



# GRADUATE HANDBOOK



TANNER HEALTH  
SCHOOL OF NURSING

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## Welcome from the Deans

Welcome to the Graduate programs at the University of West Georgia (UWG), Tanner Health School of Nursing (THSON). We are delighted you selected this university and school of nursing to pursue your education. We are confident you will find the programs of study both challenging and rewarding.

This handbook provides information regarding various UWG and policies and guidelines. Please seek clarification from faculty members as necessary. A strength of our programs is the cadre of committed faculty. You will find the faculty to be caring, competent, and empathetic individuals willing to assist your learning in every way possible. Please feel free to contact us; we welcome your input and suggestions concerning the program.

|                                                                             |                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Imelda Reyes DNP, MPH, APRN, FAANP<br>Dean, Tanner Health School of Nursing |  |
| Kathleen Morales, PhD, RN, CNE<br>Associate Dean of Nursing                 |  |
| Kelly Dyar, EdD, RN, CNN, CNE<br>Assistant Dean of Graduate Nursing         |  |

## Rights Clause

The Tanner Health School of Nursing (THSON) reserves the right to amend, modify, add to, or delete our rules, policies, and procedures.

## Mission and Vision

### Mission

The UWG THSON exemplifies academic excellence in a caring environment by providing quality undergraduate and graduate education to meet current and evolving health care needs within the global community.

### Vision

The UWG THSON will be a leader in the scholarship of teaching and learning through the empowerment of graduates and colleagues who exhibit the ability and courage to create quality caring in health care and educational systems.

## Statement of Philosophy and Assumptions

The faculty of the THSON believe and support the mission, purpose, and goals of the UWG. While offering both undergraduate and graduate academic programs, the THSON frames its philosophy within the theoretical structure of caring as the essence of nursing. The faculty are committed to creating a milieu for learning that fosters quality caring and believe that all persons are inherently worthy and deserve respect, justice, and equality regardless of gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. In pursuit of these beliefs, the faculty declare the following statements of our beliefs and assumptions:

### Environment

People construct meaning and develop knowledge through being in the world and interacting with the world. Environment includes persons, cultures, the health-care system, and other aspects of the constructed and natural world. A concern for the environment is essential due to the social, political, and economic influences on health and the health-care system.

### Health

Health is a dynamic and contextual state of being in which there is a balance of relationships, choices, and human potentials. The person's perception of health is unique and self-determined within psychological, biophysical, socio-cultural, developmental, and spiritual dimensions.

## Nursing

Nursing is a distinct discipline focused on promoting optimal health through the formation of caring relationships across the lifespan while recognizing and respecting the uniqueness of recipients of care. Quality caring provides the foundation for nurses to deliver safe and person-centered care in a rapidly changing health care environment (Watson, 2008).

## Nursing Education

Education at the graduate level is designed to foster utilization of theoretical and empirical knowledge in advanced nursing practice.

## Persons

Persons, including individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations are unique and dynamic as thinking, caring, and feeling contributors to society with the right to make choices and assume responsibility for their choices. Persons are holistic, representing an integration of mind, body, and spirit. They have spiritual-social-cultural-ethical beliefs and values that influence the perception of self, others, and the world.

## Teaching Learning

Teaching-learning is a dynamic, reciprocal, lifelong process that nurtures and facilitates growth in all participants. Learning occurs through meaningful relationships characterized by connectedness, openness, and creativity. Teachers and students share the responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that nurtures these relationships (Cara, et al., 2021; Hills, et al., 2020).

## Nursing Education

Education at the graduate level is designed to foster utilization of theoretical and empirical knowledge in advanced nursing practice.

## Caring Groups

The Caring Science curriculum model (Cara, et al., 2021) places caring, collaborative relationships at the center of a curriculum designed to create a caring culture within a nursing education program. The focus of the caring science curriculum model is on developing caring relationships with students and the use of emancipatory pedagogy (student-centered learning). According to Cara et al. (2021), nurse educators must intentionally integrate a culture of caring to support students in becoming competent and caring nurses. In education, the caring relationships between teachers and students fosters a sense of caring professionalism and the acquisition of the crucial knowledge, skills, and attitudes for nursing practice in the health care system.

## References

Cara, C., Hills, M., & Watson, J. (2021). An educator's guide to humanizing nursing education: Grounded in caring science. Springer.

Hills, M., Watson, J., & Cara, C. (2020). Creating a caring science curriculum: A relational emancipatory pedagogy for nursing (2nd ed.). Springer

Watson, J. (2008). Nursing: The philosophy and science of caring (rev ed.). University Press of Colorado.

## MSN Program Outcomes

The Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program aims to prepare registered nurses for advanced practice in health systems leadership and nursing education.

Graduates of the program will be able to

1. Synthesize established and evolving disciplinary nursing knowledge, ways of knowing, and knowledge from other disciplines, to inform clinical judgment and translate nursing science to guide evidence-based care. **Key Concepts:** Clinical Judgment, Evidence-based Practice (EBP)
2. Design holistic, respectful, evidence-based, person-centered compassionate care including family and significant others, incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion. **Key Concepts:** Communication, Compassionate Care, , Ethics, and EBP.
3. Integrate population health principles including advocacy, health policy, disaster preparedness, and collaborative partnerships to mitigate social determinants of health and support equitable and just care. **Key Concepts:** Social Determinants of Health (SDoH), Health Policy, DEI, Ethics
4. Engage in scholarship to transform health care through evidence-based nursing practice. **Key Concepts:** EBP, Ethics
5. Develop a just culture through quality improvement at individual and system levels to minimize the risk of harm and support safety. **Key Concepts:** Quality and Safety, EBP, Health Policy, , Ethics
6. Create a climate of mutual learning, respect, and shared values through partnerships for quality care delivery. **Key Concepts:** Communication, Compassionate Care, Clinical Judgment
7. Design practice within complex systems that enhance value, access, quality and cost-effective coordination of resources to provide safe, quality, equitable care to diverse populations. **Key Concepts:** , EBP, Social Determinants of Health, Communication.
8. Utilize information, communication technologies, and informatics processes for ethical decision-making to support patients, consumers, and team members in a variety of settings. **Key Concepts:** Communication, Compassionate Care, Clinical Judgment, Ethics

9. Formulate a sustainable professional nursing identity that reflects professional nursing's characteristics and values to improve the practice environment and health outcomes. **Key Concepts:** Ethics, Health Policy, , and Compassionate Care.
10. Demonstrate personal, professional, and leadership development to intentionally advance the nursing profession. **Key Concepts:** SDOH, Ethics, Health Policy

## EdD Program Outcomes

The EdD in Nursing Education (EdD) program aims to prepare nurse educators for the 21st century.

The outcomes of the doctoral program are the following

1. Demonstrate advanced nurse educator competencies to enact increasingly complex faculty and leadership roles.
2. Facilitate curriculum design, development of courses, and evaluation of program and student outcomes using evidence-based strategies.
3. Function as a change agent, innovator, and leader with the continuous pursuit of quality improvement in the nurse educator role.
4. Advance the scholarship of nursing education.
5. Conduct, evaluate, and synthesize theoretically guided research to further pedagogical knowledge in nursing education.

## General Information and Resources

In addition to this handbook, other resources will assist you in a successful journey through the graduate programs at UWG THSON.

Graduate Catalog

<https://www.westga.edu/student-services/registrar/course-catalogs.php>

Tanner Health School of Nursing Official Website

<https://www.westga.edu/academics/nursing/index.php>

Office of Community Standards

<https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpsa/ocs/index.php>

UWG Handbook

<https://uwg.policystat.com/policy/18846667/latest/>

Academic Policies

<https://www.westga.edu/administration/provost/academicpolicies.php>

Ingram Library

<https://www.westga.edu/library/>

Financial Assistance and Scholarships

<https://www.westga.edu/student-services/financialaid/index.php>

<https://www.westga.edu/academics/nursing/nursing-student-scholarships.php>

The Scoop

<https://www.westga.edu/student-services/registrar/the-scoop.php>

## Professional Nursing Associations

### American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)

The AACN is the national voice for baccalaureate and graduate nursing education. The AACN works to establish quality standards for nursing education; assists schools in implementing those standards, influences the nursing profession to improve health care; and promotes public support for professional nursing education, research, and practice. The following is the link to the organization: [American Association of Colleges of Nursing](#)

### National League for Nursing (NLN)

Dedicated to excellence in nursing, the NLN is the premier organization for nurse faculty and leaders in nursing education. The NLN offers professional development, networking opportunities, testing services, nursing research grants, and public policy to its 40,000 individual and 1,200 institutional members. The following is the link to the organization: [National League for Nursing](#)

### Pi Nu Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International

The Pi Nu Chapter of the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International, was chartered in 2000 at the University of West Georgia to recognize superior academic achievement, academic integrity, and professional leadership potential. Eligible students should also foster high professional standards, encourage creative work, and strengthen their commitment to the ideals and purposes of the profession.

The Pi Nu Chapter Executive Board reviews student candidates and inducts new members each spring by invitation. The THSON encourages students to reach for academic excellence and participate in the advancement of nursing scholarship, leadership, and professionalism through membership in this organization. Please contact nursing faculty members for additional information or visit the Sigma Theta Tau website at <https://www.nursingsociety.org/>

## Georgia Association for Nursing Education, Inc.

The Georgia Association for Nursing Education, Inc. (GANE) seeks to provide all nursing educators in the state of Georgia with opportunities to influence and improve nursing education, impact practice, and improve health care for the citizens of Georgia, promote nursing research, and collaborate with other health care disciplines and organizations.

This organization offers continuing education and professional development opportunities with reduced membership and event costs for students. Students can find more information at <https://gane.nursingnetwork.com/>.

# THSON Staff POC for Graduate Resources

Contacts found here: <https://www.westga.edu/academics/nursing/faculty-staff.php>

## Graduate Studies Associate

The THSON employs a Graduate Studies Associate to assist all graduate students with academic advisement. Students must contact the Graduate Studies Associate to request any changes in plans of study or enrollment status. Graduate students can contact the Graduate Studies Associate via phone at 678-839-5115 Monday through Friday between 8 am-5 pm or via email.

## Graduate Writing Associate

The THSON employs a part-time Graduate Writing Associate to assist faculty and graduate students with scholarly writing. The Graduate Writing Associate is available to all graduate students throughout the program. Students and faculty can contact the Graduate Writing Associate via CourseDen (D2L) email. Technology Requirements Technology Assistance:

- Students should contact UWG Online for assistance with D2L BrightSpace (CourseDen) and other online learning-specific questions. The link for more information is <https://uwgonline.westga.edu/students.php>
- Student technology requirements, general computer usage, and information and tutorials about e-mail and Ban Web are available online at the Information Technology Services (ITS) homepage, <https://www.westga.edu/its/index.php>
- Desire to Learn (D2L) & other distance education help:  
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., call 678-839-6248 or 1-855-933UWGO (8946) or access <https://uwgonline.westga.edu/> or [online@westga.edu](mailto:online@westga.edu)
- 24-Hour Help – 1-855-772-0423 or <https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu/>
- My UWG help: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. at 678-839-9587. For assistance with email: Call 678-839-6248 or email [servicedesk@westga.edu](mailto:servicedesk@westga.edu)

## THSON Committees

The THSON requests student representation on all standing committees. Students serve as associate members and enjoy all the privileges of faculty committee members except that of voting. The student body shall elect student representatives from each of the various program levels to serve on the standing committees during the fall semester of each academic year. A representative from the Prelicensure BSN\*, RN-BSN, MSN, and EdD programs will be selected for each of the following committees:

Graduate Program Committee (GPC)  
Caring for Students Committee (CSC)  
Caring for Faculty Committee (CFC)  
Evaluation Committee (EC)  
Technology Committee (TC)

## Awards for Excellence and Achievement in Graduate Studies

The outstanding Graduate Student Awards program is held each year during the spring semester celebration and coordinated by the Caring for Students Committee (CSC). The program aims to recognize outstanding graduating MSN and EdD students at the THSON. These recognitions of graduating MSN and EdD students are announced at the annual /Hooding Ceremony prior to spring graduation.

### Outstanding MSN student awards.

These awards are given to two graduating MSN students who exemplify the school's values of scholarship, leadership, and caring through their nursing practice and will be presented at the Spring Pinning/Hooding ceremony.

Nominations must be submitted by a peer, staff member, or faculty member. No self-nominations will be accepted.

One graduate from each MSN specialty track (Health Systems Leadership and Education) may be identified and recommended for this award based on the following criteria.

These awards are given to the students who:

1. Best exemplifies achievement of program outcomes.
2. Bases their practice on a personal philosophy of nursing as caring.
3. Demonstrates intellectual curiosity and excellence in academic scholarship.
4. Writes effectively and exemplifies scholarly writing.
5. Demonstrates leadership qualities and potential for accomplishment in the profession.

The Outstanding MSN Student Award will be selected by the Faculty of the THSON.

### Outstanding EdD Student Award

The purpose of the Outstanding EdD Student Award is to recognize the contribution of a graduating EdD in nursing education student who exemplifies high standards of leadership and scholarship in the field of nursing education. Nominations must be submitted by a peer, staff member, or faculty member. No self-nominations will be accepted.

Eligibility requirements:

Must have successfully defended their dissertation within one calendar year prior to the Spring pinning and hooding ceremony.

### Submission requirements:

1. Completed nomination form
2. Abstract of student's defended dissertation

The Outstanding EdD Student Award will be selected by the Faculty of the THSON.

### Graduate DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nursing Students About the DAISY Foundation

An acronym for Diseases Attacking the Immune System, The DAISY Foundation was established in 1999 in memory of J. Patrick Barnes who died (at the age of 33) from complications of the auto-immune disease Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP). Patrick's family was very touched by the remarkable compassion and clinical skill demonstrated by Patrick's nurses during his illness, so they created DAISY to recognize exceptional nurses everywhere. The DAISY Foundation is dedicated to saying Thank You to student nurses and is now proud to recognize The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nursing Students.

Nominations must be submitted by a peer, staff member, or faculty member. *No self-nominations will be accepted.*

The Graduate DAISY Award will be presented at the Spring Pinning/Hooding ceremony to a student who meets the eligibility requirements and best exemplifies the award criteria.

### Eligibility requirements:

- Must have successfully defended their dissertation within one calendar year prior to the Spring pinning and hooding ceremony, OR
- Be graduating with their Masters of Science in Nursing.

### Criteria:

Consistently exemplifies caring behaviors aligning with the THSON's caring science philosophy through one or more of the following:

- Demonstrates commitment to incorporating and advancing compassionate caring (e.g. to patients, families, peers, faculty and/or staff) through assignments and/or interactions with others,
- Demonstrates commitment to humanization of nursing practice (for example, embracing a holistic, humanistic view of individuals, in any setting),
- Makes a connection through authentic presence (virtually or in-person) with others (e.g. with patients, families, communities, peers, faculty and/or staff) by building trust and respect,

- Advocates strongly for others (e.g. patients, families, communities, peers, faculty and/or staff),
- Incorporates and advances diversity, equity, and inclusion through assignments and/or interactions with others.

## UWG Academic Policies

Graduate students will abide by all THSON guidelines located within the THSON graduate handbook and the UWG graduate policies located at the following link: <https://www.westga.edu/academics/gradstudies/academic-policies.php>.

## THSON Guidelines

### Grading System for Graduate Students

| Letter Grade | GPA Value | Final Numerical Grade |
|--------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <b>A</b>     | 4.00      | <b>89.5 - 100</b>     |
| <b>B</b>     | 3.00      | <b>79.5 - 89.49</b>   |
| <b>C</b>     | 2.00      | <b>74.5 - 79.49</b>   |
| <b>F</b>     | 0.00      | <b>Less than 74.5</b> |

#### Grade Definitions:

- **A** = Superior Scholarship
- **B** = Average Performance
- **C** = Below Average/Unsatisfactory
- **F** = Failure

### Thesis/Dissertation Grading

Thesis and dissertation hours are graded with an **S** (satisfactory) or **U** (unsatisfactory). Some programs award a letter grade during the last semester when the thesis or dissertation is successfully defended.

See the UWG Graduate School Grading System for Graduate Students at <https://www.westga.edu/academics/gradstudies/academic-policies.php> for additional grade symbols.

## Cumulative grade point average.

The cumulative grade point average in each USG institution will be calculated by dividing the number of hours scheduled in all courses attempted in which a grade of A, B, C, D, F, or WF has been received into the number of grade points earned on those hours scheduled. The cumulative grade point average will be recorded on the student's permanent record. Institutional credit shall in no way affect the cumulative grade point average (BOR Policy 3.5.1.2).

## General Academic Standards

Graduate students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher to remain in Good Academic Standing. Students must be in Good Academic Standing to be eligible for graduation and admission to Doctoral Candidacy.

Please see the UWG Graduate School policies related to Good Academic Standing, Academic Probation, Academic Suspension, and Academic Dismissal at this link:

<https://www.westga.edu/academics/gradstudies/academic-policies.php>

### **Students are required to earn minimum grades of B or S in all graduate courses in the MSN and Ed.D. programs. Students who:**

- Earn a grade of "C" or "WF" in one course, including a dissertation course, may repeat the course one time.
- Earn a grade of "C" or "WF" in any two courses, or earn two "U"s in NURS 9015, NURS 9020, NURS 9021, or NURS 9022 will be dismissed from the program.
- Earn a final grade of U in NURS 9019 Comprehensive Exam will be dismissed from the program.
- Earn an F in any one course will be dismissed from the program.

## Graduate Program Success Plan

**Purpose:** The THSON Graduate Program retention priority includes student success achievable through exemplary student and faculty engagement that demonstrates support and compassion for students' success. Faculty oversight of students' progress throughout the course/program, with planned opportunities for remedial opportunities, is one means for faculty to demonstrate support and compassion for students' success.

**Process:** THSON faculty are committed to students feeling wanted, supported, and successful in their selected programs. Faculty may use BrightSpace (CourseDen) intelligent agents to monitor class attendance. To support student success, the following will occur.

- Students earning a score of 84 or less on any assignment will contact the grading faculty and schedule a meeting to discuss a plan for success.
- Faculty will create a formal Student Success Plan for any student who is at risk of being unsuccessful in a course.

- Any student who is at risk of being unsuccessful in any course or the program at the midpoint of a course will receive a mid-term letter to initiate the development of a formal Student Success Plan.

## Attendance Guidelines for Online Graduate Courses

Course attendance/participation is a professional expectation for all students, whether the learning environment is via a synchronous or asynchronous format. For online graduate courses, students indicate attendance by logging into the course learning management system, D2L Brightspace (**CourseDen**), **at least 3 times a week** and regularly accessing the course or taking other actions specified by the faculty member to be sure not to miss important announcements.

Success in online graduate courses depends on the student's active participation and engagement throughout the course. Therefore, the online learning experience will be most effective when the student does the following:

1. Logs into the course at least three times a week to ensure they are current with course announcements, new course content, emails, and unread discussion posts.
2. Prepares for course assignments by completing all assigned readings and reviewing assignment expectations/grading rubrics beforehand.
3. Provides substantial peer feedback to fellow students in the online graduate course.
4. Assists the cohort in directing discussions towards thoughtful and meaningful discourse.
5. Maintains an open mind that allows for personal and professional growth.
6. Displays respect for self and others via reciprocity of caring within the online graduate course.

## Communication Guidelines

Official THSON communication regarding courses, clinical experiences, schedules, and program activities must occur through approved university channels:

MyUWG email for official university communications.

CourseDen (D2L) for course-related communication between students and faculty.

Communication through personal email, text messaging, or social media is not considered official.

## Social Media Expectations

Students, faculty, and staff are expected to use social media responsibly and professionally.

Maintain professional behavior and communication at all times.

Protect the privacy and confidentiality of patients, students, faculty, and staff.

Do not post photos, videos, or recordings of others without permission.

Do not represent personal opinions as those of UWG or THSON.

Include a disclaimer when identifying yourself as affiliated with UWG or THSON on personal social media.

Use of THSON logos, branding, or unofficial THSON social media accounts requires administrative approval.

Violations of professional, privacy, or confidentiality standards may result in disciplinary action.

For additional guidance, refer to UWG Social Media Policies and Procedures.

## THSON Honor Code

The UWG Honor Code policy is located within the UWG Student Handbook. The UWG Honor Code contains penalties for breach of academic integrity.

“As a student of the UWG in the THSON, I am a person of integrity, veracity, and honesty. I will uphold the moral and ethical principles of the UWG’s THSON, habitually engage in truthful speech, statements and actions, and be honorable in intentions and actions. I am a person of respect. I respect human dignity, worth, and the uniqueness of every individual. I will respect persons of all backgrounds without prejudice. I will strive to promote, advocate for, and protect the health, safety, and rights of those under my care. I am accountable for my own judgment and action, and responsible for my role as a student of the UWG’s THSON. I lead by example, and I will never settle for achieving merely what is expected but will strive for a standard of excellence that reflects dedication to the profession of nursing.”

In the event of a suspected breach of academic integrity, the following will occur:

- The course faculty member who suspects a breach of academic integrity will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the suspected breach. The meeting can occur in person or virtually.
- Course faculty will notify the Assistant Dean of Graduate Nursing and will provide documentation and their recommendation for academic penalties, including but not limited to failing the assignment and/or failing the course.
- The Assistant Dean will review the student’s file for prior Academic Integrity Violation reports.
- The reporting course faculty will complete and submit an [Instructors' Academic Dishonesty Reporting Form](#) to the Office of Community Standards. The faculty will include supporting documentation when submitting the report. The case then becomes a part of the student’s conduct record at UWG.
- The Office of Community Standards will review the case and communicate with the student.

## TURNITIN

Turnitin is an originality tool that recognizes text that has been identified as closely matching other online resources, including student-submitted work and published articles; displays of possible sources where that text is located; and indicates the percentage of a paper that is attributable to other sources. The tool will reduce accidental plagiarism by helping students understand quotation attribution and citations. The tool may also provide a percentage of the work that is attributable to generative artificial intelligence (AI).

Course faculty may enable Turnitin in CourseDen and may use the originality report, including the AI information, as part of their evaluation of student work. Students can learn more about Turnitin at the [UWG Online link](#).

## THSON Professional Attire Guidelines

The nursing student's attire influences the public's image of nursing and the UWG, THSON. The responsibility for establishing guidelines for the nursing student's professional attire rests with the THSON faculty with requirements/suggestions from the clinical/practicum agencies when provided. A student name badge should be worn when a student participates in any clinical and/or practicum activity within the student role. The THSON student name badge may be ordered from the link below:

<https://www.mcevers.org/products/uwg-nursing-namebadge>

## Grade Appeals

Students have the right to appeal a course grade. Grade appeals must be submitted in writing, using the [UWG Student Grade Appeal Form](#). All grade appeals, regardless of their nature, shall be initiated no later than the following semester after cause for the appeal occurred. Students can view the [Graduate Academic Processes | UWG](#) webpage for more information.

## Impaired Student Nurse Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist in the identification of and aid the chemically impaired student while sending a strong message that all students enrolled in the THSON at UWG are strictly prohibited from possessing or being under the influence of chemically impairing drugs or substances while engaged in any THSON classroom or clinical/practicum activity.

### Statement of Purpose

- a. Students enrolled in the THSON at the undergraduate and graduate levels engage in the THSON, classroom, as well as clinical/practicum activities that involve training on campus in the skills and simulation labs (Experiential Learning Center) and off-

campus at various types of health care facilities, including, but not limited to, hospitals, private practice offices, clinics, long-term care facilities, schools, conferences, other university and college settings, and community agencies.

- b. Chemical impairment can adversely affect the learning process and the quality of care provided by the student in the above-listed activities. It may also pose legal ramifications to the THSON and safety and health risks to the student, his/her patient(s), classmates, clinical/practicum instructors, and others.
- c. These guidelines have been adapted following the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (1998) position statement on substance abuse in nursing education.

### **Definitions**

The THSON faculty define the chemically impaired student as a person who, while participating in a THSON, classroom, or clinical/practicum activity, is under the influence of, separately or in combination, mind or function-altering substances, including alcohol, illegal street or prescription drugs, inhalants or synthetic designer drugs. *Exceptions include legally prescribed drugs taken as ordered by a Health Care Provider by the student and over-the-counter drugs. The use of these drugs does not interfere with the safe and competent performance of the student during THSON class and clinical/practicum activities.*

### **Protocol for Faculty Intervention with the Impaired Student Nurse**

Upon admission to the THSON, all student nurses must sign a consent form allowing random drug and alcohol panel testing.

If a faculty member believes the student nurse to be impaired based on altered behaviors:

- The faculty member will inform the student that they are suspected of violating the THSON Impaired Student Nurse Guidelines.
- When possible, suspicion needs to be validated by another faculty member, charge nurse, manager, or physician.
- The student will be suspended from all THSON, classroom, and clinical/practicum activities until further notice, pending alcohol and drug panel results.
- It is the student's responsibility to arrange safe transportation from the clinical activity site and/or classroom to LabCorp for drug testing.
- For THSON, classroom, and clinical/practicum activities occurring during the evening, the student is responsible for arranging safe transportation home and will be required to submit to a screening within 12 hours.
- The faculty member will stay with the student until safe transportation arrives to pick up the student and document when the student leaves the activity location.
- **The cost of transportation and the drug and alcohol panel will be at the student's expense.**

- If the student refuses drug and alcohol panel testing, they will be subject to dismissal from the nursing program.
- If a urine drug and alcohol panel are deemed positive, a second test will be conducted for verification of the original urine specimen.
- Results from the testing laboratory will be reported to the Assistant Dean of Pre-licensure Nursing at the THSON. The THSON will ensure confidentiality of the results only to the student, appropriate THSON administrators, and faculty.
- A positive drug and/or alcohol screen may result in dismissal from the nursing program.
- A negative panel will not necessitate further testing, and no further action will be taken. The student will be notified that they can return to THSON, classroom, and clinical/practicum activities and be allowed to make up any missed opportunities during said activities.
- If the panel is positive for the presence of drugs or alcohol, or if the student refused to submit to screening, the following steps will be initiated:
  - A conference will be held, within five business days, with the student involved faculty member(s), Assistant Dean of Pre-licensure Nursing, and a counselor from the UWG Counseling Center to discuss the incident in a caring environment. Concerns about the student and their well-being, behavior, performance, and academic consequences will be discussed.
  - The student will execute a written agreement to seek an initial substance abuse evaluation and counseling with a UWG Patient Advocate or Counselor or a certified or licensed professional capable of providing this service. The student must sign an informed consent form from the consulting agency/provider to allow the release of the evaluation results to be provided to the Assistant Dean of Pre-licensure Nursing of the THSON. The student is required to follow any treatment plan, which may be recommended because of the substance abuse screening and evaluation. Refusal of the student to sign the agreement or failure to comply with any recommended treatment following substance abuse evaluation and counseling will result in dismissal from the nursing program.
  - Reinstatement to the THSON requires compliance with current progression policies, a negative drug and alcohol screening, completion of all recommended treatment or support services, and agreement to participate in random screenings at the student's expense. Students must also participate in ongoing support services if recommended by the UWG Counseling Center or a licensed provider.

**IMPORTANT:** Students must be aware that a state examining board has the right to refuse to grant authorization to test for NCLEX and/or RN licensure to any individual regardless of educational qualifications based on reportable offenses found on a background check, falsification of application for licensure, felony convictions, and other moral and legal violations specified by that state board of nursing.

# Master of Science in Nursing Programs

## MSN Programs of Study

The THSON offers an MSN degree with two programs of study in either education or health systems leadership.

Courses in the program are 100% online and asynchronous. **However, practicum experiences will require in-person activities at a practicum site.** Both concentrations require an in-person practicum experience in which students must complete 500 hours of practicum experience. Students complete 200 hours of practicum during the core courses and 300 hours of practicum during their final two semesters of the program. During the final two practicum courses, students will complete a capstone project. Students are responsible for identifying a preceptor, and course faculty must approve the preceptor. Please see the MSN Practicum & Capstone Project Handbook for more information.

### Health Systems Leadership

The Nurse Leader/Manager track integrates the caring philosophy into organizational management. Its core and cognate courses provide study central to advanced nursing management and financial practice. The nursing concentration courses offer content and practice in nursing and healthcare administration and finance, relevant to primary, secondary, and/or tertiary settings in rapidly changing times. The track requires 35 credit hours for completion. The required practicum focuses on administrative and financial management in healthcare organizations.

**Nursing Education:** The Nursing Education track integrates the caring philosophy to address innovations in curriculum, instructional skills and strategies, the development and use of educational technology, and educational assessment and evaluation. Students will also develop expertise in health education and promotion, patient education, professional development, or college/university teaching. -The track requires 35 credit hours for completion. The required practicum focuses on functioning as a nurse educator in an academic or clinical setting.

## Program Orientation

Students will have an opportunity to attend a pre-program orientation. Orientation will be offered in person and will have a synchronous virtual option for students unable to attend in-person. The orientation will include information relevant to being successful in the program. Other informational sessions will occur as needed.

## Clinical Experiences

MSN students must complete a total of 500 hours of clinical during the program. Students will complete 200 hours of clinical experiences during the MSN core curriculum. Information on the clinical requirements will be in each course that requires clinical hours.

Students will complete 300 hours during the practicum courses, which include the MSN Capstone Project. Students will complete the practicum hours under the instruction of a UWG faculty member and with a preceptor. The majority of the practicum hours must occur at the practicum site. Practicum placement must occur at a site that UWG contracts with and is the responsibility of the MSN student. The Graduate Studies Associate will provide students with the listing of contracted sites.

## MSN Capstone Project

Students completing an MSN Degree from the THSON will engage in a scholarly capstone experience. Under the guidance of a faculty member, the student will plan, implement, and evaluate a capstone project directed toward the student's chosen program of study.

The capstone experience allows the student to demonstrate a synthesis of knowledge gained throughout the MSN program. The capstone experience is rooted in collegial collaboration between the student, the faculty member, and an experienced professional in the student's concentration.

The capstone project:

- Is action-oriented and addresses an issue or problem-focused in the student's area of concentration (i.e., nursing education or health systems leadership/leader/manager).
- Aligns with the strategic priorities of the organization within which the project occurs.
- The MSN program admission offer is based upon the student's plan to complete all courses and practicums in the state-listed as a residency on the UWG Admissions Application. If the student relocates residency during the program, the THSON can only guarantee continuation in the state where UWG offered initial admission approval. Please contact the THSON Graduate Studies Associate if residency state has changed since submitting the UWG application or considering a change of residence in the future.
- Proof of all health and professional requirements must be on file in the THSON before participation in any clinical/practicum activity.
- It is the student's responsibility to provide the required clinical documents to the THSON by the stated **deadline of July 1** for enrollment in the fall semester. Clinical/practicum files are complete when current documents have been uploaded to ACEMAPP Assure, and the requirements have been met. Please see Appendix C for a list of documents required.
- Failure of students to complete all items on the Health and Professional Requirements Checklist for the following courses:
  - NURS 6211, & NURS 6219 will result in a penalty of 5% of the total possible course grade if the items are not completed by the following due date: July 1.

- An additional 5% penalty will be applied to NURS 6212 & NURS 6220 for delinquent items not updated by January 1 before the beginning of each track's second practicum.
- **Students without a complete clinical/practicum file by the second week of the semester will be dropped from their courses.**
- Students are responsible for submitting documents to the THSON via ACEMAPP Assure and ensuring that their file is complete and current for each semester of enrollment in clinical/practicum coursework.
- Students will NOT be allowed to participate in clinical/practicum learning activities without the required documentation.
- If the student is not allowed into a practicum site due to a criminal background check, the student will not complete the nursing program successfully and must withdraw from the program. Any prior criminal history will be revealed on a criminal background check.

## Clinical Policies and Requirements

### Clinical Practice Information

#### Participation in Clinical Courses

- Completion of the Health Requirement Checklist must be completed by stated deadlines.
- It is the student's responsibility to meet any additional credentialing requirements for participation at an assigned facility. Please note that, in some instances, there may be associated costs (i.e. badges, additional screenings, liability upgrades) for which the student is responsible.
- Clinical experiences may be scheduled on any day of the week, during any shift, and therefore requires student flexibility. The THSON cannot be responsible for accommodating childcare, work schedules, or any other personal responsibility when scheduling students for their clinical experiences.
- Transportation to and from clinical sites is the responsibility of the student.

### Practicum Placement and Documentation

In addition to the [Health & Professional Requirements Checklist](#) requirements, clinical agencies require additional documentation and orientation materials for student clearance. Completion of these required materials may take place outside of the scheduled class dates for a given semester. Therefore, non-compliance may delay start times for students.

Students must also submit in a timely manner upon request their completed and signed [Preceptor Qualification Form](#) (to be pre-approved by faculty) and the [Practicum Facility Form](#) (needed for THSON to be sure there is an active and current agency contract in place prior to the practicum experience).

## Practicum Preceptor Guidelines

The student is responsible for finding a practicum site and a preceptor with the assistance of the Graduate Studies Associate and in consultation with their Faculty Capstone Advisor. A contract must be executed between the THSON and the practicum site before the student can begin their practicum. For additional preceptor information, please refer to the Graduate Practicum & Capstone and book. This handbook will serve as a resource guide for preceptors and students in partnership with the THSON.

## Recommendations for Elevation and Treatment following Practicum Exposure to Blood or Body Fluids

Students who sustain exposure to blood and/or body fluids while participating in university-related clinical activities should immediately notify the staff nurse responsible for the patient, the clinical instructor, and the Assistant Dean of Prelicensure Nursing. The student is expected to follow the policies and procedures for the institution in which the incident occurs regarding reporting and necessary follow-up procedures. The student may choose to receive treatment in the Emergency Department of the institution or a nearby institution at their own expense. Faculty must initiate a Post-Exposure Counseling Checklist for the student. A representative from the healthcare facility should communicate clearly to the student the post-exposure Guidelines and necessary follow-up treatment. Reporting, treatment, and follow-up procedures should be documented in the student's record by the instructor.

## Educational Doctorate in Nursing Education (EdD)

### Program Orientation

Students will have an opportunity to attend a pre-program orientation. Orientation will be offered in person and will have a synchronous virtual option for students unable to attend in-person. The orientation will include information relevant to being successful in the program. Other informational sessions will occur as needed.

Students must attend the online synchronous orientation for NURS 9019 Comprehensive Exam and for each dissertation course (NURS 9020, NURS 9021, and NURS 9022).

## Academic Integrity

To ensure academic integrity, the THSON vigorously affirms the importance of an Honor Code as defined by the THSON Undergraduate and Graduate Student Handbook. Therefore, to detect and prevent plagiarism, faculty members at THSON now use an originality tool called Turnitin to compare a candidate's work with multiple online sources. Turnitin reports a percentage of similarity with multiple online sources and provides links to those specific sources. However, the tool itself does not determine whether or not a paper has been plagiarized. Instead, the individual faculty member must make that judgment.

## Program Completion Requirements

The THSON expects students to complete the EdD program with reasonable continuity. Students must complete the Ed.D in Nursing Education degree within seven years from the start date. To successfully complete the EdD program and earn the degree, students must complete the following:

- Complete all required coursework as published in the plan of study.
- Earn a grade of Satisfactory in NURS 9019 Comprehensive Exam.
- Complete a minimum of 15 credits of dissertation coursework. Courses that count toward the dissertation are NURS 9019 Comprehensive Exam, NURS 9015 Dissertation, NURS 9020 Developing the Nursing Dissertation Proposal, NURS 9021 Applied Nursing Inquiry, and NURS 9022 Advanced Nursing Inquiry
- Successfully complete and defend a dissertation research study, including writing a complete dissertation document and presenting the dissertation to the UWG faculty.
- Submit a final approved dissertation document to ProQuest.

## Comprehensive Exam

After completing all required coursework, students must enroll in NURS 9019 Comprehensive Exam. Students must successfully complete the comprehensive exam by earning a Satisfactory grade to progress to the dissertation phase of the program. The THSON [Comprehensive Exam Guidelines](#) provide the process for the comprehensive exam.

## EdD Dissertation

After successful completion of the Comprehensive Exam, students will progress to the dissertation phase of the program. The THSON [Dissertation Guidelines](#) provide all information and guidelines for the dissertation phase.