



NURSING

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

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2017-2018

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I. Welcome

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

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

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

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

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

Online Nursing Program Contact Information:

Jessica L. Kameron MSN, RNC-NIC, CHSE
Director, Online Nursing Programs
Assistant Professor, Clinical kameron@rmu.edu
412-397-3542

II. About Robert Morris University

Robert Morris University, a private nonprofit institution, was founded in 1921 as the Pittsburgh School of Accountancy. In 1935 the School was named The Robert Morris School in honor of a famous Pennsylvanian financier of the American Revolution. In 1962, the Pennsylvania Department of Education approved status as Robert Morris Junior College. With authorization to grant the Bachelor of Science in business administration degree in 1969, the State approved status as Robert Morris College. The State approved the granting of the MBA degree in 1988.

Over the years, most notably since 1990, the College expanded and diversified its curriculum beyond the original specialty of business with its addition of graduate programs in communication, information systems, and education. In recognition of these changes, the Carnegie Foundation reclassified Robert Morris as a Master's (Comprehensive) I institution in 2000. Following a comprehensive self-study and site visit, the State granted University status in May 2001. The institution formally changed its name to Robert Morris University in January 2002.

Robert Morris University is organized into five academic units. Degrees are offered in the School of Business; School of Communications and Information Systems; School of Engineering, Mathematics, and Science; School of Education and Social Sciences; and the School of Nursing and Health Sciences. Deans of the five schools report to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. Robert Morris University offers baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral degrees.

The Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) programs at RMU received initial approval from the Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing (PASBON) and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) in spring 2003 and began admitting students in fall 2003. At that time, the programs were part of the School of Engineering, Mathematics, and Science (SEMS). In June 2004, the programs were moved into the School of Nursing and Allied Health. In April 2005, the baccalaureate and masters in nursing programs received initial Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) accreditation and full CCNE accreditation in 2010. In 2007, the school name was changed to School of Nursing and Health Sciences (SNHS).

Initial approval of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree was granted in 2007 by the PASBON and was the first BSN to DNP program approved by the state. The program received CCNE accreditation in 2010. The SNHS currently offers several tracks of the BSN-to-DNP, as well as the Master's-to-DNP option for advanced practice nurses.

In 2007, the nuclear medicine technology degree program was added to the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, followed by the health services administration degree program in 2009. In 2010-2011 the RN to BSN curriculum was revised and combined with the existing MSN program to form an accelerated RN to MSN program track. The combined program is offered in a totally online format. In the fall 2014, a health services administration graduate degree program was launched.

A. Accreditation and Approval

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

B. Mission, Vision and Values of RMU SNHS

MISSION:

The Robert Morris University School of Nursing and Health Sciences (SNHS) is learner-focused and transforms lives by preparing exemplary healthcare professionals. This is accomplished through the delivery of evidence-based academic programs in a highly engaging environment that aligns with accreditation standards and incorporates knowledge of health care trends, team-based concepts, application of research to practice, inter-professional communication skills, global citizenship and leadership characteristics, all of which focus on the ultimate goal of leading with integrity and compassion throughout their lives in a diverse and rapidly changing healthcare environment.

VISION:

To become a nationally recognized “best value” leader and school of excellence by providing a highly proactive, innovative and engaging learning environment that is focused on preparing future healthcare clinicians, scholars, educators and leaders to function within teams and excel in the rapidly changing healthcare environment.

VALUES:

1. High-quality innovative programs with attention to individual/student achievement. (Academic Excellence, Individuals Matter)
2. Faculty and student commitment and accountability to the profession. (Professional Focus)
3. Student engagement through active, lifelong learning in a rapidly changing healthcare environment. (Student Engagement)
4. Collaboration and inter-professional education to enhance patient safety and outcomes. (Changing Lives)
5. Appreciation of cultural differences when caring for patients from a holistic and global perspective. (Global Perspective)
6. Faculty as models of excellence in the roles of teaching, scholarship, service, and clinical practice. (Academic Excellence, Individuals Matter)

C. Program Objectives

The RN – BSN program prepares students to:

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

The MSN program prepares students to:

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

D. Department of Nursing Faculty

The Department of Nursing is committed to hiring highly-qualified faculty members who have expertise in nursing and education. Students are encouraged to form scholarly relationships with faculty and to seek individual assistance when needed. Our [Faculty](#) members are committed to assisting students in achieving success while maintaining the high standards required by the nursing profession.

III. Policies / Procedures / Important Guidelines

A. Academic Calendar

The [Academic Calendar](#) has important dates, including start and end dates for the

semester, dates for registration and tuition payment, course withdrawal among other important dates. Be sure to enter the correct range of dates for searching purposes.

B. University Policies

Students are expected to review and adhere to all [University Policies](#) as well as those specific to the nursing program.

C. Academic Integrity

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

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

D. Department of Nursing Policies

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

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

[RN-BSN and RN-MSN Undergraduate Policies](#)

[RN-MSN and MSN Graduate Policies](#)

E. Attendance

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

F. Fees

Students enrolled in the online nursing program are subject to additional fees. These include, but are not limited to, costs related to clinical compliance requirements.

Examples of the potential requirements for clinical courses include: Health evaluation, immunizations, TB testing, background clearances, proof of health insurance and CPR certification. The inclusive list and cost of items are subject to change depending on clinical affiliation agreements. The costs associated with these clinical compliance requirements are the responsibility of the student. Any fees associated with using a particular clinical site or preceptor are to be paid by the student.

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

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

G. RMU Email and Netiquette

RMU email is used by the faculty, staff and administration to communicate with nursing students. Please check your RMU student email daily. All academic program communication will be sent to the student's RMU email account only. Learners are responsible for monitoring this email account and responding appropriately.

NOTE: If students prefer a different email account, arrangements can be made to forward the RMU student email to that address. Please contact the [RMU IT Help Desk](#) for assistance.

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

[Netiquette Guide for Online Courses](#)

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

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

I. Appeals Process

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

IV. Curricular Information

A. Curriculum Overview

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

[RN to BSN](#)

[RN to MSN](#)

[MSN in Nursing Education](#)

B. Transfer of Credits

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

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

C. Student Advising and Registration

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

Jessica Kamerer, Program Director

kamerer@rmu.edu

412-397-3542

Lisa Hladon, Online Student Services Representative

hladon@rmu.edu

412-397-5221

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

D. Academic Progression

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

[Undergraduate Academic Standing Policy](#)

[Graduate Academic Standing Policy](#)

E. Technology

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

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

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

F. Health Insurance

All students in the nursing program are required to carry health insurance while enrolled in the nursing program. If you need health insurance, this can be obtained through [Student Health Services](#) at RMU. If you have your own coverage, you must enter your health insurance information on the RMU website each academic year; otherwise, you will be automatically invoiced for the health insurance offered through RMU.

G. Clinical Requirements

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

The Department of Nursing has contracted with [CastleBranch \(CB\)](#) to facilitate the completion and monitoring of all clinical 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 clinical 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 [Clinical Requirements Policy](#). Students are required to complete and submit all clinical 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 clinical course will result in removal from the course (and any corequisite 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 clinical clearances. Failure to complete the requirements by established due dates will result in the inability of the student to attend clinical activities. Students cannot progress in the course without proper clearance for clinical. This may result in a delay in program completion.

In the event that a positive background report is noted, RMU SNHS is obligated by clinical 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 the Program Director of any change in background or clinical clearance status. Any unreported change in status may result in dismissal from the nursing program.

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

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

Students can contact the Clinical Coordinator, Nancy Tamilya for assistance regarding their clinical requirements at tamilya@rmu.edu.

H. Transportation/Parking/Other Expenses

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

I. Appropriate Attire for Clinical and Practicum Experience

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

J. International Experiences

Nursing students are afforded the opportunity to engage in education abroad programs offered through the [Center for Global Engagement](#). In addition, Dr. Carl Ross serves as the Coordinator of the Nicaragua Experience. Students participating in the trip to Nicaragua are eligible to receive credit toward their clinical experience in designated courses, provided they meet the pre-requisite requirements. Course faculty can address course-specific requirements and allotment of clinical hours.

Dr. Ross can provide additional details about the trip to Nicaragua: [SNHS International Studies](#)

V. Student Resources

A. Center for Student Success

The [Center for Student Success](#) provides services that include but are not limited to counseling, tutoring, and disability services. The RN-BSN, RN-MSN and MSN online programs utilize technology exclusively accessible to students choosing the online distance education experience for tutoring and counseling. If you need assistance in classes, please contact your faculty member in addition to the Center for Student Success.

B. Scholarship and Financial Aid Information

Please contact the [Financial Aid Office](#) for information regarding the financial aid process at RMU. Additional links are provided below

[Scholarship Information](#)

www.pheaa.org

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. Librarian contact information is provided below:

Bruce Johnston, MLS Resource Sharing Librarian
Associate Professor, Learning Resources/Health Sciences

johnston@rmu.edu

412-397-6877

Chloe Mills, MA, MLS

Assistant Professor of Learning

Resources Online Programs Librarian

millsc@rmu.edu

412-397-6839

VI. Graduation Information

A. Pinning Ceremony

The Department of Nursing hosts a pinning ceremony during the Spring semester for online nursing students. The purpose of this ceremony, which is steeped in nursing tradition, is to celebrate those students earning nursing degrees. Family and friends are invited to attend and celebrate this accomplishment. Information is provided to eligible students by the Program Director and/or Academic Advisor.

B. Commencement

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

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

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

VII. Extracurricular Activities

A. Student Nurse Association of Pennsylvania (SNAP)

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

- Dr. Janene Szpak, szpak@rmu.edu
- Dr. Carl Ross, ross@rmu.edu

B. Dean’s Student Advisory Board

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

C. Sigma Theta Tau

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

D. Committees and Activities

Robert Morris University offers many services and activities to all students. Online students are encouraged to participate on committees and explore other student activities.

VIII. Acknowledgement Form

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

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

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

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

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

Name: _____

Date: _____

Student ID: _____