



**NURSING**

**RN-BSN, RN-MSN, MSN/MBA,  
& MSN ONLINE NURSING  
PROGRAMS**

**STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**2021-2022**

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## **I. Welcome**

Congratulations on your acceptance into the nursing program at Robert Morris University (RMU). This handbook will serve as a guide to assist you throughout your program. Awareness of, and adherence to, these policies and guidelines are imperative to your successful progression and completion of the fully online RN-BSN, RN-MSN, MSN, or MSN/MBA programs.

Student success depends on many factors, including a dedication and commitment to academics, effective communication skills, utilization of the resources available to you at RMU, and an awareness of guidelines and policies of the nursing program.

It is an expectation that you will review this handbook and refer to it throughout your time in the online nursing program. The document will be updated on a yearly basis and you are responsible for being current with policies and guidelines.

Please refer to the links provided within this document. The School of Nursing, Education, and Human Studies (SNEHS) website contains additional information to assist you in achieving success as an online nursing student:

On behalf of the administration, faculty and staff, welcome to the RMU Online Nursing Program! We wish you every success as you prepare for future endeavors and to reach your educational and professional goals!

Online Nursing Program Contact Information:

*Ashlee Shields, PhD, RN, CCRN*  
*Coordinator, Online Nursing Programs*  
*Assistant Professor*  
[shields@rmu.edu](mailto:shields@rmu.edu)  
*412-397-3541*

## **A. Accreditation and Approval**

The baccalaureate degree in nursing, master's degree in nursing, post master's/post-doctoral PMHNP certification, and the Doctor of Nursing Practice at Robert Morris University are accredited by the [Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education \(CCNE\)](#).

## **II. Program Outcomes/Objectives**

### **The RN – BSN program prepares students to:**

- Demonstrate critical thinking, clinical decision-making and psychomotor skills necessary for safe and competent practice
- Integrate methods of research and scholarship to make and prioritize diagnoses, plan, implement and evaluate the care of individuals, groups and communities
- Assess health and incorporate principles and methods of health promotion and health education in nursing care of individuals, groups and communities
- Integrate traditional and developing methods of discovering, retrieving and using information in nursing practice
- Demonstrate professional behaviors when providing nursing care to individuals and families
- Describe how health care delivery systems are organized and financed and the effect on patient care
- Communicate clearly and succinctly in speech and writing

### **The MSN in Nursing Education program prepares students to:**

- Demonstrate mastery of advanced knowledge and skills for the specialized role of the nurse educator
- Critically evaluate knowledge and theories from nursing and other disciplines for their contribution to nursing practice and education
- Demonstrate organizational and systems leadership in inter-professional collaborative practice. Critically evaluate issues relative to nursing practice and health care in light of scientific
- Knowledge and personal and societal values
- Analyze the organization, structure, and financing of health care delivery systems and the effect on patient care and outcomes
- Communicate effectively in speech and writing
- Use information technology to promote effective healthcare system planning and evaluation
- Employ advocacy strategies to influence health care and health policy development

### **MSN in Nursing Leadership Program prepares students to:**

- Demonstrate mastery of advanced knowledge and skills for the specialized role of the nurse leader
- Critique knowledge and theories from nursing and other disciplines for their contribution to nursing practice and leadership
- Appraise organizational and systems leadership in inter-professional collaborative practice in healthcare

- Employs effective communication methods to collaborate with and lead inter-professional healthcare teams
- Evaluate the impact of organizational behavior in leading healthcare organizations
- Use evidence-based practice and diverse perspectives to guide decision making for healthcare leadership practice in a global society

### **Simulation Instruction and Leadership Certificate:**

- Demonstrate effective simulation facilitation/instructional strategies
- Integrate standards for best practice within your simulation program
- Incorporate simulation measurement and evaluation strategies to enhance program outcomes
- Determine priorities for funding of simulation research projects
- Identify leadership strategies to enhance success of a simulation program
- Utilize innovative trends such as TeamSTEPPS® teamwork training in designing experiences
- Explore technologies appropriate for use in a simulation laboratory

### **Nursing Management Certificate:**

- Utilize change management and conflict resolution tactics to effectively lead healthcare teams
- The ability to explain concepts, issues, and practices related to the economics of health care financing and how those concepts affect the nurse leader's role
- The ability to explain and evaluate leadership styles and work collaboratively with peers in a manner that respects diversity and organizational needs
- Analyze the use of performance improvement and quality management resources within the healthcare setting to improve healthcare outcomes
- Develop students' abilities to view contemporary health care financial issues both analytically and strategically

### **Care Coordination Certificate:**

- Analyze the importance of strategic, operational, and performance improvement concepts as well as the importance of coordination and integration in achieving health outcome goals
- Describe current and emerging influences which are likely to affect expectations regarding managerial and health care organization performance and quality improvement initiatives
- Evaluate the nurse leader's role in care coordination
- Compare and contrast the various roles of care coordination
- Discuss various evidence-based strategies for coordinating teams and groups of people to achieve healthcare outcomes
- Manage the dynamics of group behavior effectively using leadership theory and tactics

### **Global Healthcare Certificate:**

- Explore the cultural norms of individuals of varied racial and ethnic backgrounds and its influence on healthcare practices and beliefs.
- Evaluate health care delivery and resources from a global perspective.
- Analyze the impact of using a global perspective as a nurse leader
- Examine the relationship between balance and integration of physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of health
- Compare the philosophies of the allopathic and the holistic approaches to health
- Evaluate methods to integrate complementary and alternative health treatments into nursing practice as needed to support the individual patient's holistic health needs

### **Nursing Informatics Certificate:**

- Understand the basic concepts and principles of information technology as it relates to health care services and operations
- Understand the basic concepts and objectives of federal, state, regional and organizational policies and regulations associated with information technology in health care, and their impact on the management of health care operations
- Understand how management information systems interact with other components of a health care delivery team
- Analyze how nurses are affecting change in the development and adoption of interoperable systems
- Recognize the role of the nursing informatics leader in advocating for nursing practice using information systems processes and outcomes

## **III. Policies / Procedures / Important Guidelines**

### **A. Academic Calendar**

The [Academic Calendar](#) has important dates, including start and end dates for the semester, dates for registration and tuition payment, course withdrawal among other important dates. Be sure to enter the correct range of dates for searching purposes.

### **B. University Policies**

Students are expected to review and adhere to all University Policies as well as those specific to the nursing program.

### **C. Academic Integrity**

The fundamentals of Academic Integrity are valued within the Robert Morris University community of scholars. All students are expected to understand and adhere to the standards of Academic Integrity as stated in the [RMU Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Any student who violates the Academic Integrity Policy is subject to possible judicial proceedings according to the recommendations of the Academic Integrity Committee. Sanctions are outlined in the policy and depending upon the severity of the violation could range from no disciplinary action to being dismissed from the university.

## **D. Department of Nursing Policies**

The Department of Nursing has specific policies guiding our academic practices, in addition to the University academic policies. Where differences occur, the nursing policies supersede University policies. The following links provide access to the Department of Nursing undergraduate and graduate policies and procedures, as well as the University policies. Students are expected to review this important information and adhere to all policies.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are a student in the RN-to-MSN program, both Undergraduate and Graduate policies will apply as you progress from BSN courses to MSN courses.

[Department of Nursing Policies](#)

## **E. Attendance**

Online students who fail to maintain active participation in an online course may receive a failing grade and are subject to the discretion of academic progression committee in accordance with the Academic Progression policy to continue in the RN-BSN, RN-MSN, MSN or MSN/MBA online distance learning program. The student is responsible for communicating extenuating circumstances to the course faculty, their academic advisor, and/or Program Coordinator

A student who is absent due to symptoms of Covid-19 is entitled to makeup work missed if the student fulfills the instructor notification requirements of the policy. Students are not to be penalized for any missed assignments, projects, examinations, tests, etc. or to have their daily grades automatically reduced when covered by this policy. Furthermore, the faculty must allow the student to make up or complete any assignments, etc., that were missed due to officially sanctioned obligations.

## **F. Fees**

Students enrolled in the online nursing program are subject to additional fees. These include, but are not limited to, costs related to practicum compliance requirements. Examples of the potential requirements for practicum courses include: Health evaluation, immunizations, TB testing, background clearances, proof of health insurance and CPR certification. The inclusive list and cost of items are subject to change depending on practicum affiliation agreements. The costs associated with these practicum compliance requirements are the responsibility of the student. Any fees associated with using a particular practicum site or preceptor are to be paid by the student.

Please refer to the link to CastleBranch for a list of fees for compliance requirements necessary to begin practicum rotations. **Students will be directed as to when to begin this process.** <http://rmu.castlebranch.com/>

The following link provides information about tuition and university fees.

[Tuition and Fees](#)

## **G. RMU Email and Netiquette**

RMU email is used by the faculty, staff, and administration to communicate with nursing students. Please check your RMU student email daily. All academic program

communication will be sent to the student's RMU email account only. Learners are responsible for monitoring this email account and responding appropriately.

**NOTE: If students prefer a different email account, arrangements can be made to forward the RMU student email to that address. Please contact the Help Desk at 412-397-2211 for assistance.**

Online students must respect the online classroom as a learning environment. Professional behavior is expected at all times when interacting with peers and instructors. The guidelines for behavior and interaction in an online environment are referred to as netiquette. Click on the following link for a guide to proper netiquette.

[Netiquette Guide for Online Courses](#)

#### **H. Chain of Command Issues/ Concerns Related to a Course**

If a question or concern arises regarding a course issue, the student should discuss the issue at the level of the course instructor. If the issue is unresolved at the level of the instructor, the student should follow the procedure outlined in the [Student-Faculty Disputes Policy](#).

#### **I. Complaint(s) Process**

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the department head of nursing. The DH will attempt to resolve the issue with appropriate university personnel (where applicable). Any formal complaint regarding a faculty member follows the student-faculty dispute policy.

#### **J. Appeals Process**

If a student is appealing a decision related to a departmental policy, the student must notify the Program Coordinator of the decision to appeal. The Program Coordinator will determine the appropriate process for a case based on the reason for the appeal and communicate the process to the student.

#### **K. RMU Ready Plan**

Robert Morris University is committed to promoting a safe and healthy environment for our students, faculty, staff, and visitors. This RMU Ready Plan outlines the university's plans for resuming in person instruction and residential living in accordance with the requirements and guidance of Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), and the Allegheny County Health Department. It is the responsibility of students to review the RMU Ready Plan.

[RMU Ready Plan](#)

### **IV. Curricular Information**



## **A. Curriculum Overview**

RMU's Online Nursing Degree programs provide maximum flexibility and support for individuals with busy professional lives. The following links provide information regarding the online nursing programs:

[RN to BSN Program Information](#)

[MSN Program Information](#)

## **B. Transfer of Credits**

Upon admission, all transcripts are evaluated by a representative of the Admissions department. Students will be informed of the acceptance of transfer credits. Please note, courses older than 12 years must also be reviewed and approved by the Program Coordinator and Department Head.

Any request for transfer credits into the MSN program will be reviewed for consideration once course syllabi are provided. Transcripts are reviewed to determine RMU equivalency by the Program Coordinator.

For further details, please review related University Academic Policies related to your specific questions. Policies can be found [here](#).

## **C. Student Advising and Registration**

Once accepted into the RN-BSN, RN-MSN, MSN/MBA or MSN program, students are assigned an Academic Advisor who works in collaboration with the Program Coordinator and other university departments. The academic advisor develops an individualized course map and determines the sequencing of courses throughout the curriculum. This course map is communicated to students via email; please be sure to respond to emails in a timely manner to ensure your enrollment in required courses. Once a student confirms his/her intent to enroll in courses, the registration process can be completed.

Program Coordinator

412-397-3541

Academic Advisor

[snhsonlineadvising@rmu.edu](mailto:snhsonlineadvising@rmu.edu)

412-397-6899

Please contact your Program Coordinator and Academic Advisor with questions about adding, dropping and/or withdrawing from online courses. Failure to properly notify the University may result in a financial penalty. Please refer to the academic calendar for add, drop and withdrawal deadlines. Additional information regarding registration can be found in Academic Affairs, or by using the link: [Office of the Registrar](#)

## **D. Academic Progression**

Students who have concerns about their academic standing should discuss academic progression with their Academic Advisor or Program Coordinator

[Undergraduate Academic Standing Policy](#)

[Graduate Academic Standing Policy](#)

## **E. Technology**

The RN to BSN, RN to MSN, MSN/MBA and MSN online programs utilize technology exclusively accessible to students choosing the online education experience. There are basic technical skills necessary for online education; in addition, the following software and communication bundles are recommended:

- Antivirus software
- Microsoft Office
- Professional or Microsoft Office for Macintosh
- Broadband Cable (best)
- FIOS Internet Service (best)
- DSL
- Satellite
- Dial Up (not recommended)
- Firefox Browser-recommended browser for all Blackboard activities

All courses are web based and accessible from any computer with an internet connection with the exception of **some practicum courses**. Robert Morris University uses Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) for web based courses. Online assistance with Blackboard technology and instructions can be accessed by contacting the RMU Blackboard 24-hour technical support at 412-397-2211.

## **F. Health Insurance**

All students in the nursing program are required to carry health insurance while enrolled in the nursing program. If you need health insurance, this can be obtained through <http://studentlife.rmu.edu/student-health-services> at RMU. If you have your own coverage, you must enter your health insurance information on the RMU website each academic year; otherwise, you will be automatically invoiced for the health insurance offered through RMU.

## G. Practicum Requirements

Courses with a practicum will require students to obtain specific clearances prior to the start of the course. These requirements are based on RMU's practicum affiliation agreements with external agencies.

The Department of Nursing has contracted with [CastleBranch \(CB\)](#) to facilitate the completion and monitoring of all practicum requirements. ***All students must create an account with CastleBranch when prompted to do so by the Clinical Coordinator.*** This profile will serve as a Document Manager for all required records, including health exams, criminal background clearances, RN licensure, CPR Certification, professional liability, and health insurance. Initial practicum clearances are required prior to the start of the first practicum course and must be renewed on an annual basis.

- *All students must adhere to the practicum requirements below as applicable to the program.*
- [RN-BSN Practicum Requirements](#) or
- [RN-MSN Practicum Requirements](#)

Students are required to complete and submit all practicum clearance requirements to CB 30 days prior to the first day of the course. Failure to submit these requirements 30 days prior to the first day of the practicum course will result in removal from the course (and any co-requisite courses) by the University Registrar.

Students will receive detailed information regarding access to CastleBranch well in advance of courses with a practicum. Students are responsible for adhering to the procedures guiding practicum clearances. Failure to complete the requirements by established due dates will result in the inability of the student to attend practicum activities. Students cannot progress in the course without proper clearance for practicum. This may result in a delay in program completion.

In the event that a positive background report is noted, RMU SNHS is obligated by practicum affiliation agreements to share the results of criminal record clearances with the external agencies. The student will be asked to complete a personal statement about the offense which will be filed in the student's record and reported to the external facility. The agency, in turn, has the right to determine if a student with a positive criminal background is permitted to complete an experience within a given facility. The facility has the right to refuse the student access which may result in the student's inability to meet the course objectives.

### COVID-19

Students attending practicum experiences must adhere to the [School-level, COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan for Clinical Education](#). Students who test positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms, cannot attend their practicum experience(s).

## COVID-19

Students will need to follow guidelines set forth in the [RMU Ready Plan](#), this includes reporting for COVID-19. If students are coming to campus, *Guidelines for Students, Faculty, and Staff to Self-Monitor* in the RMU Ready Plan must be followed. Practicum students will follow PPE guidelines and use PPE provided by the facility where their practicum is completed. Fully online program students will follow guidelines driven by their practicum placement.

All students will need to obtain clearance to return to campus and/or their practicum following an absence related to COVID-19, as described in the RMU Ready plan. In addition, individuals need to report if they have tested positive and provide notification to the program coordinator and course instructor. If a student is unable to complete coursework due to illness, please notify the course instructor and program coordinator as soon as possible.

**It is the responsibility of the student to notify the Program Coordinator of any change in background or practicum clearance status. Any unreported change in status may result in dismissal from the nursing program.**

Required clearances for courses with a practicum component include, but are not limited to:

- Health evaluation, immunizations and titers
- Criminal background check
- Child abuse clearance
- FBI clearance
- CPR certification (AHA Healthcare Provider)

Students can contact the Clinical Coordinator, at 412-397-5967 for assistance.

### **H. Transportation/Parking/Other Expenses**

Each student will be responsible for his/her own transportation to and from the sites used for the practicum experiences. Parking or additional costs incurred while at practicum sites are the sole responsibility of the student.

### **I. Appropriate Attire for Clinical and Practicum Experience**

It is expected that all RMU nursing students dress professionally and adhere to agency requirements for appropriate attire during their practicum activities.

### **J. International Experiences**

Nursing students are afforded many opportunities to engage in educational abroad programs offered through the [Center for Global Engagement](#). Course faculty can address course-specific requirements and allotment of practicum hours.

## **V. Student Resources**

### **A. Center for Student Success**

The [Center for Student Success](#) provides services that include but are not limited to counseling, tutoring, and disability services. The RN-BSN, RN-MSN,

MSN/MBA and MSN online programs utilize technology exclusively accessible to students choosing the online distance education experience for tutoring and counseling. If you need assistance in classes, please contact your faculty member in addition to the Center for Student Success.

### **B. Scholarship and Financial Aid Information**

Please contact the [Financial Aid office](#) for information regarding the financial aid process at RMU.

### **C. RMU Library**

The [RMU Library](#) is staffed by qualified librarians to assist you in your scholarly projects. The RMU Electronic Library is a helpful service to search databases while off campus. Students who would like more support or assistance are welcome to contact the library through various methods at [www.rmu.edu/library](http://www.rmu.edu/library)

## **VI. Graduation Information**

### **A. Commencement**

RMU hosts two formal commencement ceremonies every year in the month of May – one for graduate students and one for undergraduate students. The dates are published in the academic calendar. These formal academic ceremonies are rich with tradition and include the academic procession of administrators, faculty, and students; a pertinent message delivered by a guest speaker; and the presentation of the degrees. Academic regalia is required at both ceremonies. Family and friends are encouraged to attend; although, tickets are required for attendance at the undergraduate commencement ceremonies.

**Students must apply for graduation online within the first two weeks of the semester in which they will graduate. Click on the link for additional information from [Academic Affairs](#) Students who do not apply for graduation, even if not attending ceremonies, will not receive a diploma.**

Note: Students who will complete their degree in the summer session may be eligible to “walk early” at the May commencement ceremony. A “Walk Early Form” must be completed and signed by the Dean of the School of Nursing, Education, and Human Studies. Please refer to Academic Affairs for additional information.

## **VII. Extracurricular Activities**

### **A. Student Nurse Association of Pennsylvania (SNAP)**

RMU has a [SNAP](#) chapter on campus. The faculty advisor assists the organization. SNAP meets regularly to discuss community service involvement and fundraising to support their activities. SNAP Advisors are listed below:

- Dr. Janene Szpak, [szpak@rmu.edu](mailto:szpak@rmu.edu)
- Dr. Carl Ross, [ross@rmu.edu](mailto:ross@rmu.edu)

### **B. Dean's Student Advisory Board**

Two representatives from each class are elected to serve on this advisory board. The board meets two to three times per term and discusses nursing program- related ideas and concerns with the Dean of SNEHS. Students interested in participating can contact the Dean's administrative assistant, at [sabol@rmu.edu](mailto:sabol@rmu.edu).

### **C. Sigma Theta Tau**

Sigma Theta Tau International, the Honor Society of Nursing, promotes scholarship in the profession of nursing. There are specific criteria for selection and it is an honor to be selected. *Upsilon Phi* is our chapter of Sigma Theta Tau. Students who become eligible are invited to join and are strongly encouraged to do so.

### **D. Committees and Activities**

Robert Morris University offers many services and activities to all students. Online students are encouraged to participate on committees and explore other student activities. Additional information can be found with the [office of student life](#).

## VIII. Acknowledgement Form

Students can confirm their receipt and understanding of the handbook either by completing the online form; or by printing, signing, scanning and returning the form below. If printed, this form is to be submitted to Online Academic Advisor. The online form can be accessed via the link below. A copy of this acknowledgement form or the completed online form will be kept in the student's academic file.

### [ONLINE NURSING PROGRAMS STUDENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM](#)

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the contents within this student handbook. I acknowledge that I have reviewed the links containing undergraduate/graduate policies, including the Robert Morris University Academic Policies and Procedures and the Department of Nursing Policies for Students.

I acknowledge my responsibility to comply with all existing, new, and revised policies of Robert Morris University and the RMU Department of Nursing.

I acknowledge that I am responsible for having access to the current version of the student handbook and will be responsible for reviewing the handbook and submitting an acknowledgement form on an annual basis.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_