



VITERBO UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF NURSING

**Direct Entry Master of Science in
Nursing (DEMSN)**

Student Policy Handbook

2026 –2028

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NURSING PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM	4
Philosophy	4
Metaparadigm Definitions.....	4
Key Definitions.....	5
Mission	5
Vision Statement	5
Core Values.....	5
Goals	6
DEMSN Program Student Learning Outcomes	6
Curriculum Conceptualization	6
PLANS OF STUDY.....	8
5 Semester Plan	8
8 Semester Plan	8
Progression and Retention	9
Academic Honesty	9
Viterbo University School of Nursing – Honor Code.....	9
Academic Planning	10
Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI)	10
Attendance	13
Exam Question Analysis.....	13
Formatting Requirements	13
Grade Concerns	13
Grade Appeal Policy.....	13
Formal Complaint Process	13
Methods of Evaluation	13
Nursing Course Transfer Policy.....	14
Nursing Student Success Plan.....	14
Probationary Status in Nursing.....	14
Progression Requirements for Nursing.....	14
Readmission to the School of Nursing.....	15
School of Nursing Grading Scale	15
Transfer of Graduate Credits from other Nursing Programs	15
Withdrawal from Nursing Course(s)	15
CLINICAL	16
Clinical Evaluations	16
Communication with Clinical Partners	16
Clinical Organization Requirements	16
Documentation and Medical Records	16

Professionalism and Attire.....	16
Professionalism.....	17
Attire.....	17
Confidentiality and Privacy.....	18
Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Ability.....	19
Pre-Clinical Requirements	20
Licensing Restrictions	21
Professional Liability Insurance Policy.....	21
Transportation.....	21
Use of Electronic Devices.....	22
HEALTH and SAFETY.....	22
Exposure to Body Fluids.....	22
Students' Health Insurance	22
Student Injuries	22
Emergency ID cards	22
Signature of Agreement – DEMSN Handbook	23

NURSING PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM

Philosophy

We believe nursing is a holistic, caring science. Our core values – caring, integrity, commitment, collegiality, and wisdom – together with our Catholic Franciscan traditions form the basis of a curriculum and learning environment designed to instill a sense of scholarly inquiry, a quest for excellence, and an aptitude for leadership and service in a dynamic healthcare environment. Faculty, staff, and students collaborate in forming an innovative, transformative learning experience while cultivating the importance of diversity, relationship-based care, and a holistic approach to persons.

We recognize the importance of reflection, engagement, and curiosity in developing ethical leaders who embrace sustainability and service. Through a commitment to quality, we strive to provide learning spaces and activities for our students that are grounded in multiple ways of knowing and an evidence informed base to build confidence and competence. We recognize the importance of developing resilience that accompanies participation in self-care practices. (rev. 2020)

Metaparadigm Definitions (rev. 2020)

As an Undergraduate Nursing Program rooted in Catholic Franciscan values, we believe that:

Persons

Persons are multidimensional beings who seek to find meaning and purpose in their lives. Persons have inherent dignity and worth, the capacity for self-healing, and the right to autonomy and self-determination in their life choices. There is unity and inter-connectedness within the individual and with families, communities, societies, and the global environment.

Health

Health is seen as the dynamic balance, integration, harmony, and sense of well-being between the mind, body and spirit. Wellness and illness are personal lived experiences and a natural part of life, learning, and movement towards change and development. Healing is multi-dimensional, creative, unfolding and unpredictable. Healing is a lifelong journey into wholeness in one's own life, family, community, and global relations.

Environment

Environment consists of internal and external factors that influence the health and wellness of persons, families, communities, and societies who impact, create and co-exist within their environment. The interconnectedness of the person and the environment cannot be separated. Environmental fields are infinite, innovative, unpredictable, and characterized by increasing diversity. Environmental and human fields are identified by wave patterns manifesting continuous mutual change. The nurse becomes the environment.

Nursing

Nursing is a discipline grounded in holistic, caring science which honors the inherent dignity and worth of persons and the environment. Nursing is relationship-centered, advocating for and promoting optimal health and wellness of persons, families, communities and systems. These relationships are transpersonal, forming connections using authentic presence and intentionality. The discipline of nursing provides the foundation for professional holistic nursing practice. (rev. 2020)

Key Definitions

Professional holistic nursing practice

Professional holistic nursing practice is built on the foundation of a baccalaureate education, which integrates the liberal arts and sciences with disciplinary knowledge, skills, and values. Professional nursing practice in a dynamic health care environment is independent, collaborative, evidence-informed, interdisciplinary, and interprofessional. Professional nurses are committed to self-care, reflective learning, contemplative practice, and scholarly inquiry.

Learning

Learning is a lifelong endeavor that is self-motivated, reflective, and active. The processes and outcomes of learning include critical analysis and synthesis of knowledge, personal experience, and disciplinary expertise.

Teaching

Teaching is a creative, reflective, and interactive process that facilitates learning. Teaching involves the sharing of knowledge and experience grounded in theory, research, and practice.

Teaching-learning practices

Teaching-learning practices encourage multiple ways of knowing, incorporate active learning strategies, promote critical thinking and clinical judgment, and provide opportunities to develop professional values. Effective teaching and learning is student-centered and takes place in an encouraging, challenging, and respectful environment.

Mission

The School of Nursing prepares nurse leaders for professional holistic nursing practice and advancement of nursing knowledge, through the pursuit of wisdom. Faculty create an educational experience that embraces diversity, equity and inclusion within the values of caring, wisdom, integrity, collegiality, and commitment for faithful service and ethical leadership in a global community. (rev. 2020)

Vision Statement

The School of Nursing will develop leaders whose competence, caring, and commitment to excellence will empower individuals and communities to achieve their highest level of health and well-being.

Core Values (rev. 2020)

Caring

- We recognize and honor the dignity of students, faculty, and those we serve.
- We strive to create an inclusive environment which honors the diverse life experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds of all persons.
- We strive to interact with all persons in respectful and compassionate ways.

Integrity

- We accept personal accountability for all we say and do.
- We strive to base our actions on ethical principles and values that flow from the Franciscan tradition.*

Commitment

- We are committed to pursuing excellence in education and learning.
- We are committed to living by the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion and ensure that all voices are heard.

- We are committed to advocate for the health of all persons and for advancing the profession of nursing.
- We are committed to professional development through scholarly activities.

Collegiality

- We recognize and celebrate diversity and contribute our individual talents to our common work as scholars and professionals.

Wisdom

- We recognize that reflection and discernment are integral to learning and professional growth and are vital for advancing nursing practice.

**Ethical Principles include autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice and veracity.*

**Values include contemplation, integrity, service, hospitality and stewardship.*

Goals

The goals of the School of Nursing are to:

1. Implement a professional nursing curriculum that builds on a strong liberal arts foundation for undergraduate learners and offers specialization, expansion, and/or advancement in nursing practice for graduate and professional learners.
2. Provide an educational experience that emphasizes active learning in a values-based context.
3. Create a collegial environment that facilitates the professional development of students and faculty.
4. Prepare graduates for professional practice in a dynamic healthcare environment.

DEMSN Program Student Learning Outcomes

This program will prepare graduates who:

1. Provide holistic relationship-based care that is congruent with the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion for all persons, families, communities, and society.
2. Partner effectively with clients, health team members, and community stakeholders to achieve health equity for all persons.
3. Synthesize knowledge from the liberal arts, the sciences, health information technologies, and the discipline of nursing to provide professional holistic nursing care.
4. Demonstrate safe, evidence-informed clinical reasoning in designing and providing professional holistic nursing care to achieve quality health outcomes for all persons.
5. Provide respectful and compassionate care through incorporating the values, standards, and ethical principles of the nursing discipline.
6. Construct a professional holistic nursing identity through reflective practice, self-care, and scholarly inquiry.

Curriculum Conceptualization

Nursing as a healing art and science is grounded in compassionate and faithful human service. The nursing curriculum is grounded in a strong liberal arts foundation and understanding of the unique discipline of nursing.

The seal of Viterbo University has four symbols--the cross, a rose, three wavy lines and a torch. Each of these symbols has a meaning for the University. The cross symbolizes Christianity; the three wavy lines indicate the institution's geographic location where three rivers join; the torch of learning symbolizes the primary function of the University; the rose recalls the patroness of the University, St. Rose of Viterbo.

These four symbols, representing themes of spirituality, caring, wisdom and life-long learning, together with curricular emphasis on ethical leadership and faithful service combine to create a unique nurse who at graduation receives the nursing pin containing an imprint of the seal of Viterbo University. The nursing pin, and the symbols represented on it, will be an ever-present reminder of the qualities nurtured within the curriculum and learning environment of Viterbo University.

The first symbol is the cross. The interpretation for the curriculum is one of spirituality, a concept broader than Christianity. Spirituality is defined by the School of Nursing as the lived experience of one's belief, ensuing from a particular center of meaning, bringing a particular quality of energy and holistic awareness to self and others. Spirituality is intertwined and overlaps with caring, which is the second theme represented on the seal as the rose. Caring becomes an intentional action that encompasses the nurse's empathy for and connections with persons, families and communities as well as the ability to translate this intention into knowledgeable, compassionate, sensitive interactions.

The third symbol, the three wavy lines represents the current of learning that is enduring and continuous throughout a lifetime. The curriculum and learning environment seek to provide a taste of knowledge leading to a life-long quest for wisdom, depicted as the torch--the final symbol on the seal. Wisdom is being able to see things in their entirety. Contributing to this ability to envision wholeness is knowledge, an ability to discern inner qualities and relationships, and the capacity to make sound judgments. Wisdom is achieved through a gradual, maturing process nourished and shaped by experience. (rev. 2014)

PLANS OF STUDY

5 Semester Plan

FALL				SPRING				SUMMER			
YR. 1	Semester One			Semester Two			Semester Three				
N501	Nursing Ways of Knowing*	3		N521	Pharmacology*	3		N512	Nursing Informatics*	3	
N513	Pathophysiology*	3		N536	Foundations of Child and Adolescent Care (D)*	2		N538	Human Reproduction Maternal-Newborn Care (D)*	2	
N522/523(L)	Holistic Nursing Health Assessment (D)*	3		N537	Medical and Surgical Nursing Fundamentals (C)	4		N539	Care of the Patient with Complex Conditions (C)	4	
N531	Health Promotion Across the Lifespan*	3		N642	Interprofessional Communication and Healthcare Partnerships *	2		N560	Leading Change: Applying Evidence to Practice*	3	
N550	Scholarly Writing Intensive* (summer before or fall)	1									
		13					11				12
YR. 2	Semester Four			Semester Five							
N514	Climate Change and Health: Global Awareness & Social Justice*	3		N548	Capstone Experience (C)	4					
N526	Mental Health and Illness in Nursing Practice (D)*	2		N624	Healthcare Ethics and Policy: Foundations for Nursing Advocacy	2					
N528	Population Health in the Community (C)	4		N672	Prototyping and Implementation: Scholarly Project II*	3					
N 671	Innovation & Project Design: Scholarly Project I*	3		N663	Prof. Nursing Leadership & Healthcare Delivery *	3					
		12					12	Total Credits = 60			

Notes: *denotes online course; D = didactic; C = clinical; L = Lab

8 Semester Plan

FALL				SPRING				SUMMER				
YR. 1	Semester One				Semester Two				Semester Three			
N501	Nursing Ways of Knowing*	3		N642	Interprofessional Communication and Healthcare Partnerships *	2		N512	Nursing Informatics*	3		
N531	Health Promotion Across the Lifespan*	3		N624	Healthcare Ethics and Policy: Foundations for Nursing Advocacy	2		N560	Leading Change: Applying Evidence to Practice*	3		
N550	Scholarly Writing Intensive* (summer before or fall)	1										
		7						4				
YR. 2	Semester Four				Semester Five				Semester Six			
N513	Pathophysiology*	3		N521	Pharmacology*	3		N538	Human Reproduction Maternal-Newborn Care (D)*	2		
N522/523(L)	Holistic Nursing Health Assessment (D)*	3		N536	Foundations of Child and Adolescent Care (D)*	2		N539	Care of the Patient with Complex Conditions (C)	4		
				N537	Medical and Surgical Nursing Fundamentals (C)	4						
		6						9				
YR. 3	Semester Seven				Semester Eight							
N514	Climate Change & Health: Global Aware & Social Justice*	3		N548	Capstone Experience (clinical 4)	4						
N526	Mental Health and Illness in Nursing Practice (didactic)*	2		N672	Prototyping and Implementation: Scholarly Project II*	3						
N528	Population Health in The Community (Clinical)	4		N663	Prof. Nursing Leadership & Healthcare Delivery *	3						
N671	Innov. & Project Design: Scholarly Project I*	3										
		12						10		Total Credits = 60		

Notes: *denotes online course; D = didactic; C = clinical; L = Lab

Progression and Retention

Academic Honesty

Viterbo Nursing Students will be held responsible for abiding by the Viterbo University Academic Integrity Policy as outlined in the university student handbook and policies outlined in the SON handbook. The student is expected to earn the course grade independently. Students who exhibit academic dishonesty may be given a failing grade for the course. In addition, students are expected to abide by the Viterbo University School of Nursing Honor Code. All students sign this honor code during the sophomore year and in each nursing course. Students may be subjected to disciplinary action for unprofessional conduct up to and including violations of the honor code (rev. 2022)

Viterbo University School of Nursing – Honor Code

I am committed to academic honesty and the five core values of the School of Nursing at Viterbo University, even in the face of adversity.

Core Values

Caring

- We recognize and honor the dignity of students, faculty, and those we serve.
- We strive to create an inclusive environment which honors the diverse life experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds of all persons.
- We strive to interact with all persons in respectful and compassionate ways.

Integrity

- We accept personal accountability for all we say and do.
- We strive to base our actions on ethical principles and values that flow from the Franciscan tradition.*

Commitment

- We are committed to pursuing excellence in education and learning.
- We are committed to living by the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion and ensure that all voices are heard
- We are committed to advocate for the health of all persons and for advancing the profession of nursing.
- We are committed to professional development through scholarly activities.

Collegiality

- We recognize and celebrate diversity and contribute our individual talents our common work as scholars and professionals.

Wisdom

- We recognize that reflection and discernment are integral to learning and professional growth and are vital for advancing nursing practice.

**Ethical Principles include autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice and veracity.*

**Values include contemplation, integrity, service, hospitality and stewardship.*

To attain these ideals, I embrace this honor system as my way of life.

Academic Planning

Students are required to meet with their assigned academic advisor prior to registering for courses in the second semester. After the second semester, students will no longer be required to meet with their advisor; however, a meeting can be requested. It is the student's responsibility to request a meeting. Students are responsible for monitoring their Progress Report through Student Planning to be sure they have completed all of the requirements for graduation.

Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI)

Description of ATI:

Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) is a comprehensive online assessment and review program that is designed to provide nursing students with a variety of tools that will assist them throughout their nursing school program in a variety of ways. ATI has been shown to increase NCLEX pass rates and reduce student attrition in nursing programs when implemented consistently. Participation in the ATI program will allow the student to gain experience in taking computerized nursing exams similar to NCLEX, increase confidence in nursing knowledge base and comprehension, identify strengths and weaknesses, developing a plan for remediation and ultimately enhance success in the nursing program and the NCLEX upon graduation. Both students and faculty can find significant benefits through the use of ATI with consistent implementation, clear communication, appropriate valuation of assessments, and creation of a positive, mutually accountable environment.

Students are required to participate in the ATI program. The program will involve a proctored assessment of critical thinking at the beginning and end of the nursing program.

ATI Content Mastery Integration and Policy

Students in the Direct Entry Master of Science in Nursing Science (DEMSN) program will be required to take ATI competency tests pertaining to each of the major courses/content areas throughout the curriculum. The ATI test(s) will be given at designated times during identified Nursing course. The tests could be scheduled outside of lecture class time and the student is required to attend. Testing will be done on the student's personal laptop, and will be proctored.

Benchmark Proficiency Levels:

There are four levels in the ATI testing program. Level 3 is the highest and Below Level 1 is the lowest level of proficiency. A minimum of Level 2 is the expectation for all testing scores to be successful in preparing for NCLEX, but points will be given based on each level.

Proficiency Level	Description
Below Level 1	Scores below Proficiency Level 1 do not meet expectations for performance in this content area and reflect performance well below minimal standards. Extensive and rigorous focus review is required.
Level 1	Scores meeting the Proficiency Level 1 standard can be considered to meet the absolute minimum expectations for performance in this content area. Scores at this level were judged by the content expert panel to indicate a student as likely to just meet NCLEX-RN® standards in this content area. ATI advises these students to develop and complete a rigorous plan of focused review to achieve a firmer grasp of this content
Level 2	Scores meeting Proficiency Level 2 standard can be considered to exceed minimum expectations for performance in this content area. Scores at this level were judged by the content expert panel to indicate a student as certain to meet NCLEX-RN standards in this content area. ATI advises these students to engage in continuous focused review to improve their knowledge of this content

Level 3	Scores meeting the Proficiency Level 3 standard can be considered to exceed most expectations for performance in this content area. Scores at this level were judged by the content expert panel to indicate a student as likely to exceed NCLEX-RN standards in this content area. ATI advises these students to engage in continuous focused reviews to maintain and improve their knowledge of this content.
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Practice and Proctored Assessment

ATI practice and testing assessment scores are to be calculated at 10% of the course grade. Points awarded for ATI practice and proctored assessments should not exceed 10% of the total grade in the course.

Practice A will be given in the first half of the course. This will give the student an idea of content areas to focus on throughout the course. There will not be rationales provided, and points will be awarded based on completion of the assessment and focused review by the given due dates.

Practice B will be given approximately 2 weeks prior to the end of the course. Rationales will be provided, and points will be awarded based on completion of the assessment and focused review by the given due date

Proctored Assessment The Content Mastery Series Assessments provide essential data regarding a student's mastery of concepts in relation to specific nursing content areas. Content-specific assessments provide proficiency levels that measure a student's level of knowledge acquisition. NCLEX® readiness is measured with the RN Comprehensive Predictor®, Points will be given for each proctored assessment based on level achieved. Failure to complete the focused review by the assigned time or for the required amount of time will result in a loss of the corresponding 2% associated with the focused review.

Course Integration Breakdown

Practice Assessments: 40% of total points available (each assessment = 20%)			
Complete Practice Assessment A		Complete Practice Assessment B	
Focused Review: • Minimum 1-hour Focused Review on initial attempt • For each topic below 60%, complete either a Basic Concept Map, System Disorder Concept Map or 3 Critical Points template as part of the required focused review process. If there are not any topics below 60%, utilize the three where you scored the lowest. <i>* Take Post Study Quiz (if available)** and complete an active learning template for each topic missed</i>		Focused Review: • Minimum 1-hour Focused Review on initial attempt • For each topic below 60%, complete either a Basic Concept Map, System Disorder Concept Map or 3 Critical Points template as part of the required focused review process. If there are not any topics below 60%, utilize the three where you scored the lowest. <i>* Take Post Study Quiz (if available)** and complete an active learning template for each topic missed</i>	
Standardized Proctored Assessment (60% of total points available)			
Level 3: 95% or above Passing predictability = 40% (percentage of remaining points)	Level 2: 90% or above Passing predictability = 30% (percentage of remaining points)	Level 1: 85% or above Passing predictability = 10% (percentage of remaining points)	Below Level 1: 84% or below Passing predictability = 0% (percentage of remaining points)
Focused Review = 20% • Minimum 1-hour Focused Review • For each topic below 60%, complete either a Basic Concept Map, System Disorder Concept Map or 3 Critical Points template as part of the required focused review process. If there are not any topics below 60%, utilize the three where you scored the lowest.	Focused Review = 20% • Minimum 2-hour Focused Review • For each topic below 60%, complete either a Basic Concept Map, System Disorder Concept Map or 3 Critical Points template as part of the required focused review process. If there are not any topics below 60%, utilize the three where you scored the lowest.	Focused Review = 20% • Minimum 3-hour Focused Review • For each topic below 60%, complete either a Basic Concept Map, System Disorder Concept Map or 3 Critical Points template as part of the required focused review process. If there are not any topics below 60%, utilize the three where you scored the lowest.	Focused Review = 20% • Minimum 4-hour Focused Review • For each topic below 60%, complete either a Basic Concept Map, System Disorder Concept Map or 3 Critical Points template as part of the required focused review process. If there are not any topics below 60%, utilize the three where you scored the lowest.
Percentage of all Three Assessments (A, B and Proctored)			
100%	90%	70%	60%
No retake required	No retake required	Retake may be required	Retake may be required

For example, a student who completes all practice assessments and required focused review will receive 40% of the total points for content mastery series. The remaining 60% depends on how well they do on the proctored assessment. Level 3 or high and complete 1 hour of focused review. If they score level 2 and complete the focused review, they will receive 50% out of 60%, level 1 and focused review = 30% of 60%, below level 1 and focused review = 20% of 60%

Ex. All three assessments combined equal roughly 10% of the total grade. This 10% is comprised of 3 assessments.

- Practice A + focused review = 20%
- Practice A + focused review = 20%
- Proctored assessment + focused review = 60%

Focused Review Proctored Assessment:

All students will be required to utilize tools provided by the ATI program to improve their mastery of content learned. All students will be expected to complete a focused review to increase their learning and knowledge, and to identify areas that need to be focused on for NCLEX success. Focused review is to be handwritten on the provided templates in ATI. A **minimum of 2 hours** of focused review will be required for those students scoring below Benchmark of Level 2. See instructions above regarding the focused review process and templates. All documentation for focused review activities will be sent to the course instructor **within 3 days** from the date of the exam. If not received within 3 days no points will be awarded for score achieved.

Course with content mastery assessments

Content Mastery Assessment	Course
NURS 536 Medical Surgical Fundamentals, 2 nd semester	Fundamentals
NURS 537 Foundations of Child and Adolescent Care, 2 nd semester	Pediatrics
NURS 538 Human Reproduction and Maternal Newborn Care, 3 rd semester	Maternal/Newborn
NURS 539 Care of the Patient with Complex Conditions, 3 rd semester	Adult- Medical Surgical Pharmacology
NURS 526 Mental Health and Illness in Nursing Practice, 4 th semester	Mental Health
NURS 528 Population Health in the Community, 4 th semester	Community Health
NURS 671 Scholarly Project I, 4 th semester	Leadership
NURS 548 Capstone Experience, 5 th semester	Pharmacology (Second Proctored Exam) Nutrition NCLEX Predictor

STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (Initial all and sign below):

_____ I have received a copy of and have read and understand Viterbo's ATI Assessment and Review Policy _____ I understand that it is my responsibility to utilize all the review modules, tutorials, and online resources available from ATI, as designated by Viterbo.

Student printed name: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____

Attendance

Attendance in lecture is an expectation and a requirement for financial aid reporting. The Viterbo University Attendance Policy is followed within the School of Nursing. Attendance is mandatory for:

1. Clinical
2. Nursing skills laboratories
3. Exams
4. Simulation experience

A student unable to attend any of the above must contact the instructor prior to the class, seminar, clinical experience, clinical orientation, nursing skills laboratory, simulation and/or exams. Failure to do so will result in a failure for that missed experience. Prior notification does not necessarily assure an excused absence or ability to make up missed activity.

A student who has two unexcused absences from clinical may be required to withdraw from the clinical and related nursing theory courses. (rev. 2025)

Exam Question Analysis

For each exam, performance statistics are evaluated for every question, and the exam may be adjusted accordingly. (rev. 2026)

Formatting Requirements

The format to be used for written papers is that which is stated in the current edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Papers must be typed. Each grammatical, spelling, and APA error will be penalized, up to a maximum 10 percent of the paper. (rev. 2019)

Grade Concerns

At the end of the course, if the student is dissatisfied with their grade, they have the right to it. Details about the grade appeal process are available in the [University Graduate Catalog](#).

Grade Appeal Policy

When a student has a grievance related to a course grade, the student should first discuss the matter with the individual course faculty member and put the concerns in writing. If a satisfactory conclusion is not achieved, the matter may be brought, in turn, to the Assistant Dean, the College Dean or other College Administrator, and then to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Students need to review the [Viterbo University Student Handbook](#) for details of the grade appeal process. (rev. 2021)

Formal Complaint Process

Formal complaints should be written and follow prescribed steps, with the use of [Viterbo Speaks Up](#). The specific student complaints procedure is outlined in the [VU Student Handbook](#).

Methods of Evaluation

The students will be informed of the methods of evaluation at the beginning of each course. Students are responsible for completing assignments on or before the designated time. Five percent per day of the total points will be assessed against any assignment that is submitted and/or completed after the designated time and due date. A student may ask for an extension on an assignment prior to the due date, if it is mutually agreeable. Exceptions to this policy may be noted in course syllabus.

Nursing Course Transfer Policy

The DEMSN program has been carefully planned and developed to meet the needs of the graduates. In view of the connection of the curriculum to the desired outcomes and the quality of the graduate, once a student has begun classes as a degree-seeking student in the Viterbo University DEMSN program, all classes must be taken at Viterbo University.

Nursing Student Success Plan

A Success Plan may be implemented for either academic or non-academic reasons when a student is not meeting expected performance standards at any point during a nursing course. Developed collaboratively by the faculty and student, the plan outlines clear expectations for improvement and defines specific performance goals. Support measures may include tutoring, a reduced course load, scheduled check-ins with faculty advisors, or other strategies aimed at promoting academic success. Once initiated, the Success Plan remains in effect through the completion of the nursing program. Students are responsible for sharing and discussing their plan with faculty in each subsequent nursing course.

Probationary Status in Nursing

Students enrolled in the full-time plan of study (5-semesters) are expected to maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.75 or higher throughout the program. According to the university's financial aid policy, graduate students with a cumulative GPA below 3.0 may become ineligible for federal financial aid. For financial aid questions, contact the Financial Aid office. In the event of a drop below 3.0, the cumulative GPA must equate to 2.75 or higher within **two subsequent semesters** and remain at or above that level through completion of the program.

Should students enroll in the part-time plan of study (8-semesters) fall below a 2.75 cumulative GPA, an extended probation period may be considered. During this extended probation period, continuous academic improvement (e.g., higher term GPAs, improved course performance) must be demonstrated each subsequent semester. Failure to show progress toward the required GPA may result in dismissal from the program.

Students are expected to earn a grade of C or higher in all courses. Any student who receives a grade of CD or lower in a nursing course will be placed on academic probation and required to complete a Student Success Plan, which may extend the length of the nursing program. Students will be formally notified in writing of their probationary status, including the expectations and duration of the probation period. Moving forward, students must achieve a grade of C or higher in all remaining courses. Failure to meet this standard may result in dismissal from the program.

Any student on probation who receives a grade of CD or lower in a nursing course may be subject to dismissal, even if their cumulative GPA shows improvement.

Progression Requirements for Nursing

A student who earns a grade of "D" or "F" in a nursing course will be placed on academic probation and must retake the course the next time it is offered, provided space is available. If the course is full, the student will be re-tracked and must wait until space becomes available. Depending on the course in which the unsatisfactory grade was earned, the student may be permitted to enroll in additional coursework until the course is successfully repeated.

When a course is repeated, both the original and repeated grades will remain on the transcript. However, the cumulative GPA will be recalculated based on the repeated course grade. Both attempts will count toward semester credit totals, but only the second attempt will count toward cumulative completed

credits. The probationary status associated with the original unsatisfactory grade will remain on the student's academic record.

Readmission to the School of Nursing

An individual previously dismissed from the School of Nursing seeking readmission shall be required to complete a readmission packet. The guidelines shall be obtained from the DEMSN Program Chair. The completed readmission packet will be evaluated on an individual basis by a readmission board.

Students readmitted into the nursing program after being dismissed must retake the course(s) that resulted in dismissal from the nursing program. Students on probation are strongly advised to seek assistance from the HUB for Student Success.

School of Nursing Grading Scale

(grades are rounded up at 0.5%; i.e. 91.5 % = 92 or AB)

Overall Percentage/Grade			
94 – 100%	A	92 – 93%	AB
87 – 91%	B	85 – 86%	BC
80 – 84%	C	78 – 79%	CD
74 – 77%	D	73% or below	F

Transfer of Graduate Credits from other Nursing Programs

Up to six credits may be transferred to the DEMSN program, if equivalent. To be considered for transfer, the grade earned must be at least a B. Transfer credits must be taken from an accredited institution of higher education completed within the last five years and equivalent to the course it is replacing in the requirements at Viterbo. Courses older than five years may be given credit based on individual review. Students who wish to transfer credits must have an official transcript sent to the director of the DEMSN program. Courses will be evaluated for equivalency, and written notification of acceptance of transcript credit will be provided to the student by the director.

Withdrawal from Nursing Course(s)

A student shall be permitted to withdraw from a given nursing course with a grade of W on the transcript one time and may repeat the course **the next time it is offered**. Please know this will affect a student's progression in the program. Also, know that this may affect financial aid status if dropping below 3 credits. A student who wishes to withdraw completely from Viterbo during a semester must contact their academic advisor to discuss the decision and complete the necessary paperwork. The Withdrawal form is on the Registrar's Forms web page.

Failing grades are recorded for students who do not officially withdraw from the university. Any [applicable refunds](#) for courses are pro-rated according to the deadline dates printed in the class schedules for the fall, spring, and summer terms. A student who wishes to reenter for any subsequent term must complete a reentry application form for re-acceptance.

CLINICAL

Clinical Evaluations

Viterbo University School of Nursing emphasizes the practice of professional nursing. The clinical performance tool has specific criteria that will be evaluated. These criteria are expected to be performed. Students must achieve the minimal expected level of performance for each DEMSN Program Student Learning Outcome (PSLO) to pass the course and progress in the program at the final evaluation; and more than one unexcused absence may result in failure. (*excused absences include bereavement policy, illness with doctor's excuse, or excused university event). All missed clinical hours will require clinical hour make-up. The student must contact the faculty, or the missed clinical day becomes an unexcused absence. Clinical behaviors jeopardizing patient safety may result in immediate failure of the course at which point, course withdrawal is not permitted. (rev. 2026)

Communication with Clinical Partners

Students are **not** to contact agencies inquiring about their policies or student clinical placement. The School of Nursing will inform students of their clinical placements and agency contacts. Contacting agencies without Viterbo School of Nursing permission may jeopardize Viterbo's longstanding positive relationship with those facilities. Not adhering to this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Clinical Organization Requirements

Prior to practicing in the clinical settings each student must complete organizational based requirements. Failure to complete these requirements will result in the student not being able to practice clinically.

Documentation and Medical Records

Student nurses are permitted to review medical records only for patients to whom they have been assigned and with whom they have directly participated in care. All students must adhere to the documentation policies of the clinical agency, as well as Viterbo University's HIPAA and confidentiality guidelines. (Refer to the specific agency's documentation policy and the HIPAA policy section for additional details.)

When using written documentation, Viterbo University students identify themselves on the patient's chart by signing their name in full and following it with VSN.

Professionalism and Attire

Viterbo University School of Nursing values professionalism and a professional image by our nursing students. Viterbo students realize that they themselves play a part in forming the image of nursing daily. This professional image is formally evaluated by faculty because of the school's belief that the attitude and appearance of all Viterbo nurses have a direct impact on the public's perception of our professionalism, competency, and quality of care. These standards are developed to ensure that all Viterbo University nursing students demonstrate the professional attributes of nursing through their actions and attire. Not adhering to these standards will result in an unsatisfactory for the clinical day and/or possible dismissal from the nursing program.

Professionalism

Viterbo University School of Nursing requires our students to display professionalism in all interactions in the classroom, lab, and simulation, and individual communication with faculty and staff. Attributes of professionalism include collegiality and civility. Viterbo University School of Nursing defines collegiality and civility in the following ways:

Collegiality: Cooperative interaction among peers, faculty, and staff.

Civility: An act of showing regard and respect for others including politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, and courteousness. Ultimately, civility is treating others as we would like to be treated.

Professional attitudes are challenged during times of frustration, disappointment, and dissent. Learning and displaying the skills to manage these situations in a professional manner demonstrates the personal accountability and leadership qualities essential to fostering the professional reputation of the Viterbo nurse and further enhances the professional image of nursing as a profession.

Attire

The Viterbo Nursing Student Uniform consists of:

- White scrub top with patch (2 required)
- Red scrub pants (2 required)
- Red or white scrub jacket with Viterbo logo (1 required)
- Gray polo shirt with logo and navy dress pants or navy scrub pants
- Solid white or nude undergarments
- Neutral colored shoes (NO open backs or Crocs)
- Neutral colored socks
- Viterbo University Student Nurse Name badge and any site/facility required ID's; mworn at all times in the clinical setting.

When the uniform is worn, it must be neat, clean and complete as described above. This includes clean shoes and shoelaces. The scrub jacket is to be worn instead of sweaters. If another layer of clothing is needed, a short or long-sleeved plain gray, navy, black or white t-shirt may be worn. The uniforms may only be worn in clinical environments. Clinical environments include simulation and skills lab. The scrub jacket should be worn over professional attire (no blue jeans/shorts) for designated assignments in the clinical setting.

The gray polo shirt, with navy dress pants or navy scrub pants (no leggings) are worn for selected clinical settings and on campus clinical labs.

Whenever the uniform or scrub jacket is worn, hair is to be neat & drawn back from the face. Headbands/head coverings will be allowed in solid colors of black, navy blue, red or white. Facial hair must be neatly trimmed (or must follow organizational policy).

The following standards are required when in clinical settings, lab, and simulation:

- Only small stud earrings may be worn.
- Facial and tongue jewelry will not be allowed.
- A single small stud in the nose is permitted. For any other facial piercing, a clear retainer is permitted. Septal jewelry is not allowed.
- All other visible body piercings must be removed.
- Wristbands, hairbands (on the wrist) or bracelets are not allowed.
- Necklaces are not allowed, unless needed as a medical alert.
- Every attempt should be made to cover tattoos in the clinical setting.
- No perfume/body spray/cologne will be worn while providing patient care.
- Fingernails should be trimmed and well-manicured and not extend beyond the fingertips.
- Neutral/muted colored nail polish is acceptable as long as there are no chippings in the paint. Artificial/gel nails are not allowed.
- Make-up should be neutral toned.
- Rings, other than smooth wedding or commitment bands without gemstones, should not be worn. One smooth surfaced ring band may be worn.
- Students may not chew gum.
- Students shall adhere to additional dress code policies as required by clinical facilities.

Students not adhering to the standards of professionalism may be asked to leave the classroom, clinical setting, lab, or simulation. (rev. 2026)

Confidentiality and Privacy

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Maintaining confidentiality is an essential part of ethical nursing practice. Information accessed by students for client care and for educational purposes is of a private nature and must be protected. Health information must be accessed and handled according to federal HIPAA standards and specific institutional policies. Special care must be taken to delete identifiers before using any private health information. During every clinical rotation all students must follow the institution/agency HIPAA policy as outlined in orientation at the respective institution/agency. Breach of the HIPAA policy could result in federal mandated fines or civil penalties as well as dismissal from the Viterbo nursing program.

Some guidelines to follow include:

1. Do not give patient/client information to anyone unless there is a “need to know”.
2. When you need to discuss patient information, pay attention to who may overhear your conversation. Look for a private place to speak if others, especially members of the public, may hear you.
3. If you overhear others inappropriately discussing a patient/client, you may want to remind them that they have an obligation to maintain patient/client confidentiality.
4. Keep patient information out of public traffic areas. For example, do not leave paper containing patient information where others can see it.
5. Be responsible when disposing of patient/client information.
6. Follow all policies and procedures on protecting the confidentiality of patient/client information. Be sure to remove all identifiers from client information used in reporting cases in conferences or in writing papers for your courses.
7. If in doubt, talk to your clinical instructor or to a member of the nursing staff.
8. The Viterbo University policy on social networking will be adhered to as it relates to HIPAA and confidentiality.

9. Students may not discuss or post any information about faculty, peers, patients, family members, or any clinical facility on any electronic venue (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, cell phones).
10. Students may not leave/save any patient, family, faculty, clinical facility or student information on any open access desktop or hard drive. Any infraction will result in immediate dismissal from the nursing program.
11. **Use of Medical Records:** Student nurses may review medical records for their assigned patients only. Refer to specific agency policy and HIPAA policy. (rev. 2022)

Source: (Mayo Clinic Health System- Franciscan Healthcare of La Crosse Policy) (rev. 2021)

Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Ability

The Viterbo University School of Nursing supports the Viterbo University Policy and guidelines relating to the non-exclusion of qualified students from college programs solely by reason of disability status.

To meet the requirements of and to successfully participate in the nursing program at Viterbo University students must be able to perform skills that are essential to nursing. Needs of students with a disability are assessed and accommodations communicated based on the needs of the student, in coordination with Accessibility Services*. The student must be able to meet these requirements throughout the program even with accommodation.

1. **Physical Requirements:** The student must be capable of performing physical care of the client. This includes, but is not limited to, the ability to move and position patients, to perform visual inspection, to differentiate among a full spectrum of colors, to differentiate between various sound, to perform venipuncture, to administer medications, and to read a wide variety of gauges and monitors. The student must be able to perform and maintain certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation. If the student struggles with any of the functions, there is a process to determine if the student can fulfill the essential functions of the program.
2. **Communication:** The student must be able to gather information relating to the client to observe and describe physical, psychological changes and recognize non-verbal communication. They must be able to communicate sensitively and efficiently with clients and their families and relate intellectually and personably with members of the health care team.
3. **Intellectual Abilities:** Critical thinking and problem solving are demanded of all professional nurses. This requires that the student possess abilities in logical thinking, measurement, calculation, reasoning, and analysis.
4. **Behavioral and Social Attributes:** The student must possess emotional maturity to participate in the nursing program. They must be able to exercise good judgment and to act responsibly and promptly in completing client-related activities. The student must be able to function effectively under stress and adapt to changing environments to be able to function in uncertain circumstances while caring for clients. The student must be able to tolerate long hours and physically taxing workloads. Viterbo's Accessibility office and/or the clinical site may provide reasonable accommodations. The student must be able to demonstrate qualities of integrity, compassion, and skills in interpersonal relationships.
5. **Evaluation:** Viterbo University School of Nursing recognizes its responsibility to prepare competent professional nurses and include qualified students with disability(ies) into the program. The School of Nursing will utilize technological advances and feasible alternative opportunities to encourage students with diagnoses the means to successfully complete the program. (rev. 2025)

* In accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504.

Pre-Clinical Requirements

All the following **must be completed** prior to beginning the Clinical Graduate NURS Courses (second semester of the program) and uploaded to your *Clinician Nexus* account. If requirements are not completed according to policy, the student will not be allowed in the clinical areas.

- Certified Nursing Assistant Certification (CNA)
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) for health professionals (must be American Heart Association). Students must remain current in CPR throughout the course of the program
- Caregiver Criminal Background Check (see below)
- Physical examination report
- Health insurance
- Record of up-to-date immunizations including:
 - Tetanus and Diphtheria within last 10 years
 - Measles, Mumps and Rubella-2 vaccinations or positive titers
 - Varicella zoster or positive titer
 - Hepatitis B (complete series or blood tests to show immunity)
 - Influenza – annual requirement by October 31st
 - Two-step Tuberculosis/Tuberculin Skin Test (initial test)*
 - COVID-19**

**Covid 19 clinical partners' vaccination requirements and exemption qualifications continually change, and since this document is reviewed once a year, this may not reflect the most current policy. Please inquire with the DEMSN program chair if this may apply to you.

Tuberculin Skin Test (TST): Another name for the TST is the PPD or Mantoux test. If this is the first TST or if it has been more than 12 months since the last negative TST, a two-step test is required. If the first test is negative, the second TST must be administered 1-3 weeks after the first test is read. Documentation is required of all test results. Also, the QuantiFERON-TB Gold (QFT) blood test is an acceptable alternative to the TST, PPD or Mantoux. All nursing students are required to have a repeated test for tuberculosis every 12 months.

A student who has reacted positively to the TST is required to have an initial chest x-ray, and a copy of the results must be provided to the Director of Health Services at Viterbo University. A student who has had a previous positive tuberculin test and has had medical treatment will be required to have a chest x-ray prior to participating in clinical in the sophomore year. Each year these students will complete a health questionnaire rather than the TB test. Repeated chest x-rays are not required unless symptoms develop that could be attributed to TB.

Titers: A titer test is a measure of antibodies in the blood, providing a check of disease immunity. Titers are also required if there are no records of required immunizations. Titers are required to show immunity to MMR and Varicella; however, the immunization series is acceptable. Titers also are acceptable for Hepatitis B; however, the immunization series is preferred. Results of blood tests must be uploaded into Clinician Nexus, which provides information related to requirements.

Students who choose not to receive the COVID-19 vaccination will need to apply for exemption in consultation with the School of Nursing Clinical Coordinator. It is the responsibility of the student to complete the application and return it to the Clinical Coordinator who will submit the application to the clinical partner. There is no guarantee that a facility that accepts exemptions will be available at the time of the student's assigned clinical rotation or that the exemption would be granted. Student progression in the program may be impacted.

Criminal History Search: Federal and State statutes require that criminal background checks be completed for all persons who provide care for others or who have access to people who receive care. Clinical agencies prohibit placement of students with criminal histories of specific crimes and offenses that have been identified by the state of Wisconsin as bars to employment or licensure (such as abuse, assault or neglect). Viterbo University School of Nursing requires that all students complete a disclosure statement and submit a criminal history search (criminal background check) prior to beginning the professional sequence. Healthcare agencies may require additional criminal history searches prior to student placement in that agency. Students are required to comply and are responsible for the cost of the search.

The Dean of the College of Nursing and Health will analyze reports on positive findings for a criminal record check on a case-by-case basis. Students will be informed of positive findings and will be consulted before a decision is made regarding eligibility to care for clients in contracted agency placements. Individuals whose background check identifies bars to the provision of care in contracted agencies or places restrictions on client contact will not be allowed to progress in the program.

A complete criminal background check is required every four years. The School of Nursing requires a disclosure statement every year the student is in the nursing program. In addition, students are required to disclose any arrest or conviction during their tenure in the program. All disclosures will remain confidential and will be analyzed on an individual basis to determine if such an arrest or conviction is “substantially related” to care of clients in clinical agencies. Falsification or omission of relevant information may constitute dismissal from the program. (rev.2022)

Licensing Restrictions

Persons who have felony convictions may be barred from taking the licensing examination for Registered Nurses. An individual with such a conviction is responsible for contacting the State Board of Nursing for individual counseling.

Professional Liability Insurance Policy

Viterbo University requires all nursing students to purchase and supply proof of independent professional liability insurance if they are participating in a clinical experience outside of the official course start and end period. The insurance provides coverage for immersion experiences outside of course dates, make up time for an incomplete course grade, or other situations as deemed necessary. (rev. 2020)

The School of Nursing administration can provide information about this coverage. Once obtained, students must share this coverage with the School of Nursing office by either hard copy or electronic copy. The clinical coordinator will acquire and maintain these professional liability insurance records. (rev. 2020)

Transportation

Students are responsible for their own transportation to and from the assigned agencies. The School of Nursing follows the Viterbo University travel policy. (rev. 2022)

Use of Electronic Devices

The personal use of electronic devices during scheduled clinical time is prohibited, except during breaks away from the clinical area. Smart watches may be worn while on clinicals. The use of smartphones and smartwatches is limited to referencing resources only, while in the clinical setting. Departure from these guidelines may be subject to securing the device for the remainder of the day and may result in an unsatisfactory for the clinical day.

HEALTH and SAFETY

Exposure to Body Fluids

The procedure known as Standard Precautions (related to the handling of body fluids) will be discussed and demonstrated to students before they begin clinical experiences. Subsequently, students are responsible for protecting themselves and all patients by rigorously applying these precautions in all laboratories and clinical settings.

Students exposed to body fluids in the clinical setting will follow the protocol for that agency regarding evaluation and prophylaxis following significant exposure and will be responsible for any expense incurred. If the agency protocol does not cover students, the student will report to the hospital of choice for evaluation and prophylaxis. Students are accountable to report exposure to the agency staff and the clinical instructor for initiation of the protocol. (rev. 2022)

Students' Health Insurance

Students are **not** provided health insurance by Viterbo University or by the hospital or health care agency in which clinical experiences are being conducted. Certain health care organizations require students to carry health insurance before participating in clinical experiences. Therefore, all students will be required to show proof of their own health insurance coverage and upload the information to *Clinician Nexus*. (rev. 2022)

Student Injuries

Injuries incurred by the nursing students during their laboratory/clinical experiences should be reported immediately to the agency staff and Viterbo Nursing clinical instructor. Agency policy will be followed in reporting incidents. All students are responsible for medical expenses to treat any injuries they incur. In addition, the Viterbo faculty member will fill out an accident/incident report form that must be submitted to the Dean. (rev. 2022)

Emergency ID cards

Students will be provided with emergency ID cards and will be required to attach them to their Viterbo School of Nursing name badges or to those required by their assigned clinical facility.

Signature of Agreement – DEMSN Handbook

I have read and understand the policies and procedures required of me as a nursing student at Viterbo University and by signing or typing my signature signifies my understanding.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Printed Name:_____