

**USC** Suzanne Dworak-Peck  
School of Social Work  
*Department of Nursing*

# Student Handbook

## Policies & Procedures

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## Mission and Vision

The Department of Nursing opened within the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work at the University of Southern California in 2015. This department is committed to achieving distinction in and preparing leaders in advanced research, education, and nursing practice. The Department aims to work collaboratively with our Social Work colleagues and others, to improve patient care by preparing outstanding advanced practice nurses who provide evidence-based practice, and transform the healthcare system by preparing leaders in healthcare policy and research. The specific goals of the Department of Nursing are to prepare graduates for advanced nursing practice, leadership in scholarship and research, and leaders in education. The Nursing Department focuses on social, contextual, ecological issues, and social determinants of health.

The Nursing Department offers graduate degree programs. The current program is an MSN-level advanced practice nursing Family Nurse Practitioner program. This program prepares learners who have earned a baccalaureate degree in nursing to become socially aware, clinically excellent, advanced practice nurses who will be leaders in education and practice.

The philosophical beliefs of the Nursing Department support the basis for quality education, research, continued career mobility, and lifelong learning, concomitant with society's advancing technological changes and evolving healthcare needs. The philosophy is based on that affirmed by the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and is predicated on our beliefs regarding individuals, society and the environment, health and healthcare delivery, nursing, advanced practice nursing, scholarship, and competency.

## Philosophy

Each individual is a unique physical and psychosocial being with the potential for growth influenced by heredity, family structure, environment, spiritual beliefs, and cultural values. Each person possesses inherent dignity and worth, and therefore has the right to self-determination. It is the responsibility of the nurse to ensure that the individual is informed to make responsible decisions that affect his/her life. Each person is in constant interaction with both an internal and external environment. This interaction shapes a personal perception of health, and directs the choices and human behaviors that promote growth and wellness.

Society is a group of individuals with specific and/or collective activities, interests, needs and cultures. Society structures itself in order to achieve common purposes and goals,

and supports members' external environment. This structure is rapidly changing, and societies can be local, regional, national, and global.

Health is a dynamic state of physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being that fluctuates over the lifespan. Health is a subjective state influenced by both internal and external factors, which result in an understanding and appreciation for wellness and health that is unique to each individual. Optimal health does not preclude the existence of illness; health and illness can co-exist. Persons with chronic or debilitating illness may experience individually-determined optimal levels of health through adaptation.

Nursing is an art and an expanding science that focuses on the promotion and maintenance of the health of individuals, families, and communities. The practice of nursing is based on a scientific foundation. Nursing utilizes a holistic approach, committed to the delivery of compassionate and competent care. Nurses are knowledgeable providers of healthcare, deliberative in and responsible for their actions while collaboratively working with others to provide quality, effective care. All levels of nursing share some core beliefs that expands as professional consciousness evolves and the individual progresses academically and experientially to develop professional identity.

Advanced Practice Nursing is based on the synthesis of scientific, experiential, aesthetic and interpersonal knowledge. The Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) has a thorough understanding of foundational nursing through earning a baccalaureate degree in nursing science. After an advanced preparation in nursing practice, including advanced pathophysiology and pharmacology, APRNs assess patients, prescribe and interpret diagnostic tests, make diagnoses, and initiate and manage treatment plans including prescribing medications. Along with providing skilled clinical services, APRNs bring a comprehensive perspective to healthcare including health promotion, disease prevention, and health education for patients and their families. The APRN may function independently or collaboratively and is accountable as a direct provider of care. APRNs promote interdisciplinary collaboration to help assure positive health outcomes. APRNs assume leadership roles in legislation and public service to identify and implement changes in the delivery of healthcare. Nursing has a moral responsibility to the common good and an obligation to provide culturally sensitive, high-quality care for all human beings. APRNs assume responsibility for their continued professional growth as nurses, professional accountability and participation in health care education. The APRN is prepared to deliver evidence-based practice for patients with common complex chronic and acute conditions throughout the life cycle.

Nursing education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge that fosters development of an individual for a productive life. Curricula are designed to prepare learners to achieve the nursing program outcomes so that graduates are able to meet the challenges of the evolving healthcare climate and provide excellent clinical care. This includes engagement, assessment, interventions, and evaluation. Educational experiences are clearly articulated, planned, collaborative, and interactive. A major goal of these experiences is the integration of research approaches and research findings into classroom discussion and clinical practice. The faculty's responsibility is to serve as a resource and mentor, to facilitate the development of learners' knowledge acquisition, clinical judgment, and psychomotor skills. The faculty provides flexibility in the curricula, recognizing that learners possess diverse abilities and employ different learning strategies. Learners' knowledge and skill is evaluated objectively. The faculty believes that all learners are capable of assuming responsibility for personal achievement. Learners are expected to be accountable for their actions and behaviors and are responsible for competently practicing within legal, ethical, and regulatory standards.

Competence is the ability to perform a task according to a predetermined standard. Each graduate of the nursing department possesses fundamental competence to enter advance practice nursing at the level the learner was prepared. To assist in this process, the faculty has developed competency based educational programs congruent with the philosophy, organizing framework, and program outcomes. A group of essential competencies with related critical behaviors, grounded in evidence based practice and current best practices form the basis for the performance standards used to determine the learner's achievement.

Scholarship is the ongoing process of seeking knowledge, interpreting knowledge, and synthesizing knowledge, all in the support of science and the scientific basis for clinical practice.

The faculty's beliefs about individuals, society, health, nursing, advanced practice nursing, nursing education, competence, and scholarship provide the basic foundation for the organizing framework. The department organizes curriculum to facilitate student learning, achieve student learning outcomes, and to attain program learning outcomes. The curriculum prepares graduates for obtaining certification and to succeed as culturally competent and clinically excellent nurses, leaders, educators and scholars.

## Accreditations and Memberships

The master's degree program in nursing at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (<http://www.ccneaccreditation.org>).

The USC MSN-FNP program conforms to the California Board of Registered Nursing's "Standards of Education for Nurse Practitioner Programs" ([California Code of Regulations Section 1484](#)) and have been approved by the BRN (<https://www.rn.ca.gov/education/apprograms.shtml#np>).

The Family Nurse Practitioner Program is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing and its faculty are members of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), the National Association of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF), the American Academy of Nursing (AAN), the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and the California Association of Nurse Practitioners.

Faculty hold memberships and board positions in national organizations as well as in their home state nursing organizations.

## Policies & Procedures

### Compliance Requirements

All enrolled degree/certificate-seeking students must register and complete a background check, drug screening, certifications, and required vaccines and medical tests. The Department of Nursing has contracted with CastleBranch to track and approve all compliance requirements. It is the student's responsibility to maintain, renew, and update each requirement by the expiration date and to keep copies for your personal records.

Follow these instructions to purchase the correct package from CastleBranch:

- Visit: <https://portal.castlebranch.com/UQ51>
- Continue your order with CastleBranch and fill in all information to complete order. If you have your USC email, please use it when registering. If you do not have access to your USC email when you are registering, please use a personal email that you check frequently.

- No further action is required for the background check. Instructions for your drug screening will be emailed to you by CastleBranch once you have placed your order.
- Your account will list the required documents for compliance. Documentation related to the requirements listed below will be found in your CasteBranch account. Upload scanned copies of your documentation to the appropriate requirements. All medical documents must be submitted and approved through CastleBranch. Do not submit any documents directly to the Department of Nursing.

If you are having technical issues with CastleBranch, please contact their service desk: (888) 723-4263.

## **Policy on Background Checks, Toxicology Testing, and Disclosure**

An increasing number of health care facilities require students in the Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) program at the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing at the University of Southern California obtain and pass a background check and drug test in order to participate in clinical facility placements. Consequently, students are required to undergo a background check and urine drug screen when they are conditionally admitted to the FNP program.

Admitted students are required to immediately report all changes in their criminal record (including DWIs or DUIs) and/or disciplinary actions initiated with the Board of Nursing, which occur while enrolled in the FNP program since any conviction or other adverse result may prevent placement at a clinical training site. Failure to report any change in status will result in referral to Director of the FNP program and possible dismissal from the program.

Updated criminal background checks and/or drug testing may be required by clinical affiliates of the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing.

The fees required to obtain a background check, urine drug screen, and any additional tests are the sole responsibility of the student. Students must authorize release of the results of the background check and urine drug screen to the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing and its clinical affiliates. If there is any information in the report that the clinical facility determines disqualifies the student from participating, the student will be responsible for obtaining the necessary documents to correct/explain the information. If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of the clinical facility, the student may not be able to participate in a clinical program and may be unable to complete the requirements for his or her degree.



## University Policy on Alcohol and Other Drugs

USC recognizes that illegal or abusive use of alcohol and other drugs by members of the university community has a detrimental effect on the university's commitment to provide continual excellence in teaching, research and education. Misuse of drugs by students poses hazards both to the individual involved and to the community. Students share with faculty and staff the responsibility for creating attitudes conducive to eliminating the abuse of alcohol and other drugs within the university community.

USC's comprehensive approach to addressing substance abuse emphasizes:

- Taking effective steps to create and maintain a drug-free workplace and educational environment for students, faculty and staff.
- Providing continuous access to prevention, health promotion and medical and behavioral healthcare services, along with referrals to off-campus treatment facilities as appropriate.
- Encouraging individuals who are experiencing problems associated with alcohol and other drugs to seek assessment and treatment.
- Engaging in ongoing self-assessment of university sanctions for the illegal manufacture, distribution, use or possession of drugs and the unlawful possession or use of alcohol. (See "Sanctions" section of this policy for an overview of possible university and criminal sanctions.)

Policy: <https://campusactivities.usc.edu/alcohol-policy/>

## Additional Requirements

### *Pre-Entrance Health Form*

Required health forms must be completed by a healthcare provider and submitted to the School prior to orientation. This document must verify that the student is physically able to participate in his/her program of study, and meets all qualifications outlined in the Department of Nursing Technical Standards for Admission & Graduation Policy.

### *Required Immunizations/Titers*

- Influenza
- Tuberculin: TB Skin Test/PPD or QuantiFERON Blood Test
- Tdap
- MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
- Varicella Zoster
- Hepatitis B
- COVID Vaccination and Booster

### ***Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Certification (CPR)***

Students must choose one of the following CPR BLS certifications:

- American Heart Association - BLS for Healthcare Providers
- American Red Cross - BLS for Healthcare Providers
- Military equivalent training

### ***Online Training Modules and Consent Forms:***

- HIPAA Training
- Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) Blood borne Pathogens
- Confidentiality Statement
- Honor Code Statement
- Student Handbook Acknowledgement of Receipt

### ***RN License***

All students must submit evidence of current nursing licensure from state where clinical and/or capstone courses will be completed.

### ***Urine Drug Screen & Criminal Background Check***

Students must provide information for background check and urine drug screen. This is performed every two years, unless there are site-specific requirements that mandate testing prior to clinical. Instructions for your drug screen and background check will be located in your CastleBranch account.

### ***Health Insurance***

Proof of health insurance as required by USC.

## **Professional Responsibility**

Valid/Current Nursing license in state of residence and clinical placement and/or capstone.

## **Technical Standards for Admissions and Graduation**

Candidates for nursing degrees must be able to meet the minimum standards (listed below) with or without reasonable accommodation:

*Observation:* Students must have sufficient capacity to make accurate visual observations and interpret them in the context of laboratory studies, medication administration and patient care activities. A student must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand. Students must have a sufficient level of hearing to determine both high and low levels of frequency and amplitude (monitor, assess and respond to health needs).

*Communication:* Students must communicate effectively both verbally and non-verbally to elicit information and to translate that information to others. A student must be able to read and write English effectively in order to fulfill academic requirements, and to maintain accurate clinical records on patient care.

*Motor Skills:* Students are required to possess motor skills sufficient to elicit independently information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other manually-based diagnostic procedures. Students should be able to conduct laboratory and diagnostic tests, and carry out physical assessments. Students must possess motor skills required for their specialty's scope of practice. The student must also be able to coordinate fine and gross muscular movements to treat patients in emergency situations. Emergency situations include any circumstance requiring immediate remedy.

*Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities:* The student must be able to develop and refine problem-solving skills that are critical to practice as a nurse. The student must have the ability to measure, calculate, reason, analyze and synthesize objective and subjective data and to make decisions that reflect consistent and sound clinical judgment. Students must possess good judgment in patient assessment, and the abilities to incorporate new information, comprehend three-dimensional relationships, and retain and recall pertinent information in a timely fashion. This includes decision-making in order to maintain safety and security of patients and to behave appropriately with patients, staff, students, supervisors and faculty.

*Behavioral and Social Attributes:* Students must possess the physical and emotional health required for the application of his/her intellectual abilities and the employment of sound judgment in an appropriate and prompt manner. Students must be able to function effectively under physically taxing workloads, and in times of physical and mental stress. Students must display compassion, sensitivity, and concern for others, and maintain professional integrity at all times. Students must be able to adapt to changing environments; display flexibility; accept and integrate constructive criticism and learn to function cooperatively and efficiently in the face of uncertainties inherent in clinical practice. This includes appropriately interacting with individuals, families, and groups from a variety of social, emotional, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds.

*Program Specific Requirements:* In addition to the areas enumerated above, applicants and students must also possess any abilities and skills deemed essential for their particular program. These areas of enumerated skills and abilities are the minimum attributes required of applicants for admission to the specific nursing program and of students who are candidates for graduation.

*Ability to Manage Stressful Situations:* Students must be able to adapt to and function effectively to stressful situations in the classroom and clinical settings (including emergency situations). Students will encounter multiple stressors while in the nursing program; these stressors may be (but are not limited to) personal, patient care, faculty, peer, family, and or program-related.

Admission to the Department of Nursing at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is open to all qualified individuals and in accordance with the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act and the American with Disabilities Act. The Department of Nursing is committed to accommodating the needs of students with documented disabilities, and will do so to the extent possible without compromising the essential components of the curriculum.

## Program Competencies and Terminal Objectives

Competencies	NURS 501	NURS 502	NURS 503	NURS 504	NURS * 505	NURS 507	NURS 600	NURS * 601	NURS 602	NURS 603	NURS * 604	NURS 605	NURS 606	NURS 607	NURS * 608
Scientific Foundations															
Leadership															
Quality															
Practice Inquiries															
Technology / Information															
Policy															
Health Del. Systems															
Ethics															
Independent Practice															

Competencies	Terminal Objectives
Scientific Foundations	Integrates scientific findings from nursing, biopsychosocial fields, genetics, public health, quality improvement, and organizational sciences for the continual improvement of nursing care across diverse settings
Leadership	Recognizes that organizational and systems leadership are critical to the promotion of high quality and safe patient care. Leadership skills are needed that emphasize ethical and critical decision making, effective working relationships, and a systems-perspective

<b>Quality</b>	Recognizes that advanced practice nurse must be articulate in the methods, tools, performance measures, and standards related to quality, as well as prepared to apply quality principles within an organization
<b>Practice Inquiries</b>	Recognizes that the advanced practice nurse applies research outcomes within the practice setting, resolves practice problems, works as a change agent, and disseminates results
<b>Technology / Information</b>	Recognizes that the advanced practice nurse applies research outcomes within the practice setting, resolves practice problems, works as a change agent, and disseminates results
<b>Policy</b>	Recognizes that the advanced practice nurse is able to intervene at the system level through the policy development process and to employ advocacy strategies to influence health and healthcare
<b>Health Del. Systems</b>	Recognizes that the advanced practice nurse applies and integrates broad, organizational, client-centered, and culturally appropriate concepts in the planning, delivery, management, and evaluation of evidence-based clinical prevention and population care and services to individuals, families, and aggregates/identified populations. As a member and leader of interprofessional healthcare system, the advanced practice nurse communicates, collaborates, and consults with other health professionals to manage and coordinate care.
<b>Ethics</b>	Includes matters involving moral principles and social policy including professional guidelines for advanced practice nursing when providing care
<b>Independent Practice</b>	Recognizes that nursing practice, at the master’s level, is broadly defined as any form of nursing intervention that influences healthcare outcomes for individuals, populations, or systems. Advanced practice nurses must have an advanced level of understanding of nursing and relevant sciences as well as the ability to integrate this knowledge into practice. Nursing practice interventions include both direct and indirect care.

## Academic Advisement

Upon enrollment, graduate nursing students are assigned to a Student Success Advisor who will help students understand academic policies and procedures and how to navigate programs of study, as well as monitor progress to ensure completion of required coursework and counseling students on how to improve any performance issues. Students should consult with Student Success Advisor about any program changes, such as a shift in full-time/part-time status, or taking a leave of absence, all of which are subject to approval by the Director of the program of study.

## Registration

Though information may be provided by the university regarding the registration process, students must follow the registration guidelines and timelines established and distributed by the nursing registrar. Registration information is provided each semester via email and the school’s website at ([www.usc.edu/socialwork](http://www.usc.edu/socialwork)) under Student Resources. Students can also find a schedule of course offerings posted in the Schedule of Classes (<https://classes.usc.edu/>).

## Maximum Units

Due to the rigorous demands of the program, students may enroll in a maximum of 12 units per semester. Students are encouraged to register for no more than 6 or 7 units (typically 2 classes) on a given day within the Department of Nursing.

## Attending Correct Class Section

Stability among classes is vital to the ongoing instruction that will take place, and excessive dropping/adding after the first three hours of instruction is disruptive to this process. **No one is allowed to sit in on a course section for which they are not registered.** Students should confirm the accuracy of their class schedule on the first day of class.

## Dropping and Adding Courses

Students may drop or add classes any time prior to the start of the semester if class sections are open and available for the proposed changes. **Classes in the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, Department of Nursing are closed after the first day of class, and no changes will be permitted except in extraordinary circumstances.** Any special exceptions that occur within the first week of classes require advanced approval by the Program Director. Students seeking approval should contact the Nursing Registrar at [nursingreg@usc.edu](mailto:nursingreg@usc.edu).

If you drop a course within the first 20 percent of the semester, you will not be charged tuition for the course and the course will not appear on your academic transcript.

If you drop a course after the 20 percent mark, but before the 45 percent mark of the session, you will not get a refund, but the course will NOT appear on your academic transcript with a mark of "W."

Dropping a course after the 45 percent mark of the session will result in a "W" on your transcript. A mark of "W" does not affect a student's grade point average.

No course may be dropped after the 80 percent mark of the semester.

If a student stops attending a course after the first 20 percent of the semester and before the 45 percent mark of the session without officially dropping the class, the student may be awarded a mark of "UW" (unofficial withdrawal) by the instructor, which is calculated into the GPA like a grade of F. Students are responsible for all of their registered courses and are expected to either complete all courses accordingly or to withdraw from them before the 45 percent mark deadline.

Students who must withdraw from the program should contact their Student Success Advisor. All withdrawals must be requested and processed before the end of the 20 percent mark of the session to be eligible for a refund. Refunds are subject to university guidelines.

## Course Fees

As part of the two on-campus intensives during the MSN program, a \$350.00 course fee is associated with the following courses:

- NURS 502 – OCI #1
- NURS 601 – OCI #2

## Program Track Changes

A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for all students who request a program track change from part-time to full-time status.

## Withdrawal from the University

### Continuous Enrollment

The university requires that all graduate students remain in continuous enrollment each fall and spring semester until degree requirements are met. In certain circumstances, an anticipated break in enrollment may be covered by a time-limited (one or two semesters) leave of absence. (The university allows a maximum of four semesters for leaves of absence.) Such leaves of absence must be applied for and approved, in advance, by the director of student services.

### Leave of Absence

Students who are in good standing with a minimum 3.0 GPA, making satisfactory progress toward the graduate nursing degree, and have a compelling reason to do so, may request a leave of absence for a stated period, usually not to exceed one year at a time. (The university will permit a maximum of four semesters for leaves of absence.) The request for a leave of absence must be made no later than the last day to drop or add courses. A leave of absence form requesting a leave along with a letter requesting a leave must be submitted to your Student Success Advisor and approved by the Program Director. The form must indicate the reason for the leave and the proposed semester to return. An academic plan will be developed to prepare for your re-entry into the program. Students gone longer than two years will need to apply for re-admission through the Graduate School of the University.

## Readmission

Students who have withdrawn from the program in good academic standing, and wish to return, must contact the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Nursing Registrar's office at [nursingreg@usc.edu](mailto:nursingreg@usc.edu) at least eight to 12 weeks prior to your approved re-entry semester. The plan for re-entry will be discussed, along with readjustment to program expectations.

A student who leaves the program without notifying the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work's Department of Nursing has taken an unofficial leave and failed to abide by the continuous enrollment requirement. Former student who have been enrolled for longer than four or more semesters may wish to apply for readmission to the program. Students must contact the Nursing Registrar to assist in the planning of the student's return. Students must submit an application for readmission to the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing, addressed to the Admissions Office and Scholarship Programs, along with updated school transcripts, employment information, an updated autobiographical statement, and at least two letters of reference. The Admissions Office and Scholarship Programs, along with the Program Director, may request an interview and will make a determination regarding the student's request to be readmitted. If the decision is in favor of readmission, the student's application will be submitted to the Graduate School, indicating the School's recommendation and approval of the student's request.

## Dismissal

Dismissal occurs rarely and only when all other appropriate alternatives have been exhausted. Circumstances resulting in this decision may include: grade point average falling below 3.0 at the end of the first semester; a clinical work evaluation which indicates failure to achieve expectations; failure to attend classes or clinical work on a regular basis; or failure to complete assignments. The student may reapply to the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing if he or she wishes. In conjunction with a reapplication, there should be some demonstration that professional/personal growth has occurred.

## Attendance

As a professional school, class attendance and participation is an essential part of your professional training and development at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. You are expected to attend all classes and meaningfully participate. More than 2 unexcused absences in class may result in the lowering of your grade by a half



grade. Additional absences can result in additional deductions. For VAC courses, meaningful participation requires active engagement in class discussions and maintaining an active screen. Having more than two unexcused absences in class may result in the lowering of your grade by a half grade. Additional absences in the live class can result in additional deductions. Furthermore, unless directed by your course instructor, you are expected to complete all asynchronous content and activities prior to the scheduled live class discussion. Failure to complete two asynchronous units before the live class without prior permission may also lower your final grade by a half grade. Not completing additional units can result in additional deductions.

University of Southern California policy permits students to be excused from class without penalty for the observance of religious holy days. This policy also covers scheduled final examinations which conflict with students' observance of a holy day. Students must make arrangements *in advance* to complete class work which will be missed or to reschedule an examination due to observance of a holy day. Policy: <https://orsl.usc.edu/life/calendar/absences/>

## Grading

Final course grades shall be A, B, C, D, F, including designations of +’s or –’s. The university will not record an A+ on your transcript as a final grade. A grade of C- or below is equivalent to failure in all graduate courses, and the course must be repeated.

Within the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, grades are determined in each class based on the following:

1. Grades of A- or A are reserved for student work which not only demonstrates mastery of content but also shows the student has undertaken a complex task, has applied critical thinking skills to the assignment and/or has demonstrated creativity in her or his approach to the assignment.
2. A grade of B+ denotes work that has demonstrated a more than competent understanding of the material being tested in the assignment.
3. A grade of B signifies the student has done adequate work on the assignment and meets basic course expectations.
4. A grade of B- indicates a moderate grasp of content and/or expectations.
5. A grade of C or C+ would suggest a minimal grasp of the assignments, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement.
6. Grades between C- and F denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in all aspects of a student’s performance on the assignment.

Grade reports will not be automatically mailed to you at the end of each semester. Students may access an electronic report of your grades on *OASIS* on the USC website: [www.usc.edu](http://www.usc.edu).

## Withdrawing and Repeating Courses

A graduate nursing student may only withdraw and/or repeat a course once. Failure or withdrawal after the first 20 percent of the course on the second attempt will result in dismissal from the program.

## Grades of Incomplete (IN)

A grade of Incomplete (IN) should only be assigned in the case where work cannot be completed because of documented illness or some other emergency occurring after the 45 percent mark of the semester.

When an IN grade is given in lieu of a final grade, you and the instructor will negotiate and sign an agreement with regard to what work remains to be completed and within what time frame in order for the IN grade to be removed from the record with a final grade given. While the university permits a time limit of up to one year to complete work for which an IN grade has been entered, the contract between you and your faculty member will determine the terms for completion. If you are unable to meet the terms of the contract, you must renegotiate those terms directly with the faculty member. Failure to do so may result in a failing grade. **Students will not be permitted to move forward until all outstanding IN grades have been resolved.**

## Other Marks and Their Definitions

### IP (In Progress)

Interim mark for a course exceeding one semester.

If the IN is not removed within the designated time, the course is considered “lapsed,” and the grade is changed to an IX. An IX will be calculated into the grade point average as 0 points. Courses offered on a Credit/No Credit basis for which a mark of IN is assigned will be lapsed with a mark of NC or NP and will not be calculated into the grade point average. A student may petition the Committee on Academic Policies and Procedures (CAPP) for an extension of time for the removal of an IN; however, extensions beyond the specified time limit are rarely approved if the student has enrolled in subsequent semesters. In all cases, a petition for an extension of time for removal of an IN must have school approval and include a statement from the instructor explaining what is needed to

complete the course and why the student should be given further time for completion.

### ***Credit / No Credit Courses – Clinical Courses***

Following is a list of Credit/No Credit courses in the MSN program:

- NURS 502
  - NURS 505
  - NURS 601
  - NURS 604
  - NURS 608
- A grade of B quality or better is required in both the non-clinical and clinical components of the course to achieve credit (CR) for the course.
  - Students must achieve an average of 83% in the non-clinical assessments for this course, which is 40% of the course grade.
  - Students must also achieve an 83% in the clinical component of the course, consisting of completion of clinical hours, Typhon entries, and a passing grade on the Clinical Evaluation Tool.
  - The clinical component is 60% of the course grade.

#### **CR (Credit)**

Passing mark for non-letter-graded courses. Equivalent to B quality or better for graduate courses; no effect on GPA. Refer to Grading Options and Enrollment Status

(<https://arr.usc.edu/services/grades/gradinghandbook/gradingpolicies.html#Grading%20Option%20and%20Enrollment%20Status>).

#### **NC (No Credit)**

Less than equivalent of B quality for a graduate, non-letter-graded course; no effect on GPA.

#### **Bridge Course (NURS 500)**

This course is graded Credit/No Credit. Students will earn a passing grade if their total score for the class is at least 80% of the possible points from participation and exams scores. Students who are required to take this course as a pre-requisite for enrollment into the MSN-FNP program must pass with Credit for the course. Students who withdraw or do not earn credit for the course may not repeat the course.

## **Progression in the Program**

The University reserves the right to dismiss any students who do not maintain the required standards of scholarship, or whose conduct or clinical performance demonstrates a lack of fitness for a health profession.

## **Disputing a Grade**

When a student complains of prejudiced, capricious or unfair evaluation, a basis for appeal may exist. Faculty members are required to justify disputed grades. The student must meet with the faculty member to review the grade in question. Every effort should be taken to resolve the matter at this level. If the student is dissatisfied with the instructor's response, the student may appeal in writing to the director of student services. Such an appeal must be received by the end of the following semester (excluding summer) after the student has received the disputed grade. The Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing Administration will review the matter, and a decision will be given to the student following the review process.

## **Academic Probation**

Graduate nursing students must achieve a B (3.0) grade point average for the entire program. If at any time your grade point average falls below a 3.0, you will be formally placed on academic probation until grade deficiencies have been corrected.

A graduate nursing student must receive a grade of B- (80%) or better in all clinical courses. Graduate nursing students may only receive one C+ or C in any non-clinical graduate nursing course, a failure in any course or a GPA of less than 3.0 will be referred to the director of student services for action.

All students must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 to qualify for the graduate nursing degree.

## **Academic Progress Evaluation and Review**

### **Academic Warning and Dismissal of Graduate Students**

Staff advisors and the Department of Nursing take factors other than satisfactory grades and adequate GPAs into consideration in determining a student's qualifications for an advanced degree. A student's overall academic performance, specific skills and aptitudes, and faculty evaluations will be considered in departmental decisions regarding

a student's continuation in a master's or doctoral degree program. Procedures on disputed academic evaluations are described in SCampus.

## **Professional Conduct**

In order to practice as a nurse practitioner a person must possess a variety of cognitive, sensory, affective, interprofessional and psychomotor skills. These functions are essential to successful progression in and completion of nursing program requirements and are a requirement of each course. Students should carry out their nursing responsibilities and interactions with others in a manner consistent with the professional obligations of the profession. Behavior and communication that is disrespectful to faculty, staff, academic partners, preceptors, patients, and fellow students is disruptive and prohibited. This includes communications that are aggressive or hostile in tone – including but not limited to emails, verbal abuse, shouting, profanity, stalking, swearing, sexually suggestive talk, threatening communication of any kind or any other activity that meets the legal definition of harassment. Students who exhibit a chronic pattern of hostility and intimidation will be issued a Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) and will be referred to the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs to determine if a violation of the Student Code of Conduct has occurred.

## **Professional and Academic Standards**

Graduates of the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing must enter the profession meeting the highest professional and academic standards. Consequently, the school bears a responsibility to ensure students meet the standards for acceptable professional and academic performance. As defined by the Department of Nursing and the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, five areas comprise satisfactory professional and academic progress:

- Abiding by the USC Student Conduct Code
- Abiding by the USC policies regarding academic integrity
- Maintaining an acceptable cumulative grade point average
- Acting in accordance with professional ethics
- Mastering professional competencies.

Violations of the Student Conduct Code and policies regarding academic integrity are governed by policies outlined in SCampus under University Governance and Academic Policies (<https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/>). A student's ability to maintain an acceptable cumulative grade point average, act in accordance with professional ethics (in accordance with the American Nurse Association Code of Ethics) and master

professional competencies is initially governed by the school's procedures for review. Students wishing to appeal must follow procedures the USC Graduate School has set forth and outlined in SCampus under University Governance and Academic Policies.

Students who do not meet satisfactory professional or academic performance requirements at the end of the semester are notified in writing and are subject to the school's student review process. A Level III review will be conducted for students who do not meet the criteria for satisfactory performance at the end of each semester with the goal of remediation before or during the first semester of the concentration year. Students who do not meet satisfactory professional or academic performance requirements at the end of the foundation year will receive a letter informing them of the need for a Level III review.

## **Student Review Process**

To ensure the integrity of the academic process, every effort shall be made to provide a fair, just and expeditious review process. This document represents the official professional and academic review process for the Department of Nursing. The Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, Department of Nursing has charged the Office of Student Services to inform students of their rights and responsibilities, and to provide information and clarification on the professional and academic review process.

## **Types of Review**

### **Level I**

If a problem is identified with student grades, professional ethics and/or professional competencies, the individual academic faculty will meet with the student. For clinical placement issues, the clinical faculty liaison, and the Director of Clinical Placements will meet with the student.

### **Level II**

If the problem with student grades, professional ethics and/or professional competencies persists, the individual academic faculty will meet with the student. If clinical placement issues persist, the director of clinical placements and the clinical faculty liaison will meet with the student.

### **Level III**

If the problem with student grades, professional ethics, professional competencies is still not resolved, the associate dean of clinical education and the Level II group participants (in cases related to clinical work) or the director of student services (in cases related to course work) will meet with the student. In case of clinical

education practicum/placement review, improved performance must be met on the date specified in the Student Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) or the student is subject to dismissal from the program. Please refer to the Clinical Placement Manual (online) for further details on the Clinical Education student review process. Conditionally admitted students who fail to meet the 3.0 GPA requirement by the end of the first semester, are subject to dismissal from the program. Students placed on academic probation who fail to meet the 3.0 GPA requirement by the end of the subsequent semester are subject to dismissal from the program.

## **Student Appeals Process**

In compliance with the academic policies outlined in SCampus under University Governance and Academic Policies (<https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/>), the Department of Nursing has two levels of appeal for disputed evaluation: 1) Instructor and 2) Department Chair. In the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing, appeals to the Dean will be handled by the Program Director.

## **Student Appeal to the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work**

Students wishing to appeal to the director of the graduate nursing program must submit to the director of student services a detailed narrative explaining the reason(s) for the appeal. The student should also outline the outcome/resolution that he or she is seeking. A written decision will be sent to the student after the director of the graduate nursing program decision. Normally, the decision should be sent to the student within approximately 15 days after the review. This time may be extended if necessary. The student should be informed in writing if the decision will be delayed.

## **Student Appeal to the Graduate School**

SCampus specifies the student may appeal dismissals from the program to the Office of the Provost. That appeal should be sent to the associate dean for graduate academic affairs in the Graduate School.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (<https://dsp.usc.edu/>) each semester. You then must obtain a letter of verification for approved accommodations and deliver it to

your instructor as early in the semester as possible. You can contact DSP counselors by phone at (213) 740-0776 or by email at [DSPFrontDesk@usc.edu](mailto:DSPFrontDesk@usc.edu).

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

### Support Systems

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*  
[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*  
[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)



Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call* [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

## Social Media

Social media are an important part of communications between students in the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing. The school welcomes this form of active engagement and exchange, which helps us all build stronger connections with each other. The school has adopted some [guidelines](https://dworakpeck.usc.edu) ([https://dworakpeck.usc.edu/](https://dworakpeck.usc.edu)) to ensure that we make the best possible use of these pages, accounts, and groups.

## Commencement

The university holds a main commencement ceremony each year in early May. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Department of Nursing hosts a more personalized ceremony following the university's ceremony.

Once requirements have been met, degrees may be posted to your official transcript at the end of any semester. Final grades are typically not posted prior to the commencement ceremonies, and only students in good standing at the end of the previous semester with a grade point average of 3.0 or better will be permitted to participate in these ceremonies.

Students will not be permitted to participate in commencement if they:

- have failed a course in the final semester of the program (includes clinical work)
- must re-take a concentration course during the next scheduled semester

Permission is granted only to students in good standing whose anticipated date of completion is within the same calendar year as that commencement ceremony.

Graduation lists are confirmed by the Office of Student Services.

*Dean's List* Students who have achieved a grade point average of 4.0 or better by the end of the fall semester preceding commencement will make the Dean's List. Students on the Dean's List are also recognized at the Dean's Recognition Ceremony and at commencement.

Students are not eligible for the Dean's List recognition if they:

- have received incompletes for any reasons
- have failed a course
- are under investigation for a behavior or an academic integrity violation
- have been sanctioned for a behavior or academic integrity violation
- have been dismissed from a clinical placement

## Dean's Honorable Mention

Students who have achieved a grade point average of 3.95 - 3.99 by the end of the fall semester preceding commencement will receive the "Dean's Honorable Mention" designation. Students are not eligible for the Dean's Honorable Mention if they:

- have received incompletes for any reasons
- have failed a course
- are under investigation for a behavior or an academic integrity violation
- have been sanctioned for a behavior or academic integrity violation.
- have been dismissed from a clinical placement

# Professional Expectations and Conduct

## Classroom Behavior

Faculty and students are mutually responsible for enforcing optimal classroom behavior and thus helping to create an appropriate learning environment for all.

All students shall be given the opportunity to learn in an environment that is free from noise, intrusions and disruptions. Students should remain attentive to the activities of the virtual classroom and behave in a manner that allows others to be attentive. Noise must be avoided and includes, but is not limited to: beepers, cell phones, children, side conversations among students, monopolization of conversation, reading newspapers, and frequent getting up and down while class is in session.

## Attendance for Testing

Students are expected to take tests as scheduled unless an excused absence is obtained from an appropriate course faculty representative before the time of the test. A grade of F will be given to a student with an unexcused absence from a test.

## APA Format

Formal papers submitted for all graduate nursing courses should follow the writing and documentation guidelines of the current Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Previous editions are not acceptable.

## Honor Pledge

The following honor pledge is included and signed on each examination and assignment:  
*"On my honor, I pledge that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this (exam), (assignment), (care plan), (paper), (project). If I violate this agreement, I may be subject to adverse action up to and including dismissal from my Academic Program."*