

# UConn School of Nursing Master of Science Program Handbook 2023-2024 Academic Year



**Prepared by:**

Ivy M. Alexander, PhD, APRN, ANP-BC, FAANP, FAAN  
Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner Graduate Track Director

Valarie Artigas, DNP, APRN, NNP-BC  
Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Graduate Track Director

Kristin Bott, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC  
Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Graduate Track Director

Denise Bourassa, DNP, RNC, CNL, CNE  
MS Nurse Educator and MS Nurse Leader Graduate Track Director

Brenda McNeil, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC  
Interim Family Nurse Practitioner Graduate Track Director

Kaylea Medina, MS Program Coordinator  
Kaylea.Medina@uconn.edu

## Table of Contents

Welcome to UConn.....	3
UConn School of Nursing Master of Science Program.....	4
Our PRAXIS .....	5
Your Advisor .....	6
Communication .....	6
General Policies .....	6
Program Requirements and Milestones .....	10
Pre-Clinical requirements .....	11
Clinical Policies .....	12
Resources .....	17



## Welcome to UConn

Greetings Master of Science, Nursing students,

Welcome to our UConn Community of Scholars. This document is a reference for students in the Master of Science Program at the University of Connecticut (UConn) School of Nursing (SON). It is to be used in conjunction with the [graduate school catalog](#). The UConn Graduate School ultimately awards the degree of Master of Science.

Our faculty & staff will communicate with you through individual messages to your UConn email and those distributed on the listserv [MSNUR-L@LISTSERV.UCONN.EDU](mailto:MSNUR-L@LISTSERV.UCONN.EDU)

We encourage you to visit the school's website to learn about [student organizations and leadership positions](#) in which you may be involved. The website also provides updated information on student [scholarship](#) opportunities. The UConn Graduate School website includes information on [graduate assistantship](#) opportunities, [financial aid and Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#).

In addition to our world-class faculty scholars and educators in the SON, UConn provides significant [academic support](#) to promote students' success.

- The [Dean of Students Office](#) serves as a centralized resource for connecting students with appropriate university and community programs, offices, and individuals, and to resolve issues that affect the quality of students' academic or community life and personal goals.
- The [Academic Achievement Center](#) is a walk-in service for students to learn effective ways to study, time management strategies, and methods of managing stress.
- Free tutoring is available through the [Writing Center](#) with available expertise to help students refine their writing skills in any course.
- Students with disabilities are provided accommodations through the [Center for Students with Disabilities](#).
- For students whose first language is not English, student support is provided through [International Student and Scholar Services](#). All new international students must complete check-in online through the ISSS website.

Your academic advisor, faculty members, staff, and Graduate Track Directors are always available to address any questions, concerns or issues. Best wishes for a smooth and satisfying UConn experience.

Regards,

Dr. Alexander, Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner Track Director  
Dr. Artigas, Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Track Director  
Dr. Bott, Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Track Director  
Dr. Bourassa, Nurse Educator and Nurse Leader Track Director  
Dr. McNeil, Interim Family Nurse Practitioner Track Director

## UConn School of Nursing Master of Science Program

The School of Nursing (SON), located in Storrs Hall, was founded in 1942 by Carolyn Ladd Widmer. In the years since, the school has grown significantly. The SON was initially home to a BS program only and responded to the public need to prepare nurses for advanced nursing practice roles in 1971 by offering tracks in the Master of Science program. Today, the Master of Science program includes four nurse practitioner tracks, including programs of study in Adult-Gerontology Primary Care, Adult-Gerontology Acute Care, Neonatal, and Family Nurse Practitioner, and the Nurse Educator and Nurse Leader tracks.

The UConn SON supports students in achieving their highest academic and leadership aspirations through learning experiences that reflect current and future health care needs. Thus, we believe students must be exposed to a broad range of experiences to grasp the foundations of nursing science and practice in the real world, and to gain leadership skills to advance health. The SON curriculum is rigorous, providing graduates with the foundations of advanced nursing practice and leadership with emphasis on problem-solving and critical thinking.

Upon completion of course work and all prescribed experiences, our graduates are prepared to:

- Synthesize appropriate theories from nursing and related fields to respond to emerging health care challenges.
- Synthesize appropriate scientific findings and theories from nursing and related fields to lead change to improve outcomes.
- Influence health care policy for the benefit of person, community, nursing, and environment.
- Demonstrate PRAXIS at an advanced level of nursing in a selected area of concentration.
- Exert leadership in creating a collaborative and caring health care community.
- Synthesize best evidence and translate into practice to creatively improve health care quality and outcomes.

Upon successful completion of the curriculum, students receive a Master of Science (MS) degree from the University of Connecticut, Graduate School and may apply for eligibility for the national certification examination in their respective population focus.

- Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner students apply for certification through the [American Association of Nurses Credentialing Center](#) or the [American Association of Critical-Care Nurses](#).
- Adult-Gerontology Primary Care and Family Nurse Practitioner students apply for certification through the [American Association of Nurses](#)

[Credentialing Center](#) or the [American Academy of Nurse Practitioners National Certification Board](#).

- Neonatal Nurse Practitioner students apply for certification through the [National Certification Corporation](#).
- Nurse Educator students can apply for certification through the [National League for Nursing](#)
- Nurse Leader students can apply for certification through the [American Organization for Nursing Leadership](#) or American Nurses Association

In addition, each graduate has the necessary background to apply for admission to the UConn SON Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) or Philosophy of Science (PhD) programs.

## Our PRAXIS

One of the most important aspects for a student to learn early on is the PRAXIS statement that guides our behaviors and actions within the SON. All members of the SON are expected to abide by these principles, and they are part of the student evaluation criteria in many courses.

### **The philosophy of the School of Nursing is directed by six guiding principles, known as PRAXIS:**

- **P**rofessionalism in behavior, presentation, and conduct
- **R**espectful of the richness and diversity of others and of
- **S**elf-**A**ccountability for actions
- **eX**cellence in scholarship, practice, teaching, and service
- **I**ntegrity, inquisitiveness, and innovation,
- **S**ervice to the profession and the community

The SON expectations are consistent with behaviors that will be required of students in the clinical setting. Rude or disrespectful behavior, bullying or unprofessional conduct is not tolerated. As a student at UConn School of Nursing, this extends to interactions that students have on and off campus as well as through social media. Violations of PRAXIS are a serious offense that can be grounds for dismissal from the School of Nursing.

Reports of violations of PRAXIS are placed in the student's file and a thorough investigation is performed by the Associate Dean as delineated by the PRAXIS policy. Please note that other processes are used at the University level to handle violations of the Student Code <https://community.uconn.edu/the-student-code-preamble/> or academic misconduct <https://community.uconn.edu/academic-misconduct/> that can also result in dismissal from the University.

## Student's Advisor

Upon admission, students are assigned a SON faculty advisor who will assist the student in planning their program of study to meet the program requirements. Student must meet with their advisor each semester prior to registering for courses for the following semester. Students are to contact their advisor to make an appointment each semester prior to or soon after registration opens for the following semester.

As part of the orientation to the SON, students will be asked to complete the Program Planner within the PeopleSoft/Student Administration system. Please be sure to keep this updated with any changes that are made throughout their program.

Registration holds in Student Administration/Peoplesoft may be placed for any requirements that need to be completed. Please identify the type of hold placed and follow instructions (negative service indicator ) given on how to lift the hold or notify the appropriate department. Registration holds may take 24 hours to be lifted after the requirements have been completed.

## Communication

1. The UConn email system is the official communication system in the SON. Students are expected to check it daily.
2. SON e-mail communications between students, staff and faculty members should be **addressed within 2 business days** following receipt of the message. This is to foster prompt communication between advisors and advisees as well as assist with coordination of the student educational experience.
3. As a general rule, if a conflict arises between students, it is best to attempt to address the concern first with the individual. If the conflict remains unresolved, one or both parties should address the concern first with the course instructor, then the faculty advisor, and/or the respective Graduate Track Director.
4. In instances where the conflict remains unresolved despite talking with the faculty advisor or Graduate Track Director, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies can be contacted to facilitate mediation or deliver a final decision on the matter.

**University Policies: Academic and Student Life** Please use the active link to review the compilation of [standards, policies and resources](#) and other regulations regarding academic and student life.

## School of Nursing Policies

SON specific policies may be found at [School of Nursing Policies | School of Nursing \(uconn.edu\)](#) and include:

- SON Appeal of Assigned Course Grade
- SON Cell Phone Use Policy
- SON Clinical Practicum & Residency Course Policy
- SON Compliance with Agency
- SON Dress Code Policy
- SON Exam Taking Policy
- SON Laptop Requirement Policy
- SON Medication Math Competency Policy
- SON Missed or late coursework Policy
- SON Missed Exam Policy
- SON Religious Observation Conflict Policy
- SON Social Media Policy
- SON Requirement for Clinical Practicum Courses

All UConn students have full access to Microsoft Office, Microsoft Windows, and other software. These resources are delivered at no charge through [the online portal](#).

### **Grading Policy:**

The University has established the following grading policy for [graduate students](#). All intermediate calculations of grades throughout a course will be expressed on a 0.00-100.00 scale and will be recorded to two decimal place precision -e.g., 95.00 or 92.67. Final numeric grades for a course will be based on averaging intermediate grades. Typically, the averaging process will give different weights to different intermediate grades -e.g., exam grades may "count more" than assignment grades. In the conversion of a final numeric grade to a course letter grade, decimal parts below 0.50 will be "rounded down to the closest whole number -e.g., 92.49 becomes 92 and decimal parts at or above 0.50 will be "rounded up" to the closest whole number -e.g., 92.50 becomes 93.

### **Required GPA**

A cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or above must be maintained in order to earn the Master of Science degree. Students must earn a B (3.0) or better in all nursing graduate courses in order to earn credit toward graduation. A student may only repeat one course with a NURS prefix throughout their graduate study. If a student does not earn a B or better on the first try, a collaborative decision between the faculty of record for the course, the advisor, and the student is made to determine if a repeat of the course is appropriate. A graduate student may repeat one course one time. Earning a grade less than B in a second course will result in dismissal from the program.

### **Maintenance of Records**

Students are to retain the course syllabi and other documents acquired throughout their program as part of their professional portfolio, as these may be needed to pursue other scholarly activities beyond or following program

completion. Students have access to MyCreds, an e-portfolio as part of CORE Elms. Graduates retain access to their MyCreds, e-portfolio.

### **Student Requests for Change in Major Advisor**

If a student wishes to make a change of major advisor (MA), the student must notify their respective Graduate Track Director. After consultation with the Graduate Track Director, the student will notify the current MA, the requested MA, and complete a [Change in Graduate Major Advisor Form](#). This form is then submitted to the Office of the Registrar.

### **Student Requests for Changing Programs or Tracks**

Students who wish to change their population focus or track should meet with their advisor to discuss the reason(s) for the change and implications for their program of study. The student must rewrite their personal statement that was completed as part of the admission process to address new career goals and a career plan. The new personal statement is submitted to the current Graduate Track Director and proposed Graduate Track Director. After submitting the new personal statement, the student should contact the proposed Graduate Track Director to set up an appointment to discuss the change and determine whether any openings are available in the proposed Track. If the Graduate Track Director approves the change, the student must submit a revised program of study in the program planner within the Peoplesoft/Student Administration system.

### **Student identification of clinical placements**

Students identify potential clinical sites and/or preceptors. Students complete the [Form](#) and submit it to their Graduate Track Director and the MS Program Coordinator. All preceptors and clinical sites are vetted and approved by the Graduate Track Director. Following vetting and approval, The Graduate Track Director will communicate approval status to the student.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD), Wilbur Cross Building Room 204, (860) 486-2020 or <http://csd.uconn.edu/>. An assessment must be completed each semester by CSD. Once the student is assessed, appropriate accommodations will be communicated by email to the instructor of record for each course. Only students who complete this process will be granted accommodations.

### **Student Requests for Faculty Recommendations**

Student requests for letters of recommendation should be made by sending an email request through the university email system that specifies the records (academic performance information) that may be disclosed, the purpose of the disclosure, and identify the individuals or entities to whom the disclosure may be made. Alternatively, the student may complete and send the [release form](#) found



on the University's Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) webpage.

## Program Requirements and Milestones

The Master of Science program curriculum is guided by the 2021 AACN Essentials (AACN, 2021) and prepares students for the nurse practitioner role in accordance with the Consensus Model for APRN Regulation: Licensure, Accreditation, Certification and Education (July 2008).

All tracks in the Master of Science program share a set of courses, called core courses, that include specific learning objectives required for advanced nursing practice. These online courses include:

NURS 5012 Nursing Science and Patterns of Knowing  
NURS 5020 Statistical Methods in Nursing  
NURS 5030 Nursing Research for Clinical Scholarship.  
NURS 5035 Evidence-Based Practice to Advance Clinical Scholarship  
NURS 5870 Health Policy and Populations-Based Advocacy for the Scholarship of Application.

Each of the tracks also address the 3 role course requirements of APRN and MS Nurse Educator education, by providing advanced education in pathophysiology across the lifespan, pharmacology, and health assessment. Upon passing the 3 role courses, APRN students will begin their clinical courses with a qualified preceptor. Students are required to meet all pre-clinical requirements by the published deadlines in order to register for the clinical courses in the subsequent semester.

## Pre-Clinical Requirements

Policy: All students participating in clinical learning experiences at University of Connecticut School of Nursing (SON) must be in compliance with health clearance policies as required by University of Connecticut and clinical agencies in which students perform their clinical hours. The student is responsible for providing UConn SON with evidence of health status, immunity and education by the published deadline as well as maintaining compliance throughout their academic program. Inability to meet deadlines or meet compliance standards will limit the student's ability to be placed in a clinical agency and complete the program. Students are required to create an account in American Databank's (ADB) [Complio](#) system, enter their information and upload the required documents by the published deadlines. Requirements and deadlines may be found through [Office of Clinical Placement Coordination](#).

Purpose of Policy: UConn School of Nursing students have clinical learning experiences and are expected to provide direct care to patients in a variety of clinical settings as part of their training. This contact places students at risk for both exposure to and transmission of communicable diseases and blood-borne

pathogens. Therefore, specific procedures are needed to: (1) decrease health risks to students, (2) protect patients and other healthcare professionals with whom the student interacts, and (3) comply with UConn School of Nursing healthcare agency contracts, federal Occupation Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations, and Connecticut State Department of Health policies. Please note that all health clearance requirements are based on the requirements mandated by clinical agencies where students complete their clinical hours.

### **Health Requirements/ Background Checks / Drug Testing**

Nursing students are required to complete a series of clinical learning experiences in order to successfully meet the learning outcomes of their program of study. Prior to participating in clinical learning experiences, students are required to complete health and immunization requirements, a criminal background check and a drug test by the [published deadlines](#). Each clinical facility has policies regarding required health documents, possible convictions and potential drug use that may bar students from being accepted at the facility for clinical placement. If a student is not accepted to an assigned placement because of their health or immunization status, the findings of a background check or drug screen, UConn School of Nursing does not guarantee an alternate clinical placement. School of Nursing policy dictates that students who are unable to complete clinical requirements for any reason will be subject to dismissal from the program. The procedure for completing a criminal background check and a drug test is done through the American DataBank Company. Please note that each student is responsible for covering the costs for their health requirements, background check and the drug screen. If students have any questions or concerns related to the background check or drug screen, please contact the student support team at [ocpc.compliance@uconn.edu](mailto:ocpc.compliance@uconn.edu).

## **Clinical Policies**

**In addition to the pre-clinical requirements, there are other aspects that you need to prepare for as part of your clinical placements. These include the following requirements and policies:**

### **Transportation**

Students must have a means of reliable transportation and cover the costs of travel to and parking at the clinical agencies. There is no guarantee that a student's clinical site will be on a bus or train line or near other students for carpooling. Carpooling, cab, Uber, or other similar services are not a form of reliable transportation to use for clinical rotations. Students without a means of reliable transportation cannot enroll in clinical courses, and risk dismissal from a clinical course if not able to meet clinical requirements due to transportation issues.

## **Requirements for clinical practice in five areas of motor, sensory, communication, behavior, and critical thinking skills**

The clinical setting presents unique challenges and responsibilities for nursing students caring for patients in a variety of health care environments. In addition to academic qualifications, UConn nursing students must possess the ability to consistently demonstrate a proficiency in five core areas for nursing students. Specifically: motor, sensory, communication, behavior, and critical thinking skills. These areas reflect the reasonable expectations of a nursing student performing the common functions of a registered nurse and/or an advanced practice nurse. In adopting these standards, we are mindful of the patient's right to safe and quality health care.

The ability to consistently demonstrate these personal and professional competencies are essential from admittance to graduation. Students must be capable of performing the skills of a nursing student.

Therefore, each nursing student must have the ability to learn and perform the following competencies and skills:

**Motor:** The student must possess sufficient motor capabilities to execute the movements and skills required to provide safe and effective nursing interventions. These include, but are not limited to:

1. Coordination, speed and agility to assist and safely guard (protect), with safe and proper body mechanics, patients who are ambulating, transferring, or performing other activities.
2. Ability to adjust and position equipment and patients, which involves bending or stooping freely to floor level and reaching above the head.
3. Ability to move throughout the classroom/clinical site, sit and stand for long periods of time to carry out patient care activities.
4. Ability to perform patient care duties for up to 12 hours at a time, day or night.
5. Ability to move or position patients and equipment, which involves lifting, carrying, pulling, up to and including 30 pounds.
6. Ability to guide, resist, and assist patients, or to provide emergency care, which involves the activities of standing, kneeling, sitting, or walking.
7. Ability and dexterity to manipulate the devices used in giving nursing care.
8. Ability to administer CPR without assistance.

**Sensory:** The student must possess the ability to obtain information in classroom, laboratory or clinical settings through observation, auscultation, palpation and other measures, including but not limited to:

1. Visual ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and interpret facial expressions and body language, identify normal and abnormal patterns of

- movement, to read or set parameters on various equipment, to discriminate color changes, and to interpret and assess the environment.
2. Auditory ability (corrected as necessary) to recognize and respond to soft voices, auditory timers, equipment alarms, call bells, and to effectively use devices for measurement of blood pressure, breath sounds, etc.
  3. Tactile ability to palpate a pulse and to detect changes or abnormalities of surface texture, skin temperature, body contour, muscle tone, and joint movement.
  4. Sufficient position, movement, and balance sensations to assist and safely guard (protect) patients who are ambulating, transferring, or performing other activities.

**Communication:** The student must be able to utilize effective communication with peers, faculty, patients and their families, and other health care providers. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Ability to read at a competency level that allows one to safely carry out the essential functions of an assignment (examples; handwritten chart data, printed policy and procedure manuals).
2. Ability to effectively interpret and process information.
3. Ability to effectively communicate (verbally and in writing) with patients/families, health care professionals, and others within the community.
4. Ability to access information and to communicate and document effectively via computer.
5. Ability to recognize, interpret, and respond to nonverbal behavior of self and others.

**Behavior:** The student must be capable of exercising good judgment, developing empathic and therapeutic relationships with patients and others, and tolerating close and direct physical contact with a diverse population. This will include people of all ages, races, socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, as well as individuals with weight disorders, physical disfigurement and medical or mental health problems. This also includes, but is not limited to:

1. Ability to work with multiple patients/families and colleagues at the same time.
2. Ability to work with classmates, instructors, health care providers, patients, families, and others under stressful conditions, including but not limited to providing care to medically or emotionally unstable individuals, situations requiring rapid adaptations, the provision of CPR, or other emergency interventions.
3. Ability to foster and maintain cooperative and collegial relationships with classmates, instructors, other health care providers, patients, and their families.

**Critical Thinking:** The student must possess sufficient abilities in the areas of calculation, critical problem solving, reasoning, and judgment to be able to

comprehend and process information within a reasonable time frame as determined by the faculty and the profession. The student must be able to prioritize, organize and attend to tasks and responsibilities efficiently. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Ability to collect, interpret and analyze written, verbal and observed data about patients.
2. Ability to prioritize multiple tasks, integrate information and make decisions.
3. Ability to apply knowledge of the principles, indications, and contraindications for nursing interventions.
4. Ability to act safely and ethically in the college clinical lab and in clinical placements within the community.

If a nursing applicant or student is unable to meet one or more of these areas, due to a disability (long or short term), s/he may request consideration for an accommodation through the [Center for Students with Disabilities](#). Prompt notice is essential for full consideration. The requirements for clinical practice apply for all programs which include a clinical component.

### **Body Fluids Exposure**

In the event a UCONN Nursing student or faculty is exposed to blood or body fluids during a clinical practicum the following protocol is to be implemented.

1. Administer first aid
  - a. Irrigate the exposed area as soon as possible.
  - b. STUDENT: Notify your clinical instructor immediately.
2. Gather information
  - a. Identify the source patient and mechanism of exposure/injury
  - b. Identify source patient's HIV and Hepatitis status
3. Present to the nearest Emergency Department immediately (this will be at student/faculty expense)
  - a. Post-exposure treatment for HIV must begin 1 – 2 hours post-exposure
4. Follow-up Care
  - a. STUDENTS
    - i. Present to Student Health Services Infection Control nurse after you have been treated in an Emergency Department
    - ii. Participate in 3- and 6-month follow-up at Student Health Services
  - b. FACULTY
    - i. Present to your own personal health care provider

**REMEMBER**

This exposure needs to be documented in an “Incident Report” at the agency where the exposure took place using agency guidelines.

## Resources

### 1. Curriculum

<https://nursing.online.uconn.edu/#masters>

### 2. Net Id and listserv

<https://its.uconn.edu/services/applications/uconn-lists-listserv/>

### 3. Writing resources

<https://writingcenter.uconn.edu/overview-of-grad-support/>

### 4. Insurance

<https://shs.uconn.edu/insurance-information/>

### 6. Academic calendar

<https://registrar.uconn.edu/academic-calendar/>

### 7. Forms

<https://registrar.uconn.edu/forms/>

### 8. University of Connecticut Policies

<https://policy.uconn.edu>

### 9. Financial Support

Financial resources for graduate students are listed on our webpage at <https://nursing.uconn.edu/financial-assistance/>

[Go to Top](#)