



NURSING

**BSN PROGRAM
(Pre-licensure)
STUDENT HANDBOOK
2026-2027**

**Robert Morris University
School of Health Professions
Department of Nursing**

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I. Welcome

Congratulations on your initial, or continued, enrollment in the pre-licensure BSN program! I am confident your program of study will prepare you for a rewarding career as a professional nurse.

A successful undergraduate nursing student is responsible, accountable, and informed. Your success depends on many factors, including dedication and commitment to academics, effective communication skills, utilization of the resources available to you at RMU, and compliance with all program and clinical guidelines and policies.

The BSN student handbook is updated every year and serves as a guide to assist you throughout your program. It is an expectation that you will thoroughly review the student handbook and refer to it throughout your time in the nursing program. Students are responsible for following all policies and procedures outlined in the handbook; in addition, students must adhere to the other program-related and university-related policies and guidelines.

On behalf of the Department of Nursing administration, faculty and staff, I wish you every success as you prepare for an amazing career in nursing.

Dr. Ashlee Shields PhD, RN, CCRN
Director, BSN Program
Associate Professor of Nursing
Scaife Hall, Room 113
412-397-3541
shields@rmu.edu

II. Department of Nursing (DON)

A. Accreditation and Approval

All nursing programs within the RMU Department of Nursing are fully accredited by [CCNE](#) (Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education) for the period 2020-2030. In addition, the pre-licensure BSN Program remains on the [Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing](#) list of *fully approved* registered nursing education programs in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

B. Department of Nursing Mission Statement

Through professionally focused nursing education, immersive learning experiences, and a supportive academic community, the Department of Nursing challenges and inspires students to become career-ready professionals who advance the health of individuals, clients, patients, and populations

C. BSN Program Objectives/Outcomes

The 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.

C. Department of Nursing Faculty

The Department of Nursing at RMU is committed to hiring highly qualified full-time faculty and part-time instructors with expertise in both nursing and education. Students are encouraged to form professional relationships with faculty and to seek individual assistance when needed. For more information about the faculty, [click here: School of Health Professions](#)

III. Policies, Procedures and Important Guidelines

A. Academic Calendar

The [Academic Calendar](#) is maintained by the university registrar and includes important dates for registration, drop/add periods, final exams and other important dates. Students are responsible for adhering to deadlines as outlined in the academic calendar.

B. University Policies & Guidelines

B1. Academic Policies

Students are expected to review and adhere to all university-level [Academic Policies](#) under the jurisdiction of the University Provost. In addition, students must adhere to policies within their department and/or program of study.

B2. Academic Integrity

All students are expected to adhere to the standards of Academic Integrity as stated in the [RMU Academic Integrity Policy](#). Any student who violates the Academic Integrity (AI) Policy is subject to possible judicial proceedings according to the recommendations of the AI Committee. Sanctions are outlined in the policy and range from no disciplinary action to being dismissed from the university.

B3. Student Policies and Resources

In addition to the academic policies, RMU enforces a set of [Student Policies and Resources](#), including the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Enforcement of these policies help to ensure a safe campus community and apply to all students across all levels.

B4. COVID-19

Students should visit the [COVID-19 Information & Resources](#) on a regular basis for university updates and messages to the campus community. Nursing students must also adhere to all clinical education guidelines and affiliating agency requirements regarding COVID-19.

C. Department-level and Program-level Policies

The Department of Nursing has specific program-level policies to guide academic and clinical practices and procedures. Students are required to adhere to all department-level and program-level policies and procedures. Students can use the following link to review all relevant departmental and program-level policies: [Nursing and Health Sciences Policies](#)

D. Tuition & Fees

Students enrolled in the undergraduate nursing program are responsible for additional costs and fees associated with the program. Examples of additional costs include, but are not limited to, textbooks and resources, uniforms, equipment, and technology software. Students will also incur the costs associated with clinical education, such as background clearances, drug testing, transportation and parking. There are also course related fees for labs, simulation, standardized examinations and NCLEX preparation materials.

The following link provides information about tuition and university fees: [Tuition and Fees](#)

E. RMU Student Email

Email is used by the faculty, staff and administration to notify nursing students of important information. Students are expected to monitor their RMU student email account daily. For information related to university email, please contact the [RMU Help Desk](#).

F. Chain of Command for Concerns or Formal Complaints

A student who has a question or concern directly related to a course is encouraged to resolve the issue with the appropriate faculty member. In the event the issue cannot be resolved, students must follow the procedure outlined in the university's [Academic Policies: Faculty Dispute Policy](#).

A student with a concern or formal complaint that is not course-related should notify the Department Head of Nursing in writing. In turn, the Department Head will request additional information and/or provide guidance and direction. When appropriate, the Department Head will consult with BSN Council and/or other nursing administrators to resolve the situation.

G. Appeals Process

Students who opt to appeal a department-level decision must adhere to a specific process and timeline. The student must notify the Department Head of Nursing **in writing and within 7 days of any formal department level notification**. Upon receipt of the intention to appeal, the Department Head (DH) will convene a meeting of additional faculty and/or nursing administrators. Once a final decision is made, the Department Head will notify the student.

IV. Curricular Information

A. Program Tracks

The RMU Department of Nursing offers two pathways for pre-licensure students to earn their baccalaureate degree.

The *Traditional* track is intended for students who do not have a previous bachelor's degree. Additional information, including admission requirements and the 4-year course plan, can be found on the BSN Program website: [Traditional BSN Program](#)

Students in the traditional 4-year BSN track are permitted to apply for program acceleration. Information about this option will be made available to students during the fall term of their junior year. Students interested in accelerating must meet specific criteria and follow the process outlined on the application form: [Application to Fast-Track in BSN Program](#)

The accelerated *Second-Degree* track is intended for students who have earned a baccalaureate (or higher) degree in another discipline. The program is typically completed in four consecutive terms once all prerequisite courses are complete. Additional information, including admission requirements, pre-requisite courses and the second-degree course plan are available on the program website: [Second-degree BSN Program](#)

B. Advisement & Registration

All undergraduate nursing students will have an assigned faculty and academic advisor and are required to meet with their assigned faculty advisor on an annual basis. Students are expected to both meet and communicate with their academic advisor about any academic issues and/or questions regarding registration and course planning. **Prior** to course registration, advisors must approve course selections for the nursing major. Students who do not schedule an advisement meeting will likely delay course registration.

Students who withdraw from a course due to a failing grade OR those who fail to meet the objectives of a course on the first attempt are required to repeat the course. Repeating students are not guaranteed a seat; students who are repeating a course will only be registered if an opening exists.

The RMU [Course Catalog](#) contains information regarding course offerings for each term. Students can also browse courses and register for courses using the self-service portal in [Banner](#).

C. Course Pre-/Co-requisites or Simultaneous Requirements [BSN_Pre.Co.Sim Reqs_2022](#)

Courses may have prerequisites, co-requisites, or simultaneous requirements ([see descriptions in the link attached](#)). These specific requirements will guide [Academic Requirements for Student Progression](#) and advisement decisions throughout the nursing curriculum. The requirements for each course are listed in the Course Catalog. Students are also encouraged to discuss course requirements with their academic advisors.

D. Standardized Testing

The prelicensure BSN program utilizes standardized testing to assess student achievement and to elevate student outcomes. Please refer to the course syllabus for further information on how standardized testing will be used to meet course objectives and program outcomes.

E. Testing Platform

The prelicensure BSN program utilizes ExamSoft, an assessment management platform. This platform enables completion of assessments and analysis of exam results and other data in an online format. Prelicensure BSN students are required to take exams via the ExamSoft platform using Examplify software. Students are expected to utilize their own personal computer and are responsible for downloading and maintaining the Examplify software.

To determine if your computer meets the minimum system requirements, please review the information on the [ExamSoft](#) site.

[ResTech](#) is available for assistance with technical support on personal computers for students who live on campus. All others should contact [ExamSoft Support](#).

F. FLEAPs and Study Abroad Opportunities

[Faculty-Led Education Abroad Programs \(FLEAPs\)](#) provide students with once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to travel and learn abroad while earning course credit. FLEAPs and other study abroad opportunities are coordinated through the [Center for Global Engagement \(CGE\)](#).

V. Clinical and Simulation Education Information

A. Confidentiality and HIPAA

The [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability](#) (HIPAA) Act of 1996 is an extensive piece of legislation that requires the standardization of electronic patient health, administrative, and financial data. Strict patient confidentiality is always expected in accordance with HIPAA, RMU policy, and clinical facility policies and procedures. A violation of patient confidentiality may result in dismissal from the nursing program.

B. Prevention of Blood borne Illnesses

The University has a policy to guide the prevention of blood borne illness. It is the responsibility of all students to follow this policy and policies from clinical agencies to protect themselves and others.

[Blood Borne Pathogens](#)

C. Clinical Requirements

The Department of Nursing (DON) is required to comply with all clinical agency affiliation agreements. The affiliation agreements outline specific requirements and guidelines necessary for students to fully participate in clinical activities. As a reminder, nursing students are guests at the clinical facilities and must adhere to all policies and procedures in an attentive and respectful manner.

The DON utilizes [DISA](#) as background screening and compliance management system. Students will receive detailed information regarding how and when to access CB. Students must remain attentive and responsive to communication regarding CB and all clinical requirements.

Per the [Clinical Requirements Policy](#), failure to complete the requirements by the established deadline will result in students being removed from course rosters. In turn, this will result in delayed program progression or dismissal from the program.

In accordance with our current clinical affiliation agreements, the following items must be completed prior to *any and all* clinical experiences. The costs associated with clinical requirements are the responsibility of the student.

Items are subject to change at the discretion of the clinical agencies.

- Initial and annual health evaluation
- Verification of immunity to Varicella, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Hepatitis B surface antibody (Anti HBs titer)
- Tdap within last ten years or a Td booster (per CDC guidelines)
- Two-step PPD test and annual TB test (T-spot or Quantiferon Gold Blood test)
**If the skin test is positive, a chest x-ray is required along with a statement of follow up care from a healthcare provider. Students with a history of positive TB with a negative chest x-ray are required to follow-up with their healthcare provider.*
- Initial 10-panel urine drug screen (some facilities may require additional panels).
ALL RMU nursing students are subject to random [testing for substance abuse](#).
- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance
- Pennsylvania Criminal Record Check Clearances
- FBI Criminal History Background Check
- Proof of Health Insurance
- Vaccination status for influenza and COVID-19
- Current CPR certification

American Heart Association (AHA) “BLS” for Healthcare Providers is the only accepted level of certification for nursing students. Students are responsible for maintaining current certification throughout enrollment in the program.

NOTE: The annual health evaluation, TB test, and background clinical clearance updates are required on an **annual** basis throughout the program.

It is the student’s responsibility to maintain accurate records and to update all clearances per the policy. Students are advised to keep the original documents but may be asked to supply additional copies of documentation surrounding clinical clearances.

In the event of a positive background report or positive drug test, the Department of Nursing is required to disclose the information to appropriate personnel at the clinical agency(ies). The student will be asked to complete a personal statement about the offense. The students’ statement will be kept on file and shared with the clinical facility. Course faculty will be notified on a “need to know” basis only.

The clinical agency reserves the right to refuse a clinical placement to students with a positive criminal record and/or drug test. This refusal may result in the student’s ability to meet the course objectives and clinical requirements. In turn, this will result in the failure of the course per the [Clinical Requirements Policy](#).

NOTE: A charge or a conviction of a felonious act may prevent students from attending clinical experiences. Inability to fulfill clinical objectives could result in failure of the course and/or dismissal from the program. A charge or a conviction may also affect the ability to obtain a nursing license; the individual State Board of Nursing has final authority regarding licensure decisions. For additional information related to criminal convictions and licensure, refer to the following guide: [Commonwealth of PA - Act 53 Best Practices Guide](#)

It is the responsibility of the student to **IMMEDIATELY** notify the Department of Nursing of any change in criminal background or clinical clearance. Any unreported change in status or falsification of information will result in dismissal from the nursing program.

C1. Health Forms

An initial health evaluation is required prior to the start of the first course with clinical agency activities. An **annual health evaluation is required** throughout the duration of the BSN program where a student is enrolled in clinical courses.

The Department of Nursing health evaluation requirement and form are different from the health evaluation required by Student Life. Documents for this evaluation are available on the DISA site. Students are responsible for downloading the form from DISA and having it completed by the healthcare provider. Completed forms need to be uploaded to the DISA site by the designated due date. Students are encouraged to keep original copies of any forms that are uploaded to DISA.

Students who fail to meet the health requirements will not be permitted to begin clinical courses. This may affect the students' progression in the nursing program. This includes any change in physical, mental or cognitive status. Clearance from a medical provider will be **required** following any change in condition or status. Medical clearance may be required prior to returning to the classroom, clinical and/or simulation settings and will be placed in the student's file. Individual reviews will be conducted as the need arises.

All information regarding student health is confidential. In the event of a change in health status (due to sickness, pregnancy, surgery, injury, mental health, etc.) or any change in functionality of the student in the clinical or simulation setting, the student must notify the BSN Program Director IMMEDIATELY.

Generally, students are not permitted to be in clinical or simulation settings if unable to function to full capacity. When necessary, permission will be obtained from the clinical agency for the student to attend clinical when health-related issues arise.

C2. Uniforms and Equipment

Students are required to purchase and wear program-approved uniforms during clinical, simulation and lab experiences. Information regarding the ordering process will be provided. Students may wish to purchase more than one uniform for clinical and simulation experiences. For more information related to uniforms, refer to the following policy: [Guidelines for Professional Appearance](#). In addition to uniforms, students may be required to purchase medical equipment, such as a stethoscope, penlight, etc. Students can practice with equipment in the RISE Center during scheduled labs. Students must follow all RISE Center Policies and Procedures where medical equipment is concerned.

C3. Student Liability Insurance

Students are covered by a group liability insurance policy through the RMU College of Health and Human Sciences for issues related to practice in the clinical, lab, and simulation settings. A copy of the policy is maintained within the College of Health and Human Sciences.

C4. Transportation

Students are responsible for their own transportation to and from the assigned clinical sites. Parking fees and other transportation-related costs are the sole responsibility of the student. Students should follow the directions for parking and recommendations for security and safety per the clinical facility's instructions and recommendations.

D. RISE Center and Simulation Education

The Department of Nursing utilizes the physical resources and expertise of the faculty and staff in the [Research and Innovation in Simulation Education \(RISE\) Center](#) to incorporate highly realistic simulation education into the BSN curriculum. Simulation education includes low-fidelity and high-fidelity mannequin-based instruction; in addition, the RISE Center employs standardized patients (trained medical actors) to create clinical scenarios in a controlled and safe environment.

The RISE Center features four high-fidelity simulation rooms, two outpatient office examination rooms, a home health suite, three debriefing areas, the 8-bed clinical performance suite and multiple office meeting areas. State-of-the-art audio-visual equipment allows for debriefing using recordings and live audiovisual (AV) feeds remotely.

Throughout the BSN program, students should consider the RISE Center a clinical education setting. Therefore, students are required to adhere to all clinical policies and guidelines when assigned to the RISE Center for clinical experiences.

E. Inclement Weather

In the event the University delays or cancels classes due to weather, this applies to classroom, simulation, lab, and clinical activities. Faculty may also cancel class and/or clinical activities during inclement weather, even if the university does not close. Communication should be established by each instructor so that students can be notified in a timely manner.

If students arrive at a clinical site *prior* to the announced delay or cancellation, they should remain in place until the inclement weather subsides. Students should always use good judgment and refrain from driving in hazardous conditions.

Any clinical absence must be communicated to the clinical instructor prior to the start of the clinical day per the clinical instructor's guidelines.

Students are also encouraged to sign up for RMU ALERT to receive communication in the event of an emergency. [The RMU Alert Omnilert Safety App](#).

F. Health Incident, Accident or Injury

All students are required to IMMEDIATELY report any accident, incident or injury that occurs at the clinical site, simulation lab or other RMU setting. Students should report directly to faculty members of the course and the [RMU Student Incident/Injury Report Form](#) must be completed.

In the event of an injury or contaminated exposure, students are to follow the procedure of the clinical facility. This typically involves reporting to the emergency department for evaluation. The student or instructor may be required to complete an incident report at the clinical agency. In addition, the faculty member must complete the [RMU Student Incident/Injury Report Form](#) and submit a copy to the Department of Nursing as soon as possible.

The clinical instructor, lead faculty for the course and BSN Program Director should be notified immediately of any incident in the clinical setting.

VI. University Services

A. Student Health Center

Robert Morris University has partnered with UPMC to provide [MyHealth RMU](#) - an onsite health and wellness center that treats a variety of health issues, paying special attention to the unique needs of young adults. Students can contact the UPMC MyHealth@School Center at 412-397-6220.

B. Counseling Center

The RMU [Counseling Center](#) is committed to addressing the mental health needs of students via clinical services and psychoeducational programming, to increase resilience and help students to develop strategies for success. To schedule an appointment, please contact the counseling center at 412-397-5900 or via email at counseling@rmu.edu.

C. Center for Student Success

The [Center for Student Success \(CSS\)](#) provides a host of services and resources in an inclusive environment by helping each student persist and thrive at RMU from orientation to graduation. Services include, but are not limited to, the following:

C1. [Student Accessibility Services](#)

RMU is committed to equal opportunity for all students and does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission or access to its programs and activities. Students with disabilities that may require accommodations should contact SAS as early as possible so that potential needs can be assessed. The SAS Coordinator's contact information is provided below. SAS connects qualified students with necessary accommodations and resources to have an equal access to their education. Accommodations for students fall over five categories at RMU: academic, classroom, housing, dining, and temporary.

- [SAS Policies and Procedures](#)
- [SAS Test Center](#)

Students already pre-approved for testing accommodations can schedule a test using the link above. It is the student's responsibility to schedule the start time of the exam to fit within the Test Center hours. SAS is located within the Center for Student Success in the Nicholson Center. For additional information, contact SAS@RMU.edu.

C2. [Tutoring Center](#) - Tutoring is free and open to RMU students on a first-come, first-served basis, and one-on-one services during the fall, spring, and summer semesters.

C3. [Student Employment Program/Work Study](#) - This program coordinates on campus and off-campus work-study opportunities

D. Center for Veterans and Military Families

RMU's [CVMF](#) is open 24/7 to all veteran/military students and their families. The CVMF staff administers veteran and military educational benefits. In addition, CVMF delivers continual, holistic transition assistance programming. CVMF also welcomes all ROTC students and is home to RMU's Army's ROTC Cadre. For additional information, contact VETERANS@RMU.edu or 412-397-5435

E. RMU Library

The [RMU Library](#) strives to meet the diverse information needs of the RMU community. The library is staffed by highly qualified librarians to assist with a range of scholarly endeavors. There are also many nursing professional journals located in the library in print format. In addition, the RMU Electronic Library is a helpful service to search databases while off campus.

F. Scholarship and Financial Aid Information

The Financial Aid Office assists all students and provides information regarding options for financing your education. Please contact the [Financial Aid Office](#) for information regarding the financial aid process at RMU. Phone: 412-397-6250

VII. Department of Nursing Services

A. Test for Success Program

The Test for Success (TFS) Program is dedicated solely to the undergraduate nursing students. Nursing students are encouraged to access the TFS Program resources, including tutoring, test-taking strategies, mentoring, and coaching. The mission, vision and goals of the TFS Program are noted below.

MISSION: The TFS Program provides students with the best college experience from beginning to end, integrating a comprehensive academic success program. For additional information please contact Erin Baker-Caldwell, TFS Manager, Scaife Hall, Room 143 at bakere@rmu.edu or 412-397-6833.

B. S.M.A.R.T. Program

S.M.A.R.T. = Students, Mentoring, Assisting, Relating and Transitioning

The SMART Program is a student-driven, peer mentoring program that provides social, academic, and emotional support and guidance within the school of nursing during the continuum of the nursing program. For additional information please contact Dr. Shamika Zyhier, zyhier@rmu.edu or Renee Augustine, augostine@rmu.edu

VIII. Student Activities & Service Opportunities

A. Student Nurses Association of Pennsylvania (SNAP)

The [Student Nurses' Association of Pennsylvania](#) is a nonprofit organization and constituent of the [National Student Nurses' Association \(NSNA\)](#), representing nursing students throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. RMU has a local SNAP chapter on campus and nursing students are encouraged to join. SNAP meets regularly to discuss community service projects and fundraising activities to support their activities. The advisors for SNAP are listed below:

Faculty Advisor for SNAP:

Dr. Janice Sarasnick, sarasnick@rmu.edu

Club Advisor for SNAP:

Mrs. Kara Whitehill, whitehill@rmu.edu

B. Dean's Student Advisory Board

C. 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.

D. Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI)

[Sigma Theta Tau](#) International Honor Society is committed to sharing knowledge and resources with nurses across the globe. On September 30, 2008, RMU was granted an official chapter of Sigma, Upsilon Phi Chapter.

Membership in Sigma Theta Tau, Upsilon Phi is by invitation only. Membership criteria include GPA, class rank and number of courses completed within the nursing curriculum. For additional information, contact Dr. Janice Sarasnick sarasnick@rmu.edu or Dr. Stephanie Jacobs jacobss@rmu.edu

E. Red Cross Club

The [RMU Chapter of the American Red Cross Club](#) is an engaged part of the national organization focused on bringing community support to RMU and surrounding areas. As a Red Cross Club member, you will also engage with key local, national and international issues. You might help to alleviate the chronic blood shortage by hosting a blood drive, or support military members and their families with a card or care package drive. The Red Cross Club allows you to address important issues in creative ways that make sense for your community. For additional information, contact Dr. Carla Conrad, conrad@rmu.edu

F. Other Student Activities

RMU's [Student Experience Office](#) is committed to student-centered entertainment and programming for both residents and commuter students. Nursing students are encouraged to explore service and philanthropic activities, governance and leadership positions, Greek life, club sports, theater, and other special interest organizations.

IX. Graduation Information

A. Applying to Graduate

Students in their final year of study should pay particular attention to announcements related to graduation events and deadlines. All students must apply for graduation (it is not an automatic process). Students can use this link: [Apply to Graduate](#)

B. Pinning Ceremony

The Department of Nursing hosts a pinning ceremony twice per year (May and December). The ceremony is steeped in tradition and celebrates the transition from student nurse to graduate nurse. Information about the ceremony, the purchasing of the nursing pin, and the purchasing of regalia are shared near the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. Pinning is considered a formal academic ceremony; therefore, students are required to wear academic regalia.

C. Commencement

RMU hosts a formal commencement ceremony in May and December. Students are encouraged to check the [Commencement](#) site for additional information.