access to a program or service because of a disability should contact the Office of ACCESS and Accommodation. Further information on policies, procedures and documentation requirements may be obtained by contacting the Director of ACCESS and Accommodation at 478-301-2778. All policies and procedures including Disability Grievance Procedures may be found on the [ACCESS and Accommodations website](#).

For additional information, please contact the ACCESS and Accommodations Office at (678) 547-6823 or visit the [website](#).

FERPA: Release and Consent to Disclosure of Student Education Records

Student externship applications, scholarship applications, new nurse graduate applications, and student applications for other types of positions or awards often require letters of recommendation and/or completion of recommendation form by College faculty and/or administration. Disclosure of a student's confidential education records requires prior written consent of the student (unless disclosure is permitted under certain exceptions to FERPA set forth in [Section 99.31](#) of the FERPA Regulations). For each faculty and/or administration request, a student's written consent must be provided by using the form *FERPA: Release and Consent to Disclosure of Student Education Records* found on the Canvas Graduate Students Resource page.

Religious Observance Policy

Mercer University is respectful of the religious practices of members of the student body. Students who will be absent from class for religious observances must confer with their instructor(s) regarding the date of the absence at the beginning of each semester or session, or at least two weeks prior to the dates of the absence. The disposition of missed assignments will be arranged between instructor and student. If a mutually satisfactory solution is not reached, the right to establish a reasonable alternative is reserved to the instructor. Students who feel that their academic performance will be compromised by the alternative assignment / examination timetable may ask that the instructor's dean review the instructor's decision.

Pregnancy Disclosure Policy

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 (“Title IX”), is a Federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including pregnancy and pregnancy related conditions, in educational programs and activities.

Pregnancy and Related Conditions Include, but are not limited to:

- Pregnancy,
- Childbirth,
- False Pregnancy,
- Medical Conditions During Pregnancy,
- Miscarriage,
- Termination of Pregnancy, and/or
- Medically Required Recovery Arising in Connection with Pregnancy.

Students who are pregnant or are experiencing pregnancy related conditions are entitled to Reasonable Modifications to prevent sex discrimination and ensure equal access to the University’s education program and activity. Reasonable Modifications are those that do not fundamentally alter the University’s education program or activity. Any student seeking Reasonable Modifications must complete a Pregnancy Modification Request Form. This form, as well as additional information can be found at: <https://equityandcompliance.mercer.edu/sexual-misconduct-title-ix/pregnancy-related-information/>. The student will then be contacted to discuss appropriate and available Reasonable Modifications based on their individual needs. Students are encouraged to request Reasonable Modifications as promptly as possible.

Children and Guests Policy

The campuses, regional academic centers, and all other facilities of Mercer University are restricted to students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University, except when all or part of the University location, its buildings, or facilities are open to the general public for a designated time and purpose.

A “guest” of the University is a person invited by an officer, employee, or student to visit the campus at a specific time and place for a designated purpose. Personal guests of students are permitted as long as they restrict the length of their campus visits and abide by all appropriate guidelines and policies related to their visit, including those pertaining to Housing and Residential Life.

Arranging childcare is the personal responsibility of students who have children. Students are not authorized to bring children to a Mercer facility for extended periods of time. Frequent or lengthy visits of children are not permitted, as they may create disruptions and distractions and present a liability to the University for their safety. Children, other than those specifically enrolled in a youth specific program, may not attend class, use University equipment, or be left unattended on University property. Childcare issues frequently arise when Mercer holidays and those of the child’s school do not match, or when a child is sick and cannot attend school or daycare. Students must plan for these challenges in advance. Asking a faculty member to allow a child in class is not an option as faculty members are not authorized to allow children to attend class.

Health Insurance Requirement

All Mercer University nursing students are required to have health insurance and submit proof of health insurance for class enrollment. To ensure that all students have insurance coverage, students are automatically enrolled in and billed for health insurance with CORE Management. If a student has an

active health insurance policy, the student can exempt this charge through the [waiver process](#). The student is not responsible for the insurance charge if a waiver for coverage is made through this website within the time frame specified.

Required Immunizations and Credentials for Clinical Agency Compliance

Students are required to have the following immunizations and credentials on file in the graduate administrative secretary's office. Clinical agencies may require students to complete the credentialing process through specific agency compliance databases (e.g. ACEMAPP). Program fees cover costs associated with database access. Individual clinical agencies may require additional credentialing components (e.g. fingerprinting).

The following clinical compliance requirements apply to students in the M.S.N. and D.N.P programs. Failure to be compliant with clinical credentialing by the first day of class may result in an administrative withdrawal from the program. Students are not considered for clinical placements until clinical credentials are submitted and approved.

HEPATITIS B VACCINES & TITER	*Submit proof of (3) doses of the Hepatitis B vaccine Energix-B, Recombivax HB, or Twinrix OR (2) doses of the Hepatitis B vaccine Heplisav-B AND
	*Submit proof of positive Hepatitis B titer - drawn 6-8 weeks after full vaccine series
	<i>If Hepatitis B titer is negative or equivocal:</i>
	The student must repeat the 3 dose vaccine series (dose #1 now, dose #2 in 1 month, dose #3 5 months after dose #2) of Enderix-B, Recombivax HB, or Twinrix OR the 2 dose vaccine series (dose #1 now, dose #2 in 1 month) of Heplisav-B AND
	Repeat Hepatitis B titer 6-8 weeks after completing the 2 or 3 dose vaccine series.
	If the second titer remains negative after a total of 4, 5, or 6 vaccines (depending on which vaccine was received), immunity is assumed, BUT the student <u>must</u> obtain a letter from his/her healthcare provider stating he/she is a non-converter.
MEASLES, MUMPS, AND RUBELLA (MMR) VACCINES &/OR TITERS	*Submit proof of (2) MMR Vaccines OR
	*Submit proof of positive MMR titers (for EACH Measles, Mumps, & Rubella)
	<i>If MMR titer is negative or equivocal and student cannot produce evidence of having received (2) MMR vaccines:</i>
	The student must receive 2 MMR vaccines 4 weeks apart. Submit documentation.
VARICELLA VACCINES AND/OR TITER	*If you have NOT had Varicella (Chicken Pox): Submit proof of (2) Varicella vaccines
	*If you HAVE contracted Varicella (Chicken Pox): Submit proof of positive Varicella titer (You do not need the vaccine).
	<i>If Varicella titer is negative or equivocal and student cannot produce evidence of having received (2) Varicella vaccines:</i>
	The student must receive 2 Varicella vaccines 4 weeks apart. Submit documentation.

TETANUS, DIPHTHERIA, PERTUSSIS (Tdap)	*Submit proof of Tdap (not Td) vaccine within the last 10 years OR if more than 10 years since received Tdap, proof of the initial Tdap AND proof of a Tdap or Td booster within the last 10 years. (NOTE: Boostrix and Adacel are Tdap vaccines). If no proof of receiving a Tdap vaccine is available, the student must receive the Tdap vaccine, not a Td vaccine, and submit documentation of this.
BASIC LIFE SUPPORT CARD (BLS/CPR)	*Submit copy of current card (front & back), or electronic certificate, with student signature (for card) or verification code (for certificate). Students must be certified by the American Heart Association as a BLS for Healthcare Provider . Certification must be valid for the entire academic year. This may require recertification earlier than expiration date.
NURSING LICENSURE	A copy of proof of nursing licensure must be current, certified in the current state of residence, and on file in the Credentialing Coordinator's office.
DUE PRIOR TO REGISTRATION FOR SEMESTER AND/OR PRACTICUM COURSES OF ENROLLMENT SUBMIT TO COLLEGE DESIGNATED CREDENTIALING SITE:	
BACKGROUND AND DRUG SCREEN REPORT	The Background Check and 12 Panel Drug Screen must be initiated through www.advantagestudents.com ONLY (choose the 'Student Package' and use your Mercer email address when setting up account). This screening should be completed by: <i>Full-time MSN, Post-Master's Certificate, and Post-Master's DNP students must complete background check and drug screen prior to registration for Semester 1. Part-time MSN and all BSN-DNP students must complete the background check and drug screen in the Fall semester prior to starting practicum. You must submit proof of completion of background check <u>and</u> drug screen. <u>If your drug screen result is "negative dilute," you must repeat your drug screen.</u> Students are advised to register for the drug screen and proceed immediately to the collection center to ensure timely return of results which can take up to one week. A repeat background check later in the program may be required by certain clinical facilities.</i>
POLICY DOCUMENTS	Sign and Submit the following documents found in the college designated credentialing site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> HIPAA Statement <input type="checkbox"/> Social Networking and Professional Behaviors <input type="checkbox"/> Use of PDA & Other Electronic Devices in Clinical and Class Settings <input type="checkbox"/> Authorization for Photography and Recording <input type="checkbox"/> Authorization to Release Student Records <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Honor System
PERSONAL HEALTH INSURANCE CARD	*Submit a copy of personal health insurance card (front and back of card). Resubmit each year even if same card as previous year. Your name must appear on the insurance card. If you are covered under your parent's insurance, submit a copy of the card and a completed 1095 form OR a letter from the insurance company showing that you are covered under the policy. If you are covered under a healthcare policy for someone in the military and do not have an insurance card, you must submit a letter from the insurance company or military certifying your military healthcare coverage. In cases where students experience events that require medical attention while in clinical settings (such as, but not limited to, needle sticks and syncope), it is the GBCN policy to follow protocols set by the clinical institution where the incident occurs. Students are advised they are responsible for any costs incurred that are not covered by their health insurance policy for treatment of a health issue that presents while in class, lab, or clinical.

COVID-19 VACCINE	*Submit proof of COVID-19 vaccine(s) on a CDC "COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card" (preferred documentation) OR GRITS record. 2 vaccines are required for Pfizer (the second vaccine due 3 weeks after the first) and Moderna (the second vaccine due 4 weeks after the first) vaccines; 1 vaccine is required for Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine. Other documentation for COVID-19 vaccination such as state records, medical facility records, pharmacy records, etc. may be acceptable. Documentation must include student name AND vaccine name AND date administered AND healthcare provider name (initials, printed name, or signature are accepted; medical credentials are NOT required) OR facility name.
ANNUAL TB TESTING	Submit proof of negative T-spot test <i>OR</i> Quantiferon Gold TB blood test. <u>Each year thereafter</u> , submit proof of negative T-spot test, OR Quantiferon Gold TB blood test. Test results must be valid for the entire academic year. *PLEASE NOTE: Clinical facility requirements vary which may result in the need for students to obtain additional TB Testing in any given semester.
	<i>If the TB test is POSITIVE, the student will be referred for further evaluation and possible treatment.</i>
	<i>If a student previously received the BCG vaccine, they should submit proof of a negative TB blood test (Quantiferon Gold Test or T-Spot Test).</i>
	<i>If a student has tested positive for TB in the past, they must submit proof of treatment and a current chest x-ray.</i>
DUE BY SEPTEMBER 15th EACH YEAR	
SUBMIT TO COLLEGE DESIGNATED CREDENTIALING SITE:	
ANNUAL FLU SHOT	Submit proof of <u>current</u> seasonal flu shot (received after August 1 of the current year). <u>Must submit actual administration record with date of administration, site of administration (i.e., left deltoid), name and location of facility where shot obtained, and provider's signature and credentials;</u> a vaccine prescription is NOT an acceptable administration record unless it includes the above information, most importantly the provider signature and the name and location of the facility. If using the form provided by GBCN for documentation of flu shot, the form must be completed in its entirety AND must have the name and address of the facility at which the immunization was received stamped (not handwritten) on the form. If no stamp is available, you <u>must submit</u> the GBCN form AND supporting documentation that verifies your name, the name and location of the facility where shot obtained, and date of vaccine administration (a vaccine prescription IS an acceptable SUPPORTING document). In that the flu shot changes from year to year, you may need to update your flu shot while enrolled in the program.
COMPLETE IN CANVAS PRIOR TO YOUR FIRST FALL TERM OF ENROLLMENT:	
HIPAA ASSESSMENT	Complete assessment in CANVAS with achievement of minimum score of 80%

PLEASE NOTE: ALL RECORDS OF IMMUNIZATION OR IMMUNIZATION DOCUMENTS, MUST HAVE A PROVIDER SIGNATURE OR SIGNATURE OF VERIFICATION INCLUDED (I.E., PHYSICIAN, NP, PA, DO, ETC.). THIS CAN BE AN ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE OR ACTUAL SIGNATURE. ALSO, THE NAME OF THE FACILITY WHERE IMMUNIZATIONS WERE ADMINISTERED OR WHERE RECORDS HAVE BEEN RETRIEVED FROM MUST BE INCLUDED (I.E., PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT, PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE, PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT, DRUG STORE WHERE FLU SHOT RECEIVED, ETC.). EXCEPTIONS TO THE SIGNATURE REQUIREMENT ARE GRITS FORMS AND OFFICIAL SCHOOL IMMUNIZATION RECORDS. YOU MAY RECEIVE IMMUNIZATIONS AND BLOOD TESTING AT THE STUDENT HEALTH CLINIC LOCATED ON THE ATLANTA CAMPUS IN SHEFFIELD GYM BLDG., RM #206. THEY ARE OPEN 8-4, M-F. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES, CALL 678-547-6130.

-IN ADDITION TO THE REQUIREMENTS LISTED ABOVE, YOU MAY BE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE FACILITY-SPECIFIC OR UNIT-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS, SUCH AS A RESPIRATOR FIT TEST.

-THE COLLEGE OF NURSING USES A DESIGNATED GRADUATE PROGRAM ORIENTATION COURSE TO VERIFY AND TRACK ALL REQUIRED CLINICAL COMPLIANCE DOCUMENTS. LOGIN INSTRUCTIONS ARE INCLUDED IN YOUR PROGRAM ACCEPTANCE MATERIALS. PLEASE USE YOUR MERCER EMAIL ADDRESS WHEN ENROLLING IN YOUR COURSE.

AdvantageStudents.com

(Background Check and Drug Screens)

InfoMart, through [AdvantageStudents](#), is an online background verification system that provides you the opportunity to order your own background check and drug screen for student placement at participating hospitals. This background check will give you a certified report that you can print or share online with your selected hospitals and/or colleges, by providing them an authorization code that you will set-up during the order process. Georgia Baptist College of Nursing does not view student background or drug screens. Clinical agencies to which the student is assigned reviews background and drug screens, notifying the College of any student who is not acceptable for clinical placement to their agencies. If a student is denied clinical placement due to the background or drug screen, the College will make a second clinical placement assignment if another clinical agency placement is available. A second clinical agency denial based on the background or drug screen will prevent a student from progressing in the program.

How do I order a background check/drug screening?

1. Select the hospital or school to view the recommended packages that fit their requirements.
2. Select the appropriate package.
3. Complete the online registration form to order your background package. The online form accepts payment by credit card and money order.
4. Once you submit your order you will receive an email confirmation with your order details.
 - Select a Hospital/College/University
 - Select a hospital, college or university from the following list to see the background check criteria: **Georgia Baptist College of Nursing at Mercer University**

Student Package (background check and drug screen)

- National Social Security Search
- Criminal History Search (up to 5 jurisdictions) Multi-State Sexual Offender Search
- OIG List of Excluded Individuals/Entities
- GSA List of Parties Excluded from Federal Programs
- US Treasury, Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) List of Specially Designated Nationals (SDN)
- Patriot Act Search (includes Government Suspect and Terrorist List searches)
- Employment Verification (only required for students 21 years of age or older)
- Drug Screen: 11 panel urine lab test (in-network LabCorp; MRO service included)
 - Test includes: Amphetamines, Cannabinoids, Cocaine Metabolites, Opiates, Phencyclidine, Barbiturates, Benzodiazepines, Methadone, Propoxyphene, Methaqualone and Oxycodone

How will I know when my background check is completed?

You will receive an email notification from Advantage Student once your background report results are completed. You can log into your account at any time to view the status of your background check.

There are three status levels: PROCESSING, PENDING, and COMPLETE.

- PROCESSING means that it is a new order and Advantage Student has not received any results back yet.

- PENDING means that the report is still pending, but Advantage Student has received some of the results back. You can click on PENDING and a status report will pop up.
- COMPLETE means that Advantage Student has received all of the results from your background screening and the report is complete. You can click on COMPLETE and your completed report will pop up.

How do I complete my drug screening?

You will receive an email with instructions for scheduling and completing the drug screen. If you are paying by credit card you will receive this email once your order has been submitted. If you are not paying by credit card you will receive the email once your payment has been received or a school/hospital administrator has approved your order. If you do not received this email, please contact customer service at (800)800-3774 option 2. Please do not attempt to take a drug screen without first receiving this confirmation. Once the test has been taken and results entered in the system (approximately 48 hours after completing the test), print the front page only of the report; this page has the student name and the word 'COMPLETE' on the page. Send this page only (*no other pages of the report*) to the graduate administrative secretary.

Official Communication

All students are assigned a Mercer email address. Mercer University and the College of Nursing will use this address for any official email correspondence to students. Students are expected to check their Mercer email regularly. In the event of an emergency, Mercer will use multiple methods, including emergency text messaging, to notify students. Students are expected to maintain and update their cell phone numbers via MyMercer.

MyMercer

MyMercer, Mercer's student self-service portal, allows access to personal information, student records, registration, and financial planning resources. Guidelines for accessing MyMercer and changing passwords can be found on the [MyMercer page](#) of the Information Technology website.

Mercer Live (Email Access)

Mercer Live is the university's student email system, powered by Microsoft. Mercer students may access their Mercer Live email accounts over the Internet or via an email access program (client). Guidelines and procedures can be found on the [Email Access page](#) of the Information Technology website.

Canvas & Zoom

The College uses online academic technology systems, Canvas and Zoom. Canvas is the University learning management system (LMS). Students will access course syllabi, class calendars, course content and assignments, and other very important course information through Canvas. Zoom is a video conferencing tool, offering 'live' and 'pre-recorded' classes, and collaborative web-based meetings.

To login to Canvas:

- Go to [Mercer University Canvas login page](#)
- Locate and click the button, **Mercer User Login**; You will be redirected to the Mercer Canvas Login Page
- Enter the your Mercer University ID number (i.e., 12345678) in the username field
- Enter the same password you use to access MyMercer

- Click '**Sign in**'. Once logged in, your **Dashboard** will appear showing all courses you are enrolled in.

Depending on the course, links to Zoom sessions will be accessible through the specific course page in Canvas.

Help and Support

If you have problems accessing or using Canvas, contact the [Mercer University IT Help Desk](#) via email at Helpdesk@mercer.edu, or phone at 678.547.6310 (Atlanta), 478.301.2922 (Macon).

Refer to the GBCN Graduate Student Resource Page for quick Canvas navigation tips.

For additional guides on Canvas, locate "Search the Canvas Guides" under the **Canvas Help** button.

Campus Network Identification

Any student registered for courses and who has paid tuition and fees for the current school session may obtain network identification (ID). Readings assigned to courses may also require a network ID to access electronic reserves, obtain access to online catalogs, and campus electronic mail.

Mercer Identification Number

All new students are randomly assigned a system generated eight-digit Mercer Identification Number. The new number will allow students to perform a variety of functions, such as registering for classes, requesting transcripts, paying tuition, and making Bear Card transactions. A Social Security Number will not be printed on documents such as: class lists, reconciliation rolls, grade rosters, counseling reports, standard and ad hoc computer reports. Returning students will keep the same Mercer Identification Number.

Grading Scale for Graduate Nursing Courses

Grade	Nursing Courses	Quality Points Per Credit Hour
A	90-100	4.0
B	80-89	3.0
C	75-79	2.0
F	Below 75	0
FQ	Failure-Quit Attending/Never Attended	0
S	Satisfactory	*
U	Unsatisfactory	*
ABX	Absent from final examination (excused)	*
IC	Incomplete due to some requirement other than the final examination (excused)	*
IP	In progress	*
AU	Audit	*
W	Withdrawal	*
Z	Grade Not Reported	*

*Grades are not calculated in the GPA

Policy for Successful Completion of Nursing Courses

In all graduate nursing courses involving objective testing, students must achieve a 75% exam average before non-examination evaluative measures are factored into the final grade. A minimum average of 75% on all exams must be earned for students to successfully pass the course. Once achieved, all other course assignment grades can be factored into the student's final course grade. The rationale is to ensure students meet a minimum competency in certification testing.

General Testing Guidelines

Classroom Testing Guidelines

- Students may not have any textbooks, notebooks, food, or beverages on the desk at any time during an exam. No outerwear, hats, or sunglasses are allowed.
 - All books, outerwear, backpacks, phones, and other belongings will be placed at the front of the classroom prior to the exam.
 - Mobile phones and smart watches: It is College policy that no phones or smart watches are permitted in the classroom during the exam. If a student is found to have a phone or smart watch in their possession during the exam, the phone will be taken, and the student will receive a grade of zero (0) on the exam. If there is an extenuating circumstance and the student must be available via cell phone, the student will label the cell phone with their name, turn the phone on vibrate, and give it to an exam proctor in the testing room.
- The instructor will determine seating arrangements.
- Students may not leave exams in progress for any reason unless accompanied by a proctor. It is best to use the restroom before the exam begins.
- Students will not be able to ask questions about the exam content or items during the entire exam period to the course faculty.
- Speaking to another student after the examination has started is not permitted and will result in automatic expulsion from the room and a score of zero (0) for the exam.
- Testing start and end times will be listed. Students who arrive late will only be afforded the remaining allotted test time. Any student who arrives after another student has completed the examination and left the testing room will not be permitted to take the examination that day.
- During testing sessions employing electronic devices, opening any browser other than the testing screen, or taking screen shots will result in automatic expulsion from the room and a score of zero (0) for the exam.
- When a student finishes and submits their exam, students must exit the room quietly. To be respectful of students continuing to testing, no talking is permitted in the hallways outside the exam classrooms.

ExamSoft Testing

All exams will be administered through ExamSoft. Laptops should be fully charged prior to beginning the exam. Students are expected to bring a laptop that is virus free and meets the recommended standards. Recommended standards, best test taking practices, and minimum system requirements for PCs and Macs can be found on the [ExamSoft website](#).

- Students must bring and use headphones/earbuds for applicable test items requiring auditory test stems.

- Students should ensure the date and time are correct on their device so it will not affect the student's taking of the exam.

Prior to the Exam

- Students must come to the exam having downloaded the exam. No downloads are allowed at the exam unless specifically directed by the course faculty.
- Students must report to the exam at least 10 minutes before the exam, place all belongings at the front of the room, sit in the pre-assigned seat, and have Exemplify running on their computers ready to input the password BEFORE the exam time.
- Prior to launching an exam, students must disable any anti-virus software and save any documents. When the exam launches, all applications will be forced to shut down and you will lose any unsaved data. The exam proctor will provide you with the password to begin your exam at the designated start time.
- Automatic laptop software updates/downloads prior to a scheduled exam are not recommended. This can interfere with exam deployment and prevent access to the exam during testing time. If automatic downloads are set on the student laptop, it should be restricted to 0200 to avoid interference with testing.

During the Exam

- Students who wish to return to questions or make notes may use the 'notes' section in Exemplify during the exam.

After the Exam

- Once students complete an exam, a green confirmation screen will appear. Students will also receive an email from Exemplify confirming that the test has been uploaded. You can click the History button on the green confirmation screen to review your upload history. This will reconfirm the uploading of your answer file. You must show this green confirmation screen to your proctor prior to leaving the room. The exam will then be deleted from your device.
- Exam reviews are given at the discretion of the Course Coordinator. If an exam review is given, you will be notified of the exam review procedure by your faculty.

Exemplify with ExamID and ExamMonitor

Exams taken off campus will be administered through ExamSoft and the exam proctoring software ExamMonitor. Detailed instructions on how to use ExamID and ExamMonitor will be provided in the courses that use the software and in the Canvas Graduate Student Resources page.

Online Testing Guidelines

1. Each student must be in a well-lighted room to enable visualization of your face and eyes. Lighting should be in front of your face with minimal lighting behind you. If you have large windows or lighting behind you, you will need to move your computer to a different area to comply with this lighting requirement.
2. The environment around you should be free of anything including paper/pencil, notes, another computer/laptop/tablet, mobile phone, smartwatch, food or drinks.
3. The Webcam, speakers, and microphone must remain on throughout the exam.
4. Students must be visible on the webcam throughout the exam.
5. During the exam, students should stay seated at their computer until completion of the exam.
6. During the exam, students should keep their eyes focused on the computer screen without looking away from the screen for more than a second or too.

7. There can be no talking, no phones, headphones, or earplugs. Do not read exam questions out loud.
8. It is recommended that students use a hard-wired connection to the internet rather than a wireless connection.
9. If difficulties arise, call the course coordinator for the course in which the test is being given.

Guidelines Related to Student Conduct in Online Learning Experiences

Students engage in online learning experiences across programs and courses at Georgia Baptist College of Nursing (GBCN). Online learning experiences may occur in class, labs, simulations, clinical settings, and other locations. In GBCN graduate programs, online learning experiences may be delivered asynchronously and/or synchronously via Zoom or other web conferencing platforms. Standards for student conduct, as outlined in the “Standards of Conduct” section of the GBCN Graduate Student Handbooks, are expected to be met regardless of learning platform. The Standards of Conduct especially important for online learning include behaviors related to social responsibility and professionalism, as well as the “Minimum College Standards (as related to the Nursing Profession)” section. In addition, students are expected to follow the following guidelines during all online learning experiences.

1. Connectivity

- a. Students must have appropriate internet access with adequate audio and video capability on a computer for online learning participation.
- b. If technical difficulties are encountered beyond the student’s ability to solve, the student should immediately troubleshoot with Mercer IT and notify the faculty. If a student is disconnected from the learning experience for any reason, the student must note the time of the internet interruption, actions taken to resolve, and follow course policy. Technology interruptions may result in an unexcused absence.
- c. Students must test their connectivity and computer for proper operation prior to participating in any online learning experience. If connectivity or computer operation issues occur, including a malfunctioning camera or audio, the student will be expected to rectify these issues (e.g., move to an area where connectivity is adequate, find a computer that is properly functioning as in the University library, etc.) **prior to** the scheduled start time for the session. Failure to rectify technical difficulties prior to the online learning session may result in an unexcused absence.

2. Attendance

- a. The student must be logged into Zoom for the entirety of the learning experience, from beginning to end, with an active camera. Partial attendance does not meet participation requirements for learning experiences and make-up assignments may be required.
- b. Students are responsible for ensuring there are no regular scheduling conflicts (work or other life commitments) that prevent presence (online or face-to-face) and participation in courses. Additionally, students should be punctual in attending all learning experiences, including testing, clinical, laboratory, and simulation experiences.
- c. Students are expected to display their full first and last name during online Zoom or other web conferencing sessions for attendance and to encourage the development of the community of scholars. Nicknames or incomplete information should not be used.
- d. The student’s full face must be visible during synchronous online sessions in order to be marked as “present.” For example, having only the top part of the head visible or leaving the video frame while the session is in progress is considered unacceptable and

does not constitute “presence” in the online learning experience. The camera may be turned off or repositioned during breaks.

- e. Class protocols vary, but generally student audio should be muted except when the student is speaking.
3. Professionalism
 - a. Students must adhere to a professional code of honor and conduct in all learning environments and in all online interactions with other students, faculty, and staff.
 - b. Students must ensure their username, demeanor, and background are appropriate for a professional setting.
 - c. Students must be dressed in attire that is reasonable and consistent with a college setting (e.g., no pajamas, no revealing clothing, no lying in bed, etc.) for any online learning experience.
 4. Settings and Distractions
 - a. Students must log in from a stable, non-distracting setting and be present in that setting throughout the entire online session.
 - b. Engaging in any online learning experience while moving from one location to another (e.g. while driving a car, or while at work) is unacceptable.
 - c. Students noted to be in unacceptable or unstable settings may be asked to leave the session, may receive an unexcused absence, and will be responsible for missed content.
 - d. To eliminate disruptions in online learning environments, students should minimize outside distractions such as talking or texting on the phone, watching television, listening to music, or being distracted by family members, children, pets, etc.

Students **do not have permission** to post **any** class/course materials, class or lab recordings or photos, or any representation in part or in whole of online learning experiences on the internet, YouTube®, or any social media platform. Failure to abide by this expectation will be considered an academic integrity violation.

Guidelines for Scholarly Work Related to Graduate Study

The administration and graduate faculty strongly encourage students to be productive in writing, publishing, presenting, and seeking funding for scholarships and/or grants related to their scholarly work. The following guidelines are designed to support students in developing their scholarship in a professional manner and apply to any form of scholarly work (e.g. grants, scholarships, abstracts, presentations, manuscripts for publication) related to their graduate studies.

General Guidelines and Requirements

1. Scholarly works based on your graduate studies and/or any scholarly work where you identify yourself as a Georgia Baptist College of Nursing (GBCN) student reflect on the College and the University. Therefore, informing graduate faculty familiar with the work and the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs in writing about plans for submission is essential so that appropriate review and administrative approval can be obtained.
2. To assure quality review from graduate faculty, students should submit a draft of the scholarly work in a timely manner. The length of time required for the review should be negotiated with the individual faculty member(s).
3. Scholarly work should not be submitted to experts or faculty external to GBCN unless the document has been reviewed by appropriate GBCN graduate faculty and has received approval for such external review.

4. Having a faculty member's name on any scholarly work indicates to others that the faculty member has read and approved the work. Therefore, it is important to send your grant, scholarship, abstract, manuscript, or any other document to the faculty for their review, and ask for approval to include the faculty member's name on the document.
5. All graduate students are required to use the official College template for poster and/or podium presentations.

Guidelines and Requirements for Submitting Grants/Scholarships

1. We encourage students to submit grants and/or scholarships to support their graduate studies, dissertations, and scholarly projects. Students planning to submit a grant/scholarship during graduate studies should discuss plans for submission with the appropriate GBCN graduate faculty (e.g. dissertation chair, scholarly project chair, or capstone advisor) well in advance of the due date (a minimum of two to four weeks depending on the scope of the submission). The faculty member can help the student review grant or scholarship guidelines to offer insights and explanations that may increase chances for a successful submission. In addition, it permits the faculty member adequate time to prepare supporting documents such as letters of support.
2. Some grants and scholarships are paid directly to the student; however, other funds are paid to the University and must be disbursed according to University policy. If the grant and/or scholarship guidelines require University approval, there is a specific process for this. The faculty member is critical in guiding the student through this administrative review and approval process.

Guidelines for authorship/co-authorship

1. If a student wants to submit scholarly work for presentation and/or publication, the student needs to carefully consider the authorship of the work. All people, including peer student(s), the faculty, and external experts who considerably contribute to the scholarly work need to be invited as co-authors based on the APA's authorship criteria which states "Authorship is reserved for persons who make a substantial contribution to and who accept responsibility for a published work. Authorship encompasses, therefore, not only persons who do the writing, but also those who have made substantial scientific contributions to a study" (APA, Section 1.21, p. 24). Additional information about authorship can be found in the APA manual (pp. 24-26) and at the website of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (icmje.org).
2. Graduate students may consider publishing a paper written as a course requirement. Doing so often requires substantial revision of a paper designed to meet course objectives to become a publishable manuscript. If the student decides to submit a paper developed from a course for publication, they need to carefully consider the authorship of the faculty based on the contribution of the faculty to the work. If the faculty meets the APA's criteria of authorship, the student needs to invite the faculty to be a co-author to facilitate the process. Working with a more experienced writer can be extremely beneficial for the novice.
3. An important part of the trajectory of scholarship is to publish the doctoral dissertation/scholarly project after graduation. Dissertation chair, scholarly project chair, and other committee members often make a substantial intellectual contribution to the conceptualization, design, and implementation of the dissertation/scholarly project. In addition, the committee members assist students in writing and refinement of the final dissertation/scholarly project document. Thus, it is appropriate and a professional courtesy for the student to invite the committee to co-author with them. As experienced authors, faculty

can guide the graduate in the process of selecting the appropriate journal and submitting and revising manuscripts for publication.

4. Master's students may consider disseminating information about their Master's Capstone Project. Examples of dissemination may include submitting an abstract for poster or podium presentation and/or submitting a manuscript for publication. With faculty mentoring by a Capstone advisor, a completed project demonstrates students' cumulative knowledge from Master's curriculum, development of expertise as advanced practice nurses, and competence in oral and written scholarship. It is the Capstone advisor's responsibility to certify student competence in the subject area of the project and student ability to communicate scholarly efforts to others with a high degree of skill verbally and in formal writing. Upon approval of the Capstone advisor, the students may submit their work for dissemination. Since the MSN Capstone Project is typically undertaken by a small group of students, all members of the Capstone group must agree to disseminate information about their project.

Policies and Procedures Specific to the Learning Resource Center

(Applicable to all students using the LRC)

Learning Resource Center

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) is a facilitative educational environment designed for the instruction and demonstration of new and/or complex clinical nursing skills and simulated patient care. The lab provides equipment and supplies to achieve the objective of excellence in nursing education. Lab experiences are scheduled by LRC faculty in collaboration with course faculty. Lab access is available to students during the academic period to encourage individual or small group review or practice of skills. The lab maintains a collection of teaching models, materials, and other resources for faculty and student use.

General Information

1. Lab activities focus on the application of scientific principles. The student must prepare by reading, reviewing, and completing assigned activities prior to the lab experience. Preparatory activities are included with student's course assignments.
2. Lab attendance is mandatory. In the case of unavoidable absence or tardiness, the student must notify faculty at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled lab. The student is responsible to contact the appropriate faculty to schedule a make-up experience.
3. Unprofessional behaviors will be included in the clinical evaluation at midterm and final evaluation.
4. Various lab resources are available to students. Additional lab experiences may be requested according to individual needs. Students or faculty may schedule lab counseling or remediation.
5. Open lab times are offered to students prior to formal evaluation activities. Open lab times are also available to students seeking additional practice and/or faculty supervision.

Course Evaluations

Evaluations of courses, faculty teaching, clinical/lab instruction, and/or clinical sites are only available online for a designated preset period during the semester and close by the last day of the semester under evaluation. For courses on blocked formats or concluding prior to the general end of the semester, students will have one week after course ends to complete evaluations.

Mercer University's online evaluation software, *CoursEval* is accessed via each Canvas course. Students are encouraged to complete course evaluations in *CoursEval* for all registered courses each semester.

There are several types of evaluations. The **course comprehensive** is an overall evaluation of the course and its faculty and instructors. The **classroom teaching or clinical/lab skills evaluations** are used for evaluation of individual faculty and instructors. Faculty members and instructors may have more than one type of evaluation listed, but students can only do one (1) comprehensive course evaluation per registered course and only one evaluation per faculty member or instructor per type. On the evaluation form, check the course/section number and instructor name to verify that the course and professor are correct. **Clinical site/agency evaluations** are completed for all clinical facilities for which the student had a semester placement.

Academic Status

See the GBCN section of the [Mercer University Cecil B. Day Campus 2023-2024 Catalog](#) for information on Academic Status (academic warning, academic probation, academic dismissal, nonacademic dismissal, and administrative suspension and dismissal).

Assigning Grades in Cases of a Breach in Academic Integrity

A student who has been assigned selected sanctions for breach of academic integrity will receive a grade of F for the course in which the breach occurred. The student will receive a grade of W in other courses depending on academic standing at the time of withdrawal.

Make-Up Policy for Canceled Classes

In the event that the College of Nursing must cancel classes or practicum due to unforeseen circumstances, faculty will communicate plans for instructional make-up hours. Make-up instruction may be provided via recorded lectures or asynchronous class time. Each course faculty team, in collaboration with the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, will determine how the instructional hours will be provided. Practicum make-up will be arranged on an individual basis with the preceptor.

Classroom Expectations

1. Students are expected to attend classes. Regular attendance is considered essential for meeting course objectives.
2. Students are expected to read required readings in preparation for class and they are strongly encouraged to read recommended readings as assigned.
3. Students are responsible for getting their own copies of class materials and information if not present at the time these are distributed or presented.
4. Students must adhere to a professional code of honor.
5. Students are expected to come to class in attire which is reasonable and consistent with a college setting.
6. Students should follow the policy in the event of inclement weather (see Student Policies).
7. No children are permitted in the classrooms, Learning Resource Center, or second floor of the college building.
8. No food or drinks are permitted in the classrooms.
9. Students must have faculty permission to record lectures.
10. Classroom presentations MAY NOT be posted on the internet, YouTube, or other social networks.

Dress Code: General Campus

Students are expected to dress appropriately when attending classes and on campus. See MSN and DNP sections for more information about dress code for the clinical experience.

Food in Classroom

The consumption of food is not allowed in classrooms or labs across campus. Individual buildings have designated spaces within the building where food may be consumed. The following spaces within the College of Nursing are designated as areas for food to be consumed: 117, 118 (student lounge), 137, kitchen area on floor 1, third floor balcony, and the outdoor table seating areas.

Student Resources

Academic Advisor

Upon admission, the student will be assigned a faculty academic advisor. The advisor will assist the student in reviewing progress in their course of study. An advisement period is established each semester to encourage advisors and students to schedule a plan of study for the subsequent semester. It is the responsibility of the student to schedule a meeting with their advisor during this advisement period. Students are also encouraged to utilize their advisor as a resource person within the College. Advisement sessions may be accomplished through email, phone conference, or other means of communication regarding their curriculum plan.

Center for Nursing Excellence

The Center for Nursing Excellence (CNE) provides student retention and academic success strategies for undergraduate and graduate GBCN students. Graduate student services provided by the CNE include individual student evaluation and academic success plans, individualized tutoring, and faculty support. Resources include test taking strategies, academic success strategies, and professional development support.

Re-enrollment and Readmission

Students in Good Standing

A student in good standing who leaves the College for less than one year is eligible to re-enroll by contacting the Admissions Office. Re-enrollment is subject to availability and space restrictions in courses and is determined by the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. A student who leaves the College for more than one year must apply for readmission through the Admissions Office and must meet requirements in the latest catalog. The Associate Dean or designee will review all such applications and make the final decision on student readmission.

Students Not in Good Standing

A student permanently excluded from the program cannot apply for readmission. A student who leaves the program with a cumulative GPA below 3.0 or is academically dismissed and is not permanently excluded from the program may apply for readmission through the Admissions Office. Readmission is not guaranteed. The Graduate Programs Committee (GPC) will review the application and decide to allow or deny readmission. If readmission is allowed, the GPC will specify conditions with which the student must comply to register for subsequent semesters. Conditions may include, but are not limited to, courses to be taken/repeated along with the grade required, total semester hours allowed, and/or

the attainment of a specific semester GPA. Breach of the conditions specified by the GPC will result in permanent dismissal of the student.

Limitation in Completion of Degree Requirements

A student in the M.S.N. program must complete all degree requirements within a period of five (5) years. A student in the D.N.P. or Ph.D. program must complete all degree requirements within a seven-year period. Time limits shall be computed from and include the first semester of credit applied to the degree program. Students who do not enroll for three (3) consecutive semesters are subject to all program policies, guidelines, and requirements in place at the time of re-enrollment.

Distance Learning

Distance learning is when the majority (more than 50%) of the instruction occurs when the student(s) and instructor(s) are not in the same place. Blended programs and courses meet on-campus *and* online and offer a blend of the two environments. Both online and blended courses may require regularly scheduled virtual class meetings or proctored exams.

Complaints. Distance learners have a separate process available to them for filing grievances that relate to unfair business practices and non-compliance with state authorization regulations. See the Complaint Process page of the [Mercer University Distance Learning website](#) for more information.

Technology Requirements

The graduate programs integrate technology into teaching and learning experiences for students across the curriculum and learning platforms. To ensure that all students have adequate technology access and support, all enrolled graduate students are required to have access to a laptop (required for MSN, DNP, and PhD students) and/or a desktop computer that meet the minimum requirements listed below.

Minimal Technology Specifications

System Age	Recommended system 3 years old or newer
System Requirements	<p>Windows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows 11 recommended • Processor: Intel Core i5/i7/AMD Core CPU • 8 GB (or more) RAM <p>Mac:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAC OS X 12 (Monterey) or greater • Processor: Intel Core i5/i7/i9 or Apple M1 CPU • 8 GB (or more) RAM
Hard Drive	256 GB of available space or higher
Display	1024 x 768 or higher screen resolution
Webcam	720 P (1280x720) Resolution
Ports	2 USB ports
Browser Requirements	<p>For the best user experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred: Mozilla Firefox latest version [for Windows and Mac] • Preferred: Google Chrome latest version [for Windows and Mac]
Internet Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wired and/or wireless network card. • Minimum high speed cable connection: 3 Mbps cable (i.e. high-speed DSL, cable modem) [5 Mbps connection recommended for quicker load times]
Other Software/Plug-ins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adobe Acrobat Reader latest version— Required to view documents in your browser • Java latest version—Required for several features in Canvas • Anti-virus software • Microsoft Office – Required for course assignments and presentations

Computer Requirements

MSN, DNP, PhD Laptop Requirement. Students are required to have a laptop (PC or Mac) that meets minimal specifications to support learning and evaluation during the program. Students use their laptops for learning and evaluation activities that include online testing in the classroom (ExamSoft/Examplify), testing off campus (using ExamMonitor) with proctoring, and application of other software and technology products. *NOTE: Tablets are not supported by the ExamSoft testing package [and other select products] being used by the College of Nursing.*

Distance learning courses are delivered through the Canvas LMS. High-speed internet access is highly recommended for all distance learning students to engage in teaching and learning activities using software and various technologies. Some courses will require that students have access to headphones, speakers, microphones, and/or webcams. Synchronous online courses are delivered through Zoom and Canvas. Access to high-speed internet access is required for all online classes.

Technology Support. Academic Technology Services, a division of the Mercer University Information Technology department, provides students with online tutorials on the IT website, which cover most activities students will need to perform including taking exams, turning in assignments and other related tasks. Additional technology support for students can be found on the [Mercer IT Student Page](#). Students

are able to contact the IT Help Desk for technology support via phone and email (helpdesk@mercer.edu). On-call personnel are available to handle after-hours emergencies; directions for leaving an after-hours call are found [here](#).

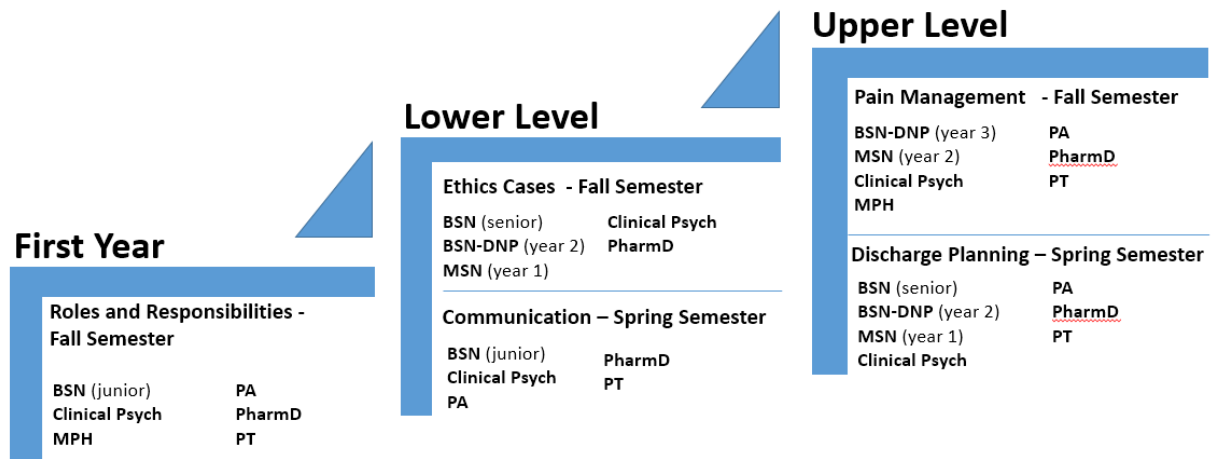
Course/Clinical Software Recommendation

Graduate students engaged in clinical practice are strongly recommended to purchase UpToDate® the evidence-based clinical decision support resource application.

Interprofessional Education

The Mercer University Health Sciences Center, Atlanta campus, collaborates to provide interprofessional education (IPE) activities across disciplines. The following colleges and programs participate in IPE: College of Pharmacy, Georgia Baptist College of Nursing, College of Health Professions (Clinical Medical Psychology, Physician Assistant, Physical Therapy, and Public Health programs), and an external partner, Morehouse School of Medicine. The IPE activities are structured from simple to complex based on the level of student participants. MSN and BSN to DNP students are required to participate in IPE activities at designed times during their program of study. The IPE large group activities are provided below.

Longitudinal Progressive IPE Curriculum



Graduate Student Activities

Student organizations and activities are funded in part by an activity fee that students pay each semester.

The governing of student affairs is a vital responsibility of the student body. The Student Government Association, SGA, is the name of the student governing body at GBCN and all enrolled students are automatically members. SGA serves as an umbrella for all recognized organizations of GBCN through its Executive Council, which is composed of four elected officers, three elected representatives from each undergraduate level (junior and senior), plus a representative from each recognized organization on campus. The Executive Council, through its monthly meetings, allocates funds to recognized

organizations and maintains the treasury for each organization. SGA also serves as a clearinghouse for fundraisers and student activities.

Recognized Student Organizations

Because involvement in student organizations and activities contributes to the holistic development of the individual student, the faculty and staff encourage and support students in this endeavor. Being active in a campus organization expands the interests and capabilities of the student and allows for the development of new relationships. Holding an office in an organization promotes the development of leadership skills and instills a sensitivity and responsibility to one's community.

Student Groups Currently Recognized by Georgia Baptist College of Nursing

Phi Kappa Phi

This is the nation's oldest, largest, and most selective all-discipline honor society that draws its members from all academic disciplines within colleges and universities. Membership in Phi Kappa Phi is by invitation and requires nomination and approval by a chapter.

Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing - Pi Gamma Chapter

Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, today known as Sigma, is the most prestigious international nursing honor society with chapters around the globe. To be considered for membership, graduate students must have completed one quarter of the graduate nursing curriculum, hold a 3.5 (or higher) GPA. All inductees must meet the Society's expectation of academic integrity. Graduate students who were inducted into Sigma in their undergraduate program may transfer their membership or obtain dual membership with the Pi Gamma Chapter.

Student Generated Communications

All communications to the College community that are student generated must come under the auspices of one of the recognized organizations on campus, which has either a faculty or professional staff member as a sponsor. Additionally, all communications must be approved by the Dean of the College of Nursing prior to distribution. It is expected that all communications be consistent with the philosophy and the values of the College and the University.

Orientation

All new students are required to attend an orientation session. It is a strongly held belief that students who attend orientation are better prepared to begin classes and become comfortable in new surroundings more quickly than students who do not attend orientation. Orientation is held each year prior to the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. Students who cannot attend orientation due to illness or a previous commitment are held fully responsible for obtaining the information presented at orientation.

White Coat Ceremony

The White Coat Ceremony is held for MSN and DNP students to publicly declare their intent to seek higher education in nursing.

Graduation

All students must apply for graduation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of all College and University degree requirements as published in the College Catalog and to ensure that such requirements have been met or that the appropriate waivers, if applicable, have been secured and filed in the Registrar's Office. All "holds" and debts to Mercer University must be cleared prior to graduation or the student will not be permitted to participate in the Hooding Ceremony or Commencement.

Hooding Ceremony

The Hooding Ceremony is held the Friday before Commencement at the end of spring semester. Hooding ceremonies are carried out by institutions of higher education to recognize students who have earned an advanced degree beyond the bachelor's degree. The ceremony is a time when the College can recognize the individual accomplishments of MSN, DNP, and PhD graduates. During the ceremony graduates come forward and have their hoods placed over their heads by faculty who have participated in the graduates' accomplishments.

Commencement

The celebration of commencement is held at the end of spring semester. Students will be given information during their final year regarding fees, the ordering of caps and gowns, invitations, and diplomas. A graduation fee is assessed the last semester prior to graduation, regardless of a student's intent to participate in graduation activities.

Academic Awards

Graduate students are honored at a Hooding Ceremony that recognizes students who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in nursing. A list of these awards and an explanation of each follows:

Outstanding Master of Science in Nursing Award. The selection is made by graduate faculty and honors a student who has demonstrated exemplary achievement in leadership and scholarship during the MSN degree program. The MSN award recipient serves as a professional role model for peers in promoting the advancement of quality nursing practice, safe and effective care, and interprofessional collaboration in an advanced specialty area of nursing practice.

Outstanding Doctor of Nursing Practice Award. The selection is made by the graduate faculty and honors a student who has demonstrated exemplary achievement in leadership and clinical scholarship during the DNP degree program. The DNP award recipient serves as a model for advanced practice nurses assuming complex leadership roles as clinical innovators for the improvement of healthcare outcomes for individuals and for society.

Outstanding Doctor of Philosophy Award. The selection is made by graduate faculty and honors a student who has demonstrated exemplary achievement in leadership and scholarship during the PhD degree program. The PhD award recipient serves as a nurse scholar assuming leadership roles in education, practice, and research to improve healthcare.

Pi Gamma Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Outstanding Scholarship Awards are to support, advance, and reward the community of scholars at Georgia Baptist College of Nursing. Awards are presented to the best student presentations from each degree program. Pi Gamma members select the

student projects that demonstrate significance to nursing, evidence of critical thinking and reasoning, and potential for continued scholarship. The following graduate student awards are presented: Outstanding MSN Capstone Award, Outstanding DNP Scholarly Project Award, and the Outstanding Dissertation Award.

ALMA MATER

Georgia Baptist College in your hands you hold the city's heart,
Teaching those who follow nursing, standing ready to impart
Knowledge to each eager mind, and a love for human kind
Pride in our profession and commitment to our healing art

Curing body, mind and spirit is the goal for which we strive
And through strength, concern and vigil, keeping dying hopes alive
Holding close our legacy of holistic harmony
Through our skills and constant caring nursing ever will survive

*Composed May 1993 for first commencement
Composer: Curtis Bryant — Lyricist: Martha Fowler*

University Policies and Procedures

For the complete list of policies and procedures, refer to the [Mercer University Student Handbook](#).

Academic Grievances and Appeals

Policy: Students have the right to bring grievances against a faculty member or an administrator and to appeal decisions concerning academic matters. A “grievance” is typically a complaint relating to some allegedly improper action or behavior. An “appeal” is typically a request for review of a routine judgment or decision. Such matters may include, but are not limited to failure to abide by requirements described in the course syllabus, arbitrary awarding of grades, discrimination based on race, color, national origin, disability, veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, genetic information, age, or religion (except in limited circumstances where religious preference is both permitted by law and deemed appropriate as a matter of University policy).

Time Frame: For grievances and appeals of any kind, students are required to initiate them with the appropriate faculty member no later than thirty (30) days from the completion of the term in which the course was offered. Grievances or appeals received after this period will not be honored.

Informal Resolution Procedure: Student grievance and appeal procedures encourage each student to handle complaints as close to the source as possible. If a student has a complaint against a faculty member, the student should first attempt to resolve the issue by an informal meeting with the faculty member involved. If this is not satisfactory, or if the student believes that they cannot discuss the complaint with the instructor, the student may follow the Formal Resolution Procedure.

Formal Resolution Procedure: The following protocol should be followed:

1. The student should meet with the associate dean after submitting to this person a formal written account of the grievance or appeal. This narrative must be submitted no later than

thirty (30) days from the date on which the student was formally notified of the instructor's decision.

2. If the grievance or appeal is not satisfactorily resolved by the associate dean, the student should meet with the Provost after submitting to the Provost a formal written account of the grievance or appeal. This narrative must be submitted no later than thirty (30) days from the date on which the student was formally notified of the associate dean's decision.

If the student has a grievance or appeal involving a dean, they should schedule an appointment with that dean in an attempt to resolve the matter. If the matter is not resolved or if the student believes that they cannot discuss the issue with that dean, the student may address the grievance or appeal to the Provost. In all academic grievance and appeal procedures, the decision of the Provost is the final University decision.

Once the University grievance or appeal procedure has been exhausted, the student can seek a solution outside the University by filing a complaint with the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (GNPEC). The details for filing a complaint with the GNPEC are located on their website and require a specific form. The student can access <https://gnpec.georgia.gov/> and click on "File a Complaint" for this information.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and program accreditors can be contacted to file a complaint if a student believes accrediting standards were violated or grievance procedures were unfair and applied inappropriately and inconsistently. The student can access SACSCOC at <https://sacscoc.org/?s=complaint> and click on "Complaint Procedures Against SACSCOC or Its Accredited Institutions" for more information. A listing of all University accreditors with contact information can be found in the Mercer University catalog. [Note: The procedures associated with the accrediting agencies are not intended to be used to involve the agency in disputes between individuals and member institutions, or cause the agency to interpose itself as a reviewing authority in individual matters of admission, grades, granting or transferability of credits, application of academic policies, fees or other financial matters, disciplinary matters or other contractual rights and obligations.]

Nonacademic Grievances

Policy: Mercer University recognizes the importance of providing an efficient procedure for a timely and fair resolution of a nonacademic grievance. Students are encouraged to use the process to resolve allegations concerning (1) a University employee, (2) administrative policies or procedures, and/or (3) a University program, service, or activity.

Informal Resolution Procedure: Many grievances can get resolved via informal personal meetings, phone calls, or emails directly with the employee or office responsible for the grievance. Whenever possible, students are encouraged to exercise these avenues of communication first. However, should these avenues not rectify the grievance, or the student wishes to bypass the informal resolution process, then the formal grievance process below should be implemented.

Formal Resolution Procedure: When a student wishes to file a formal grievance that is nonacademic in nature and does not already have a stated appeal or grievance process as prescribed by law or the institution, they should follow this procedure:

1. The student should submit the grievance in writing to the supervisor of the University employee responsible for the action or event that forms the basis of the grievance. This statement should

contain a brief statement of the grievance and the remedies sought, and be clearly labeled "Formal Grievance" for tracking purposes. A copy of the statement must also be presented to the Associate Vice President of Human Resources and the Vice President for Student Affairs. This grievance should be submitted to the employee's supervisor within ten (10) days of the action or event that forms the basis of the grievance.

2. The supervisor will meet with the respondent to discuss the grievance within ten (10) days of receipt of the written grievance. The employee's supervisor will reply in writing to the student with the results of the discussion and plans for further action, if any, within ten (10) days of the meeting. A copy of this reply will be provided to the Associate Vice President of Human Resources and the Vice President for Student Affairs.
3. If the student is not satisfied with the results from the supervisor and wants the grievance to be considered further, the student will have an opportunity for appeal as follows:
 - (a) In the case of grievances concerning employees, policies, procedures, or programs of a nonacademic nature within a specific school or college, the student may appeal to the Dean with responsibility for the employee's unit and request a meeting in order to seek a resolution. This appeal must begin within ten (10) days after the employee's supervisor has completed consideration of the grievance and responded in writing to the student. A written reply from the Dean indicating the results of the meeting and including further action, if any, to be taken will be sent to the student within ten (10) days after consideration of the grievance. A copy of the appeal and the response from the Dean must be provided to the Associate Vice President of Human Resources and the Vice President for Student Affairs.

If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Dean, the student may appeal in writing to the Provost with responsibility for the school or college and request a meeting. The appeal must begin within ten (10) days of the date the Dean has completed consideration of the grievance and responded in writing to the student. A written reply by the Provost indicating the results of the meeting and including further action, if any, to be taken will be sent to the student within ten (10) days after consideration of the grievance. The decision of the Provost with responsibility for the employee's unit will be the final University decision on the grievance. A copy of the appeal to the Provost and the Provost response will be copied to the Associate Vice President of Human Resources and the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Once the University grievance or appeal procedure has been exhausted, the student can seek a solution outside the University by filing a complaint with the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (GNPEC). The details for filing a complaint with the GNPEC are located on their website and require a specific form. The student can access <https://gnpec.georgia.gov/> and click on "complaint form" for this information.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and program accreditors can be contacted to file a complaint if a student believes accrediting standards were violated or grievance procedures were unfair and applied inappropriately and inconsistently. The student can access SACSCOC at <https://sacscoc.org/?s=complaint> and click on "Complaint Procedures Against SACSCOC or Its Accredited Institutions" for more information. A listing of all University accreditors with contact information can be found in the Mercer University catalog.

[Note: The procedures associated with the accrediting agencies are not intended to be used to involve the agency in disputes between individuals and member institutions, or cause the agency to interpose itself as a reviewing authority in individual matters of admission, grades, granting or transferability of credits, application of academic policies, fees or other financial matters, disciplinary matters or other contractual rights and obligations.]

(b) In the case of grievances concerning employees, policies, procedures, or programs of a nonacademic nature outside of the administrative organization of a specific school or college, the student may appeal to the Vice President with responsibility for the employee's unit and request a meeting in order to seek a resolution. This appeal must begin within ten (10) days after the employee's supervisor has completed consideration of the grievance and responded in writing to the student. A written reply from the Vice President indicating the results of the meeting including further action, if any, to be taken will be sent to the student within ten (10) days after consideration of the grievance. The decision of the Vice President with responsibility for the employee's unit will be the final University decision on the grievance. A copy of the grievance and their response will be submitted to the Associate Vice President of Human Resources and the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Once the University grievance or appeal procedure has been exhausted, the student can seek a solution outside the University by filing a complaint with the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (GNPEC). The details for filing a complaint with the GNPEC are located on their website and require a specific form. The student can access <https://gnpec.georgia.gov/> and click on "complaint form" for this information.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and program accreditors can be contacted to file a complaint if a student believes accrediting standards were violated or grievance procedures were unfair and applied inappropriately and inconsistently. The student can access SACSCOC at <https://sacscoc.org/?s=complaint> and click on "Complaint Procedures Against SACSCOC or Its Accredited Institutions" for more information. A listing of all University accreditors with contact information can be found in the Mercer University catalog. Note: The procedures associated with the accrediting agencies are not intended to be used to involve the agency in disputes between individuals and member institutions, or cause the agency to interpose itself as a reviewing authority in individual matters of admission, grades, granting or transferability of credits, application of academic policies, fees or other financial matters, disciplinary matters or other contractual rights and obligations.]

The Dean of Students or student affairs designee on each campus serves as a resource for students seeking assistance with grievance procedures.

Other Grievances

A number of specific grievance policies and procedures that are prescribed by law, accrediting body, or organization are available to students.

- Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy/Title IX (Contact Human Resources)
- Disability Policy and Grievance Procedure (Contact ACCESS and Accommodations)
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) complaints are directed to the US Dept. of Education (Contact Office of the Registrar)
- Accrediting bodies (Specific contact information for each accrediting body is listed in the Mercer Catalogs)

MERCER University Student Code of Conduct

Changes may be made to the Student Code of Conduct during the school year. The most up-to-date and complete version can be found in the [University Student Handbook](#).

Community of Respect

Mercer University strives to be a *Community of Respect* where everyone is held in mutual high regard. Because every human being is created in the image of God, each person deserves to be treated with respect and civility. Standards of conduct are based on the values of mutual respect:

Respect for Academic Integrity

We value a community that encourages an academic atmosphere. We believe that honesty is important to learning.

Respect for Other Persons

We value the worth of every individual in the community and we respect the dignity of each member in the community. We take responsibility for the consideration of the rights of others.

Respect for the University Community

We value showing respect for the rights and property of others. We take responsibility to act to maintain University property.

Respect for Community Authority

We acknowledge and value our privileges and rights as members of the University community. We take responsibility for acting to uphold community standards.

These values are codified into the following Student Code of Conduct, which includes a general overview of the process, a listing of unacceptable student conduct, possible sanctions, and other key information. This Student Code of Conduct applies to all students on all campuses, including online programs, and supersedes any student conduct policies and procedures previously used by colleges or programs. Program-specific regulations and policies (including professional standards) may apply to students beyond those outlined here and may be found in supplemental handbooks. Nothing in this policy prohibits these academic programs from pursuing additional review and action of professional standards as appropriate to their professions. Students are expected to be aware of and conduct themselves in a manner that is in compliance with all applicable policies found in the [University Student Handbook](#) and related campus supplements. Academic violations are handled through a separate process found in the academic Honor Code.

Graduate Honor System

The Graduate Honor System is a code established, interpreted, and administered by the Graduate Council of Mercer University. It is based on the Undergraduate Honor System and draws on the traditions of integrity and academic freedom which are embodied by that system. Like that system, the aim of the Graduate Honor System is to promote complete freedom within the academic community – a freedom which is based on a trust between students and faculty.

At Mercer University, the Honor System is subscribed to by everyone enrolling in any class, whether during the regular academic year, the summer term, or evening classes. The faculty subscribes to and supports fully the Honor System. The Honor System places responsibility for honesty where it belongs and ultimately must rest, on the individual. The individual is responsible for reporting any academic dishonesty they may observe as well as being responsible for their own honesty. By placing the responsibility on the individual, each student becomes the guardian of the Honor System. As a pledge to uphold this responsibility, each student assumes the Honor Pledge stating, “I pledge myself to neither give nor receive aid during tests or for any individual assignments or papers, nor to use any information other than that allowed by the instructor. I further pledge that I will not allow to go unreported to the proper persons any violation of the Honor System and that I will give true and complete information before the Honor Committee.”

The policies and procedures for dealing with infractions of the Honor Code by students matriculated in Graduate Programs under the jurisdiction of the Graduate Council of Mercer University can be found on the [Office of the Provost](#) website.

Mercer University Social Media Guidelines

The Social Media Guidelines at Mercer University are designed to be a seamless integration with existing University policies that help govern campus life at Mercer. With 12 schools and colleges on major campuses in Macon, Atlanta and Savannah and at four regional academic centers across the state, Mercer University has multiple policy handbooks that directly relate to the unique environments in which they exist. The Social Media Guidelines provide guidance for using different social media platforms within the context of these policies established by the University to govern student and staff (non-faculty) behavior. With regard to University faculty, and in keeping with the principle of academic freedom, the Social Media Guidelines are consistent with the Faculty Handbook.

The complete [Social Media Guidelines document](#) for more information. A list of social media accounts can be found on the [website](#).

Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy

Mercer University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in employment without regard to race, color, national origin, disability, veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, age, or religion (except in limited circumstances where religious preference is both permitted by law and deemed appropriate as a matter of University policy). This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including but not limited to hiring, placement, promotion, termination, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation and training programs.

In addition, as a federal contractor, the University has adopted an Affirmative Action Plan in accordance with applicable legal requirements. This plan is reviewed and updated annually. Employees and

applicants may access, upon request, the full affirmative action plan (absent data metrics) at locations and times posted in the Human Resources office.

Mercer University's EEO policy, as well as its affirmative action obligations, includes the full and complete support of all divisions of Mercer University, including its President.

Mercer University will make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with known disabilities unless doing so would result in an undue hardship. Mercer University prohibits any form of unlawful employee harassment based on race, color, national origin, disability, veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, age or religion.

Any employee with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of their immediate supervisor, the Equal Opportunity Officer, the supervisor of the person behaving objectionably, or for sexual violence/sexual harassment with the Office of Civil Rights. Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear of any form of retaliation.

Mercer University maintains an audit and reporting system to determine overall compliance with its equal employment opportunity mandates and to respond to any specific complaints applicants or employees file with the Mercer University's equal employment opportunity office. The Associate Vice President for Human Resources [1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, GA 31207, phone (478) 301-2786] is the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Officer and is responsible for monitoring and coordinating compliance with this policy and applicable laws and regulations, including Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Executive Order 11246, and other federal and state laws.

Mercer University Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals Policy

Mercer University ("Mercer") is committed to maintaining a fair and respectful environment for living, working, and studying for all, including individuals with disabilities. To that end and in compliance with federal and state laws, this policy provides guidelines regarding Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals while on Mercer property. This policy does not pertain to animals being used for teaching or research. The policy is posted on the University [website](#).

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

Mercer University is committed to maintaining a fair and respectful environment for living, work and study. To that end, and in accordance with federal, state and local law and University policies, the University prohibits harassment of or discrimination against any person because of race, color, national or ethnic origin, disability, marital status, veteran status, sex (including pregnancy, child birth or a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, age, or religion (except in limited circumstances where religious preference is permitted by law), or any other protected status or characteristic as defined by law. Mercer University is also committed to providing an educational and workplace environment free from all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, gender discrimination or harassment, sexual exploitation, stalking, or retaliation.

To uphold the University's values of fostering a climate of opportunity, mutual respect, and understanding and striving for a campus that is absent of discrimination and sexual misconduct, the

Office of Equity and Compliance will address and remediate reported forms of discrimination and sexual misconduct and provide policies, training, and education in an effort to prevent discrimination and sexual misconduct. You may contact the Associate Vice President of Equity and Compliance/Title IX Coordinator at 478-301-2788 or at stellato_sl@mercer.edu or learn more by visiting <https://equityandcompliance.mercer.edu/>. All Mercer University employees are required to disclose information about suspected or alleged sexual misconduct or discrimination to the Title IX Coordinator. If the Office of Equity and Compliance receives information about an incident of sexual misconduct or discrimination, they will reach out to provide information on your options, rights, and supportive measures that are available to you as a member of the Mercer University community.



GEORGIA BAPTIST
COLLEGE OF NURSING

Ph.D. Degree Program Section

2024—2025

About the Ph.D. in Nursing Student Handbook

Prior sections of this handbook provide general information, guidelines, and policies relevant to Mercer University and to the graduate programs of the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing (GBCN). This section of the handbook pertains specifically to Ph.D. in nursing students. Additional information about the Vision and Mission of the GBCN, policies and procedures about admission to the Ph.D. in Nursing program, program requirements, plans of study, and academic progression can be found in the [Mercer University Cecil B. Day Campus 2023-2024 Catalog](#). In addition, multiple resources for graduate students can be found on the Graduate Student Resources page in the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS).

Ph.D. Program Description

The purpose of the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing (Ph.D.) program at the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing of Mercer University is to develop nurse scholars for careers in education, practice, and research. Graduates of the program will advance nursing knowledge, improve nursing practice, and be leaders in the profession.

Ph.D. Student Learning Outcomes

At completion of the program, the PhD graduate will:

1. Develop expertise in an area of inquiry.
2. Make meaningful contributions to nursing knowledge through original research.
3. Advance the discipline of nursing through inter-, intra-, or trans-disciplinary research, teaching, mentorship, and/or service to the profession.
4. Demonstrate leadership within the evolving healthcare landscape of diversity, health equity, and inclusivity.

Academic Advising

Academic advising involves assisting students in the selection of courses within the plan of study and registration. In addition, academic advisors guide students with various scholarly opportunities as they progress through the program. The Ph.D. Coordinator serves as the academic advisor for all newly admitted Ph.D. students and continues in this role until students reach the dissertation phase. When the student is assigned a dissertation chair, the Chair serves as academic advisor until the degree is completed.

Formation of Scholars

The program of study for all doctoral students includes participation in the Formation of Scholars sessions. To facilitate professional development, doctoral students gather three times during each academic year for the Formation of Scholars sessions that include meetings of the courses and activities related to socialization in the role of a scholar in nursing. Ph.D. students continue to join the sessions at least once an academic year while in *NUR 815 Dissertation Research*.

Dates for AY 2024 – 2025 Formation of Scholars:

August 22, 2024: New student orientation

August 23 & 24, 2024

November 15 & 16, 2024

April 4 & 5, 2025

Qualifying and Comprehensive Examinations

Georgia Baptist College of Nursing's commitment to excellence in doctoral education is evidenced by the evaluation of several outcome indicators of quality. The College of Nursing uses the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN) 2022 document entitled *The Research-Focused Doctoral Programs in Nursing: Pathways to Excellence* as a component of the framework for the evaluation process of the Ph.D. in Nursing degree program.

The College of Nursing evaluates each Ph.D. in Nursing student's basic knowledge of the expected student outcomes as delineated by *The Research-Focused Doctoral Programs in Nursing: Pathways to Excellence* document. Progress toward these outcomes are assessed in both examinations and include:

- A. Articulate the history and philosophy of related sciences and knowledge construction, and how history and philosophy of related sciences have influenced both current nursing knowledge and the rapidly evolving nature of the nursing discipline;
- B. Critique and integrate different scientific perspectives that guide the conduct of inquiry and research;
- C. Demonstrate a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and critique; and
- D. Apply diverse analytic approaches that allow for deep examination and exploration of underlying factors influencing health disparities (AACN, 2022, p. 5-6).

1. Qualifying Examination

The Qualifying Examination is a broad-based examination. The purpose of the examination is for the student to demonstrate understanding of the core competencies necessary for the research doctorate encompassing program content covered within the first two semesters of full time Ph.D. coursework. Passing the examination indicates the student has acquired a suitable foundation for proceeding in doctoral studies.

- a. Qualifying Examination Procedure: The Qualifying Examination is designed, administered, and evaluated by College of Nursing faculty in the Ph.D. in Nursing degree program. Other qualified faculty may be a part of the process as specified by the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and dependent upon individual student needs. The Qualifying Examination may not be taken until the student provides evidence of the following:
 1. Successful completion of the first two semesters of full-time coursework applicable toward the degree;
 2. A grade average of at least 3.00 in the doctoral program; and
 3. Approval from the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs to take the examination.

Specific instructions will be provided to students during the first semester of study. Students will respond to questions prepared by the doctoral faculty. As with all scholarly writing in our program, adherence to APA writing style, format, grammar, and spelling will be considered in the evaluation of the examination. Clear, coherent, logical arguments and evidence of critical thinking for doctoral level of study will be required. Additionally, the exam questions will document student comprehension of course content completed prior to the exam. Faculty in the Ph.D. program will evaluate each completed examination and then determine whether the student has passed or failed the examination. There are three possible outcomes from the qualifying examination evaluation, as specified below:

1. Pass
2. Fail, with the opportunity to retake
3. Fail, with academic dismissal

If faculty evaluations of examination responses are not congruent, the Graduate Programs Committee (GPC) will make the final evaluation. Students are notified of the outcome of the faculty evaluation within three weeks of completion of the examination.

- b. Unsuccessful Completion of the Qualifying Examination: A student who receives the outcome of “Fail, with the opportunity to retake” will be provided one additional opportunity to take the Qualifying Examination. The retake must be completed by the end of the immediately following semester. The student may register for summer semester courses, but a successful outcome of the second Qualifying Examination is required prior to enrollment in the second fall semester courses. This timeline may vary for students in part time study. A student who receives the outcome of “Fail with academic dismissal” will be dismissed from the Ph.D. in Nursing program.
- c. Qualifying Examination and Ph.D. in Nursing Program Progression: An evaluation of “Pass” allows seamless progression in the Ph.D. in Nursing program. A student can only take the Qualifying Examination a total of two times. Failure on the retake examination will result in academic dismissal from the Ph.D. in Nursing program.

2. Comprehensive Examination

The College of Nursing accepts the approved dissertation proposal and proposal defense presentation as the comprehensive examination and as evidence of a comprehensive, scholarly synthesis of content within the doctoral program. The Comprehensive Examination (dissertation proposal and proposal defense) is completed prior to conducting dissertation research. The development of the dissertation proposal is directed and evaluated by the dissertation committee. The final approval decision rests with the dissertation chair.

Reference

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2022). *The research-focused doctoral program in nursing: Pathways to excellence*. <https://www.aacnursing.org/news-data/position-statements-white-papers/research-focused-pathways-to-excellence>

Developed by Graduate Programs Committee (GPC), March, 2010; Approved by GPC, March 15, 2010; Minor editorial changes made to document, July 8, 2010; July 2011; April 10, 2012; September 2013; November 2014; October 11, 2017; August 2, 2023.

Policies and Procedures for Dissertation Preparation and Filing

Introduction

Richly steeped in many hundreds of years of academic heritage and historical significance, the multi-phased process of selecting a doctoral dissertation committee, developing a research topic, preparing a dissertation proposal, defending the proposal, conducting research, writing a scholarly dissertation document, defending the dissertation, and completing / filing all paperwork associated with the final phase of the dissertation and graduation process is the culmination of formal doctoral studies. Georgia Baptist College of Nursing of Mercer University faculty believe research conducted by Ph.D. students

must be original in nature, and the outcome of the research and preparation of a scholarly manuscript should make significant contributions to knowledge development in the nursing discipline.

Entities and individuals other than doctoral students have vested interests in ensuring the highest quality of research and writing for every completed dissertation. The College of Nursing faculty in general, the Dissertation Committee Chair and Committee, Mercer University at large, and the nursing profession are vitally committed to the success of this exacting and rigorous process. Dissertation committee chairs and members will supervise the intellectual content of the dissertation and ensure the use of the required style of writing and formatting.

Students must be thoroughly familiar with these dissertation policies, procedures, and guidelines. Additionally, students must adhere to the Mercer University requirements as delineated in the [Mercer University Dissertation / Thesis Format Guide](#) (October, 2020) and in documents located on the Mercer University Provost's [web page](#) regarding the electronic submission of dissertations. In addition, the *GBCN Dissertation Guidance for Ph.D. Students* document can be found on the Graduate Student Resources page in the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS). A chart providing internal deadlines that must be met for the degree to be conferred during a specific semester is included in this handbook.

Selecting a Dissertation Committee

The Dissertation Committee will be comprised of a minimum of three members composed of the following:

1. Chair - assigned from Georgia Baptist College of Nursing (GBCN) Ph.D. in nursing degree program faculty;
2. Committee Member (Internal) - assigned from doctorally prepared GBCN faculty with graduate faculty status;
3. Committee Member (External) - selected externally from GBCN and / or Mercer University; must be doctorally prepared and meet the criteria for GBCN graduate faculty status; this is a non-compensated appointment; and
4. Additional Committee Member(s) may be required. This determination will be made at the discretion of the Dissertation Committee Chair.

The Dissertation Committee Chair (Chair) will be assigned during the semester students are enrolled in *NUR 845 Research Synthesis*. The external committee member must be selected prior to the proposal defense. The Chair, in collaboration with the student, will invite the proposed external committee member to join the committee and submit an electronic copy of that person's curriculum vitae to the Graduate Programs Committee for review and approval.

The Dissertation Committee composition may be changed at the discretion of the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. A written request, with substantive rationale for a change, must be submitted to the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs for review. Submission of a request for change does not guarantee a change will be approved.

Selecting a Dissertation Topic

In consultation with the Chair, the student will select a dissertation topic and proposed methodology. The topic must be of significance to the discipline of nursing and must contribute to the current state of nursing science. The scope of the research should be within the expertise of the student. In cases where the student desires to pursue research questions or methods that require additional education beyond the required coursework, the student will be responsible for proposing a plan to gain the

additional research skills or knowledge base to adequately conduct the research. The proposed project must demonstrate academic rigor while remaining within the realm of feasibility for doctoral-level research. Additionally, the final product should be of interest and quality sufficient for publication as well as presentation at professional conferences.

The dissertation process involves the creation of two documents that reflect refinement of the dissertation research ideas: (1) the dissertation proposal, and (2) the final dissertation. The dissertation proposal is the primary document which describes the rationale for the proposed research and how the dissertation research will be conducted. Before dissertation research can commence, the dissertation proposal must be successfully defended. The dissertation document is the formal manuscript describing the entire dissertation research process. Upon completion of the dissertation manuscript, the student must successfully defend the dissertation.

Process for Proposal Development

Approval of the dissertation proposal and progression to proposal defense is predicated on sufficient knowledge to conduct the research study. Should the Dissertation Committee deem necessary, the student may be required to take additional course work to ensure adequate preparation to conduct the research as proposed. It should be noted that changes to the proposal could also result in additional course work for the student.

The dissertation proposal will consist of Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the dissertation document which will be developed by the student with the guidance of the Chair. Once the Chair and committee members deem appropriate, the student will defend the proposal. The student will submit the approved proposal in the NUR 815 Canvas course as an assignment.

The proposal defense will consist of a formal presentation by the student to the Dissertation Committee and will be open to other faculty, students, and guests. The student will have 25 minutes to present the proposal, followed by 15 to 20 minutes for questions and comments from the Committee and others in attendance. At the conclusion of the defense, the Committee will meet to determine if the student has successfully defended the proposal. The Chair will complete the proposal defense rubric in the NUR 815 Canvas course.

The Dissertation Committee Chair will notify the student as to whether the student may proceed with the proposal or if modifications are required. Any required modifications must be made and IRB approval obtained prior to commencing the research.

Demonstrating Satisfactory Progress toward Dissertation Completion

Students complete the dissertation research while being continuously enrolled in *NUR 815 Dissertation Research* until the degree is conferred. Within the first two weeks of the semester, students registering for dissertation hours (NUR 815) must discuss plans for progress with the Chair and submit to the Chair specific, measurable, and appropriate dissertation goals each semester. The Chair will review goals for feasibility and collaborate with the student if revision is needed. Approved goals are submitted as a course assignment by the end of the third week of each semester. The student is encouraged to review the goals with the Chair at midterm so the goals may be revised if needed. The student must demonstrate achievement of and / or consistent progress toward dissertation goals. The student will submit a summative evaluation of progress toward the semester's goals by the last week of the semester and meet with the Chair to evaluate achievement of goals and progress. If the student is not

making satisfactory progress, the student will earn a grade of Unsatisfactory. A student may earn an Unsatisfactory in NUR 815 Dissertation Research one time without being dismissed from the program. A second Unsatisfactory will result in dismissal from the doctoral program. Unsatisfactory progress will be reviewed and approved by the Graduate Programs Committee, the Ph.D. Coordinator, and the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs.

Obtaining University Institutional Review Board Approval for Dissertation Research

In accordance with Mercer University and federal requirements for research, no research activities may take place prior to submission and receipt of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. At Mercer University, the IRB determines under which circumstances research may be considered exempt from further review. Thus, the researcher must not assume the research falls into one of the established exempt categories and attempt to bypass the IRB review process.

Students will receive the appropriate background information and training to conduct research within the PhD curriculum. Documentation of Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training, a requirement in NUR 831 Ethics in Nursing Research, is necessary prior to submitting the IRB proposal, and training must be renewed every three years.

Depending upon the type of research to be conducted and corresponding data collection sites, the student may need to obtain approval from other IRBs and / or research committees prior to commencing research. All Mercer students are required to have Mercer IRB approval, but if students also need IRB approval from their home institutions, one IRB may agree to be the IRB of record through an Institutional Authorization Agreement (IAA). Consultation with your chair and the Mercer IRB regarding IAAs and other necessary approvals will occur during the dissertation preparation. It is important to note that other IRB and/or institutional research committee approvals without an IAA may require submission of modifications to the Mercer University IRB.

Final Oral Defense of Dissertation

After dissertation research is completed and upon satisfactory completion of the entire dissertation document, the Chair, in collaboration with the committee members, will grant approval for scheduling the dissertation defense. This is a public defense open to anyone in the University, College, or community. An electronic announcement of the date, time, location, and title of dissertation research will be sent to the GBCN faculty and students by the Dissertation Chair or designee. The student will submit the approved dissertation in the NUR 815 Canvas course as an assignment.

In defending the dissertation, the student will make a formal 30-minute presentation followed by questions relevant to the dissertation document and the oral presentation. Questions from committee members will be followed as time permits, with questions from those in attendance.

Following the oral defense, the Dissertation Committee will render one of the following decisions: (1) Pass or (2) Fail. A decision of Pass may include conditions, identified by the dissertation committee, to be met prior to final Dissertation submission to the Provost's Office. The final review and approval of the dissertation submitted to the Provost rests with the dissertation chair.

Upon successful defense of the dissertation, the Chair will complete the dissertation defense rubric in the NUR 815 Canvas course. Should the Chair, in collaboration with the Dissertation Committee, deem the student has not satisfactorily defended the dissertation, the student will be notified of the required course of action and the defense rubric in Canvas will be completed. The student will be granted an

additional opportunity to defend the dissertation. This final opportunity must occur after completion of the action plan developed by the Chair and within 12 months of the initial defense date.

Ph.D. Dissertation Completion Timeline

The following dates represent the suggested timeline for completion of the dissertation process to graduate in the selected semester. Note the dates that are bolded are firm deadlines specific to Mercer University. It is recommended the student submit the final electronic version of the dissertation to Mercer University no later than two weeks prior to the deadline so if there are any errors with formatting, these can be corrected and the document resubmitted. Students' dissertations must be submitted electronically, approved by the Chair, and accepted by Mercer University by the deadline date in order to graduate that semester.

Activities	Fall	Spring	Summer
Full draft of dissertation due to all members of the committee (in GBCN/Mercer University format)	2 nd week of August	2 nd week of January	2 nd week of April
Dissertation Defense Announcement	1 st week of September	1 st week of February	1 st week of May
Dissertation Defense	2 nd week of September	2 nd week of February	2 nd week of May
Final copy ready for final style check and to committee members for final sign-off	1 st week of October	1 st week of March	1 st week of June
Submit final copy to Provost's Office/Dean of Graduate Studies	2 nd week of October	2 nd week of March	2 nd week of June
Final Date to Submit to Mercer (Provost/Dean of Graduate Studies)	November 1 by 5:00 pm	April 1 by 5:00 pm	July 1 by 5:00 pm
Degree Conferred	December	May	August
Commencement	Students completing in Fall semester, participate in May commencement.	Students completing in the Spring semester participate in May commencement.	Students completing in Summer semester participate in May commencement of the following year.

Limitation in Completion of Degree Requirements

A student in the Ph.D. program must complete all degree requirements within a seven-year period. Time limits shall be computed from and include the first semester of credit applied to the degree program. Students who do not enroll for three (3) consecutive semesters are subject to all program policies, guidelines, and requirements in place at the time of re-enrollment.

Nurse Faculty Loan Program Information

Important Information for Applicants and Recipients

The Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP) is a federal program designed to increase the number of nursing students who pursue careers as full-time faculty teaching in schools of nursing. The program provides funds to eligible schools of nursing that offer advanced education nursing programs to prepare graduates to serve as academic nursing faculty. Funds from the program are administered by the Bureau of Health Professions, Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA). The NFLP offers significant loan forgiveness to students in Doctoral nursing programs who:

- undergo specified educational coursework relevant to the nurse faculty role, and
- **commit to work full-time as faculty in nursing programs upon graduation.**

Following graduation and upon full-time employment in a school of nursing within nine to twelve months of graduation, the borrower can cancel up to 20% per year for a maximum of 85 percent of the total NFLP loan (years 1, 2, 3- 20% each year; year 4: 25%). Full-time employment is defined as: (1) employment as a full-time faculty member in an accredited school of nursing; or (2) employment as a part-time faculty member at an accredited school of nursing in combination with another part-time faculty position or part-time clinical preceptor/educator position in an accredited health facility, affiliated with an accredited school of nursing that together equates to full-time employment.

Those who *fail* to become full-time faculty members, as defined above, within twelve months of graduation, or take a leave from school, must *repay* the loan at the prevailing market rate. Awardees will sign a promissory note with the Student Loan Office in Macon, GA. **IMPORTANT: A promissory note must be signed EACH semester the student accepts money.** Although financial need is *not a criterion*, the federal approval mechanism for NFLP is submission of a FAFSA. Awards are contingent upon ongoing federal funding and distribution guidelines. Therefore, any information provided is contingent upon federal funding guidelines and is subject to change. Priority will be given to students who do not have full funding from other sources.

Recipients of the loan must also comply with completing any interviews, forms, and questionnaires associated with the loan program.

Highlights for 2024-2025

1. As provided under Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act, Section 846A as amended by the Affordable Care Act of 2010, Public Law 111-148, section 847(f) –
 - In FY 2024 a **funding priority** continues to be the support of nursing students in a nursing doctoral program.
 - In FY 2024 the total **NFLP loan limit amount is \$40,000**. The total of the loans for any academic year made by schools of nursing from loan funds may not exceed \$40,000 per student for any academic year.

NOTE: Not all fees are covered by NFLP. NFLP will not support graduation fees, insurance, or late fees incurred by student.

Role of the College of Nursing & Office of Student Financial Planning

The College of Nursing in collaboration with the Student Loan Office and Office of Student Financial Planning oversees the NFLP at Georgia Baptist College of Nursing. The College of Nursing reviews NFLP applicants, authorizes loan support, and monitors recipients' adherence to the academic plan required of NFLP recipients. The Office of Student Financial Planning administers the disbursement of the loan, monitors compliance with federal funding financial and documentation requirements. The Student Loan office is responsible for securing the promissory note and addresses loan repayment post-graduation.

Criteria for NFLP Eligibility & Continuation of Funding

The NFLP guidelines specify that in making funding decisions, priority is granted to those who have already received NFLP support. New funding preference is awarded to full-time students. This is provided application materials and deadlines are met. The eligibility criteria for new applicants and continuing applicants include the following:

- (a) U.S. citizen or national of the U.S, or a lawful permanent resident of the U.S. and its territories,
- (b) No judgment liens entered against them based on the default on a Federal debt, 28 U.S.C. 3201(e);
- (c) **A completed, up-to-date FAFSA** on file with Office of Financial Aid;
- (d) Full-time or part-time enrollment in an eligible program for advanced nurse education (DNP or PhD degree programs) at the time the NFLP loan is established and must complete the education component(s) to prepare qualified nurse faculty;
- (e) Continuous enrollment status (must be enrolled two semesters each year to be considered continuous);
- (f) Maintenance of a minimum 3.0 term and cumulative GPA;
- (g) Good academic standing;
- (h) Commitment to assuming a full-time faculty position in a nursing program.

After acceptance and when award money is available, students will be notified by the Office of Student Financial Planning with an Award Letter. Students must accept this aid in writing and complete a promissory note each semester they receive notice of the award.

REMINDER: The student must have an up-to-date FAFSA in order to receive an award.

Promissory Note

Students accepting NFLP funding will be required to complete a promissory note with the Student Loan Office in Macon, GA. **It is very important to note that the student must apply for the loan for the academic year upon entry (completed once) and complete a reference form (Exhibit C) each semester. It is not necessary to apply for this loan each semester; just once an academic year. However, a recipient must sign a promissory note each semester; acceptance of federal money requires the recipient's original signature.** Information generally included in the note is summarized below; the recipient is responsible for reading the promissory note (received from Mercer Financial Aid/Loan Office) very closely. Once again, closely read the expectation of the agreement. Although the information listed below is intended to be accurate, the student is advised to closely review the agreement before signing.

It is essential for the borrower to realize:

1. **The borrower** must be employed at a nursing accredited program. There are three agencies which accredit nursing programs: ACEN (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing), CCNE (Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education), and NLN CNEA (National League for Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation).
2. **Fulltime employment** – the borrower must be employed fulltime as a nurse educator.
3. **The NFLP** loan will bear interest on the unpaid balance of the loan at: (a) the rate of 3 percent per annum beginning 3 months after the Borrower graduates from the program, **OR** (b) bear interest on the unpaid balance of the loan at the prevailing market rate if the Borrower fails to complete the advanced nurse education program or when the Borrower fails to establish employment as full-time nurse faculty at an accredited school of nursing.

All other aspects of the Promissory Note are also important but the three items listed above often produce the most questions. Remember, the Promissory Note is a binding, legal, agreement and the borrower will be expected to adhere to the stipulations in the note, by providing a signature at the end of the agreement.

Who is not eligible to apply to the NFLP?

The NFLP Legislation established that loans may be made to students pursuing a course of study in an advanced degree program. Students enrolled in the following programs are ineligible for NFLP support:

- **Post-graduate certificate students:** Post-graduate certificate programs do not meet the requirements of a degree program.

What are the responsibilities of NFLP recipients?

If approved to receive monies from the NFLP, borrowers must:

- Sign a promissory note and a Statement of Rights and Responsibilities each semester they receive funding.
- Complete the required nursing education coursework. NFLP recipients are obligated to take the required educational component for their degree program.
 - Doctoral students (DNP and PhD) must complete the following courses:
 - NUR 816 Foundations of Nursing Education; and
 - NUR 817 Nursing Program Development and Evaluation.

Acceptable Educational Program Options

PhD Curriculum Option

PhD students must complete the nurse educator cognate series concentration, which includes six semester hours. The College of Nursing offers a cognate series for doctoral students with foundational and advanced applications in nursing education. The cognate series provides the student with the opportunity to work with nursing faculty members who are experts in the area of nursing education. The courses in the nurse educator cognate series include NUR 816 Foundations of Nursing Education and NUR 817 Nursing Program Development and Evaluation.

***Please note that all of the above information is believed to be correct but the applicant is ultimately responsible for understanding the financial commitment and obligations of the loan agreement.**