



NURSING

**MSN
ONLINE NURSING
PROGRAMS**

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027

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I. Program Information

A. Program Contacts

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B. Accreditation

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

C. Program Outcomes

The M.S.N degree programs prepare students to:

- Demonstrate mastery of advanced knowledge and skills for the specialized role of the nurse educator or nurse leader.
- Critically evaluate knowledge and theories from nursing and other disciplines for their contribution to nursing practice, education and leadership.
- 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

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-level Policies as well as those specific to the nursing program. University-level Academic Policies can be found on the following site: <https://www.rmu.edu/academics/provost/registrar/policies>

C. Academic Integrity

The fundamentals of Academic Integrity are valued within the Robert Morris University community of scholars. Please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy website at <https://www.rmu.edu/academics/provost/registrar/academic-integrity> for the current policy and associated resources. 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

In addition to university-level policies, the Department of Nursing has specific policies guiding academic practices. Where differences occur, the nursing policies supersede University policies. The following links provide access to the Department of Nursing undergraduate and graduate policies and procedure.

[Department of Nursing Policies](#)

E. Attendance

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. Students are responsible for communicating extenuating circumstances to the course faculty, their academic advisor, and/or the Department Head of Nursing.

F. Fees

Students enrolled in the nursing program may be subject to additional fees. These include, but are not limited to, costs related to practicum compliance requirements (health evaluation, mandatory immunizations, etc.) and transportation to practicum sites. The costs associated with these practicum compliance requirements are the responsibility of 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, fees and other student financial services information: [Tuition and Fees](#)

G. RMU Gmail and Etiquette

RMU uses Google Gmail as the email provider for all students. The Gmail account 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.

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.

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 Department Head will endeavor to resolve the issue with appropriate university personnel (where applicable). Any formal complaint regarding a faculty member follows the student-faculty dispute policy noted above.

J. Appeals Process

If a student is appealing against a decision related to a departmental policy, the student must notify the Department Head of Nursing in writing of their intent to appeal. The Department Head will determine the appropriate process on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature of the appeal. The Department Head will communicate the process and procedure with the student.

IV. Curricular Information

A. Curriculum Overview

Upon admission to the MSN programs, students are provided with a course map or plan of study. Students opting to "stop out" for a semester (or longer) risk being able to complete the program as originally designed. Students who fail to enroll in four consecutive semesters (including summer terms) require readmission. Effective 2025-2026 academic year, the MSN programs will NOT admit or readmit any students. [MSN Program Information](#)

B. Student Advising and Registration

All graduate students are assigned to an Academic Advisor who works in collaboration with other program personnel to ensure each student is following the appropriate plan of study. This course map (or plan of study) 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.

Renee Augustine is the Academic Advisor and Graduate Student Support Specialist.
Email: augostine@rmu.edu

Please contact your 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](#)

C. Academic Progression

Students who have concerns about their academic standing should discuss their academic progress with their Academic Advisor and/or the Department Head of Nursing. Click the link below for the university policy related to academic standing for graduate students.

[Graduate Academic Standing Policy](#)

D. Technology

The MSN online programs utilize technology exclusively accessible to students choosing the online education experience. There are basic technical skills necessary for online education. 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. The RMU Help Desk can provide a certain level of assistance with Blackboard technology. Contact the RMU Help Desk at 412-397-2211.

E. Professional Portfolio

All MSN students are required to submit a comprehensive professional portfolio as a graduation requirement. Failure to complete the portfolio will result in a delay in program completion and graduation. The components of the portfolio are linked to course objectives and program outcomes; successful achievement is demonstrated through inclusion of course assignments, artifacts and narrative/reflective materials. Students are provided with Portfolio Guidelines – it is highly recommended that students build their portfolio as they progress through the MSN program.

F. Practicum Requirements

Courses with a practicum component require students to obtain specific clearances prior to the start of the course. These requirements are based on the Affiliation Agreement between RMU and the agency serving as the practicum site.

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.***
- [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 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.

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

Questions related to CastleBranch and/or the process for completing the practicum requirements can be directed to Feather Bacher (bacher@rmu.edu), Clinical Placement and Compliance Specialist.

G. 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.

H. Appropriate Attire for Clinical and Practicum Experience

RMU nursing students are expected to dress professionally and adhere to agency requirements for appropriate attire during their practicum activities.

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. Students in need of assistance should notify course faculty in addition to contacting 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

VI. Extracurricular Activities

A. Dean's Student Advisory Board

The Health and Human Sciences Leadership Team welcomes the input and feedback from students across all programs. Students will be invited to participate in the Dean's Student Advisory Board as program representatives. Meetings typically take place twice per academic year. Students interested in participating should contact the Dean's Office directly.

Dean Nadine Englert can be reached via email or phone

Email: englert@rmu.edu

Office: 412-397-6805

B. 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 the RMU chapter of Sigma Theta Tau. Eligible are invited to join and are strongly encouraged to do so.

VII. Graduation Information

A. Commencement

RMU hosts commencement ceremonies in December (end of Fall semester) and December (end of Spring semester). Information is posted on the RMU site: <https://www.rmu.edu/academics/commencement>. The dates are also 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.

Students must apply for graduation within the first two weeks of the semester in which they will graduate. Students should refer to the Academic Calendar as well as visit the Commencement webpage for dates and details.

Students who do not apply for graduation will not receive a diploma (regardless of attendance at the Commencement Ceremony).