

***RN to BSN Degree Completion Program
Student Handbook***

AY 2023-2024



Health Services

College of Health Professions and Science

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MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

I am honored to welcome you to Montana State University Billings College of Health Professions and Sciences, RN to BSN Program. You will join many other Bachelor of Science Nurses, including our past alums, faculty, and other professionals who have guided our students and program development.

Our program is nationally accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). This is a distinct honor for any program. Still, more importantly, MSUB has been accredited with CCNE since the inception of our program in 2017, which means that every BSN student has graduated from an accredited program. Our first goal when starting this program was to ensure that our BSN graduates had this distinction, as many associate programs were or were not nationally accredited at the time. Graduating from an accredited program is now a requirement of many healthcare organizations.

The faculty and staff at MSUB are student-centered, creating a campus environment where teaching and mentorship are the priorities. Many faculty have active research agendas, with some involving students in their scholarship.

A Montana Healthcare Grant developed the RN to BSN Degree Completion program and is being offered at two Universities in Montana. The RN to BSN program at MSUB began in the fall of 2017. It is an online program containing two faculty-led clinical-mentored courses. This program is designed to be completed in three semesters when attending as a full-time student. However, students can attend the program part-time to complete it within three years. The RN to BSN program is 49 credits, which include 33 credits of nursing courses and 16 general education courses. Depending on the course, it is taught either as a semester-long course or in eight-week course blocks. The program is designed to build on the knowledge students have gained in their associate nursing program, along with teaching baccalaureate-level nursing concepts using the Essentials of Baccalaureate Education of Professional Nursing Practice 2008 and 2021 and Quality and Safety in Education in Nursing Standards and Guidelines.



Dr. Rebecca L. Muller, DNP, MS, APRN, FNP-BC, CIC
RN to BSN Program Director, Associate Professor
Medical Director Student Health Services
Rebecca.muller1@msubillings.edu
Office: (406) 896-5849

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE NURSING PROGRAM

Purpose of the Handbook

This 2023-2024 RN to BSN Student Handbook for Montana States University Billings (MSUB) has been reviewed and approved by the faculty of this program. The purpose is to introduce the nursing program policies regarding General, Health, and Academic concerns as clearly outlined within this document. The RN to BSN Student Handbook aims to familiarize students with the Nursing Program beliefs, organization, and policies that guide the program of study, activities, and student learning outcomes. The MSU Billings Catalog, MSU Billings Student Handbook, and the State Board of Nursing Rules are other valuable documents to review.

The RN to BSN curriculum was approved by the Montana Board of Regents in September 2016 for the College of Allied Health Professions, later named the College of Health Professions and Sciences.

As we experience this decade's transitions in healthcare and education, we are challenged to think, communicate, and practice "outside of the box". We are challenged to maintain our values and traditions of the past while creatively adapting to change. You, the consumers of both healthcare and the education process, will define the future direction of healthcare and education. We honor your participation with us as partners in nursing.

Please read this handbook carefully. In each course, you will be asked to acknowledge that you have read and understand the policies of the Nursing Program. Exceptions to the guidelines must be submitted in writing and approved by the Program Director. The program director has the right to decline or approve the request.

MISSION & VISION

The Nursing Program mission, vision, values, program outcomes, program goals, conceptual framework and student learning outcomes are consistent with those of MSU Billings, the MSUB Mission Statement, and the State Board of Nursing rules and regulations governing nursing practice.

University

Mission- *Montana State University Billings delivers a transformative education that empowers students from diverse backgrounds to succeed.*

Vision- *Educating students to impact an evolving global community.*

Core Themes-

Theme 1: *Build educational programs to support student needs.*

Theme 2: *Progressively grow the university.*

Theme 3: *Strengthen relationships with the community to enhance partnership opportunities.*

Theme 4: *Unify, invigorate, and engage MSUB's structure and culture.*

Core Values-

Respect: *Respect allows us to seek out and appreciate the best in other people. Self-respect is also a vital value, which results from knowing one has put forth his/her strongest effort.*

Integrity: *We commit to honesty, ethical behavior, and accountability, and promise to do only what is right, legal, and moral.*

Selfless Service: *We are a university of people that will put the welfare of our community and fellow human beings—especially students before our own.*

Inclusion: *We value processes that seek input from a broad array of stakeholders to produce better products and outcomes.*

Stewardship: *We promise to conserve and best-utilize the human, economic, physical, and environmental resources entrusted to us.*

Excellence: *We strive for perfection in everything we do from teaching to service, knowing that we can always improve.*

Ingenuity: *We embrace and support innovative and creative solutions to set our university apart and to best serve students.*

Lifelong Learning: *We value educational experiences for all people that spark intellectual curiosity and cultivate engaged citizens.*

College of Health Professions and Science

Mission- *Montana State University Billings' College of Health Professions and Science prepares health professionals and natural scientists to meet the needs of an evolving society through education, research, discovery, and service.*

Vision- *Through an environment that promotes experiential learning, students will be transformed into our future health care professionals and scientists.*

Values- *Build collaborative partnerships among students, faculty, researchers, community members, and industry leaders to improve the physical, emotional, and intellectual health of our communities.*

Support every student in meeting their educational goals with informed advising, high quality instruction and innovative curriculum.

Share our expertise through service to our institution, community, and discipline.

Engage in scholarship and research that involves our students in the pursuit of knowledge that will better the health of our communities and explore the wonders of the natural world.

RN to BSN degree completion program

Mission- *The mission of the RN to BSN Degree Completion Program is to further prepare nurses as professionals whose practice reflects evidence-based, ethical, and articulate practice in the nursing profession through further education.*

Vision- *The vision of the RN to BSN Degree Completion Program is to educate nurses further to work in various environments for nursing.*

Values- *We value collaborative partnerships among nurses, faculty, community members, and industry leaders for nursing care provided.*

- *We highly regard adding knowledge to nurses as part of the educational opportunity.*
- *We place a high value on sharing expertise through faculty-led clinical mentored projects.*
- *We value a seamless curricular online experience among all nurses.*

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

- *Montana State University Billings is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education.*
- *The State Board of Regents fully approves the Nursing Program.*
- *The baccalaureate degree program in nursing at Montana State University Billings is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (<http://www.ccnaccreditation.org>).*



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Conceptual Framework

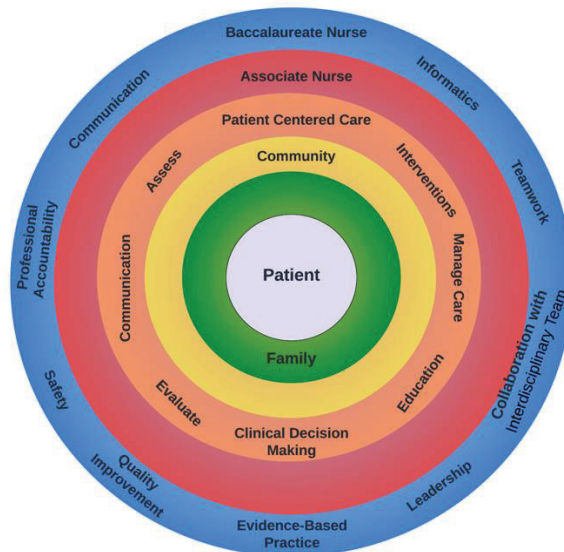
The MSU Billings RN to BSN conceptual framework is based on the systems theory approach incorporating the BSN Essentials 2008 and 2021 and the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN). This approach is supported by ten core components that will guide the curriculum expectation and program outcomes for this RN to BSN Degree Completion Program graduates.

The baccalaureate core components are:

- Patient-Centered Care
- Communication
- Leadership
- Safety
- Evidence-Based Practice
- Professional Identity
- Teamwork
- Collaboration with Interdisciplinary Team
- Quality Improvement
- Informatics



RN to BSN Conceptual Framework



Program Goals

1. *Eighty (80) percent of students who start will successfully complete the program within three years of beginning the program.*
2. *Ninety (90) percent of graduates will report being employed or planning to continue as graduate students.*

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO):

1. *Apply advanced nursing theory through holistic nursing care to individuals, family units, communities, and populations across the healthcare continuum.*
2. *Utilize quality improvement processes and research to provide high-quality, safe nursing care through coursework and virtual simulations and collaborating with interdisciplinary teams through evidence-based practice.*
3. *Provide inclusive, patient-centered care, and advocate in a professional manner according to legal and ethical standards.*
4. *Apply the nursing core values of excellence in assessment, caring, ethical practice, civility, accountability, and life-long learning.*
5. *Promote patient safety through effective communication and use of information technology.*
6. *Apply leadership skills throughout health care systems.*

PROGRAM OFFERING RN TO BSN CURRICULUM

Admission to MSUB does not guarantee acceptance into the RN to BSN Nursing Program.

The credential awarded to students who complete the nursing program will be a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree.

The Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education approved the RN to BSN degree completion program. The following criteria are required for completion:

1. *The nursing program will consist of 49 credits (see Table 1)*
 - a. *includes a common set of nursing courses totaling 33 credits,*
 - b. *Consists of a common set of other required other courses, totaling 16 credits,*
2. *The nursing program will include a common set of MUS core courses totaling 31 credits.*
3. *The university requires 36 upper-division credits to be taken at MSU for graduation.*
4. *A variety of transfer credits will be accepted.*
5. *The university requires 120 credits for graduation.*

The program adopts all major provisions of the Montana University System's common curriculum established by the Healthcare Montana Consortium/

Table 1 shows the plan of study for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. This can be completed in as little as three (3) semesters of full-time study or up to three (3) years of part-time study.

Table 1: Plan of Study to Receive BSN

Fall Semester	Course ID	Course Name	Credits
Full Semester	Stats 216**	Introduction to Statistics	4
1 st 8 weeks	NRSG 325*	Advanced Health Assessment	3
2 nd 8 weeks	NRSG 320*	Nursing Informatics	3
1 st 8 weeks	WRIT 321**	Advanced Technical Writing	3
2 nd 8 weeks	NRSG 424*	Nursing Research & Evidenced Based Nursing	3
Spring Semester	Course ID	Course Name	Credits
Full Semester	PSYX 230**	Developmental Psych	3
Full Semester	NRSG 301*	Nursing in the Community	5
Full Semester	NRSG 302*	Nursing in the Community CI	1
1 st 8 weeks	NRSG 322*	Health Promotion & Education	3
1 st 8 weeks	PHL 326**	Dying & Medical Ethics	3
2 nd 8 weeks	NRSG 326*	Complex Healthcare Needs	3
Summer Semester	Course ID	Course Name	Credits
Full Semester	NRSG 463*	Nursing Leadership & Management	5
Full Semester	NRSG 464*	Nursing Leadership & Management CI	1
1 st 7 weeks	NRSG 322*	Family Nursing	3
2 nd 7 weeks	NRSG 361*	Global Nursing	3
½ semester (you choose)	Humanities**	Your choice of course	3

Other required courses ** may be filled with courses from community colleges and affiliation agreements with local and regional colleges. However, 36 upper division (300-400 level) credits must be taken at MSU.

Table 2: Requirements for Graduation

BSN Advising Table

Category	Credits	Earned	Remaining
MUS Core	31	TBD	TBD
Required Nursing Courses	33*	TBD	TBD
Other Required Courses	16**	TBD	TBD
Electives from ASN	Variable	TBD	TBD

Total **120 required to graduate with your BSN**

MUS = Montana University System; TBD = To Be

Determined

RN TO BSN 2+1 Program

2023-24 Advising Worksheet BSN on Admission

Courses are only offered in the prospective semesters, as outlined in Table 1 above.

If the Associate nursing degree is Associate Science of Nursing, this plan of study will be followed. Additional science courses may be required if an Associate nursing degree is an Associates Art in Nursing. This will be assessed by the Registrar's and Advising Department upon application to the RN TO BSN Program.

A minimum grade of C or better is required in all nursing courses, and C- or higher for all non-nursing courses.

CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT:

1. Apply to MSUB University as a non-degree-seeking student.
 - a. Please Note:
 - i. If you are an MSUB City College student, you do not need to apply to MSUB again.
 - ii. If you are a student from Great Falls, Northern, or Bozeman, we have “Seamless Enrollment”. In “MyInfo,” please use the Seamless application link found right under “DegreeWorks”.
 - iii. For out-of-state colleges, please follow the steps below.
 - iv. Financial aid will not cover the five (5) nursing courses as they are not in the 2+1 plan of study.
 - v. Once the associate nursing student has completed their program, they will be required to apply for the RN to BSN program to complete their degree and be awarded their BSN degree.
 1. Students in good standing will be given priority in continuation in the program and further nursing courses.
 - vi. If you plan on using financial aid in the RN to BSN program, you will need **12 credits/semester**, so plan accordingly.
2. A written request to the Director of the Nursing Program the following:
 - a. Which course(s) you would like to take
 - b. What semester you would like to take the course(s)
3. Non-RN to BSN Program nursing students (those currently enrolled in an associate nursing program at a community college) may take upon written consent of the RN to BSN Program Director, based on availability:
 - a. NRSRG 320 Nursing Informatics– During 1st semester of their associate nursing program
 - b. NRSRG 361 Global Nursing– After 1st semester of their associate nursing program
 - c. NRSRG 344 Family Nursing – After 1st semester of their associate nursing program
 - d. NRSRG 322 Health Promotions – After completion of 2nd semester of their associate nursing program (2nd year)
 - e. NRSRG 326 Complex Health – After completion of 2nd semester of their associate nursing program (2nd year)
4. Students must maintain a “C” or higher in associate nursing courses to take 300-level nursing courses and have good standing in their current nursing program.
5. Students on probationary status in their current associate nursing program will not be allowed to take these nursing courses.
6. Students must pass 300-level nursing courses with a “C” or higher to continue to take further RN to BSN courses while in their associate program.

7. Students work with an advisor after receiving written permission from the program director to take nursing courses as a non-degree-seeking students.
8. Students are encouraged to complete STATS 216, Developmental Psych 230, Humanities, writing 321 or equivalent, and Medical Ethics (PHL 326) or equivalent before taking nursing courses.
9. Licensed RN students in other RN to BSN programs can apply for 300- or 400-level courses with proof of an unencumbered license.
10. RN to BSN students who still need to complete their NCLEX may not take NRSB 302 or NRSB 464; both are faculty-led clinical mentored courses. These courses are offered with the didactic corresponding courses only (NRSB 463 & NRSB 301).
11. Non-nursing students are not eligible for these courses.

CHAPTER 4:

PROGRAM FACULTY AND STAFF

Program Director, Associate Professor and Administrative Assistant

The Program Director's responsibilities, according to the Montana State Board of Regents Statutes, state that the primary responsibility of the person holding this position will be to provide overall direction of the RN to BSN Degree Completion Program, ensuring quality education for the undergraduate student. This person will be expected to use their skills to assist in recruiting, retaining, and contributing to the success of our students, as well as participating in ongoing efforts to improve the quality of our learning-centered environment. This position will be expected to coordinate faculty workloads, develop and deliver upper-division nursing courses online, schedule course delivery, advise students, and move the program towards ongoing accreditation.

Rebecca Muller, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, CIC

Program Director, Associate Professor

Yellowstone Science Building, Room 217

Office phone (406) 896-5849; E-mail rebecca.muller1@msubillings.edu

- Doctorate Nurse Practitioner, Educational Leadership, 2022, American Sentinel College of Nursing & Health Sciences at Post University, Waterbury, CT
- Family Nurse Practitioner, 2014, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT
- Master Science Nursing Education, 2012 University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY
- BSN, 2008 University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY
- ASN, 1998 Sheridan College, Sheridan, WY
- LPN, 1993 Northwest Community College, Powell, WY

Assistant Professor

The Assistant Professor's primary responsibility will be to provide quality education for the undergraduate student. These persons will be expected to use their skills to assist in recruiting, retaining, and contributing to the success of our students, as well as participating in ongoing efforts to improve the quality of our learning-centered environment. This position will be expected to develop and deliver upper-division nursing courses online.

Dacia DeBock, MSN

Assistant Professor

Yellowstone Science Building, Room 215

Email: dacia.debock@msubillings.edu

- Master Science Nursing Education, 2019 University of Mary, Bismarck ND
- BSN, 2017 University of Mary, Bismarck, ND
- ASN, 2008, Northwest College, Powell, WY

Adjunct Faculty

The adjunct faculty's primary responsibility will be to provide quality education for the undergraduate student. These persons will be expected to use their skills to assist in recruiting, retaining, and contributing to the success of our students, as well as participating in ongoing efforts to improve the quality of our learning-centered environment.

Emilee Kidd, MSN, FNP-BC, C

- *Family Nurse Practitioner, 2021, American Sentinel University*
- *BSN, 2018, Montana State University Billings*
- *ASN, 2009, Excelsior College*
- *LPN, 2001, Idaho State University*

Melissa Lund, DNP, RN

- *Doctorate Nurse Practitioner, Educational Leadership, Oct 2022 American Sentinel College of Nursing & Health Sciences at Post University, Waterbury, CT*
- *Master Science in Nursing Education 2019, Western Governors University*
- *BSN 2009, Westminster College*
- *ASN 2006, SLCC*

Program Coordinator

Nursing office personnel are responsible for managing the daily operations of the Nursing Office. They type all program documents, maintain student records, order supplies and coordinate yearly activities. When other support staff or Assistant Professors are unavailable, the Program Coordinator is a student resource.

Hannah O'Donnell

Yellowstone Science Building

Room 117

(406) 896-5830

Email: hannah.odonnell@msubillings.edu

CHAPTER 5:

PROGRAM DELIVERY

Online Classroom Activities

The curriculum for the RN to BSN program will be delivered in an online learning format. Students participate in various learning activities and situations, leading to mastery of the student learning outcomes.

Each Professor directs online classroom instruction. Students are expected to participate in online learning activities. This may include but is not limited to activities such as reading assignments, discussion threads, group projects, written assignments, and virtual simulations.

Faculty Led Clinical Mentored Courses

There are two faculty-led clinical mentored courses, Nursing Leadership and Management (NRSG 464) and Nursing in the Community (NRSG 302), each a one-credit approach for 45 face-to-face and project hours needed. Clinical activities integrate concepts from each class. Clinical activities are structured to meet the course's program learning outcomes and student learning outcomes. These courses are a "Pass" or "Fail" course; no letter grade is given in a clinical mentored course.

CHAPTER 6:

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

[University Policies & Notifications](#)

[MSU Billings Student Policies & Procedures Handbook](#)

[Campus Alcohol and Drug Policies](#)

[Disability Act](#)

[Immunization Requirements](#)

[Sexual Harassment](#)

[Student Activities Board](#)

Direct links to important sites (this is not an all-inclusive list, refer to the University Policies & Notifications Home Page for a complete list.

CHAPTER 7:

NURSING PROGRAM POLICIES

*An acknowledged quiz is completed by every student at the start of every class and is considered your consent to understanding and following all program policies. This is not an optional quiz, **please get in touch with the program director before completing your quiz if you have any questions or need clarification.***

The course modules will open once the student has signed off on these consents, which are recorded in each course that the student is in by acknowledgment of the quiz. The student handbook is available for students to read before completing the quiz, as well as being emailed to new students upon entry into the program. This ensures that student always have the most current version of the student handbook. Each student will sign a hard copy via DocuSign that will be in your student file.

Absence

Absences should be acceptable as this is an online program, but students should contact the course faculty for a prolonged absence for further guidance.

Students are responsible for knowing the content of any classes, orientation, group work, and assignments missed and gathering their course materials. See the special circumstances/emergency late assignment agreement in Appendix B, which must be signed and turned into the course faculty before the due date. Failure to complete this form and have both electronic signatures will result in a grade according the Syllabus for said course.

Academic Progress/Grading Letter Grades

One letter grade is awarded for each course based on the criteria found in each syllabus. Grades are based on coursework completed based on the following grading scale. Grades will not be rounded.

- *A = 90-100 %*
- *B = 80-89 %*
- *C = 70-79 %*
- *D = 60-69%*
- *F = 59% or below*

Admission Process

We promote an appropriate fit to the Nursing Program and students' educational goals and outcomes through the admission process and the activities leading up to admission.

- *Students apply to MSUB.*
- *Submission of official transcripts from all colleges/universities for evaluation*

- *Evidence of current unencumbered license as a Registered Nurse (RN) and/or proof of scheduled NCLEX exam date.*

Students meet with an academic advisor in the Nursing Program to develop a plan of study.

Completion of the application does not guarantee admission to nursing classes. The number of students admitted to the nursing program is limited to 30 per section. The faculty review and selects candidates for each subsequent semester.

The Nursing Program reserves the right to deny admission to any applicant based on the best interest of the profession and the program. Failure to disclose previous or pending criminal behaviors may lead to denial of admission, dismissal from the program, or revoked admission. Falsification will be considered grounds for dismissal from the Nursing Program.

Advisement/Advisors

Each student in the nursing program is assigned an advisor at the start of the first semester. The same advisor is retained for the remainder of the program unless the student or instructor requests a change. The student and advisor meet face-to-face or online at least once during the fall and spring semesters to plan enrollment in courses for the next semester. The advisor helps the student through the process of course selection and graduation. Course approval by the advisor is mandatory to ensure the completion of all curriculum requirements for graduation in a timely manner. It is the student's ultimate responsibility to ensure they are keeping track of their plan of study and that all credits are transferred in and accounted for accurately. If a student has a question, they should contact the registrar's office for clarification.

Students are encouraged to make appointments with the advisor at the earliest indication of an academic problem. If a personal situation or circumstance influences academic progress, the advisor may refer students to other college support services or community resources at the advisor's discretion.

Attendance policies for required nursing courses.

Upon registering for classes, students contract to attend classes online regularly and adhere to course requirements. This includes consistent participation in course activities.

Rationale

Core values and practice standards guide attendance policies.

- *Learning is achieved through individual study and group interaction. Classroom activities guide and focus personal study and provide experiences to apply theory to practice with group interaction.*
- *The group-learning activities predominant in MSUB nursing courses require regular participation in class. Learning is achieved by group interaction.*

- *Effective team (group process/conflict resolution) skills are valued by employers. Group-learning activities provide a safe place to learn and practice these skills.*
- *Respect for our peers, instructional staff, and the learning process is reflected by being present and on time.*
- *Accountability is a value in both education and nursing practice standards. Accountability involves trustworthy, credible, honorable, and responsible behavior.*
- *Employers rate attendance and timeliness as attributes necessary for continued employment. The classroom and clinical setting are the worksite in the learning environment.*

Consistent attendance demonstrates respectful, accountable behavior. In analyzing MSUB students' records, a high positive correlation was found between attendance and academic success.

Background Checks

Background checks are not required by MSUB RN to BSN as students are registered nurses with an unencumbered license. However, some agencies may require this for a clinical activity even if not with patients and so facility policies will over-rule MSUB policies on background checks.

Confidentiality Agreement

Students in the Nursing Program may work with patients and patient medical records in various healthcare facilities and the classroom.

Student use of medical records and confidential patient information in the educational process requires:

All information about a patient, written or verbal, is strictly confidential. Any violation of confidential information about a patient is punishable in a court of law. Refer to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.

The professional Code of Ethics of the American Nurses Association stipulates that confidentiality of patient information is a part of professional responsibility and integrity.

Because of these legal and ethical considerations, any student enrolled in the Nursing Program who reveals the contents of a medical record or information related to a patient's private personal status is subject to reprimand and possible immediate dismissal from the Nursing Program.

Having understood the above, you agree to maintain the confidentiality of all patient information you are exposed to as an MSUB Nursing student.

Consent form for release of information

In Acknowledging this handbook in your courses, you consent to the Nursing Program to use the results of tests, journals, and any student work to be included in group data for educational research, grant and accreditation, and other publications. Your name and any identifying information will not be used.

DocuSign

Is a process used by MSUB to obtain electronic signatures. If you receive a document to be signed electronically, please complete this and it will be automatically returned to the program coordinator, program director, or faculty initiating the document for signature.

Due Process

Student problems related to rules, policies, Assistant Professors/staff conduct, and waivers should be resolved using campus resources in the following order:

- 1. Faculty/Instructor*
- 2. Advisor*
- 3. RN – BSN Program Director – Dr. Rebecca Muller DNP*
- 4. Department Chair – Dr. Suzette Nynas*
- 5. Dean – Dr. Kurt Toenjes*

The student may bring one advocate of their choosing or the ASMSU Billings Student Resolution officer at any time throughout the above process. Refer to MSU Billings Student Handbook for student complaint procedures.

Financial Aid

If you need assistance with Financial Aid, please follow this link: [Financial Aid](#)

Graduation Application

[Graduation Application](#)

Grievance Procedure and Grade Appeal Procedure

The RN to BSN program fully embraces due process for formal complaints. We encourage students who feel they may have been treated unfairly to request a review of the circumstance through a formal complaint. Formal complaints follow the MSUB guidelines.

When a student is concerned about a particular individual or department's action, the complaint should initially be directed to the person(s) responsible for the individual or department as noted in the University organizational structure. Certain expeditious procedures to redress specific complaints are outlined on the following pages. The MSUB complaint guidelines can be reviewed here:

<https://www.msubillings.edu/vcsa/studenthandbook.htm>

The program defines a formal complaint as a student's perceived wrongful treatment and unfair grading. This process is fully described in the student handbook and explained to students during the online orientation. All appeals will be kept on file by the Program Director. If a student has a complaint that is not nursing course specific, it will follow the MSUB complaint guidelines. We encourage students and clinical sites who may have a particular course of nursing complaint of the following procedure:

- Appeals must be done in writing.
- The Program Director must receive the appeal for any nursing course grade to be reviewed.
- The written intent for appeal must be received within one business day of being informed of the grade posted or infraction.

Nursing Committees

Participation in Nursing Program Team Meetings

The RN to BSN program professors believe student participation in department committees enhances the educational program and facilitates their growth and development as healthcare professionals. Representation on committees provides the structure for this participation. Students may be invited to attend the following:

- Advisory Board Committee
- RN to BSN Shared Governance

Advisory Committee

This committee is created to meet community workforce needs with the Nursing Program efforts. It limits its activities to advising on matters that directly concern the program. The objectives of the committee are as follows:

1. Articulate the purpose and objectives of the Nursing Program to the public and healthcare agencies.
2. Interpret community healthcare needs and resources for the Nursing Program.
3. Recommend policies and procedures for recruitment and retention,
4. Support higher educational standards for the nursing program, Assistant Professors, and students.
5. Recommend curriculum adaptations based on changing competencies, knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for successful completion of the program.
6. Assist in identifying resources for educational materials, equipment, and support services for the Nursing Program and students.
7. Assist in long-term program planning based on changes in the healthcare industry, community needs assessment, and the nurse's clinical skills and education needs.

Membership: Representatives of nursing services, health-related community agencies, community members, Assistant Professors, and student representatives.

RN to BSN Shared Governance

- Shared Governance Bylaws

Photographic release

In Acknowledging this handbook in your courses, you permit MSUB to use your photograph or video representation in any media for information dissemination or publicity related to MSUB.

I agree to abide by these policies while enrolled in the nursing program. This agreement will remain on file with the nursing director through each nursing course students are enrolled in throughout the program so that students have the most current RN to BSN Handbook.

Problem-Solving and Performance Improvement Process (PIP)

*The philosophy of the faculty is to collaborate as partners with students to facilitate student learning and program completion. It is the responsibility of students to progress satisfactorily in **academic work** and demonstrate **professional behavior**. Students who have issues with academic work and/or professional conduct will be notified by the appropriate faculty and given the guidelines and opportunity to improve.*

- *PIP is to Improve Unsatisfactory/Unsafe Student Conduct (Academic and/or Professional Behavior)*
- *A problem-solving conference and/or a warning letter is initiated when students experience a pattern of academic difficulty (ex: grades less than “C” on assignments or quizzes) or present a pattern of unprofessional behaviors (ex: poor attendance, disrespect of others, unsafe practices, or workflow impact).*
- *The problem-solving conference is documented in the student’s academic file, and the student is given a copy. (Form A)*
- *Referrals are made to tutors, or other resource persons, as needed.*
- *There is an end date on the problem-solving conference Form A for improvement.*
- *If academic performance or professional behaviors do not improve, the faculty will initiate a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) (Form B).*
- *The purpose of the PIP is to delineate the pattern of the student problem, establish measurable improvement goals, develop an action plan for improvement, state the time frame for improvement, and identify logical consequences for achievement or lack of resolution of the problem. A copy of the PIP is placed in the Student Record, and a copy is given to the student.*
- *Students must complete the PIP successfully by the end date given on the form to progress to the next semester or next course of the nursing program. Students who do not meet the required criteria established in the PIP will be dismissed from the program and/or receive a failing grade in the course and may not progress to the next semester.*
- *Suppose a student advances to another course or the next semester, and the issues stated on the initial problem-solving form (even if they were resolved in the previous semester/course) reoccur. In that case, the problem(s) will advance to the PIP level.*
- *See Appendix A Problem-Solving and PIP.*

Progression and Graduation in the RN TO BSN Program

To progress from one semester to the next and to graduate from the nursing program:

1. All required non-nursing courses must be passed with a "C-" or better grade. Students who receive a grade of "D," "F," or "W" in any course will extend the length of the program. All required nursing must be passed with a "C" or better grade. Students who receive a grade of "D," "F," or "W" in any nursing course will extend the length of the program. Faculty-Led Clinical Mentored courses must receive a P for Passing which is granted with the completion of 45 hours.
2. If a student fails to pass a course, they must follow the Nursing Program readmission policy outlined in the policies section of the Nursing Handbook.
3. All nursing courses must be completed within two (2) attempts. If students are unable to complete any nursing course within two (2) attempts, this may be grounds for removal from the program.
4. The Student Record must demonstrate progressive growth and development in professional behaviors across the curriculum. (Source of documentation: Student Code of Ethics, Academic probation and suspension; student clinical evaluation; and performance improvement plan record).
 - a. Students who do not demonstrate growth in professional behaviors may be placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). (See Appendix A, Forms A and B)
 - b. In situations of a serious and critical nature, students may be removed immediately from the program-related activity. They may receive a course grade of "F" or "W" and dismissal from the program.

Readmission to the Nursing Program

Students who withdraw from nursing classes or fail (grade less than C) a nursing or core curriculum class must request readmission to the nursing program. **Readmission is not guaranteed.** An exit interview with the Program Director is required for any student desiring readmission. Issues discussed in the exit interview may include problems encountered by the student, the process for readmission, if appropriate, and other pertinent concerns.

Readmission is contingent upon the following:

- Space available in the particular semester desired.
- If an exit interview was completed.
- Approval for readmission by the Program Director.

In the following situations, students may **not** be readmitted to the Nursing Program:

- Failure of the same course twice.
- Failure and a withdrawal from the same nursing course.
- Violation of the professional code of conduct.
- Please complete an exit interview with Program Director at the time of departure.

The following process is delineated for students seeking readmission to the nursing program.

1. *At the time of failure or withdrawal from the nursing program, the student makes an appointment for an exit interview with the Program Director. The Program Director and student will review the reasons for failure/withdrawal. The student is advised of the requirements for readmission, as stated in this policy.*
2. *The Professors may make recommendations regarding readmission.*
3. *After review of the exit interview and faculty recommendations, the Program Director will communicate the decision to the student in writing.*
4. *Any conditions, coursework, or required activities must be completed successfully for readmission. Coursework assists the student in relearning/reinforcing knowledge skills and attitudes not attained, retained, or improved test-taking skills. Activities may include tutoring and referrals as deemed appropriate.*

Reenrollment to the University

1. If you take a semester off, you must fill out the University Re-enrollment Form
 - a. There should be no fee associated with this application
 - b. This is the University's way of tracking head counts of student enrollment, no penalty for taking a break
 - c. Re-enrollment application

Removal from the Program

Students may be removed from online classroom settings or nursing program activities for unsatisfactory/unsafe student conduct. Assistant Professors may deny a student access to course activities for unsatisfactory/unsafe student conduct. Written documentation of the event is recorded in the student file. The nature of the problem determines the action and resolution process, which may include a PIP or dismissal from the nursing program with a grade of "F" or "W."

Nursing is a high-risk/high-consequence profession. The repercussions can be devastating if a nurse makes an error or demonstrates ineffective communication/interaction skills with those around them. Coursework includes learning the technical skills needed to do the job and the behavioral skills required to effectively interact with patients, families, and coworkers.

The following list is representative, but not all-encompassing, of non-professional behaviors which may lead to removal from the online classroom or faculty-led clinical-mentored project and/or dismissal from the Nursing Program:

1. *Verbal or nonverbal communication threatens the emotional and physical safety of peers, staff, faculty, or others in college-related activities on campus, in the online classroom, or at college-sponsored events.*

2. *Behavior that is disorderly, disruptive, or impedes the education process or activities of the college community (workflow impact). This includes, but is not limited to:*
 - *Not participating in the online class*
 - *Not being prepared to participate in class discussions.*
3. *Unprofessional conduct. This includes, but is not limited to:*

Violation of confidentiality

1. *Disrespect for peers, professors, faculty, staff, or clinical site staff.*
2. *Dishonesty. This includes, but is not limited to:*
 - *Plagiarism of papers and classroom work*
 - *Cheating on examinations*
 - *Submitting written material that is untruthful, fraudulent, or unprofessional.*
3. *Failure to improve behavior after problem-solving counseling. This includes continuing unsatisfactory work/performance or unsafe behavior after receiving a PIP for the problem.*
4. *Failure to meet educational outcomes at each level of the program.*
5. *Failure to achieve a “C” or higher grade in all required coursework.*
6. *Failure to consistently maintain competencies already demonstrated or learned or incorporate these competencies into new theories and skills.*
7. *Violation of Montana statutes or college policy. This includes, but is not limited to:*
 - *Conviction of a felony*
 - *Breach of confidentiality*
 - *Theft or destruction of college or clinical site property*
 - *Being under the influence of chemicals, alcohol, or drugs that impair judgment while on campus or participating in a college-related activity.*
 - *Use or possess a deadly weapon on campus, in the clinical setting, or a college-related activity.*

Students will be evaluated on nursing course participation and professionalism at the Assistant Professor’s discretion.

Retention guidelines

To ensure the success of students in the nursing program:

- An average of 70% on all coursework must be achieved to pass a required nursing course.
- Students whose grades are influenced by personal issues should meet with the Assistant Professor.

Standards for Academic/Professional Quality and Integrity Confidentiality Agreement

Information obtained by students during nursing activities related to patients, agency personnel, and community/clinical facilities is strictly confidential. This information may only be discussed in nursing class and

conference time for learning. Discussion of this information outside of class is unacceptable. Any written papers related to clinical activities shall not identify any patient by name.

Student Conduct

Standards of Nursing Practice guide conduct and practice. Nurses are healthcare professionals who must follow a **code of ethics** established by the American Nurses Association (ANA (See Chapter 8). The Montana Nurse Practice Act, the statute regulating the practice of nursing, defines the rules governing the professional conduct of nurses (See Chapter 8). The MSU Billings Student Handbook also recognizes the need for meaningful standards. Please refer to the Student Handbook to guide student behavior. Nursing students are expected to uphold these codes as MSU Billings learning community members.

Complete policies governing academic and judicial procedures are outlined in the MSU Billings Student Handbook and MSU Billings MSUB Catalog (Chapter 6).

Student Request for Information

Students may have access to their student files. Suppose students want copies of documents from their files. In that case, a written request must be submitted to the Nursing Program Director at least two working days before receiving the file information to allow adequate time for office staff to make copies. Students may review their files with office staff or Program Director present; this is subject to Program Director and faculty availability and generally cannot be accommodated on a “walk-in” basis but should be scheduled in advance.

Student Responsibility Statement of Finances

Students understand the expenses for enrollment in the Nursing Program. While MSUB assists students in obtaining financial aid, you are fully responsible for paying tuition, fees, related education obligations, and living expenses.

Study Time

According to MSUB policy for lecture classes, one credit hour equals one hour of class per week.

Generally, for any college course, students are expected to spend at least two-three hours in outside study and preparation for each hour spent in class. Classroom online lectures and discussions are supplemented with reading and audio-visual. In the nursing program, students enrolled in 12 or more credits will spend at least 30-40 hours per week in class or outside study.

Transfer Students

Opportunities for transferring nursing credits from previous nursing programs into the current Nursing Program are available depending on space and courses needed. Students completing partial nursing coursework in an

approved nursing program other than the current MSUB program must follow the residency transfer requirements of the College. For nursing course credits to be considered, the courses must be similar in the course description.

Students must provide course descriptions and syllabi of completed nursing courses to MSUB. Student transcripts will be reviewed for an equivalency evaluation once the student has met the enrollment process requirements. Acceptance of prior course credits is at the discretion of the Program Director. Acceptance of nursing transfer courses is not guaranteed.

Evaluation of transfer credits also includes the following items:

- *Acceptance into the Nursing curriculum through the enrollment process.*
- *Students must meet the MSUB requirements to receive the academic degree; see Chapter 2 for specifics.*

Written Assignments

*Grading criteria for individual assignments are distributed on D2L. All formal papers must be turned in on time in APA format. **Students are responsible for keeping a copy of all written assignments.***

Student work via email will only be accepted if directed by the faculty to do so.

CHAPTER 8:

RESOURCES

These are underutilized resources available to all MSUB students. We highly recommend you become familiar with them throughout your time in the RN to BSN program.

Academic Support Service (ASS)

ASS Homepage

See also the flyer found in D2L under the Welcome Module

American Nurses Association - Code for Nurses

The American Nurses Association Code of Ethics for Nurses can be located online at the following website-

<http://nursingworld.org/>

Montana State Board of Nursing Statues and Rules

Box

One of the most important tools is “BOX”.

- You can download Box Drive and use that to save your assignments as well as share just 1 document and collaborate with your peers for group projects. Please use your MSU Email to set this up, not your personal emails. (We learned the hard way summer 2023 that by using personal emails that this did not work well).

BSN Essentials

The RN to BSN program follows closely with the American Associate of Colleges of Nursing BSN Essentials which are a key foundation of this programs curriculum content. For more information, please follow the link:

[BSN Essentials Homepage ACCN](#)

Classrooms:

Classrooms are provided through online Desire to Learn (D2L) access.

e-Learning for Students

This link takes you to the e-Learning site for Students. The e-learning team has done a phenomenal job of putting together resources for students and we highly recommend you spend some quality time checking this out before you start the program or while you are in the program.

[e-Learning](#)

E-mail

All students will have two emails while at MSUB. Please set these up right away as it is critical for your success

1. name@msubillings.edu
 - a. For example: Rebecca.muller1@msubillings.edu
 - b. Required to use for Box and Lucidchart
2. name@billings.desire2learn.com
 - a. For example: Rebecca.muller1@billings.desire2learn.com
 - b. Required to use in our On-line Learning Platform – Desire 2 Learn (D2L)

You can forward these emails to your personal email but in order to sign up for free links you will need to set up your MSU email, we can't stress this enough.

1. Lucidchart
2. Box
3. Microsoft Suite
4. Information Technology
5. e-Learning

Information Technology

This site has the links for downloading Microsoft Office Suite that is free to students.

- If you have Chrome Book which runs off Chrome OS you will not be able to download Microsoft Office onto that device.
- If you have questions, please call the IT department.

Information Technology

Library:

The library houses references, texts, and journals for nursing and health-related fields. A TV/VCR monitor, individual study carrels, computer room, group study room, and computer search capabilities are available for student use.

Library Homepage: <http://www.msubillings.edu/library>. Computer capabilities include access to the Internet for CINAHL, Health Reference Center, Medline, and SERHOLD. Documents not available at MSUB can be obtained through Inter-Library Loan. Nursing students are expected to utilize the library resources.

RN to BSN Library Homepage: <https://libguides.msubillings.edu/rnbsn>

The library is also a quiet space to study if needed. Access to journals and research information can be done online.

Montana State Board of Nursing

information can be located on the following website. A hard copy of the Nursing Statutes, Rules, and Declaratory can be downloaded from the website found here: www.nurse.mt.gov

Program Information:

Please check D2L frequently for program information. Daily and weekly announcements for nursing classes, financial aid, and job opportunities are posted.

Purdue Owl (APA) Formatting

[APA Format with Purdue Owl Homepage](#)

Quality & Safety Education (QSEN)

Developed for nursing to provide ongoing “continuous improvement in quality and safety of the healthcare systems with which they work” (<https://www.qsen.org/about-qsen>)

Support Services

MSUB Student Services provides the following services for students.

academic advising, classes on academic skills, test taking, job-seeking skills, personal growth and problems, free tutors and counselors, career services including workshops, career counseling and testing, Job Locator, credential file service, career resource library, campus interviewing, and career/job fairs, and financial aid resources.

Student Health Services (SHS)

[SHS Homepage](#)

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Guidelines for Progressive Student Counseling to Improve Performance/Behavior*

*Adapted from a Padgett Thompson workshop

Purpose:

- Facilitate student achievement/success in a nursing course and program.
- Maintain the safety of the student, patient, peers, and others.
- Maintain nursing and college policies.
- Give the student direction and opportunity for improvement.

Situations necessitating progressive counseling include but are not limited to:

- An unresolved problem-solving conference issue (Form A).
- Several situations/incidents call for student counseling. An incident may breach one or more of the following (refer to Nursing Student Handbook):
 - Policy and procedure violation: example: safety risk, absences, substance abuse, cheating, hygiene, etc.
 - Performance: failure to achieve clinical objectives or improve performance (recall that marginal or needs improvement on clinical evaluations does not denote achievement of objectives), does not follow explicit instructions.
 - Behavior/Conduct: physical/verbal abuse, failure to notify the instructor of error, etc.
 - Workflow impact: “a negative effect on organization’s ability to achieve its goals”; affects the quality of the process and production of outcomes; student behavior which negatively influences others; example: slam doors, breaking confidentiality, do not participate in group problem-solving or blocking problem-solving, prevents cohesiveness, nonverbal: making faces, repeated loud sighing, shaking in anger, etc.
- Insubordination: failure to follow policies or directions.

Directions to complete the PIP form

1. Overview of the incident
 - a. Describe the incident(s), which may include:
 - i. policy and procedure violation
 - ii. performance
 - iii. behavior/conduct
 - iv. workflow impact
 - v. Give the date of the occurrence and counseling which took place.
 - vi. Summarize previous occurrences and counseling process.

2. Establish measurable improvement goals.
 - a. Related to the policy violation, performance, behavior, workflow impact; example: present and on time each day, safe medication administration, appropriate communication with peers, staff, and instructor, assignments complete and on time, etc.
3. Indicate needed training and direction. Examples:
 - a. Absences: give clear direction with absentee policy and referral to mentor/counselor for problem-solving.
4. Indicate a reasonable time frame for improvement.
 - a. The time frame depends on the situation: immediate, one week, three weeks, etc.
 - b. Indicate feedback period: may be daily, weekly, etc., dependent on the situation.
5. Indicate “review points” time frame and documentation: interim evaluation period.
 - a. If it improves for the review point period: establish an extension period for continued performance, ex: end of the semester (can’t be forever!)
6. Establish positive and negative consequences.
 - a. Delineate consequences if the student achieves outcomes: i.e., pass the course, and continue in the program.
 - b. Delineate consequences if a student does not achieve outcomes: i.e., fails the course, removal from the program, etc.
 - c. The student can choose “conscious decision-making” in resolving the problems.
7. Student input/acknowledgment
 - a. Student signs and dates indicate agreement or disagreement.
 - b. The student writes comments of disagreement regarding the incident, observations, corrective action, time frame, and consequences.
 - c. If the student refuses to sign or make comments, document the student's refusal, and if possible, have a witness sign noting the refusal. The witness must be an employee (instructor/mentor) who maintains *confidentiality*.
8. *Documentation of the PIP*
 - a. *A copy of the Performance Improvement Plan is given to the student.*
 - b. *The original is placed in the student file.*
 - c. *A written notice of completion of the PIP is written by the Assistant Professors and placed in the student file.*
 - d. *A copy is given to the student.*
9. *If students do not complete the described behavior or academic changes by the deadline on the PIP, then the student may be dismissed from the nursing program.*

FORM A

Problem-Solving Conference

On the following date _____, I (faculty) _____ met with the student _____
_____ to discuss an issue of concern.

1. Description of issues or incidents needing improvement.
2. Impact on which program learning outcome(s).
3. Plan for improvement.
4. Improvement needs to be observed by (date) _____.
5. The student and Assistant Professors members understand that in addition to this plan, the student must meet the course/clinical objectives of NRSG_____.

Student signature: _____

Date: _____

Faculty signature: _____

Date: _____

Director signature: _____

Date: _____

1 copy – student

1 copy –student file

FORM B

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) Notice

Student:

Directions: Complete the form using additional paper if necessary. Give a copy of the Performance Improvement Plan to the student. Place the original in the student's file.

1. Overview of the Incident(s) and Date (include Problem-Solving Conference date):
2. Evaluation of how behavior impacts nursing program policies.
3. Performance improvement goals:
4. Needed training and direction.
5. The time frame for improvement
6. Consequences
7. Student input/acknowledgment

_____ *I have read and understand this Performance Improvement Plan Notice.*

_____ *I agree to the terms of this plan.*

_____ *I disagree with this notice/plan.*

Student Comments:

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Faculty Signature: _____

Date: _____

Director Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Special Circumstance/Emergency Late Assignment Agreement

Date: _____

I (the student) _____ have permission from my instructor (_____) to turn in the following assignment (_____) late due to unavoidable circumstances. This assignment will be turned in on (_____); if I am unable to complete this assignment by the agreed-upon extended due date, this agreement will be reviewed by myself and my instructor. Late assignments will be subject to point(s) penalties. (this form must be initiated by the student and signed before the due date, during regular college business days M-F, excluding holidays and weekends)

Student: _____

Date: _____

Instructor: _____

Date: _____

Date assignment turned in to instructor: _____