

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

MSN-FNP
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 (USC) 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.

The Nursing Department offers graduate degree programs. The current program is a Masters in Science Nursing (MSN) level advanced practice nursing Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) 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, scholarship, and practice.

Philosophy

Each individual is a unique physical and psychosocial being with the potential for growth influenced by heredity, 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.

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; working collaborative to provide quality, effective care.

Advanced Practice Nursing is based on the synthesis of scientific, experiential, 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. APRNs have a moral responsibility to the common good and an obligation to provide culturally sensitive, high-quality care for all human beings. 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.

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.ccnaccreditation.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 (AANP) and the California Association of Nurse Practitioners (CANP).

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 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 CastleBranch 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 to 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. 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.

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 the Director of the FNP program and possible dismissal from the program.

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://policy.usc.edu/drug-free/>

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 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 placements.

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.

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: cell phones, children, side conversations among students, monopolization of conversation, turning the camera on and off and frequent getting up and down while class is in session. When attending synchronous sessions, students are expected to have their webcams focused on the student and remain on for the duration of the class time.

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 applies to 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."

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 Associate Dean of Student Affairs to determine if a violation of the Student Code of Conduct has occurred.

Program Competencies and Terminal Objectives

Ten domains constitute the framework for the practice of nursing. Although these domains are discrete entities, the APRN will need to integrate most of these domains in practice and patient encounters. The domains and their descriptors are listed below. More information on the domains, their descriptors, competencies and sub-competencies can be found in the American Association of Colleges of Nursing document

[The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education](#)

- ***Domain 1: Knowledge for Nursing Practice***
Descriptor: Integration, translation, and application of established and evolving disciplinary nursing knowledge and ways of knowing, as well as knowledge from other disciplines, including a foundation in liberal arts and natural and social sciences. This distinguishes the practice of professional nursing and forms the basis for clinical judgment and innovation in nursing practice.
- ***Domain 2: Person-Centered Care***
Descriptor: Person-centered care focuses on the individual within multiple complicated contexts, including family and/or important others. Person-centered

care is holistic, individualized, just, respectful, compassionate, coordinated, evidence-based, and developmentally appropriate. Person-centered care builds on a scientific body of knowledge that guides nursing practice regardless of specialty or functional area.

- ***Domain 3: Population Health***

Descriptor: Population health spans the healthcare delivery continuum from public health prevention to disease management of populations and describes collaborative activities with both traditional and non-traditional partnerships from affected communities, public health, industry, academia, health care, local government entities, and others for the improvement of equitable population health outcomes.

- ***Domain 4: Scholarship for Nursing Discipline***

Descriptor: The generation, synthesis, translation, application, and dissemination of nursing knowledge to improve health and transform health care.

- ***Domain 5: Quality and Safety***

Descriptor: Employment of established and emerging principles of safety and improvement science. Quality and safety, as core values of nursing practice, enhance quality and minimize risk of harm to patients and providers through both system effectiveness and individual performance.

- ***Domain 6: Interprofessional Partnerships***

Descriptor: Intentional collaboration across professions and with care team members, patients, families, communities, and other stakeholders to optimize care, enhance the healthcare experience, and strengthen outcomes.

- ***Domain 7: Systems-Based Practice***

Descriptor: Responding to and leading within complex systems of health care. Nurses effectively and proactively coordinate resources to provide safe, quality, equitable care to diverse populations.

- ***Domain 8: Informatics and Healthcare Technologies***

Descriptor: Information and communication technologies and informatics processes are used to provide care, gather data, form information to drive decision making, and support professionals as they expand knowledge and wisdom for practice. Informatics processes and technologies are used to manage and improve the delivery of safe, high-quality, and efficient healthcare services in accordance with best practice and professional and regulatory standards.

- ***Domain 9: Professionalism***

Descriptor: Formation and cultivation of a sustainable professional nursing identity, accountability, perspective, collaborative disposition, and comportment that reflects nursing's characteristics and values.

- ***Domain 10: Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development***

Descriptor: Participation in activities and self-reflection that foster personal health, resilience, and well-being, lifelong learning, and support the acquisition of nursing expertise and assertion of leadership.

Academic Advisement

Upon enrollment, graduate nursing students will work with staff and faculty to 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 faculty 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) 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. It is not recommended that students enroll in more than 7 units during the summer due to the abbreviated 12-week summer semesters.

In clinical courses, students are expected to be available to complete their clinical hours Monday through Friday. Clinical Placements do not work around student's work schedule.

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.

After the 3rd week of classes (and before the end of the 12th week of classes), students can drop a course; however, that class will appear on the transcript with a mark of “W” (withdrawal). A mark of “W” does not affect a student’s grade point average. Classes cannot be added during this period, and courses cannot be dropped after the 12th week deadline. If a student stops attending a course after the 3rd week of classes and before the end of the 12th week 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 by the 12th week deadline.

Students who must withdraw from the program should contact their advisor. All withdrawals must be requested and processed before the end of the 3rd week of classes to be eligible for a refund. Refunds are subject to university guidelines.

Courses may be added only during the 20 percent mark of the session. After registering, it is the student’s responsibility to officially drop from a course if he or she decides not to continue in a course. All such changes must be processed by Web Registration or by sending an email to the Registration Department. Failure to withdraw officially will result in the mark of “UW,” which is computed in the GPA as zero (0) grade points. A student may drop a course without academic or financial penalty up until the 20 percent mark of the session in which the course is offered. If the course is dropped after the 20 percent mark and before 45 percent of the session, the course does not appear on the official transcript only, but the course tuition and fees will be assessed to the student’s account. If the course is dropped after the 45 percent mark, it will be recorded with a mark of “W” on the official transcript. No course may be dropped after the 80 percent mark of a session. A student may not withdraw from a course in which the student committed or was accused of committing an academic integrity violation. Please refer to the [Schedule of Classes](#) to see session dates.

Filing a Program Change or Leave of Absence

Students who request a change of program or a leave of absence must contact their advisor. The change or LOA is not approved until all steps in the process have been

completed. The student must meet with their academic advisor to review the request. Final approval must be obtained from the registration and student services offices.

Course Fees

As part of the two on-campus intensives (OCI) 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 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 academic advisor and approved by the Director. The request 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 reapply for admission through the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Office of Admissions.

Readmission

If you were granted a leave as a student in good standing and making satisfactory progress towards the MSN degree, you must contact the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Nursing Registrar's office at 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. If it has been longer than four or more semesters and you wish to apply for readmission to the program, you must contact your academic advisor to assist in the planning of your return. You also will need to submit an application for readmission to the school, addressed to the admissions department, along with an updated autobiographical statement and at least two letters of reference. An interview may be requested to make a determination regarding your request to be readmitted. If the decision is in favor of your readmission, your application will be submitted to the Graduate School, indicating the school's recommendation and approval of your 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; failure to complete assignments; or violations of academic integrity. 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 are 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 two 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. 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 and clinical practicum 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://orl.usc.edu/life/calendar/absences/>

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 DSPPFrontDesk@usc.edu.

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](#).

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.

Other Marks and Their Definitions

CR (Credit) - Passing mark for non-letter-graded courses. Equivalent to B quality or better for graduate courses; no effect on GPA.

NC (No Credit) - Less than the equivalent of B quality for a graduate, non-letter-graded course; no effect on GPA. IP (In Progress) Interim mark for a course exceeding one semester.

Incomplete (IN) - Grades of Incomplete should only be assigned in the case where work cannot be completed because of documented illness or some other emergency occurring after the 12th week 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 may not be permitted to move forward until all outstanding IN grades have been resolved.

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. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the deadlines are being met.

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 MSN Director will review the matter, and a decision will be given to the student following the review process.

Academic Probation

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. Students must attain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (B) at the end of their coursework to continue in the program. Exceptions must be reviewed and approved by the director of student services, who will conduct an academic review. All students must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 to qualify for the MSN degree.

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.

Academic Conduct

Academic Integrity: 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 the USC Student Handbook section "Integrity and Accountability: Student Community

Expectations.” Violations in academic integrity will result in a F in the class and may result in dismissal from the program.

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 [USC Student Handbook](#).

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 the USC Student Handbook under University Governance and Academic Policies. 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 the USC Student Handbook 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 School. 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 the USC Student Handbook under University Governance and Academic Policies the Department of Nursing has two levels of appeal for disputed evaluation: 1) Instructor and 2) Dean. 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 review.. 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.

In compliance with the academic policies outlined in the USC Student Handbook under University Governance and Academic Policies, the school has two levels of appeal for disputed dismissal from the program: 1) Dean and 2) Office of the Provost. Students wishing to appeal Dismissal from the program must submit to the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Assistant Dean of Student Affairs 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 review. 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

The USC Student Handbook specifies the student may appeal to the Office of the Provost. That appeal should be sent to the associate dean for graduate academic affairs in the Graduate School.

Support Systems

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the [Office of Equity and Diversity](#) or to

the [Department of Public Safety](#). This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The [Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services \(RSVP\)](#) provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the [American Language Institute](#), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. [Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, [USC Emergency Information](#) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Students with Disabilities: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with [Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) 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 meet with DSP counselors in Student Union 301 Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, please call (213) 740-0776 or email ability@usc.edu.

Social Media

Social media is an important part of communications between students in the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. 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 to ensure that we make the best possible use of these pages, accounts, and groups.

We ask that all students agree to the following guidelines:

Register any USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work-affiliated student group social media page as well as identify the administrator of the page, account, or group, with the school's Student Organization and the Office of Student Affairs.

Explicitly state that the page or group has been created by USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work students and does not officially represent policies, practices, or views of the School. Open membership in any and all such social media groups to everyone. Respect others' views and opinions. Notify Student Organization and the

Office of Student Affairs of the closure or deletion of any such page, account, or group, and/or any administrative change for any such page, account or group.

By participating in the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and its affiliate (Student Organization, caucuses, and interest groups.) social media, USC students and other public users agree they will not do the following: Post material that the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and/or its affiliate groups determine is threatening, harassing, illegal, obscene, defamatory, libelous or hostile toward any individual or entity. Post any identifying information about an individual or an entity (contact information, Birthday, Social Security number, etc.) in the body of personal comments without consent. Post material that infringes on the rights of the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work or any individual or entity, including privacy, intellectual property or publication rights. This includes the improper use of (but is not limited to) images, logos, videos, content, documents, and white papers, among other examples. Post chain letters, post the same comment multiple times, or otherwise distribute SPAM. Post comments under multiple names or using another person's name. Allow any other individual or entity to use personal student identification for posting or viewing comments.

If a user is found to be in violation of any of these standards, the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and its affiliate groups reserve the right to: Ban future posts from people who repeatedly violate the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work's terms and conditions. Remove comments at any time. Immediate threats report to DPS immediately at (213) 740-4321. When providing information please include your name, the concerning behaviors, and who is exhibiting the concerning behaviors. Then report to the Office of Student Services at ssw.student.services@usc.edu.

Commencement

The university holds the main commencement ceremony each year in early May. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work 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

- Must re-take a course during the next scheduled semester

Graduation lists are confirmed by the Office of Student Affairs. Learn more about [Commencement](#).