



Graduate Nursing Student Guide 2023-2024



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GRADUATE STUDENT GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to supplement The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Graduate Catalog and UTRGV Student Guide and to assist students in becoming acquainted with the policies and procedures of the School of Nursing and the Graduate Nursing Programs. It is hoped that this will be helpful both as a convenient reference and a useful guide. It is the responsibility of each student to be familiar with the content of this guide and to follow the policies as written here and in the

UTRGV Catalog and Student Guide.

The UTRGV School of Nursing is accredited by the
[Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education \(CCNE\)](#)
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I. SCHOOL OF NURSING

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) School of Nursing has adopted the following Mission Statement:

The School of Nursing supports the mission of the Division of Health Affairs through programs that educate individuals to meet the health care needs of a culturally diverse society. These programs facilitate the development of competent practitioners, educators, and leaders within an interprofessional environment, to provide holistic nursing care to individuals, families, groups, and communities. Integral to the mission, the School of Nursing is committed to fostering research that enhances evidence-based practice and service within the profession. Furthermore, community engagement that enriches health promotion, maintenance, and restoration is highly valued.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the UTRGV School of Nursing curriculum contributes to the development of the course content to advance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of all its graduates. Grounded on the SON philosophy and mission, the curriculum is centered in the belief that the role of the nurse is to assist the person/family/community in developing their full potential to enhance wellness, prevent illness, promote self-care for optimal health, or cope with dying and death. In accordance with professional nursing standards and evidence-based guidelines for practice, the SON degree programs emphasize preparation of students to meet the dynamic needs of the international, multicultural, and multilingual society of the Rio Grande Valley. The curricula promote the development of advanced critical thinking and inter-collaborative skills to be used in conceptualizing, synthesizing, and evaluating nursing and health care. Graduates use skill, theory, research, and knowledge base in entry level through advanced roles within various settings. Grounded from education in the liberal arts and basic sciences, the curricula of the Undergraduate programs introduce concepts and develops students for entry level evidence-based professional nursing practice.

The curricula of the Graduate Programs assume an undergraduate base in nursing, physiology, pharmacology, and health assessment. It complements the UTRGV Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program in that both have an emphasis on health, its promotion, maintenance, and/or restoration. The major thrust is toward advanced practice in which the graduate is prepared to assume responsibility and accountability for health promotion, assessment, diagnosis, and management of problems across the lifespan. All programs place a strong emphasis on critical thinking and the development of sound clinical decision-making skills including clinical reasoning.

There are eight major concepts related to the central belief integrated throughout the nursing curriculum at UTRGV. These concepts are:

1. The **Individual** as a holistic being.
2. **Society** as multicultural and diversity.
3. **Wellness** and **Illness** as a continuum.
4. **Nursing** as a critical thinking, problem-solving process.
5. **Research** and **Evidence-Based Practice**.
6. **Interprofessional Practice**.
7. **Education** as a facilitator of change.
8. **Leadership**.

The **Individual**, as a holistic being, is composed of unique integrated physiological, psychological, spiritual, cultural, and social characteristics. This individual is involved in a dynamic interaction with internal and external stimuli throughout the lifespan and, as a result, is constantly establishing and reestablishing equilibrium. The aim of holistic nursing care is to interact effectively with the whole client, a total person, who is an expert on self. Using the holistic concept in the curriculum differentiates nursing from other health professions by virtue of its approach to the entirety of individuals and health.

Society is composed of individuals interrelating with one another, each from diverse cultural, ethnic, and environmental settings. Culture is composed of the values, behaviors, beliefs, and ideas shared by a group of individuals within society. The presence of many social groups, each with its unique culture, makes society multicultural. The nurse integrates multicultural concepts into areas of practice to individualize care and assist the client to promote self-care.

Wellness and **Illness**: Since the health status of an individual or group is a changing phenomenon, it may be viewed on a wellness-illness continuum. On this continuum, individuals and groups respond to multiple stimuli by maintaining their present health status, moving toward increased wellness, or moving toward increased illness. This perspective necessitates the application of the holistic concept to individualize client care.

Nursing, as a caring profession, is built upon a theoretical base and implemented through the nursing process. The nursing process encompasses a collaborative nurse-client assessment of needs, analysis of those needs, development of nursing diagnoses, planning based upon the diagnoses, implementation of the nursing care plan, and evaluation of the goals. The nursing process incorporates critical thinking, which leads to creative and intellectual practices.

Research and **Evidence-Based** studies serve as a basis for the analysis and decision-making involved in the nursing process. The nursing process is integrated throughout the curriculum and is applied from the most fundamental nursing action to complex decision making in meeting client needs and/or manage client care. Nursing focuses on a critical thinking process which is founded on concepts and principles leading to creative and intellectual processes.

Interprofessional Collaboration and **Practice** is defined as "when multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds work together with patients, families, caregivers, and communities to deliver the highest quality of care. It is based on the

concept that when providers consider each other's perspective, including that of the patient, they can deliver better care.

Education facilitates change as evidenced by the student's intellectual and professional growth. Cognitive, psychomotor, and affective behaviors change as a result of the teaching-learning process. The learning environment incorporates the principles of adult learning to promote the development of advanced critical thinking and inter-collaborative skills which may be used in conceptualizing, synthesizing, and evaluating management of nursing and health care problems. Teachers encourage students to be critical thinkers, active participants, client advocates, and self-directed learners.

Leadership in nursing further develops the previous seven concepts. Nursing leadership is defined as influencing others to improve the quality of care along with the direct participation in clinical care. Specifically, leadership in health care is a fundamental skill that allows the nurse to navigate the complex healthcare system effectively in solving problems and making decisions related to the client as a holistic being in a multicultural environment at any point in the wellness-illness continuum. Nurses, as part of the health intradisciplinary team, must be capable of leading healthcare teams and using effective communication to coordinate and manage care.

In the development of all School of Nursing programs/courses, pervasive and progressive concepts provide the framework and direction for the course objectives and content. Pervasive concepts are utilized throughout all program curriculum and consist of the individual as a holistic being, society as multicultural, wellness and illness as a continuum, nursing as a problem-solving process, care that is evidence based, nursing as part of the health-care team, nurse as a leader in health care, and education as a facilitator of change. Progressive concepts are those that are introduced with the first BSN courses and developed throughout the undergraduate and graduate curriculum.

II. GRADUATE PROGRAM

Graduate Program Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes facilitate evaluation of learning. The student will:

1. Function as a scholar with critical thinking skills supported by theories from the behavioral, physical, and nursing sciences.
2. Demonstrate organizational and systems leadership in the application of client/patient care interventions, incorporating informatics and health care technology to improve population health care outcomes.
3. Collaborate as a member of an interprofessional health care team to advocate for safe and effective client/patient care, being cognizant of cultural, societal, economic, political, and ethicolegal issues.
4. Promote quality improvement in the provision of culturally competent care to diverse populations through integration of health policy, planned programs, education, and advocacy.
5. Translate and integrate scholarship and research into masters-level practice that is grounded in the sciences and humanities.

Student Participation on Committees

Student input in the ongoing development and evaluation of the Graduate Programs is sought and valued. One student from each program will serve a one-year term on the Graduate Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Student Admission, Progression & Graduation Committee. The purpose of the curriculum committee is to provide leadership for long-range planning, overall development, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum. The purpose of the graduate student admission, progression & graduation committee is to maintain optimum academic standards for the Graduate Programs.

III. ADMISSION

Admission requirements for graduate programs are designated for students who have a high probability of success in graduate-level work at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. The university establishes minimum standards for admission to any graduate program. Each graduate program may establish higher minimum admission standards with the approval of the Graduate Education Committee. The application to all graduate programs can be found at www.utrgv.edu/gradapply

Graduate degree programs are housed in academic departments. Each department establishes its requirements for admission in consultation with the Graduate Education Committee. Graduate program requirements are in addition to the minimum requirements established for admission by the Graduate College at the university.

Normally, all undergraduate work must be satisfactorily completed prior to taking graduate courses, or at least be completed during the first semester of enrollment in graduate courses. Any student who would like to enroll in a graduate-level course (courses numbered 5000-9000) must apply and be accepted for graduate study at UTRGV. Students accepted for graduate study are also eligible to enroll in undergraduate courses. Admission procedures and criteria specific to the master's and doctoral programs are located in the relevant sections of this catalog.

Admission Categories

Graduate Degree-Seeking Students: A graduate degree-seeking student admitted into a specific degree program will be evaluated on a series of criteria created by both the university and the graduate program to which the applicant is applying and will be classified under one of the four admission classifications.

Graduate Non-Degree Seeking Students: Students wanting to take graduate coursework for professional improvement must submit a graduate application online, pay the required fees, and submit an official transcript showing the awarding of a bachelor's or higher degree. This must be sent to the UTRGV Graduate College directly from the awarding institution. Non-degree seeking students applying for certification related to education are required to have transcripts sent from all institutions attended.

Registration as a non-degree seeking student in a master's course requires the permission of the graduate program coordinator or the department chair. Please note that students interested in registering for a course in any of the accelerated programs must be degree-seeking. Registration in doctoral courses requires acceptance to a doctoral program and/or approval of the Dean of the Graduate College and may require additional documentation.

A maximum of 6 hours taken at the university as a non-degree seeking student can be applied to a graduate degree with the approval of the faculty director or the academic program coordinator of the graduate program.

International Students and Domestic Students Who Studied Outside the U.S.: Students who fall into this category should understand that in order to be accepted to any UTRGV School of Nursing MSN Programs they must have a current, unexpired, unencumbered license to practice as a Registered Nurse (RN) in the United States with expiration dates noted on their license. To be accepted to the MSN-FNP Program or the Post-Graduate FNP Certificate Program, the student must have a valid RN license to practice in the State of Texas. For any further information regarding this admission category, please visit the [*International Students and Domestic Students Who Studied Outside the U.S.*](#) link.

Admission Classifications

The following categories are consistent with the requirements from the UTRGV Graduate College. Additional requirements for Graduate Nursing Programs are found within section IV of this Guide.

Clear Admission

An applicant who meets the following criteria is eligible for clear admission to a graduate degree program:

1. Awarded a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution and earned at least a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) GPA in the last 60 semester hours or the equivalent in quarter hours on the applicants bachelors degree transcript; or
2. Earned a previous master's degree or doctoral degree from an accredited university.

Conditional Admission

Students not eligible for Clear Admission may be admitted conditionally. Once the conditions are satisfied, the admissions classification will be updated to "clear."

- Based on Academic Record:
An applicant meeting the following criteria may be granted conditional admission:
 1. Awarded a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution;

2. Earned between a 2.75 and 2.99 (on a 4.0 scale) GPA in the last 60 semester hours or the equivalent in quarter hours on the applicants bachelors degree transcript.

An applicant granted conditional admission based on academic standing may not enroll for more than 12 graduate hours in total while on conditional admittance.

A student on conditional status who earns any graduate grade less than a B will not be allowed to continue in UTRGV graduate programs. The student may appeal this decision to the Dean of the Graduate College through the department chair or program director and the dean, who will each provide a recommendation on the appeal. The appeal must be in writing to the department chair or the program to which the student is applying and should provide an explanation of any extenuating circumstances to be considered. The Graduate College Dean's decision shall be final.

At the end of the semester in which a conditional student's total earned graduate hours are six or more and the student's graduate GPA is 3.0 or better with no grade less than B, the student's admission classification will be changed to "clear."

- Based on Unofficial Documentation:
Master's applicants may be granted conditional admission pending confirmation of a baccalaureate degree. The following apply:
 1. The applicant has yet to be awarded a baccalaureate degree at the time of admission but anticipates earning the degree prior to enrolling in a graduate degree program.
 2. The applicant has submitted unofficial documents.*
 3. The student meets the minimum GPA requirements.

Conditional admission is for one module, or one long semester, or one summer module, or two-consecutive summer semesters. A student who enrolls in a graduate course(s) will have started his or her conditional semester regardless of whether the student drops or withdraws during the semester. The student must provide degree confirmation prior to enrolling in future semesters. However, students may continue to register for future semesters with the understanding that they will be dropped from classes and the refund of payment may not be granted if conditional admission requirements are not met.

At the end of one module or one long semester or one summer module or two consecutive summer semesters of conditional admission, the student will be reclassified to one of the other admission classifications, including no admission, based on the official documentation received.

*Students accepted under conditional admission are responsible for contacting the Graduate College to verify receipt of documentation and to request reclassification of admission status.

- Based on Graduate Program Requirements:
Graduate programs may accept students on a conditional basis if additional requirements must be met before clear admission, i.e., completion of designated foundation coursework or the requirements to retake a standardized test and earn a prescribed score. These requirements must be listed by the program director in the “comments” section of the application so that the admissions staff can relay the information to the student with notification of admission.

Once the graduate program requirements are met, the student will be reclassified into one of the other admission classifications, including no admission.

- No Admission:
An applicant not meeting the minimum graduate admission requirements for the university or the admission criteria for the graduate degree program will not be admitted. However, admission to a graduate program is not guaranteed if a student meets these criteria as some programs may have enrollment limitations.

The applicant may appeal this decision to the dean of the Graduate College through the department chair or program director and the college dean, who will each provide a recommendation on the appeal. The appeal must be in writing to the department chair or the program to which the student is applying and should provide an explanation of any extenuating circumstances to be considered. The decision of the dean of the Graduate College shall be final. A student admitted as a result of an appeal will normally be granted conditional admission.

An applicant not admitted to a graduate program may be eligible to enroll in undergraduate classes at the university after undergoing the proper admission process for undergraduate courses.

If an applicant is not admitted into one graduate degree program, the applicant may still be eligible for admission into another degree program. Please schedule an appointment with an academic adviser to discuss this option. Application to a different graduate program may require a new application for admission.

Criminal Background Check

The UTRGV Graduate College requires student criminal background checks for all currently enrolled and newly admitted students in various programs including the Graduate program in nursing. Background checks are reflective of the last seven years and will be honored for the duration of the student’s enrollment in the designated program provided there is no break in enrollment. Students who refuse to submit to a background check or who do not pass the background check may be dismissed from the program. See the [UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures](#) for more information.

IV. FNP-GRADUATE NURSING PROGRAMS

Master of Science in Nursing Family Nurse Practitioner Program

Purpose

Program is designed to prepare the graduate to use an expanded skill, theory, research, and knowledge base in advanced practice nursing. The program emphasizes preparation of students to meet the dynamic needs of the international, multicultural, and multilingual society of the Rio Grande Valley. The curriculum promotes the development of advanced critical thinking and inter-collaborative skills to be used in conceptualizing, synthesizing, and evaluating nursing and health care.

Family Nurse Practitioner Specialty Outcomes

The student successfully completing the Master of Science in Nursing Family Nurse Practitioner Program will be able to:

1. Apply theories, research, and conceptual models from nursing and related disciplines to facilitate best practice and clinical decision-making in primary care across the lifespan.
2. Integrate the use of communication skills, information systems, technology and systematic reviews in relation to client management across the lifespan.
3. Develop collaborative and interdisciplinary relationships and partnerships that are critical in best practice health care environments for patients/clients and their families.
4. Demonstrate leadership, ethical decision-making and safe practice in the conceptualization, design, implementation, and evaluation of health care delivery across the lifespan.
5. Provide leadership in human resources development, education, and management to improve nursing care across diverse populations.

Admission Requirements

To be admitted to the graduate program in nursing – family nurse practitioner, prospective candidates must first meet all requirements for graduate admission to UTRGV, as well as the other specialty requirements listed below:

1. Official transcripts from each institution attended (must be submitted directly to UTRGV).
2. Bachelor's degree in nursing (BSN).
3. Undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0.
4. Submission of a letter of intent.
5. Submission of resume.
6. Three (3) letters of recommendation.
7. Successful completion of undergraduate statistics course.
8. Holding an unencumbered license as a Registered Nurse in the State of Texas
Cleared Criminal Background Check.

For more information, visit the [UTRGV Graduate College MSN-FNP Program](#) information page.

Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate Program

Purpose

The graduate post-master's Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) certificate encompasses three (3) unique courses (15 credit hours) pertinent only to the FNP program. These courses contain the content and clinical hours necessary to meet national educational standards for graduate-level, advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) education and nationally recognized core role and populations-focused FNP standards and competencies. These graduate specialty courses are NURS 6347 Nurse Practitioner Role (45 clinical hours), NURS 6612 Family Nurse Practitioner I (224 clinical hours), and NURS 6613 Family Nurse Practitioner II (336 clinical hours).

Family Nurse Practitioner Specialty Outcomes

The student successfully completing the Post Master's Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate Program will be able to:

1. Apply theories, research, and conceptual models from nursing and related disciplines to facilitate best practice and clinical decision-making in primary care across the lifespan.
2. Integrate the use of communication skills, information systems, technology and systematic reviews in relation to client management across the lifespan.
3. Develop collaborative and interdisciplinary relationships and partnerships that are critical in best practice health care environments for patients/clients and their families.
4. Demonstrate leadership, ethical decision-making and safe practice in the conceptualization, design, implementation, and evaluation of health care delivery across the lifespan.
5. Provide leadership in human resources development, education, and management to improve nursing care across diverse populations.

Admission Requirements

1. A Master's or doctoral degree in nursing from a Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) accredited program in nursing.
2. An Advanced Health Assessment course equivalent to UTRGV SON NURS 6305: Advanced Health Assessment within the last 3 years*
3. An Advanced Pharmacology course equivalent to UTRGV SON NURS 6306: Advanced Pharmacology within the last 3 years*
4. An Advanced Pathophysiology course equivalent to UTRGV SON NURS 6304: Advanced Pathophysiology within the last 3 years*
5. A current unencumbered license to practice as a Registered Nurse (RN) in the State of Texas and in good standing.
6. A grade point average of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale.
7. An official transcript from all colleges and universities attended.

8. Three (3) letters of professional recommendations.
9. A written statement of purpose (letter of intent).
10. A current resume/curriculum vitae.
11. A cleared criminal background check.
12. Evidence of current immunizations required by the Texas Department of Health for students in health-related academic programs.

*The Graduate Admission, Progression and Graduation Committee requires that the applicant submit course syllabus to determine equivalency to UTRGV Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) FNP course. MSN-prepared Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) certified as adult nurse practitioners, women's health nurse practitioners, pediatric nurse practitioners or acute care nurse practitioners may have these courses waived from the admission requirements after applications have been assessed by this committee.

For more information, visit the [UTRGV Graduate College Post Master's FNP Program](#) information page.

V. PROGRESSION

Attendance

Responsibility for class attendance rests with the student. Regular and punctual attendance of all scheduled classes is expected. Instructors report non-attendance following the census date of each term in accordance with federal regulations. Students reported as not attending classes may be responsible for returning financial aid disbursed to them for any class(es) the student is not attending. Reporting of non-attendance is also a requirement of instructors throughout each semester and when reporting final grades. Instructors awarding failing grades are required to report the last day a student attended class, whether or not the student completed the class fully. Instructors may also request a student be dropped for excessive absences from class, in which case the student will receive a grade of DR and may be required to return financial aid disbursed.

Advisement

The Coordinator of the graduate nursing programs assigns a faculty advisor to each student to assist in planning his/her program of study and selecting courses for each semester of study. The Faculty Advisor for each student will assist in planning his/her program of study and in selecting courses for each semester of study. The faculty advisor will conduct advisement for pre- registration.

Degree Plan

A tentative degree plan will be initiated by the individual Program Coordinator as soon as possible after student admission. The official degree plan will be finalized the semester prior to graduation. Students must submit a graduation application a semester prior to anticipated graduation. Applying for graduation is required whether or not you

attend the commencement ceremony. Participation in the commencement ceremony does not imply that you have officially graduated. Graduate students can apply using the [UTRGV Graduation Application](#).

Licensure Updates

It is the responsibility of each student to update program records by submitting an updated RN license to the program administrative assistant each time the nursing license is renewed. Students must always maintain a current Texas/and or state of residence license to practice (or from the state of residence) as a registered nurse.

Requirements for the MSN

The general requirements for the Master of Science in Nursing are as follows:

- A degree plan approved by the Graduate Nursing Program coordinators.
- Satisfactory completion of all courses:
 - Seven years of admission into the MSN Administration or the MSN Education Programs.
 - Five years of admission into the MSN Family Nurse Practitioner and PMHNP, for graduates to be eligible to sit for a National Certification board. National certification is required by the state of Texas to be credentialed.
- Satisfactory completion of the thesis or practice intervention project (non-thesis option).

Leave of Absence / Inactive Status & Readmission

Graduate students may apply in writing for a leave of absence for no more than two long semesters or four modules. This request must be approved in advance of the leave by the graduate adviser, program director, dean of the college, and the Dean of the Graduate College. The student on leave must reapply for admission in order to return to the University, but readmission during the approved period of the leave is automatic and the application fee is waived. Readmission is not automatic and dependent upon final recommendations from the Graduate Admission, Progression and Graduation Committee and space availability. Furthermore, a leave of absence does not change the time limit for completion of the student's graduate program of study. The [Leave of Absence Request for Master's Students](#) form must be submitted no later than or during the semester prior to the requested leave. In the event that this is not possible, the request should be submitted as soon as the student is aware that he or she will not be able to register for any given semester.

For information of **leave of absence** for Special Populations such as varsity athletes, veterans, and military can be found at [Special Populations Leave of Absence](#) link.

Dropping and Withdrawal

If a student chooses not to attend a class or classes she/he is responsible for officially dropping or withdrawing from the course(s). Students must drop their classes online in ASSIST by the posted deadline. Students wishing to withdraw from the university (drop all of their classes) must do so in person at UCentral on the UTRGV Edinburg Campus

or UTRGV Brownsville Campus and submit a [Student Withdrawal Form](#) and must do so by the posted deadline for drops and withdrawals. Students who decide not to attend and do not officially complete the drop or withdrawal process through the Office of the Registrar will be responsible for tuition, fees and any other consequences or financial penalties resulting from failure to officially drop or withdraw. Students must not assume that they will “automatically” be dropped from their classes if they do not attend or do not pay. A student withdrawing during the first 75% of the semester or term (refer to the university calendar in this catalog or the Registration Bulletin for deadline dates) will receive grades of W in the classes she/he was registered for in that term. After the deadline the student remains on the class roster and receives the letter grade she/he earns. (If a student has requested some form of financial assistance, payment may have been posted to his or her account.) Refer to the refund schedules published online for refund deadlines and details.

Note: Effective January 1st, 2020, the following applies:

The grading system in the MSN program is based on a letter grade system using grades of A, B, C, and F. The mechanism for determining grades is described in each course syllabus. In order to remain in good standing and progress through the MSN program, a student must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (B) or higher. A student whose cumulative grade point average falls below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation.

As per Graduate College Policy GPA for Continued Enrollment:

“In order for a Master’s degree-seeking graduate student to remain in good academic standing, the student must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (3.0 = B on a 4.0 scale).”

Probation and Dismissal:

A Masters-level graduate student whose cumulative grade point average falls below 3.00 at the end of any semester or summer session will be notified by the Graduate College that his or her continuance is in probationary status.”

A student who receives an “F” in any course is automatically dismissed from the graduate program.

Students receiving a grade below “B” in any **clinical** course will not be allowed to progress in the program; however, the student will be given the opportunity to repeat the course the following year or next course offering.

The student bears full responsibility for completing graduate study before his or her own time limitation date within five years (FNP-MSN and PMHNP) or seven years for all other graduate nursing programs. For the FNP-MSN program, a one-year extension may be granted by the Graduate Student Development Committee upon submission of a petition by the student which contains:

- Documentation of extenuating circumstances,
- Documentation of a history of satisfactory performance,
- Preparation of a timetable and plan to complete the requirements for the Master's degree within a reasonable period.

VI. CLINICAL COURSES

Liability Insurance

Student liability insurance is required when enrolled in any course with a clinical component having patient contact. Fees for the student program policy will be assessed in the Fall semester for the academic year and are included in registration fees.

Students entering in a spring or summer semester will have a prorated fee assessed. Student liability insurance policy only provides protection for students while they are participating in clinical practice as required for their academic coursework and does not cover students in employment. The medical liability insurance is renewed annually on September 1st.

Clinical Preceptorship

A clinical preceptorship is a supervised clinical experience which allows students to apply knowledge gained in the didactic portion of a program to client/ patient care management situations in the clinical setting. Practice in the clinical setting provides the student with the opportunity to observe and actively participate in the delivery of health care that incorporates advanced practice nursing concepts. Preceptors actively practicing in the clinical setting are uniquely qualified to facilitate the development of students in this advanced practice role.

Each student enters the clinical preceptorship with a varied clinical practice experience and technical competence; therefore, providing clinical learning opportunities which support the student's individual learning needs.

It is the responsibility of the faculty and the student to identify and recruit qualified preceptors, to provide an appropriate orientation for the preceptors, including evaluation of preceptor performance. Preceptors are expected to assess student progress through written evaluation at the completion of the student's clinical experience. However, the faculty and/or the course coordinator is ultimately responsible for the overall monitoring and evaluation of student performance in clinical courses.

The details about the preceptorship role and experience are found in the *UTRGV School of Nursing Preceptor Orientation Packet* which must be given to each preceptor before any clinical experience is initiated.

Verification of the supervised clinical hours by a preceptor will be initiated by the student at the completion of the clinical practice experience. The form (Letter Verification of Clinical Clock Hours Preceptor) for completion and routing for required signatures will be found in the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Program (PMHNP) Toolbox in Blackboard Learning Management System used at UTRGV, under Forms.

It is unacceptable for students to seek health care from Faculty, Preceptors, or clinical sites. Student health issues should be directed to UTRGV Student Health Services or the individual's Health Care Provider.

VII. GRADING

University Grading Policies

For a degree-seeking student in a master's program to remain in good academic standing, the student must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (3.0=B on a 4.0 scale) and meet their department's academic progress criteria toward degree completion. The minimum GPA of 3.0 is based on all course work taken regardless of whether the courses are part of the student's degree plan. A student whose overall GPA falls below a 3.0 in a given semester is automatically placed on academic probation the following semester. Within the following nine semester credit hours, the overall GPA must return to 3.0 or the student will be suspended for a minimum of one semester.

A student who receives an F in any course is automatically dismissed from the graduate program.

Graduate Nursing Program Grading Scale

The grading system in the Graduate Nursing Program is based on a letter grade system using letter grades of A, B, C, and F. The mechanism for determining grades is described in each course syllabus as follows:

A	90 – 100
B	80 – 89
C	75 – 79
F	≤ 74

Students receiving a grade below “B” in any clinical course will not be allowed to progress in the program and will be given the opportunity to repeat the course the following year. The student must then submit a letter to the Graduate Admission, Progression & Graduation Committee requesting re-entry to the program. The student should be aware that re-entry to the program is not automatic and is based on space-availability. Only one course in the curriculum can be repeated to earn a grade of “B” or higher to progress. Any student that has already been granted permission to repeat a course (clinical or non-clinical) in the curriculum will not be allowed to repeat another course in which he/she has received a grade below “B”.

Incomplete Grades “I”

An incomplete (I) grade is a temporary grade given only during the last one-fourth of a term/ semester and only if:

- The student has completed at least 75% of the course;
- The student is passing the course to date;
- The student will not have completed the remaining required coursework within the allotted time of a regular semester or summer session; and
- The instructor determines that the reason for the work being incomplete is valid and that the grade of “I” is justified.

A written agreement between the student and the instructor specifying the work to be made up and the deadline for its accomplishment must be filed in the office of the School Director/Department Chair at the time that the “I” is submitted. The work agreed upon must be satisfactorily completed and the “I” changed no later than the end of the next regular (Fall or Spring) semester from the date the “I” was received (unless an extension is requested by the instructor) or the grade will automatically be recorded as the grade alternatively assigned by the faculty at the time of submitting the written agreement.

The Office of the Registrar must receive the complete [Request for Grade of Incomplete Form](#) with all required signatures by the published deadline for faculty to enter grades, or an NR grade will be entered.

Appealing a Grade

Students wishing to appeal final grades or decisions regarding academic standards should first discuss the matter with the instructor of the class. If no resolution occurs, and the student wishes to pursue the matter further, the student may appeal in writing to the program coordinator within one long semester after the disputed grade or decision is issued. If no resolution occurs at this level, and the student wishes to pursue the matter even further, the student may appeal in writing to the graduate program director then the dean of the School of Nursing.

At all levels of the appeal, the student will receive a written decision within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) of the receipt of the written appeal. Pursuant appeals will be written and directed within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) of the date of the program coordinator’s, graduate program director’s and dean’s decisions to the school, college, or division College Academic Appeals Committee.

The committee will consist of a panel of three faculty members, two of whom may not be from the department in which the appeal originated. The dean will appoint the panel members upon receipt of the written appeal and notify the student in writing of the date, time, and location of the hearing and the names of the members of the panel.

The student and the faculty member involved may appear in person before the panel and present evidence. The hearing will be closed to the public, and no person other than the student, the faculty member involved and panel members may be present.

No person may represent the student or the faculty member. After the College Academic Appeals Committee has heard the appeal, it will deliberate and come to a

decision. The committee's decision will be written and mailed, or delivered in person, to the student and faculty member within three class days of the close of the hearing. The student may appeal in writing within 14 calendar days to the dean/director (excluding holidays). The dean's decision will be final, and it must be mailed or delivered in person to the student within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) of the receipt of the student's written appeal.

VIII. THESIS / NON-THESIS OPTIONS

Graduate students have a choice of completing a thesis or completing a non-thesis (Practice Intervention Project) option.

See Thesis Option

Advantages of choosing the thesis option are:

- Gain beginning independent research skills;
- Close intensive work with a faculty member (chairperson of committee);
- In-depth knowledge of the research process; and
- Preparation for doctoral program work (required by some programs).

The thesis serves as evidence that a student has undertaken significant and acceptable research in the student's major field and is a public and permanent communication of that research for anyone interested in the field. The thesis research is developed and carried out by the student with the guidance of a supervisory committee. Additionally, the supervisory committee approves the thesis proposal and the completed thesis and conducts the final oral examination.

Committee Formation

The student shall choose a dissertation or thesis committee in consultation with their faculty advisor, according to the following guidelines.

- A thesis/dissertation committee must be comprised of a minimum of three members.
- One member can be from outside the SON. Below are procedures for requesting a faculty member from another university or a professional from industry or government with qualifying credentials to serve as an external member of a thesis or doctoral committee. Membership is limited only to service on the committee indicated in the request and must comply with the thesis/dissertation requirements of the program as far as the level and type of participation. To appoint an external member to a committee, the following must be submitted to the Graduate Council:
 - Memo from thesis/doctoral committee chair requesting appointment with a statement indicating the proposed member's qualifications, potential contribution to the student's committee and the proposed member has agreement to serve.
 - Current curriculum vitae of the proposed member.

- The above should be routed through the appropriate department chair/school director or graduate program director in the case of multi-disciplinary programs to the Graduate College for submission to the Graduate Council.
- The majority of the committee members need to be from the department/school – i.e., three from inside, one from another UTRGV department and another from outside UTRGV when the committee has five members.
- [Application for Thesis Committee](#) / [Application for Dissertation Committee](#) is to be submitted no later than during the first thesis/dissertation course.

Thesis Proposal

Students beginning the thesis proposal must register for **NURS 7300: Thesis I (Proposal)**. The thesis proposal delineates the research that a student elects to undertake. It includes a purpose and rationale for the research, a review of the relevant literature, the methodology to be used, and a strategy for analyzing the data. The American Psychological Association Publication Manual, the [UTRGV Thesis Manual](#) and the [UTRGV Dissertation Manual](#) format and bibliographic style is the approved format for the presentation of the written thesis proposal. Upon approval, a copy of the proposal is filed with the thesis chairperson and the Graduate Nursing Program. Once a student registers for the thesis, the student must continue to register every fall and spring semester until the thesis is defended and the student graduates.

The student develops the thesis proposal in consultation with the thesis chairperson. Upon approval of the chairperson, a typed copy of the thesis proposal is presented to each member of the thesis committee. The committee meets with the student for purposes of reviewing and approving the thesis proposal. The approved thesis proposal is then submitted to the Institutional Review Board, if appropriate. Approval of the thesis proposal by the thesis committee and the Human Subjects Review Committee (if needed) signifies that the student may undertake the research. Forms related to thesis are available from the student's advisor.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Students have the responsibility, in consultation with their faculty advisor, to determine whether IRB approval is required for their research. Students should be advised to begin the process as soon as possible since it may take several weeks to receive approval. Committee chairs are asked to direct students to the website of the Office of Research, Innovation, and Economic Development to learn about the IRB process. For information on IRB for Human Subjects, visit <https://www.utrgv.edu/irb/>.

Research Conduction

The student must register for **NURS 7301: Thesis II** during the conduction, analysis, and interpretation of the research. Graduate students using university facilities or faculty time for research or writing a thesis must be enrolled during that time. Graduates who are registered in the spring semester will automatically receive library privileges for the summer sessions. If the student is registered for thesis credit, it is expected that the

student will be working on the thesis and is in communication with the chairperson regarding thesis progress.

Thesis Oral Examination

It is the student's responsibility to schedule the oral defense of the thesis at a time suitable to the members of the thesis committee. Members of the thesis committee have voting privileges on the examination. A simple majority vote is required for successful defense. After successful defense, the student must obtain signatures on the thesis approval page. The manual that details the University requirements for the format and submission of a dissertation or thesis is available on the [Thesis & Dissertation](#) website under the Graduate College.

Thesis Submission

Thesis and dissertations are submitted by the student online. Detailed instructions regarding thesis/dissertation requirements are found on the Graduate College website in the [Thesis & Dissertation](#) link. The manuscript is uploaded by the student at the ProQuest UMI website www.etsdadmin.com/utrgv. When uploading, the student is required to pay for a minimum two copies which will go to the library and department and may order additional copies for personal use. The SON may require additional copies of the thesis (at additional expense to the student). The Graduate College will review the online submission and notify the student of any formatting that need to be made. Deadlines are posted on the Graduate College website related to submission of a thesis/dissertation. A student will not be certified for graduation unless the final approved thesis or dissertation has been uploaded to the online website and the Certification of Completion of Thesis or Dissertation form has been completed and submitted to the Graduate College.

Graduation Requirements

In order to be certified for graduation, students must complete the following:

- Submit a final copy of the Thesis or Dissertation on the [ProQuest](#) website by the Draft Online Submission Deadlines.
- By the final deadline, theses and dissertations are expected to be complete, with no further changes or corrections. To ensure that they meet this deadline, students are advised to upload their submission to [ProQuest](#) a few days before final deadline.

Faculty must:

- Submit the Certification of Completion of Thesis or Dissertation Form that is signed by all committee members to the Graduate Office
- Assign a letter grade (not "S" or "U") to required coursework. This should be done as soon as the course is completed.

Inclusion in the Commencement Ceremony Program

Students who would like to have the title of their Thesis or Dissertation included in the Commencement Program must submit their draft online by the **DEADLINE FOR ONLINE SUBMISSION OF DRAFT** date.

Extensions

Students who do not have their draft ready by the deadline must request an extension in writing to the Graduate Office. No exceptions will be made to the deadline for the final submission of the thesis and dissertation.

Non-Thesis Option/Practice Intervention Project

The non-thesis/Practice Intervention Project (PIP) option provides a capstone course which draws on previous course work and prepares the student for using research in the practice setting. The student choosing the non-thesis option must register for either:

- **NURS 7304: Advanced Practice Intervention Project** (MSN Administration Program);
- **NURS 7395: Advanced Practice Intervention Project for Nurse Educators** (MSN Education Program); or
- **NURS 7302: Practice Intervention Project** (MSN-FNP Program).

This course will focus on identification of a problem, issue, or project related to the student's clinical or role area, review of pertinent literature, development of a proposed solution, implementation of the project, and evaluation methodology. The student will submit a scholarly paper concerning the project.

IX. STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Student Accessibility Services exists to facilitate students' equal access to university programs and services, promote student learning and development, foster independence and self-advocacy, promote an environment that is free of physical and attitudinal barriers, and provide leadership to the campus on disability and accessibility issues.

Students with disabilities: To receive services from UTRGV Student Accessibility Services, the student, according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), must self-disclose a physical or mental disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities. These disabilities can include, but are not limited to learning, hearing, vision, psychological, health and physical disabilities. Students who experience a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester may be eligible for temporary accommodations. Documentation of a disability is required. Students can apply for accommodations using [mySAS](https://mySAS.utrgv.edu) the online portal located at www.utrgv.edu/mySAS

For pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, and parenting accommodations:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a Federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex—including pregnancy and parental status—in educational programs and activities. Students seeking accommodations related to pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, or parenting (reasonably immediate postpartum period) are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services for additional information or to schedule an intake appointment. Students can apply for accommodations by submitting the Pregnancy Accommodations Request

Individualized accommodations are provided to students where their ability to fully participate in course requirements and university experiences is impacted by a documented disability, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions or parenting.

If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor(s) and contact Student Accessibility Services to schedule an appointment to initiate services. It is recommended that you schedule an appointment with Student Accessibility Services before classes start. However, accommodations can be provided at any time at:

Brownsville Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in 1.107 in the Music and Learning Center building (BMSLC) and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 or via email at ability@utrgv.edu

Edinburg Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center (EUCTR) and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 or via email at ability@utrgv.edu

X. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY / INTEGRITY

Plagiarism, Fabrication, Falsification

UTRGV strives to create a research and scholarship climate that promotes faithful adherence to high ethical standards in the conduct of research or other scholarly or creative activities, without inhibiting productivity and creativity.

Every student at UTRGV is expected to exercise independent thought and expression as he or she strives for academic achievement. Incorporated in the quest for intellectual growth are the expectations of honesty, originality in written and oral expression, a respect for the exchange of ideas, and acknowledgement and recognition of the abilities and contributions of others. For information to assist students with a variety of academic integrity issues, please visit the [Academic Integrity](#) link under the UTRGV Office of the Dean of Students website.

Misconduct in scholarly activity is an offense that damages not only the reputation of those involved but also that of the entire educational community and will not be tolerated. Misconduct in scholarly activity includes fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the academic community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research or other scholarly or creative accomplishments. It does not include honest errors or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data.

As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to

give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since academic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students. For further information on academic dishonesty, please visit the [Academic Dishonesty](#) link under the UTRGV Office of the Dean of Students website.

XI. SEXUAL HARRASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION and VIOLENCE

All Vaqueros are encouraged to report sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and discrimination. If prior to making a report, you would like to speak to someone confidentially, UTRGV confidential resources are available, such as, the [Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention](#) (OVAVP), the [Vaqueros Crisis Line](#) (956) 665-5555 and the [Counseling Center](#).

In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “Responsible Employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report to the Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity (OIED@utrgv.edu) any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, and sexual harassment, about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct, discrimination, and all forms of violence. If students, faculty, or staff would like confidential assistance, or have questions, they can contact [OVAVP](#) (Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention) at (956) 665-8287, (956) 882-8282, or OVAVP@utrgv.edu.

XII. GRADUATION

All policies and procedures in the UTRGV Graduate Catalog must be followed for graduation, including the timely application for degree and payment of the graduation fee. Students completing a thesis are also responsible for the binding fees of their manuscript.

Degree requirements that must be completed are those that were in effect at the time of a student’s entrance, or in a subsequent catalog with permission from the Faculty Director or Academic Program Coordinator of the graduate program. All degree requirements must be completed within seven (7) years for the MSN Administration and Education degrees. Due to the nature of the practice-oriented curriculum in the MSN Family Nurse Practitioner program, the requirements for graduation must be completed within a period of five (5) consecutive years from the date of first enrollment whether or not the student is enrolled during that period. This maximum time frame is a deviation

from the University's seven-year time limit as described in the [UTRGV Graduate Catalog](#).

Application for Degree

Students eligible to apply for graduation must submit a [Graduation Application Form](#) via gradcertification@utrgv.edu by the established deadline published in the University Calendar.

Applications received after the published deadline may be processed for the next available graduation date. Graduation application deadlines are necessary for timely notification of outstanding deficiencies prior to graduation and to allow students sufficient time to clear such deficiencies.

Students who wish to have a maiden or other previous name added to their diploma must notify the Office of the University Registrar at least four months prior to graduation. Only the student's official full name according to his/her academic record will be printed on the diploma.

Graduation Application Fee

A nonrefundable graduation fee of \$50 is charged for undergraduate and graduate degrees as student seeks. This fee will be charged to the student's UTRGV online account. This fee is applied towards costs associated with processing of applications for graduation, auditing for degree completion, printing, packaging, and shipment of diplomas, as well as costs of facilities for Commencement ceremonies along with other related expenses. The fee is assessed to all students regardless of plans to participate in Commencement ceremonies.

Degree Audit and Graduation Clearance

Upon submission of a graduation application a preliminary degree audit will be completed to determine a student's academic progress toward degree. Students will be notified of outstanding deficiencies prior to graduation and be provided with a deadline to clear such deficiencies. In order to remain a degree candidate for the semester graduation is planned, all degree program requirements must be met by the deadline published. A final degree audit will be processed upon posting of final semester grades to verify degree completion. Students unable to clear degree requirements by published deadline (40-days after conclusion of semester) will be required to submit a Transfer Graduation Date form.

Transfer of Graduation Date

Degree candidates not clearing for graduation by the established deadline are required to submit a [Transfer Graduation Date Form](#) to change their graduation application date to a future semester. This form is available online via U Central and Graduate College website or at the U Central counter.

Commencement Ceremonies

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley holds commencement ceremonies in December and May (Fall and Spring Commencement). All students participating in a commencement ceremony are required to purchase the proper graduation regalia from the University Bookstore. Students will not be permitted to participate without proper regalia. Students may participate in only one ceremony and are subject to requirements for eligibility to participate based on degree progression and outstanding requirements.

All students participating in the commencement exercises are required to purchase the proper regalia from the University Bookstore. You cannot participate without it. For more information, visit <https://www.bkstr.com/utrgvstore/home>.

XIII. VAQUEROS REPORT IT!

In an effort to resolve misunderstandings or concerns through an informal resolution, a student is encouraged to first make a reasonable effort to resolve the problem by discussing his or her concerns with the faculty or staff member against whom the complaint is lodged. Unless extraordinary circumstances exist, the faculty or staff member shall respond to the student initiating the complaint no later than 10 business days after receipt of the complaint. If the student does not agree with the informal resolution reached with the faculty or staff member, the student may file a formal complaint no later than 10 business days after receiving the faculty or staff member's response at SRR or by completing the Vaquero Care Report It form online (www.utrgv.edu/reportit)

XIV. FNP GRADUATE CURRICULUMS

MSN Family Nurse Practitioner Program

PART-TIME						
	FALL	SCH	SPRING	SCH	SUMMER	SCH
1st YEAR	NURS 6304: Pathophysiology*	3	NURS 6308: Nursing Informatics*	3	NURS 6301: Theoretical Foundations in Nursing*	3
	NURS 6310: Health Promotion & Lab ^o	3	NURS 6311: Rural Health Nursing & Lab ^o	3		
2ND YEAR	NURS 6303: Statistics*	3	NURS 6302: Research*	3	NURS 6347: NP Role* & Lab ^o	3
	NURS 6306: Adv. Pharmacology*	3	NURS 6305: Adv. Health Assessment & Lab ^o	3	NURS 6307: Health Care Policy*	3
					NURS 7302: Practice Intervention Project	3
3rd YEAR	NURS 6612: Family Nurse Practitioner-I & Clinical ^o	6	NURS 6613: Family Nurse Practitioner-II & Clinical ^o	6		
					TOTAL SCH:	48
				TOTAL CLINICAL HRS:		800

FULL-TIME

	FALL	SCH	SPRING	SCH	SUMMER	SCH
1 st YEAR	NURS 6304: Adv. Pathophysiology*	3	NURS 6302: Research*	3	NURS 6301: Theoretical Foundations in Nursing*	3
	NURS 6303: Statistics*	3	NURS 6305: Adv. Health Assessment & Lab [◇]	3	NURS 6307: Health Care Policy*	3
	NURS 6306: Adv. Pharmacology*	3	NURS 6308: Nursing Informatics*	3	NURS 6347: NP Role* & Lab [◇]	3
					NURS 7302: Practice Intervention Project*	3
2 ND YEAR	FALL	SCH	SPRING	SCH	TOTAL SCH: 48 TOTAL CLINICAL HRS: 800	
	NURS 6310: Health Promotion & Lab [◇]	3	NURS 6311: Rural Health Nursing & Lab [◇]	3		
	NURS 6612: Family Nurse Practitioner-I & Clinical [◇]	6	NURS 6613: Family Nurse Practitioner-II & Clinical [◇]	6		

*Online course
◇Clinical course

Post Master's Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate

SUMMER	SCH	FALL	SCH	SPRING	SCH	TOTAL SCH
NURS 6347: NP Role* & Lab [◇]	3	NURS 6612: Family Nurse Practitioner-I & Lab [◇]	6	NURS 6612: Family Nurse Practitioner-II & Lab [◇]	6	TOTAL SCH: 15 TOTAL CINICAL HOURS: 605

*Online course
◇Clinical course

Graduate Student Guide 2023-2024 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
Please sign and submit scanned copy

I, _____, [printed name] have been informed that I am bound by the rules, regulations, and policies by the UTRGV Graduate Student Guide: School of Nursing. I understand that it is my responsibility to be familiar with these documents and their content by which I must abide.

I have been informed that the UTRGV Graduate Student Guide: School of Nursing includes crucial information and policies such as progression, class and lab/clinical courses, grading, thesis option, and graduation.

I understand that should practices or policies change while I am in the MSN Program, I will be bound by them. Should I leave the MSN Program for any reason and am readmitted at a later date, I will adhere to the rules, regulations, or policies in place of my return.

Student's Name (Printed) _____

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Sign and submit form back to your course coordinator within seven (7) business days.