



Graduate Program Student Handbook

2022-2023

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Welcome from the Dean

On behalf of the faculty and staff of the University of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM), I welcome you to our Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program. At our School of Nursing (SON), you will find excellent nurse educators who will serve you in meeting your goals. We are thrilled you are now part of our family and a student of the first MSN program in Arkansas with a focus on public health.

It is an exciting time to further your degree. We are seeing the complexity of nursing change with a paradigm shift to focusing delivery of care toward preserving the health and well-being of the public. Our goal is to further educate your nursing professional role. We want to empower you as a community investigator, public health data analyzer, and a disease control educator, as well as increasing your nursing knowledge on general preventive health care. You will work extensively with other graduate prepared nurses, policy developers, government leaders, and community members to determine and implement action necessary to promote public health.

We are proud of your accomplishments thus far and are eager to see you flourish in your future as a graduate prepared nurse. Welcome home!

Dr. Brandy Haley, PhD, RN



Welcome from the Graduate Program Coordinator

Congratulations on your admission to the University of Arkansas at Monticello School of Nursing Graduate Program. Choosing to continue your education will provide you with many opportunities to enhance your professional career. The UAM SON is committed to provide a supportive learning community that promotes student success and lifelong learning. We look forward to helping you achieve your educational goals.

Dr. Christine Felts, PhD, RN

Communication

This handbook may be updated as necessary. Students are notified of handbook changes by messages sent through campus electronic mail. All students enrolled in the UAM SON are expected to monitor their UAM email on a routine basis. Email communications will be sent to the student's UAM email account. Students should use their UAM email account for all communications with UAM SON faculty and staff.

Mission and Philosophy

Mission

The mission of the SON is to strive for excellence in the preparation of nursing graduates to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to advance the discipline of nursing.

The MSN Program strives for excellence in the preparation of advanced nursing graduates through the following goals:

- demonstrate excellence through practicum experiences with populations across the lifespan;
- demonstrate nursing judgment to guide nursing practice specializing in public health, and;
- demonstrate leadership through a commitment to professional practice, lifelong learning, and implementation of evidence-based practice.

Philosophy

The University of Arkansas SON faculty believes that master's prepared nurses specializing in the field of public health, use nursing knowledge to influence health policy, research, and professional practice in many academic and workplace settings. The program framework is based on the curricular elements and expected outcomes identified by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) the Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education (<https://www.aacnnursing.org/AACN-Essentials>). The program emphasizes master's prepared nurses as public health nurse leaders, interprofessional team members, and scholars who advance the nursing profession.

Public Health Nurse Role

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2022), a graduate degree will prepare the nursing graduate for a wide variety of specialty practice areas, including the public health nurse specialty. The AACN (2022) states the following:

Public health nurses focus on preserving the health and well-being of the public. These specialists are licensed professional nurses who participate in activities related to population health, health promotion, disease prevention and control, and community education. Though their responsibilities vary by role and location, master's- and doctorally-prepared public health nurses often manage clinics in various state and community settings (e.g., immunizations, well-child, health screenings), investigate communicable disease cases to determine sources and implement action necessary to

curtail the spread of disease; analyze data to identify needs and service gaps for individuals, families, and communities; provide education regarding disease control and prevention as well as general preventive health care to individuals and groups; and implement programs that address environmental and population health risks. These nurses work collaboratively with community leaders, government officials, teachers, parents, and other providers in areas related to community and population health. (para. 19)

MSN Program Outcomes

Graduate Program Strands with Outcomes

At the completion of the Master of Science in Nursing program, the graduate will demonstrate competency in the following seven strands: (1) critical thinking, (2) research, (3) nursing process with a focus on public health, (4) leadership, (5) communication, (6) teaching/learning principles, and (7) professionalism. The student achieves program outcomes through the following student learning outcomes:

Strands	Outcomes
Critical thinking	Synthesize theoretical and empirical knowledge from nursing and other healthcare team members that are vital for nursing judgement and practice.
Research	Translate evidence to develop health care practices in a culturally and ethnically diverse global society
Nursing Process	Implement the role of master's-prepared nurse as part of the interprofessional team with a focus on improving patient outcomes.
Leadership	Function as a leader and change agent to promote holistic patient-centered care and population health
Communication	Express self professionally both orally and in writing, and with clarity, persuasiveness, and coherence using standard conventions of communication
Teaching/Learning	Integrate scholarship, a spirit of inquiry, and innovation to support healthcare organizations and nursing excellence.
Professionalism	Exemplify professional values and standards, best practices, and the commitment to lifelong learning in the role of the master's prepared nurse.

UAM School of Nursing Master of Science in Nursing Program Content

Content topics such as theory, research, policy development, leadership, public health, epidemiology, Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN), and interprofessional practice are taught in this program to expand the students' knowledge base and enrich their nursing practice to improve processes, health care delivery, and outcomes for patients and populations.

Accreditation

The Associate of Applied Science in Nursing (AASN) program and the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program is approved by the Arkansas State Board of Nursing. The AASN and BSN programs are accredited by the National League for Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (NLN CNEA). Accreditation was granted February 27, 2018 and is effective through February 29, 2024. The Master of Science Nursing program will seek accreditation through the NLN CNEA following the acceptance of the first student cohort.

Faculty and Staff

Administration/Faculty			
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Graduate Program Information

Master of Science in Nursing (with a focus on Public Health) Program

The MSN in Public Health degree is a 37-hour degree and aligns with the professional nursing curricular elements and expected outcomes identified by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education (<https://www.aacnnursing.org/AACN-Essentials>). The AACN Essentials (2021) concepts include clinical judgment, communication, compassionate care, diversity, equity, and inclusion, ethics, evidence-based practice, health policy, and social determinants of health. These concepts for nursing practice will be taught by core faculty at UAM as well as contracted adjunct faculty. This program includes instruction in community and rural health, disease prevention, health education, community health assessment, nursing theory, epidemiology, public health statistics and evidence-based nursing practice, public health principles, preventive medicine, public health policy and regulations, public health care services and related administrative functions, public health economics and budgeting, social determinants, and nursing professional standards and ethics.

The program prepares RNs to respond to the complex social, legal, ethical, and public health policy implications affecting the public. The degree is offered as a full-time and part-time track and is available to RNs with a technical nursing diploma, Associate of Applied Science in Nursing (AASN) and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree.

RNs entering the program with either a technical nursing diploma or an AASN degree will receive their undergraduate BSN degree at the completion of graduate coursework. RNs

choosing this path will receive 39 credit hours held in escrow until completing all undergraduate coursework and the two designated graduate courses (Advanced Pathophysiology and Advanced Health Assessment). Students entering the RN to MSN program may lack up to 9-credit hours of undergraduate pre-requisite courses. The SON already has an RN to BSN program. RNs entering the RN to MSN track will take the same undergraduate BSN courses, except those courses will be offered in an online format. Students entering the RN to MSN track can finish in 36 months (full-time) or the maximum amount of seven years (part-time). If a student in the RN to MSN track opts to stop and earn their BSN, a change in major will be executed. The BSN degree will only be awarded at the completion of the two previously mentioned graduate courses (Advanced Pathophysiology and Advanced Health Assessment).

RNs entering the program with a BSN degree will start graduate coursework during the summer. Students entering this program track can finish in 24 months (full-time) or the maximum amount of five years (part-time).

Upon immediate AASN program completion, graduates from the UAM School of Nursing AASN program who are interested in earning their BSN and MSN degree will automatically qualify for advanced placement within the online RN to MSN course sequence. The AASN graduate must successfully pass the National Council for Licensure Exam (NCLEX) RN licensure exam with verification of current valid, unencumbered Arkansas RN license by June 30. Failure to obtain an Arkansas RN license by June 30 will result in no further RN to MSN nursing specific course enrollment until Arkansas RN licensure is obtained. Any remaining general education and nursing supportive requirements for the RN to MSN program must be completed prior to completion of course requirements for the BSN degree. All RN to BSN course grades must be a “C” or greater for progression/graduation.

Currently enrolled UAM AASN students interested in the rolling enrollment into the online RN to MSN program must request in writing to the Dean of Nursing by March 1. UAM AASN students are given priority admission into the RN to MSN program and are required to complete the same general education and supportive courses as students enrolled in the pre-licensure BSN program. This rolling enrollment program allows UAM AASN graduates to complete general education and supportive nursing coursework during enrollment in the online RN to MSN program. UAM AASN graduates may progress through the program using a 12-month accelerated option or a 24-month extended option. The nursing sequence of courses begins during Intersession and follows the online plan of study developed for the RN to MSN program.

In addition to the MSN degree, we offer a Post-master’s Certificate in Public Health Nursing. The 13-credit hour certificate will be available to RNs who already have a master’s degree in nursing and a desire to further their experience. Post-master’s nursing certificates allow RNs to grow in their careers and take on more substantial healthcare roles.

Curriculum Outline by Program Track

MSN full-time plan of study. These students have already earned their BSN degree. Courses in each phase must be completed before moving to next phase. Some courses may be taken with prior phase courses if finishing up that phase. All courses will be offered via distance learning. Length and Semester offered may vary.

Course Title and Credit Hours	Length	Semester
Theoretical & Ethical Foundations of Advanced Nursing Practice (phase 1) – 3 credits	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Epidemiology (phase 1) – 3 credits	8 weeks	Fall (1st 8 weeks)
Research & Evidence Based Practice in Public Health (phase 1) – 3 credits	8 weeks	Fall (2nd 8 weeks)
Statistics Reasoning in Public Health (phase 1) – 3 credits	15 weeks	Fall
Advanced Pathophysiology (phase 2) – 3 credits	8 weeks	Spring (1st 8 weeks)
Advanced Pharmacology* (phase 2) – 3 credits	8 weeks	Spring (2nd 8 weeks)
Advanced Health Assessment* (phase 2) – 3 credits	8 weeks	Spring (2nd 8 weeks)
Social Determinants of Health (phase 2) – 2 credits	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Public Health Policy and Economics* (phase 3) – 4 credits	15 weeks	Fall
Public Healthcare & Education* (phase 3) – 4 credits	15 weeks	Fall
CAPSTONE Public Health Leadership, Management, and Evaluation* – 6 credits	15 weeks	Spring

A grade of B or better is considered passing. Only one “C” is allowed in any course. Further Grades of C, D’s or F’s will not be accepted.

*Indicates practicum hours are required during the course.

Students must enroll in sequential semester coursework. No semester may be taken off without prior Program Coordinator approval.

MSN part-time plan of study. Semester length varies. Student must complete CAPSTONE by month 60 after enrollment. Length and Semester offered may vary.

Course Title and Credit Hours	Length	Semester
Theoretical & Ethical Foundations of Advance Nursing Practice – 3 credits (phase 1)	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Epidemiology – 3 credits (phase1)	8 weeks	Fall (1st 8 weeks)
Statistics Reasoning in Public Health– 3 credits (phase 1)	15 weeks	Spring
Research & Evidence Based Practice in Public Health– 3 credits (phase 1)	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Advanced Pathophysiology– 3 credits (phase 2)	8 weeks	Spring (1st 8 weeks)
Social Determinants of Health– 2 credits (phase 2)	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Advanced Pharmacology*– 3 credits (phase 2)	8 weeks	Fall
Advanced Health Assessment*– 3 credits (phase 2)	8 weeks	Spring (2nd 8 weeks)
Public Health Policy and Economics*– 4 credits (phase 3)	15 weeks	Fall
Public Healthcare & Education*– 4 credits (phase 3)	15 weeks	Spring
CAPSTONE– 6 credits Public Health Leadership, Management, and Evaluation*	15 weeks	Fall

A grade of B or better is considered passing. Only one “C” is allowed in any course. Further Grades of C, D’s or F’s will not be accepted.

*Indicates practicum hours are required during the course.

Students must enroll in sequential semester coursework. No semester may be taken off without prior Program Coordinator approval.

RN to MSN full-time plan of study. The same courses offered after completion of the already established BSN courses. RNs entering this track option must have completed 54 hours of undergraduate BSN pre-requisite coursework and will be given 39 credit hours held in escrow toward completion of their BSN degree. The following outline is for the full-time plan of study. All courses will be offered via distance learning. Length and Semester offered may vary.

Course Title and Credit Hours	Length	Semester
Role Transition (BSN core course) – 3 credits	2 weeks	Interession
Health Promotion (BSN core course) – 4 credits	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Healthy Aging (BSN core course) – 4 credits	15 weeks	Fall
Community Health Nursing (BSN core course) – 3 credits	15 weeks	Fall
Upper-Level Elective (BSN degree requirement) – 3 credits	8 or 15 weeks	Fall
Upper-Level Elective (BSN degree requirement) – 3 credits	8 or 15 weeks	Fall
Advanced Pathophysiology (MSN course) – 3 credits Undergraduate BSN course waived	8 weeks	Spring (1st 8 weeks)
Advanced Health Assessment* (MSN course) – 3 credits Undergraduate BSN course waived	8 weeks	Spring (2nd 8 weeks)
Nursing Research (BSN core course) – 3 credits	15 weeks	Spring
Leadership and Management in Professional Nursing (BSN core course) – 4 credits	15 weeks	Spring
Theoretical & Ethical Foundations of Advance Nursing Practice (phase 1) – 3 credits	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Epidemiology (phase 1) – 3 credits	8 weeks	Fall (1st 8 weeks)
Research & Evidence Based Practice in Public Health (phase 1) – 3 credits	8 weeks	Fall (2nd 8 weeks)
Statistics Reasoning in Public Health (phase 1) – 3 credits	15 weeks	Spring
Advanced Pharmacology* (phase 2) – 3 credits	8 weeks	Spring (2nd 8 weeks)
Social Determinants of Health (phase 2) – 2 credits	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)

Public Health Policy and Economics* (phase 3) – 4 credits	15 weeks	Fall
Public Healthcare & Education* (phase 3) – 4 credits	15 weeks	Fall
CAPSTONE Public Health Leadership, Management, and Evaluation* – 6 credits	15 weeks	Spring

A grade of B or better is considered passing. Only one “C” is allowed in any course. Further Grades of C, D’s or F’s will not be accepted.

*Indicates practicum hours are required during the course.

Students must enroll in sequential semester coursework. No semester may be taken off without prior Program Director approval.

RN to MSN part-time plan of study. Semester length varies based on enrollment. Students can finish as early as 60 months and must complete CAPSTONE by month 84 after enrollment. Length and Semester may vary.

Course Title and Credit Hours	Length	Semester
Role Transition – 3 credits (BSN core course)	2 weeks	Intersession
Upper Level Elective– 3 credits (BSN degree requirement)	8 or 15 weeks	Summer
Community Health Nursing– 3 credits (BSN core course)	15 weeks	Fall
Advanced Pathophysiology– 3 credits (MSN course) Undergraduate BSN course waived	8 weeks	Spring (1st 8 weeks)
Advanced Health Assessment*– 3 credits (MSN course) Undergraduate BSN course waived	8 weeks	Spring (2nd 8 weeks)
Nursing Research– 3 credits (BSN core course)	15 weeks	Fall
Upper Level Elective– 3 credits (BSN degree requirement)	8 or 15 weeks	Fall
Leadership and Management in Professional Nursing– 4 credits (BSN core course)	15 weeks	Spring
Health Promotion– 4 credits (BSN core course)	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Healthy Aging– 4 credits (BSN core course)	15 weeks	Fall
Theoretical & Ethical Foundations of Advance Nursing Practice– 3 credits (phase 1)	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Epidemiology – 3 credits (phase 1)	8 weeks	Fall (1st 8 weeks)
Statistics Reasoning in Public Health– 3 credits (phase 1)	15 weeks	Spring
Research & Evidence Based Practice in Public Health– 3 credits (phase 1)	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Social Determinants of Health– 2 credits (phase 2)	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)

Advanced Pharmacology*– 3 credits (phase 2)	8 weeks	Fall
Public Healthcare & Education*– 4 credits (phase 3)	15 weeks	Spring
Public Health Policy and Economics*– 4 credits (phase 3)	15 weeks	Fall
CAPSTONE– 6 credits Public Health Leadership, Management, and Evaluation*	15 weeks	Spring

A grade of B or better is considered passing. Only one “C” is allowed in any course. Further grades of C, D’s or F’s will not be accepted.

*Indicates practicum hours are required during the course.

Students must enroll in sequential semester coursework. No semester may be taken off without prior Program Coordinator approval.

The **Post-master's Certificate in Public Health Nursing** offers the same courses as the MSN in Public Health degree. RNs must have completed the three direct care courses in their MSN program. The following outline is for the certificate. All courses will be offered via distance learning. Length and Semester may vary

Direct Care Courses - These courses must have been in the earned MS/MSN degree: Advanced Pathophysiology, Advanced Pharmacology, Advanced Health Assessment		
Summer Start		
Social Determinants of Health - 2 credits	8 weeks	Summer (June-July)
Statistics Reasoning in Public Health - 3 credits	15 weeks	Fall
Public Health Policy and Economics* - 4 credits	15 weeks	Fall
Public Healthcare & Education*- 4 credits	15 weeks	Spring
Fall start		
Statistics Reasoning in Public Health - 3 credits	15 weeks	Fall
Public Healthcare & Education* - 4 credits	15 weeks	Spring
Public Health Leadership, Management, and Evaluation* - 6 credits	15 weeks	Spring
<p>*Course has a practicum component:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health Policy and Economics – 135 hours • Public Healthcare & Education – 135 hours • Public Health Leadership, Management, and Evaluation – 180 hours <p style="text-align: right;">Total Credit Hours = 13</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Total Practicum Hours = 270-315 hours</p>		

A grade of B or better is considered passing. Only one “C” is allowed in any course. Further grades of C, D’s or F’s will not be accepted.

*Indicates practicum hours are required during the course.

Students must enroll in sequential semester coursework. No semester may be taken off without prior Program Director approval.

Instructional Method

All courses offered in the MSN and RN to MSN program are offered via distance learning through the Blackboard Learning Management System. Distance learning offers both academic rigor and student flexibility and requires self-direction and excellent time management skills. All students are expected to be present in online classes through weekly participation. Refer to the course syllabus for specific distance learning attendance requirements. A variety of learning resources are available through each distance learning course, such as Shadow Health Digital Simulation. Time management is crucial to success in a graduate program. Blackboard technical support is offered by the Office of Instructional Technology and Web services. Additional information and policies regarding distance education can be found in the [UAM Distance Education Student Handbook](#). Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the recommended internet browsers for using Blackboard.

Blackboard is accessed at <https://uamont.blackboard.com/ultra/institution-page>. Students may access Blackboard courses on the first-class day of the semester. Login credentials are the UAM username and password.

Advising and Course Enrollment

Each student will be assigned to a graduate program advisor. The advisor will assist the student with program planning, concerns with academic work, and resources to support student success. The plan of study is developed in conjunction with the academic advisor and should be reviewed each semester prior to enrollment in the following semester. After the advising session, the plan of study is signed by both the advisor and the student.

The graduate program advisor will enroll students in courses following each semester advising session for the following semester. Courses should be taken in the sequence outlined in the graduate program plan of study. The student is responsible for notifying the advisor for any of the following occurrences:

- A grade of “C” or below is earned in any required graduate course.
- A grade of “D” or below is earned in any required undergraduate course.
- The student needs to withdraw from a course or add a course in any semester.

Student Identification

Students are required to wear photo identification in clinical/practicum areas in accordance with the Arkansas State Board of Nursing Rules and Regulations. Students should request a UAM Graduate Nursing Practicum Student ID by accessing the [Student ID Badge Request Form](#) on the UAM website. A professional photo with neutral background should be uploaded when completing the request form. Select “graduate student” as the card type and MSN or RN-MSN for the student degree type. You can add your RN credentials under special instructions.

Financial Aid

The UAM Financial Aid Office provides information and application materials for grants, loans, and scholarship aid. Graduate students must be enrolled in at least three (3) graduate hours to qualify for a federal direct student loan. Additional information can be found at [Financial Aid](#).

SON Scholarships

A current FAFSA must be on file with UAM prior to scholarships being awarded. The School of Nursing has several nursing specific scholarships available to applicants. After applying to the MSN program, students should then apply for scholarships by completing the [Master of Science in Nursing Scholarship Application](#).

Other Student Resources

The UAM academic calendar and class schedules can be found at <https://www.uamont.edu/academics/class-schedules.html>. The academic calendar contains beginning and ending dates for each semester, course drop dates, university breaks, and graduation dates.

Graduate Program Admission Requirements

Admission Requirements

The MSN in Public Health degree will seek accreditation from the NLN CNEA, which is the accrediting body for the AASN and BSN degrees. Program admission will begin each spring and the program will start in the Summer 1 term. The deadline for admission is March 1. Admission review takes place through March and final decisions are made six to eight weeks after the application deadline. The student must have full acceptance to the University and be issued a UAM student ID number prior to making application to the SON. Applicants to the MSN program must meet the following admission requirements:

- Acceptance into UAM with an assigned student ID.
- Unencumbered active RN license in the state of residence. The RN must have a compact license with multi-state tag if completing practicum hours in a non-resident state.
- Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.75 or above (on a 4-point scale). Students with less than a 2.75 GPA may be considered if program space is available. The GPA is calculated on the last 60 undergraduate credit hours.
- Official transcripts from all colleges/universities attended should be sent to the Office of Admissions AND the SON. The transcripts MUST show conferral of a nursing degree (diploma in nursing, associate degree in nursing, or bachelor degree in nursing).
- Letter grade of “C” or better in a basic undergraduate statistics course.
- One year of RN working experience is required. The requirement is waived for RNs entering the RN to MSN track if the student is working while in the program.
- Complete electronic SON application to the MSN in Public Health program.
- Two letters of recommendation. See [MSN Admission Guidelines](#) for specifics.

Admission to the MSN program is competitive and applicants are ranked by the GPA calculated from the last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework. There is no standardized entrance exam for application.

Experiential Learning Credit

Experiential Learning is one of the ways a graduate student may be awarded appropriate credit for demonstration of knowledge gained from life experience or professional experiences outside

the classroom. This learning may result from a professional certification, in-service training or experience acquired during your nursing career. The University may award up to six credit hours of experiential learning credit toward a graduate degree. Credit will only be awarded for courses that include practicum hours, with no more than 2 credit hours of experiential learning credit awarded per course. There is a fee associated with requesting the experience as credit. Any student interested in experiential learning credit should contact the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Practicum Compliance Requirements

Clinical Legal Documents

Students are required to complete the following prior to beginning the practicum experience:

1. Criminal background check (annually in July)
2. Drug screen (annually in July)
3. Documentation of:
 - a. Immunization status as outline below
 - b. Current CPR certification
 - c. Current, unencumbered license to practice as a registered nurse in the state where practicum hours will be completed
4. Any other requirements of the clinical agency where practicum will occur

Student must be compliant with all requirements for practicum courses before registering for courses (July 1st for fall course enrollment). Students should upload required documentation into the student screening and compliance system (PreCheck):

- Copies of required immunizations (see list below) and health insurance.
- CPR certification and TB Test results prior to expiration while enrolled in practicum courses.

Note: It is the student's responsibility to complete clinical compliance prior to beginning the practicum.

All students must complete the SON Authorization to Release Required Clinical Information form and upload to PreCheck. The form is located on the Blackboard Graduate Program organization page.

Background Check

All students must satisfactorily complete a criminal background check prior to enrolling in a practicum course (July 1st for fall classes) and as required by the clinical practicum facility. Results must be received prior to beginning the practicum experience. Many of the health care facilities affiliated with UAM SON require student background checks and drug screening. A background check may take several weeks to complete. The background checks are conducted by PreCheck, a national screening and compliance company. Detailed instructions for requesting the background check through PreCheck will be emailed to students and posted on the Blackboard Graduate Student organization page.

Results of the background check are reported to the SON Graduate Program Director. An unsatisfactory background check may result in dismissal from the nursing program.

The background check must be completed annually when the student is enrolled in a practicum course. Background checks are at the expense of the student and remain confidential.

The SON may be required to report information revealed in the background check as noted in the Arkansas State Board of Nursing Rules, Section II, A1. The SON will report information revealed on the background check of students licensed to practice in another state to the appropriate state board of nursing and will follow all stipulations placed on the student as prescribed by the student's state board of nursing.

Drug Screen

The purposes of the SON drug screen policy are to comply with regulations of health care agencies, to provide optimal care to patients, and to support the university and SON zero tolerance policy related to illicit use of substance, as stated in the [UAM Student Handbook](#).

A negative drug screen is required prior to enrolling in a practicum course (July 1 for fall classes) and is also required upon request of faculty, preceptor, or clinical site. A ten-panel drug screen (including screening for amphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cocaine metabolite, marijuana metabolite, methadone, methaqualone, opiate, phencyclidine and propoxyphene) will be completed by a PreCheck approved facility.

Student failures to submit to a drug screen, attempting to tamper with, contaminate, or switch a sample will result in the automatic dismissal from the nursing program and will be reported to the university Dean of Students in Student Affairs.

- Detailed instructions for requesting the drug screen through PreCheck will be emailed to the student and posted on the Blackboard Graduate Student organization page.
- Students may be required to repeat the drug screening at their own costs.
- Drug screens and/or alcohol tests may be required at random and for cause.

Positive Drug Screen Results

- A positive drug screen or alcohol test in a graduate student will result in the student's removal from the program.
- To be considered for re-admission to the SON, the student must submit a Petition to the Graduate Program Director.
- Re-admission to the nursing program is not guaranteed.
- If a student with a positive drug or alcohol test is re-admitted to the nursing program, random drug and/or alcohol screens will be performed at the student's expense throughout the program.
- A second positive test will render the licensed student ineligible to continue or re-enroll in the program.
- **Graduate Students who are licensed to practice in the state of Arkansas:** Positive drug screen results will be reported to the Arkansas State Board of Nursing as required in the Arkansas State Board of Nursing Rules, Section II, A1. The SON will follow all stipulations placed on the student as prescribed by the Arkansas State Board of Nursing.
- **Graduate Students who are licensed to practice in another state:** The SON will report positive drug screens of students licensed to practice in another state to the appropriate

state board of nursing and will follow all stipulations placed on the student as prescribed by student's state board of nursing.

Immunizations

Guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention

1. HEPATITIS B VACCINE with dates of each injection or declination completed. Three (3) HBV injections are needed. At least the first two of three injections must have been completed and received before clinical practice in a student role. The third HBV vaccine must be received and documented before beginning the first practicum semester.
2. TUBERCULOSIS SKIN TEST with date and results or T-Spot TB test results.
 - a. If a TB skin test is positive it should be verified with a T-Spot.
 - b. If T-spot is positive or if only a positive skin test is submitted, a chest x-ray must be completed and updated yearly.
 - c. If a skin test is positive and the T-spot is negative, a T-Spot must be updated yearly
 - d. Students that present with documentation of completed treatment should have an annual review of symptoms by physician/advanced practice nurse and provide to UAMSON.
3. MEASLES, MUMPS, and RUBELLA: Date of illness, serologic evidence of immunity, or vaccination dates as recommended by CDC.
4. TETANUS-DIPHTHERIA-PERTUSSUS (Tdap) VACCINE: Routine booster of Td vaccine should be given at 10-year intervals.
5. VARICELLA (chicken pox): A two Injection series; Reliable history of varicella disease, a positive titer, evidence of immunity, or vaccination dates.
6. COVID-19 Vaccinations: UAM does not mandate that students who are enrolled in SON programs receive a COVID-19 vaccine series (and any recommended boosters), however they are strongly encouraged to do so. Clinical facilities that partner with UAM establish their own worksite policies, and they may require that faculty members and students be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 in order to work in the facility or be assigned to specific areas. Therefore, students electing not to receive the COVID-19 vaccine series or boosters may not be able to complete program requirements, which will result in non-progression through the program. Clinical facilities may also request information regarding COVID-19 vaccination status for any student and faculty assigned to the site. Faculty and students who have received the COVID-19 vaccine should submit a copy for their file.
7. Any other immunization that may be required by clinical agencies or CDC guidelines.

CPR Certification

Basic Life Support for Healthcare Providers (American Heart Association). A copy of your certification should be uploaded to PreCheck.

Professional Liability Insurance

Professional liability insurance is required for clinical practice in a student role and is provided through the University of Arkansas to nursing students through an established student fee. Coverage applies to performance of duties as a nursing student in a clinical course. A copy of the professional liability insurance policy is on file in the UAMSON office.

Nursing Licenses

Students must obtain verification of current Registered Nurse (RN) license from the issuing board of nursing where practicum will occur. To verify a license, student should visit their state board of nursing website, verification of license, find license information, save to computer, and upload the license verification into PreCheck.

Academic and Professional Standards

Students are responsible for meeting the standard of academic and professional performance specified by the graduate program. These standards include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Graduate Practicum Expectations
- Maintenance of an unencumbered registered nurse license
- Compliance with the nurse practice act(s) which regulate the student's license(s)

Practicum Expectations

Students are expected to be familiar with the following practice and competency standards as applicable to practice:

The ANA Scope and Standards of Practice (American Nurses Association, 2021)
The ANA Guide to the Code of Ethics for Nurses (ANA, 2015)
The Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goals
Agency Policies and Procedures
Public Health Code of Ethics (American Public Health Association)
Public Health Nursing Scope and Standards of Practice (American Nurses Association)
Graduate QSEN Competencies (QSEN Institute, 2012)

Guidelines for Planning Practicum Experiences

These general guidelines are provided to assist students in planning practicum experiences. Each practicum course requires that a specific number of hours be completed in an approved public health practicum setting. The course syllabus will indicate the specific number of required practicum hours.

Please keep in mind that practicum experience can only occur while students are regularly enrolled in courses. Students cannot complete practicum experience outside of the regular semester, and practicum experience should not be planned during official university holidays. Before beginning any practicum experience, it is your responsibility to review the course objectives and practicum requirements with your preceptor. You will log practicum hours according to the guidelines provided in the course syllabus.

Students are responsible for following the procedures of each institution regarding onboarding as a student. Even if employed by an institution, there may be additional paperwork to complete. Be sure to check with the educational director, HR, or student coordinator (as appropriate) in each practicum site in which you have experience to determine what additional paperwork may be needed before you begin your experience.

Participant Responsibilities in Graduate Practicum

To assure quality in the learning experiences of students in the professional program of studies, assignments are designed to facilitate development of advanced nursing roles.

Faculty Responsibilities

- Assume responsibility for understanding course requirements and outcomes.
- Ensure overall coordination of the experience.
- Provide student with orientation to course expectations/requirements.
- Establish and maintain communication with preceptor and student.
- Meet (virtually or face-to-face) with the student according to an arranged schedule to review progress in meeting course outcomes and goals for personal and professional growth.
- Evaluate student practicum performance utilizing data provided by preceptor and student.
- Provide overall evaluation of the practicum experience through collaboration with the agency, preceptor, and student.

Preceptor Responsibilities

- Complete UAMSON [Preceptor Orientation](#) and email proof of completion to the Graduate Program Coordinator
- Provide UAMSON with a current curriculum vitae which reflects affiliation with the practicum site.
- Assume responsibility for understanding course requirements and outcomes.
- Serve as a professional role model in public health.
- Provide the student with ongoing constructive feedback that relates performance standards to student performance.
- Provide suggestions that will assist and improve student performance to achieve course and practicum objectives.
- Communicate ongoing student progress to the student and faculty and contribute to the student's summative evaluation.
- Provide on-site supervision of student.

- Complete Preceptor Evaluation of Student Performance using the electronic evaluation form.

Please note: A copy of the preceptor agreement, preceptor form, preceptor vitae, credentials, site agreement, and proof of preceptor orientation must be on file in the UAMSON before the practicum experience can commence on site.

Student Responsibilities

- Assume responsibility for securing preceptors and sites for clinical experiences and ensure valid preceptor and site agreements are attained. For each clinical experience, students should obtain a signed Preceptor Agreement, Preceptor Form, and a current curriculum vita from each preceptor which reflects the preceptor's affiliation with the clinical site.

Please Note: Preceptor and site requests for fall semester are due March 15; requests for spring semester are due October 15.

- Assume responsibility for understanding course requirements and outcomes.
- Develop personal practicum objectives in collaboration with preceptor and communicate personal practicum objectives to course faculty.
- Obtain course faculty approval prior to beginning practicum experience.
- Assume responsibility for accomplishing personal practicum objectives.
- Maintain open communication with practicum preceptor and faculty to promote achievement of practicum objectives.
- Complete practicum site required orientation and confidentiality/HIPAA compliance requirements prior to beginning practicum experience.
- Adhere to the Professional Appearance policy as found in the "Professional Appearance/Dress Code Guidelines" section of this handbook, including any specific practicum site requirements related to appropriate dress during the practicum experience.
- Maintain punctuality and adhere to established practicum calendar as predetermined with preceptor; notify preceptor and course faculty at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled experience when schedule cannot be met.
- Assume responsibility for scheduling and maintaining conferences with faculty.
- Maintain practicum journal and review with faculty on a scheduled basis.
- Complete self-evaluation at the end of each course.
- Complete a practicum preceptor evaluation.

Preceptor Guidelines/Qualifications

Graduate students work closely with preceptors for guided practice. Positive learning experiences are best assured when students select their own preceptors and sites. This fosters development of networking skills in the student and assures preceptor availability at a time and geographic location suitable to the student's needs. Student preceptors should be prepared at the master's level or above. Preceptors should be experientially prepared to guide students in the respective area of practicum course focus.

Preceptor Qualifications

- Must be master's prepared or higher
- Must hold an unencumbered license to practice in the state in which he/she practices
- Must submit license, credentials, and curriculum vita to UAMSON
- Must have at least two years of experience in the clinical practice area

Practicum experiences, sites, and preceptors will be negotiated between the student, preceptor, course faculty, and MSN Program Coordinator.

Practicum Site Placement Requests

All graduate nursing students will need clinical practicum hours. To begin practicum experiences, legal documents need to be completed. Clinical Affiliation Agreements (CAA) and preceptor agreements must be processed by the School of Nursing prior to the student participating in any clinical practicum experiences.

The University and School of Nursing have numerous current ongoing facility CAAs with many health care systems and hospitals in Arkansas. Facility/agency CAA approval can take 6 or more weeks to process, especially if the systems require their own CAA rather than the UAM CAA. Submitting required clinical documents before the due dates will help expedite approval. See the Blackboard Graduate Student organization page for practicum experience CAA request form and preceptor packet.

Professional Appearance/Dress Code Guidelines

The primary purposes of professional attire guidelines are for identification, cleanliness, neatness and to project a professional image to practicum agencies and clients.

As a graduate student, you are assuming new roles and responsibilities. Your public presentation (i.e., your dress, make-up, hair style, facial expressions, verbal and non-verbal communication, demeanor) projects an image to clients and colleagues. A positive professional image will promote the respect, power, and authority you deserve. Your image speaks for you before people can get acquainted with you or determine your level of expertise. Your appearance also reflects on the School of Nursing and influences the school's reputation and image.

When you go into a practicum setting, you are being observed by clients, family members, nurses, administrators, and physicians. Your appearance affects their impression of your potential for success. Professional dress and behavior are expected. Many agencies have dress codes that exceed UAMSON guidelines. Students will comply with the dress code of the agencies in which practicum will occur. Any questions should be discussed and clarified with the practicum preceptor prior to participation.

Business Attire – Professional business attire is expected whenever you are representing UAMSON. Some practicum situations and activities may require the student to wear business attire with or without wearing a lab coat.

Lab Coat – Unless otherwise specified by the practicum site, a clean, white lab coat should be worn when the student is engaged in UAM practicum activities.

Name Badge – Complete the following steps to order your official name badge that is required for all practicum experiences:

- 1) Go to [Student ID Badge Request Form](#) on the UAM website
- 2) A professional photo with neutral background should be uploaded when completing the request form.
- 3) Select “graduate student” as the card type and MSN or RN-MSN for the student degree type. You can add your RN credentials under special instructions.
- 4) You should also request the practicum badge under special instructions.

MSN Capstone Project Overview

The MSN Capstone Project integrates the best evidence to improve quality of nursing care in public health settings. Students are expected to determine areas of needed change, plan actions for implementation, and make recommendations to improve practice in public health. In addition, the recommendations will be disseminated through a variety of outlets to appropriate populations of interest.

See the MSN Project Guidelines found on the Graduate Nursing Program Organization in Blackboard.

Academic Policies and Procedures

Academic Conduct Code

The University of Arkansas at Monticello upholds academic integrity as foundational to appropriate conduct within the university setting. Academic dishonesty comprises any action that undermines the professional standards and integrity of the academic programs at UAM.

The UAMSON subscribes to the definition of academic dishonesty and associated penalties indicated for Graduate Programs in the UAM Catalog. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to 1) Cheating, 2) Plagiarism, and 3) misuse of University documents.

Civility and Professional Conduct

To articulate and cultivate habits for being a member of the UAM SON community, we have adopted the following statement and community norms to help guide its members in their interactions.

The UAMSON is dedicated to creating and maintaining a civil and professional community of success that supports respectful discourse, openness to opposing points of view, and passionate dialogue with an intention to secure common ground.

To achieve civility and professionalism within the program and facilitate a culture of success, it is essential for its members to uphold the following norms:

- Assume goodwill – approaching situations positively
- Communicate respectfully – listening actively and being timely
- Send the mail to the right address – taking the problem to the person involved and not going around or behind the involved person or up the chain of command without first attempting resolution with the involved person

- We are all responsible for creating a civil, professional, and inclusive learning environment

Actions that are uncivil will result in written student counseling.

Academic Progression

To progress in the program, students must adhere to:

- Governance and policies of the Graduate school found in the UAM Catalog.
- Academic and Professional Standards (as outlined in this handbook)
- Clinical Compliance Requirements (as outlined in this handbook)
- Maintenance of an unencumbered registered nurse license
- Compliance with the nurse practice act(s) which regulate(s) the student's license(s)

Grade Requirements

- A grade of "C" or lower may be earned in a graduate nursing course only once
- If a second "C" or lower is earned in a graduate nursing course, the student will not be allowed to progress in the program and will not be allowed to return to the program.
- A student may only repeat a nursing course in which a "C" or lower has been received one time throughout the program. A student may only withdraw from a course one time.
- Grades of "D" or "F" are not accepted for credit.

Testing Policy

The graduate program utilizes several resources to maintain academic integrity. Students taking online tests should develop a plan to ensure consistent internet service. If your personal internet is slow or known to fail, you should consider using your local library or other consistent internet source.

Voluntary Withdrawal

Students who desire to withdraw from the program for personal reasons must notify the professor and Graduate Program Coordinator of their intentions. The student must apply to the UAMSON for readmission if he/she wants to reenter the program. Student readmission is not guaranteed after withdrawal.

Dismissal

Failure to comply with the stated Academic and Professional Standards outlined in this handbook will result in dismissal from the program.

Readmission

Students who voluntarily withdraw, or who do not maintain continuous enrollment must apply to both UAM and the UAMSON for readmission if they desire to continue in the program. Students must be eligible to be considered for readmission. Students must meet the minimum GPA requirement and must submit a new plan of study.

Time Limit for Degree Completion

According to the UAM Catalog, it is a requirement of the UAMSON that RN to MSN students complete their degree within seven consecutive calendar years from the semester in which the student was admitted to the program and MSN students complete the degree within five consecutive calendar years from the semester in which the student was admitted to the program.

Graduation

Students must complete an application for graduation according to the following schedule:

Graduation	Application Deadline
December	April 15 th
May	November 12 th

Completion of MSN Capstone Project:

Projects must be satisfactorily defended prior to graduation. Final project requirements must be submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator two weeks prior to defense.

Complaint/Grievance Procedure

Students are expected to follow the chain of command to resolve issues or complaints. This means that the first action should always be to address the concern with the course professor. If a resolution cannot be reached, the Graduate Program Coordinator should be contacted. Finally, if the issue remains unresolved, the UAMSON Dean should be contacted.

Appeal Process

A student appealing a grade or other disciplinary action is required to adhere to the following process:

1. Submit a written request for a conference to the instructor whose grade or disciplinary action is in question.
2. If the problem is not resolved with the instructor, the student should schedule an appointment with the Graduate Program Coordinator.
3. If resolution is still not reached, the student will meet with the School of Nursing dean.
4. The student may then appeal to the Graduate Program Review (GPR) Committee. The student should submit a written request for a hearing to the Committee Chair within 72 hours of the conference with the dean. The GPR Committee Chair will schedule a special meeting within five (5) business days if no regular meeting is scheduled.
5. The student may then appeal the GPR Committee decision to the UAM Graduate Council using the procedure outlined in the UAM catalog.

Graduate Program Review Committee

Graduate students can participate in program governance by serving on the Graduate Program Review (GPR) Committee. Students may participate remotely or attend meetings on campus. One student representative shall be elected by the student body from the MSN program to serve on the committee, which meets twice each semester. Student representatives may vote.

The GPR Committee plans, revises, and evaluates the curriculum to assure quality education. The GPR Committee assures the program of learning adheres to the criteria established by the Arkansas State Board of Nursing, the Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (CNEA), and the American Nurses Association.

The GPR Committee also serves to review and make recommendations regarding supplies, audio-visual materials, computer software, and library holdings for the Graduate Program. Additionally, the GPR Committee reviews student appeals, grievances, and/or disciplinary actions. The student representative will be excused during these proceedings.

Professional Organizations

Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing

Students in graduate programs shall be eligible for membership if they have achieved excellence according to the standards approved by the Society.

Graduate students must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5. GPAs should be computed according to the policies of the university. Complete at least ¼ (one quarter) of the program of study. Refers to the total number of semester hours, not limited to nursing courses only.

National Professional Organizations

Many national organizations exist related to the student' specialty and offer reduced memberships to students.

- American Nurses Association <https://www.nursingworld.org/>
- Association of Public Health Nurses <https://www.phnurse.org>

Netiquette Guide for Online Courses

Netiquette is online etiquette. It is important that all participants in online courses be aware of proper online behavior and respect each other.

It is expected that all participants use appropriate language for an educational environment, as follows:

- Use complete sentences
- Use proper spelling and grammar
- Avoid slang and uncommon abbreviations
- Do not use obscene or threatening language

Remember that the University of Arkansas at Monticello values diversity and encourages discourse. Be respectful of differences while engaging in online discussions. For more information about Netiquette, see the Core Rules for Netiquette by Virginia Shea.

Graduate Student Confidentiality Agreement

Students are required to submit a signed copy of the confidentiality agreement. Access the Student Confidentiality Agreement on Blackboard and submit the agreement to the Graduate Nursing Program Organization Page in Blackboard.

Graduate Student Handbook Statement of Understanding

The University of Arkansas at Monticello School of Nursing (UAM SON) requires each graduate student to read and understand the Graduate Student Handbook and the [UAM Student Handbook](#). Each student should access the statement in Blackboard, read it, then sign and submit the statement to the Graduate Nursing Program Organization on Blackboard. The statement reads as follows:

“I, _____, have read and understand the UAMSON Graduate Student Handbook and the University of Arkansas at Monticello Student Handbook. I am aware that these handbooks are the primary source for policies and procedures in the UAMSON graduate program, and understand that I am responsible to adhere to all applicable policies outlined. I understand that the policies and procedures are subject to change. It is my responsibility to review the student handbooks while enrolled in the UAMSON online Graduate Nursing program.”

_____	_____
Print Name	UAM Student ID#
_____	_____
Signature	Date Signed

References

- American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2022). *Master's education*.
<https://www.aacnnursing.org/Nursing-Education-Programs/Masters-Education>.
- National League for Nursing. (2012). *Outcomes and competencies for graduates of practical/vocational, diploma, baccalaureate, master's practice doctorate, and research doctorate programs in nursing*. Wolters Kluwer.