



SMSU RN to BSN Student Handbook

2026-2027

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Welcome

Welcome to the Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) RN to BSN Program! This handbook is designed to guide you throughout your academic journey and provide important information about program requirements, policies, and opportunities.

The RN to BSN Program is designed for registered nurses who have completed a two-year associate degree or three-year diploma in nursing and wish to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN).

All coursework is delivered online through D2L Brightspace. *NURS 450: Nursing Capstone* also includes a 45-hour preceptored learning experience completed in an approved practice setting

Through the RN to BSN Program, students strengthen their leadership, management, critical thinking, and professional nursing skills to support continued growth and career advancement. Graduates are also eligible to apply for registration as a Public Health Nurse (PHN) in Minnesota.

Accreditation

The RN to BSN Program at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU), located in Marshall, Minnesota, is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN).

Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN)

3390 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 1400
Atlanta, GA 30326
(404) 975-5000

The most recent accreditation decision made by the ACEN Board of Commissioners for the RN to BSN Program is initial accreditation. Public information regarding the program's accreditation status is available on the ACEN website.

Admission Requirements

Prospective students should complete the following steps:

1. Apply for admission to SMSU
2. Complete the RN to BSN Nursing Application Process

Applicants must also meet the following requirements:

- A minimum undergraduate nursing GPA of 2.30.
- A current, unencumbered registered nurse (RN) license.

Associate degree nursing (ADN) students may apply to the RN to BSN Program while completing their nursing program. Admission is contingent upon successful completion of the NCLEX-RN examination and attainment of RN licensure.

Note: The RN to BSN Program does not require an admission examination. Because the program is designed for licensed registered nurses, graduates are not required to complete an additional licensure examination, such as the NCLEX-RN, upon completion of the BSN degree.

For additional information about the RN to BSN Program, visit our website at [SMSU RN to BSN Website](#)

We look forward to partnering with you as you work toward your educational and professional goals. For questions or additional information, please contact the SMSU Department of Nursing at NursingDept@SMSU.edu or 507-537-7591.

Dr. Lindsay Pelz

Department Chair

Dr. Tracy Hadler

Director of Nursing, RN to BSN Program

Preface

The SMSU RN to BSN Program is designed with the working registered nurse in mind, offering a flexible online format that allows students to progress through the program at a pace that meets their individual needs.

SMSU Mission Statement

SMSU prepares students to meet the complex challenges of this century as engaged citizens in their local and global communities. Our comprehensive degree programs, taught in the liberal arts tradition, are dedicated to connecting students' academic and practical professional development experiences in southwestern Minnesota to the wider world.

SMSU Vision Statement

SMSU aspires to be recognized throughout Minnesota and beyond for being an inclusive and student-centered university.

SMSU Value Statement

We value:

1. Discovery through innovative teaching, research, and other high-impact experiences.
2. Civic engagement and strategic partnerships.

3. Developing broadly educated and well-rounded leaders.

Southwest Minnesota State University views itself as a community and expects that each community member will become familiar with the standards of the community and assume responsibility for making decisions governing their behavior within this community. The SMSU Student Handbook is intended to provide the student with information about services available at the University and University procedures and should be used as a reference for basic University expectations. Updates, as they occur during the year, will be made to the handbook on the SMSU website. SMSU Student Handbook is available at [SMSU Student Handbook](#)

Introduction

The SMSU RN to BSN Program builds upon the education, professional knowledge, and experiences that registered nurses bring to the program. The curriculum integrates the sciences and liberal arts with advanced nursing coursework in leadership and management, healthcare delivery systems and informatics, community and public health nursing, health promotion, nursing research, and evidence-based practice. Professional nursing practice is grounded in established standards, ethical principles, professional competencies, and knowledge drawn from nursing, the sciences, and the humanities. The program emphasizes critical thinking, evidence-based practice, quality and safety, and a commitment to lifelong learning and continued professional development.

To support program quality and prepare graduates for contemporary nursing practice, the RN to BSN curriculum incorporates the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) competencies, including patient-centered care, teamwork and collaboration, evidence-based practice, quality improvement, safety, and informatics.

Graduates of the RN to BSN Program are prepared to practice as nurse generalists in diverse and evolving healthcare environments. They are equipped to integrate and apply knowledge, demonstrate leadership and sound clinical judgment, adapt to complex healthcare situations, and contribute to improvements in the quality and safety of patient and population health outcomes. The BSN degree also provides a strong foundation for continued professional development, specialized nursing practice, and graduate education.

SMSU RN to BSN Program Mission

The mission of the RN to BSN Program is to provide leadership in nursing education, scholarship, and practice that reflects cultural, ethical, and compassionate presence in the preparation of nurses that will serve with excellence in a diverse and ever-changing society. The RN to BSN Program adheres to and supports the mission and values of SMSU.

End of Program Student Learning Outcomes (EOPSLOs):

EOPSLO #1: Build the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the baccalaureate prepared nurse as described within the Scope & Standards of Practice and Nursing Code of Ethics. (**Courses:** NURS300, NURS450)

EOPSLO#2 Value diversity when planning equitable and inclusive person-centered care. (**Courses:** NURS310, NURS450)

EOPSLO #3: Support person centered care through inter- and intra-professional collaborative processes. (**Courses:** NURS410, NURS 411, NURS440, NURS450)

EOPSLO #4: Examine evidence to optimize health, safety, and quality outcomes. (**Courses:** NURS360, NURS390, NURS450)

EOPSLO #5: Evaluate informatics and technology to support optimal health outcomes. (**Courses:** NURS420, NURS450)

EOPSLO#6: Value social determinants of health in the nursing process application to provide person-centered care. (**Courses:** NURS320, NURS400, NURS450)

Code of Ethics for Nurses

The Department of Nursing faculty subscribes to the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics for Nurses (2025). Students are expected to learn and perform in accordance with this code: <https://codeofethics.ana.org/provisions>

Course Descriptions

A list of Nursing Major Required Courses can be found within the Academic Course Catalog: <https://catalog.smsu.edu/academic-programs-degrees/nursing/nursing-bs/>

RN to BSN Program of Study

Click on the hyperlink to access the Program of Study for part-time or full-time examples.

Application Deadlines

Applications to the RN to BSN Program are accepted for both fall and spring semesters and are reviewed on a rolling basis. Applications are reviewed in the order received once all admission requirements have been met.

Completed applications remain valid for two years from the date of submission.

Additional Information:

- Students who have been admitted to SMSU but have not yet been admitted to the RN to BSN Program may enroll in non-nursing courses while their nursing application is being processed.
- Admission to the RN to BSN Program is limited to students who reside in states where SMSU is authorized to offer the program and who meet applicable state requirements for experiential (clinical) learning.

Notification of Admission Decision

Applicants are notified of their admission status after all required application materials and admission requirements have been reviewed.

Applicants will receive one of the following admission decisions:

- Acceptance
- Provisional Acceptance
- Non-Acceptance

Admission decisions are communicated by email and U.S. mail.

Provisional Acceptance

Applicants who do not meet the minimum required nursing GPA of 2.30 may request consideration for provisional acceptance into the RN to BSN Program through the appeal process. Provisional acceptance is considered on an individual basis and is not guaranteed.

Appeal Process

Applicants requesting provisional acceptance must submit a written appeal to the RN to BSN Program Director. The appeal should include:

- The reason for requesting provisional acceptance.
- An explanation of circumstances that contributed to a nursing GPA below 2.30.
- The applicant's goals for completing the RN to BSN Program.
- A plan for achieving academic success in the program.

Review Process

Appeals are reviewed by the Nursing Admissions Committee. The committee may include:

- Department of Nursing Chair
- RN to BSN Program Director
- Registrar's representative, as needed
- Student advisor or nursing faculty member

Applicants will be notified of the committee's decision following review of the appeal.

Grading & Academic Standing Policy

Grade point averages (GPAs) are calculated and maintained by the SMSU Registrar's Office. GPAs are calculated to the second decimal place and are not rounded.

The following grades and marks are not included in GPA calculations: I, IP, AU, NA, W, CR, and NC.

The GPA officially recorded by the Registrar's Office is the GPA used for all RN to BSN Program academic standing and progression decisions.

Grading Scale

- A: 90–100%
- B: 80–89.99%
- C: 70–79.99%
- D: 60–69.99%
- F: Below 60%

Program Requirements

- Students must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0.
- A grade of “C” (2.0 / 70%) or higher is required in all nursing (NURS) courses.
- Any nursing course may be repeated once to achieve a passing grade. Students may not retake or withdraw from more than two nursing courses during the program.
- Nursing students must complete the RN to BSN Program within seven years from the first term the student enrolls in the RN to BSN Program.

A student may not continue in the RN to BSN Program under any of the following circumstances:

- The student has withdrawn from or failed more than two nursing (NURS) courses.
- The student does not maintain:
 - An unencumbered RN license,
 - A successful Minnesota Department of Human Services background study,
 - Current HIPAA training certification, or
 - An up-to-date health form prior to enrollment in the capstone course (NURS 450).
- The student is removed from the NURS 450 practicum (clinical experience) due to a safety concern or involvement in a criminal matter.
- The student does not enroll in any courses (NURS or general education) during the fall or spring semester without an approved Study Leave.
- The student fails to comply with policies outlined in the current edition of the RN to BSN Student Handbook and/or the SMSU Student Handbook.

Satisfactory Academic Progress and Program Progression

RN to BSN students are responsible for meeting both SMSU's Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements and the academic progression requirements established by the RN to BSN Program. The University's Satisfactory Academic Progress policy is available in the SMSU Student Handbook.

Students experiencing academic difficulty may be asked to participate in a Striving for Success Plan. The purpose of the plan is to identify areas of concern, establish strategies and resources to support academic improvement, and promote successful progression in the RN to BSN Program. The plan may include recommended or required actions, academic supports, resources, and expectations for improvement based on the student's individual circumstances.

Students are encouraged to utilize available SMSU academic and student support resources. Failure to meet RN to BSN Program academic progression requirements or conditions identified in a Striving for Success Plan may affect the student's ability to progress in the program. The Striving for Success Plan is intended as a student support and program progression tool and is not part of the student's permanent academic record.

Writing Assignments

The RN to BSN Program follows the most current edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) *Publication Manual* for written assignments unless otherwise specified by course faculty.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an essential component of professional nursing education and practice. RN to BSN students are expected to demonstrate honesty, accountability, and ethical behavior in all academic activities and are responsible for submitting work that accurately represents their own knowledge, effort, and achievement.

All RN to BSN students are subject to the Southwest Minnesota State University Academic Honesty Policy. Academic dishonesty may include, but is not limited to:

- **Plagiarism:** Presenting another person's words, ideas, work, or other content as one's own without appropriate attribution.
- **Cheating:** Using, obtaining, providing, or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, assistance, or resources in completing academic work or examinations.
- **Fabrication:** Falsifying, inventing, or misrepresenting information, data, documentation, or academic work.
- **Tampering:** Improperly altering or attempting to alter academic records, evaluations, assignments, examinations, or other academic materials.
- **Assisting in academic dishonesty:** Knowingly assisting another individual in violating academic integrity expectations.
- **Other forms of academic dishonesty** identified in SMSU policy or individual course requirements.

Students are responsible for understanding and complying with the complete SMSU Academic Honesty Policy and any additional academic integrity expectations identified in individual course syllabi or assignments.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools must comply with SMSU policies and the expectations established by individual course faculty and assignments. Because appropriate uses of AI may vary by course and learning activity, students are responsible for reviewing and following the specific AI guidelines provided by their instructor.

Unless otherwise authorized, students may not submit AI-generated content as their own original work or use AI in a manner that misrepresents their individual knowledge, skills, or achievement. When AI use is permitted, students remain responsible for the accuracy, quality, appropriate attribution, and academic integrity of all submitted work. Faculty may require students to disclose or document the use of AI tools, including the manner in which the tools were used, when appropriate to the assignment. Unauthorized or inappropriate use of AI may constitute a violation of academic integrity and will be addressed in accordance with applicable course and University policies.

Attribution and Use of Sources

Students must appropriately acknowledge and cite information, ideas, words, data, media, and other materials obtained from outside sources in accordance with applicable course and APA requirements. Failure to appropriately attribute sources may constitute plagiarism.

Academic Integrity Concerns

When concerns regarding academic integrity arise, course faculty will address the concern in accordance with [SMSU Policy A-032: Academic Honesty](#). The Department Chair and Director of Nursing may be notified and involved as appropriate. Students will be informed of identified concerns and any resulting actions in accordance with applicable University procedures.

Academic Integrity Violations

Academic integrity concerns and violations will be addressed in accordance with [SMSU Policy A-032: Academic Honesty](#) and applicable RN to BSN Program policies. Depending on the nature and severity of the violation, consequences may include academic sanctions permitted under University policy and applicable course requirements. Students may also be required to demonstrate achievement of applicable course learning outcomes before successfully completing the course. Academic integrity violations that affect a student's ability to meet course or RN to BSN Program progression requirements may result in failure of the course or other consequences consistent with applicable University and program policies.

Appeals

Students have the right to appeal academic honesty decisions in accordance with SMSU Policy A-032 and applicable University academic appeal procedures. Students are responsible for reviewing and following the procedures, criteria, and timelines established by the University when submitting an appeal. The complete policy and current appeal requirements are available through the SMSU Academic Honesty Policy.

Academic Honesty Acknowledgment

RN to BSN students may be required to complete an Academic Honesty Statement or acknowledgment upon entry into the program or as otherwise directed by the Department of Nursing.

Use of Student Work for Program Assessment

Student assignments and other course artifacts may be reviewed or shared as necessary for accreditation, regulatory, program evaluation, and institutional assessment purposes. Student work may be used to assess Course Student Learning Outcomes (CSLOs), End-of-Program Student Learning Outcomes (EOPSLOs), and applicable SMSU Liberal Education Program (LEP) Student Learning Outcomes. When student work is used for assessment or shared outside of the course for these purposes, student identity will be protected in accordance with applicable University policies.

Study Leave Request

A Study Leave allows RN to BSN students to remain in the program while not enrolled in BSN courses:

- Students who withdraw after the *last day to drop with refund* and who receive a grade of 'W' or 'FQ' in their registered courses must either register for courses in the subsequent semester or request a study leave in accordance with current program policy.
- Study Leave must be requested each semester by submitting the *Study Leave Request Form* and meeting with your nursing advisor.
- During Study Leave, you must have at least one general advising session to plan for the next semester.
- Only one 15-week Study Leave can be requested at a time, with a maximum of two total during the program, which can be concurrent.
- If a Study Leave Request is not submitted at the beginning of a semester and you are not enrolled in RN to BSN coursework, you will be considered withdrawn from the program.

Readmission

Students who are no longer eligible to progress in the RN to BSN Program may request readmission by submitting a written appeal to the Director of Nursing. Readmission is considered on an individual basis and is not guaranteed.

The appeal must include the following:

Circumstances and Academic History

- An explanation of the circumstances that contributed to the student's inability to meet program progression requirements.
- Identification of the nursing course(s) in which the student did not meet the required academic criteria, including the grade(s) earned.

Plan for Academic Success

- A summary of the student's meeting with their faculty advisor and the strategies identified to support future academic success.
- A clear plan describing the changes, resources, or strategies the student will use to successfully progress through the RN to BSN Program if readmitted.

Review and Decision

The readmission appeal will be reviewed by the Nursing Admissions Committee and full-time nursing faculty. The Director of Nursing will notify the student in writing of the decision.

If readmission is approved, the written decision will identify any conditions or requirements that must be met for continued enrollment and progression in the RN to BSN Program.

Eligibility for Readmission

To be eligible for readmission to the RN to BSN Program, a student must:

- Submit a new RN to BSN Program application.
- Hold a current, unencumbered RN license.
- Be able to complete all nursing (NURS) coursework within seven years of the first term of enrollment in the RN to BSN Program. Nursing courses completed outside of the seven-year timeframe must be repeated to meet degree requirements.

Communication

SMSU email is the official method of communication for the RN to BSN Program.

Students are expected to check their SMSU email regularly for important course and program information. Course faculty will communicate with students through SMSU-approved communication methods rather than personal email accounts.

Individual courses may establish additional expectations for communication with faculty. Students should review course information and follow the communication guidelines provided by their instructor.

Professional communication is an important component of nursing practice. Students with course-related questions or concerns should begin by communicating directly with the appropriate course faculty member and follow established channels as needed.

Student Participation in Program Governance

RN to BSN students have opportunities to contribute to the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the program. Students are encouraged to provide feedback and recommendations related to the curriculum, courses, practicum experience, program policies, scheduling, and the overall student experience. Opportunities for student input may include student representation, course and program evaluations, surveys, and other feedback processes.

Student feedback is considered as part of the RN to BSN Program's ongoing assessment and continuous quality improvement efforts.

Concerns, Appeals, and Complaints

The RN to BSN Program encourages students to address questions and concerns promptly and through the appropriate communication channels. The following guidance identifies the appropriate starting point for common student concerns. University policies and procedures govern formal appeals, grievances, and complaints.

Course Concerns

Students with questions or concerns related to a course should first communicate directly with the course faculty member. If the concern is not resolved, students should follow the appropriate Department of Nursing and University communication channels.

Academic Appeals

Students who wish to appeal a course grade should first discuss the concern with the faculty member who assigned the grade. If the concern is not resolved, the student may pursue an academic appeal in accordance with SMSU policy.

The complete Academic Appeals Policy, including procedures and applicable timelines, is available in the SMSU Student Handbook.

Student Grievances and Complaints

Students have the right to pursue formal resolution of grievances or complaints in accordance with SMSU policies and procedures. These may include concerns related to institutional or program quality, compliance with applicable standards or requirements, or other matters covered by University grievance and complaint policies.

The student grievance and complaint process is separate from the academic grade appeal process.

The complete **Student Grievance/Complaint Policy**, including procedures and applicable timelines, is available in the SMSU Student Handbook.

Professional and Ethical Conduct

RN to BSN students are expected to demonstrate professional, ethical, and accountable behavior throughout all academic and experiential learning activities. As licensed registered nurses, students are responsible for adhering to applicable professional nursing standards, ethical principles, nurse practice regulations, SMSU policies, and experiential learning site requirements.

Professional expectations include:

- Respecting the dignity, rights, values, beliefs, and privacy of patients, clients, families, peers, faculty, preceptors, and other members of the healthcare team.
- Maintaining patient/client confidentiality and protecting private or sensitive information.
- Communicating honestly, respectfully, and professionally.
- Demonstrating accountability for personal actions and professional responsibilities.
- Promoting patient/client safety and reporting concerns appropriately.
- Practicing within applicable professional, legal, course, and experiential learning site expectations.
- Collaborating effectively with faculty, preceptors, peers, and members of the healthcare team.
- Demonstrating integrity in academic and professional activities.
- Supporting lifelong learning, evidence-based practice, and continued professional development.

Students are responsible for understanding and following the professional and ethical standards applicable to their roles as both licensed registered nurses and SMSU RN to BSN students.

Individual Requirements and Support Systems for Students

Students in the RN to BSN Program must be able to meet the academic and professional requirements necessary to achieve program and course learning outcomes. These requirements reflect the communication, cognitive, behavioral, technological, and professional abilities used throughout the program, including during the Capstone learning experience.

Students may meet these requirements with or without reasonable accommodations. Students who believe they may need accommodations are encouraged to contact the appropriate SMSU student support services in accordance with University policies and procedures.

Examples of abilities and professional behaviors that may be required throughout the RN to BSN Program include:

- **Communication:** Communicate effectively and professionally in written, verbal, and electronic formats with faculty, peers, patients, families, and members of the healthcare team.
- **Cognitive and critical thinking:** Gather, analyze, interpret, and apply information; use clinical judgment and critical thinking; and integrate evidence into professional nursing practice.
- **Sensory and observational:** Obtain and interpret information necessary to participate safely and effectively in applicable learning and experiential activities.
- **Motor and physical:** Perform activities necessary to participate safely in applicable experiential learning activities, with or without reasonable accommodations.
- **Technological:** Use computers, electronic communication, learning management systems, and other technologies required for online coursework and professional nursing practice.
- **Professional and interpersonal:** Demonstrate accountability, integrity, respect, ethical behavior, appropriate interpersonal skills, and the ability to collaborate effectively with others.
- **Self-management:** Manage time, responsibilities, and responses to challenging or changing situations in a manner consistent with professional nursing practice.

Health Requirements

While completing practicum hours with a nursing preceptor students must meet applicable health and safety requirements established by the SMSU Department of Nursing and participating healthcare or community agencies.

Following admission to the RN to BSN Program, students will be provided instructions for submitting required health and compliance documentation. Required documentation must be submitted and maintained as directed and must be current before beginning *NURS 450: Nursing Capstone*.

Students who do not meet applicable health or agency requirements may be unable to begin or continue their practicum experience. Delays in completing required documentation may result in missed experiential learning hours and may affect course completion or progression in the program.

Health and Compliance Requirements

Students are responsible for:

- Completing the Department of Nursing **Health Information Form** and submitting required health documentation by established deadlines.
- Providing documentation of required immunizations, titers, or approved declinations/waivers, as applicable.
- Maintaining current documentation of **MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella)** immunity as required.
- Completing the **Hepatitis B vaccination series and/or titer**, which is strongly encouraged and may be required by an experiential learning site.

- Meeting any additional health, immunization, tuberculosis (TB) screening, or other compliance requirements established by the healthcare or community agency in which the experiential learning experience occurs.
- Maintaining personal copies of health, immunization, and compliance documentation for future use.

Experiential learning sites may establish requirements that exceed those of the SMSU Department of Nursing. Students are responsible for meeting all requirements of their assigned or approved site before beginning the experience.

Changes in Health Status

If a change in health status may affect a student's ability to safely meet course or practicum learning requirements, the student should notify the appropriate nursing faculty member or faculty advisor. In consultation with the Director of Nursing and other appropriate University resources, additional documentation or healthcare provider clearance may be required before the student begins or resumes experiential learning activities.

Immunization Requirements

Students must provide documentation of applicable immunization requirements as outlined below. Experiential learning sites may have additional immunization or health requirements that students must meet before participating in an experience.

Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) — Required

Students must provide documentation of one of the following:

- Two doses of the MMR vaccine administered after 12 months of age; or
- Laboratory evidence (antibody titers) demonstrating immunity to measles, mumps, and rubella.

Hepatitis B — Strongly Encouraged

Students are strongly encouraged to complete the Hepatitis B vaccination series and/or provide laboratory evidence (antibody titer) demonstrating immunity to Hepatitis B. An experiential learning site may require Hepatitis B vaccination, evidence of immunity, or other documentation as a condition of participation.

Acceptable Immunization Documentation

Printed or electronic vaccination and titer records issued by a healthcare facility or state immunization registry are accepted and do not require an additional signature. Handwritten vaccination or titer documentation, or documentation that is not an official record from a healthcare facility or immunization registry, must be signed by an authorized healthcare provider. Electronic signatures and healthcare facility stamps are acceptable.

Tuberculosis (TB) Screening

Tuberculosis (TB) screening is not required of all RN to BSN students. Students may be required to provide documentation of current TB screening based on the requirements of their experiential learning site.

When required, acceptable documentation may include:

- A current negative tuberculin skin test (TST), including a two-step TST when required by the experiential learning site; or
- A current negative Interferon-Gamma Release Assay (IGRA) blood test.

Students with a history of a positive TB screening result must provide documentation and complete any additional screening, symptom assessment, chest imaging, or healthcare provider clearance required by the experiential learning site and/or the SMSU Department of Nursing.

Students who have received the Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine should follow the TB screening requirements established by the experiential learning site.

Students are responsible for ensuring that all required TB documentation remains current for the duration of the experiential learning experience.

Immunization Exemptions and Declinations

Students who are unable or choose not to meet an applicable immunization, titer, or health screening requirement must notify the appropriate nursing course faculty member and complete any required exemption or declination documentation.

Students requesting a medical exemption may be required to provide documentation from a licensed healthcare provider identifying the medical contraindication to the applicable immunization or health requirement.

Students should be aware that experiential learning sites establish their own health and immunization requirements and are not required to accept an exemption or declination approved by SMSU. An experiential learning site may decline to accept a student who does not meet its requirements.

When feasible, the RN to BSN Program may work with the student to identify an alternative experiential learning site. However, the availability of an alternative site cannot be guaranteed. If an appropriate experiential learning experience cannot be secured, the student may be unable to complete course or program requirements, which may delay progression or graduation.

Learning sites may also require additional compliance documentation, such as immunizations, health screenings, background studies, or drug screening. Students are responsible for meeting all applicable requirements of the experiential learning site before beginning the experience.

Health Insurance

Students are encouraged to maintain current health insurance throughout enrollment in the RN to BSN Program. Students are responsible for costs associated with their personal healthcare needs, including evaluation or treatment that may be necessary as a result of illness or injury occurring while completing practicum hours.

Students should be aware that SMSU and experiential learning sites do not provide personal health insurance coverage for students participating in nursing-related learning experiences.

Professional Requirements

Students must meet and maintain all professional and compliance requirements necessary for participation in the RN to BSN Capstone experience.

1. RN Licensure

Students must maintain a current, active, and unencumbered registered nurse (RN) license throughout enrollment in the RN to BSN Program. Licensure will be verified before participation in *NURS 450: Nursing Capstone*.

Students are responsible for notifying the Department of Nursing of any change in the status of their RN license.

2. Background Study

A Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Background Study is required before participation in *NURS 450: Nursing Capstone*. Students are responsible for any associated background study fees.

Students will receive instructions for completing the required background study before beginning the Capstone experience.

Background study results may affect a student's eligibility to participate in the Capstone learning experience. If a student is unable to meet applicable background study or site requirements, the student may be unable to complete required practicum learning activities, which may affect progression or graduation.

Students should maintain copies of their background study documentation for their personal records. Experiential learning sites may require additional background checks or documentation.

Questions regarding the Minnesota DHS background study process may be directed to the DHS Background Study Unit at **651-431-6620**.

3. HIPAA Training

Students must complete required Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) training before beginning *NURS 450: Nursing Capstone*. Additional privacy or confidentiality training may be required by the experiential learning site.

4. Professional Liability Coverage

Professional liability coverage is provided by SMSU for students while they are participating in approved learning activities within the scope of their role as SMSU nursing students. This coverage applies only to activities associated with the student's educational responsibilities in the RN to BSN Program.

Providing Nursing Care During Experiential Learning

RN to BSN students are licensed registered nurses; however, while participating in an SMSU-approved practicum learning experience, students function within their role as SMSU nursing students.

Students may perform nursing activities during their practicum experience only when the activities are appropriate to the course objectives, permitted by the learning site, and

completed under the direction or supervision required by the course, preceptor, and/or site.

Students must follow applicable laws, professional standards, SMSU policies, and experiential learning site policies throughout the experience. Activities performed as part of a student's employment are separate from activities completed to meet RN to BSN course requirements.

Substance Use and Impairment

Students must be able to participate safely and effectively in all academic and experiential learning activities. Students may not participate in an experiential learning experience or other nursing learning activity while impaired by alcohol, cannabis, illegal substances, medications, or any other substance or condition that may compromise judgment, behavior, or safe performance.

Students who believe that a medication, substance, or other condition may impair their ability to safely participate in a learning activity should notify the appropriate course faculty member before participating. Students are not required to disclose specific medications or medical diagnoses unless such information is necessary to address an identified safety concern or accommodation in accordance with applicable University policies.

If faculty or experiential learning site personnel have reasonable concerns that a student's ability to participate safely may be impaired, the student may be removed from the learning activity and referred for further evaluation or follow-up in accordance with SMSU and Department of Nursing policies.

Students are expected to comply with all applicable SMSU policies and practicum site requirements related to substance use, impairment, and professional conduct.

Resource Requirements

Books and Supplies

Students are responsible for obtaining required textbooks, course materials, and supplies. Whenever possible, the RN to BSN Program utilizes Open Educational Resources (OER) and other cost-effective learning materials. Course faculty and faculty advisors can assist students in identifying required resources and available options.

Transportation

Students are responsible for arranging and paying for transportation associated with experiential learning activities. Transportation costs are the responsibility of the student.

Professional Appearance

Students are expected to maintain a professional appearance while completing practicum hours and must comply with the dress and appearance policies of the learning site.

Unless otherwise directed by the practicum learning site or course faculty, students should wear professional attire that is appropriate for the setting and the activities being performed. Students are also required to wear an SMSU RN to BSN student identification badge during their practicum experience.

Students whose attire or appearance does not meet applicable professional, safety, course, or experiential learning site requirements may be asked to correct the concern before participating in or continuing the learning activity.

Practicum Learning Site Dress and Appearance Requirements

Students must comply with all dress, appearance, identification, infection prevention, and safety requirements established by the learning site. Site-specific requirements may include expectations related to attire, footwear, jewelry, piercings, tattoos, hair, nails, fragrances, and other aspects of professional appearance.

Because requirements vary among Capstone learning sites, students are responsible for reviewing and following the policies of their assigned or approved site before beginning the experience. When site requirements differ from general RN to BSN Program expectations, the more restrictive requirement should be followed.

Questions regarding professional appearance or site-specific requirements should be directed to the appropriate course faculty member before beginning practicum hours.

Exposure to Blood or Other Potentially Infectious Materials

Students who experience a sharps injury or suspected exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials during the practicum experience must immediately notify their preceptor or appropriate site representative and follow the site's exposure procedures. The student must also notify the appropriate SMSU course faculty member as soon as possible.

Students are responsible for obtaining any recommended evaluation, follow-up care, or treatment associated with an exposure and for any related healthcare expenses not otherwise covered by their personal insurance or other applicable coverage.

Students are responsible for immediately reporting all sharps injuries and suspected exposures to bloodborne pathogens and/or other potentially infectious materials during their practicum experience to their preceptor, and subsequently to their course instructor. The student will be assessed and treated following the experiential agency or facility policy. Health care costs for injuries or illnesses sustained or contracted during experiential learning experiences are not covered by SMSU or the facility or agency; such costs are the student's responsibility.

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to meet all attendance and participation requirements established for their courses and Capstone learning experience. Specific expectations may vary by course and will be communicated by course faculty.

Students must arrive on time and participate as scheduled in experiential learning activities. If an absence or delay is unavoidable, the student is responsible for notifying the appropriate course faculty member and preceptor/Capstone learning site according to established course and site procedures.

Failure to meet attendance or experiential learning requirements may affect course completion and progression in the RN to BSN Program.

Photography, Audio, and Video Recording

Students must protect the privacy and confidentiality of patients, clients, families, staff, and experiential learning sites at all times.

Students may not photograph, record, or otherwise capture images, audio, video, or other identifying information involving patients or clients during Capstone learning activities unless specifically authorized in accordance with applicable SMSU and practicum learning site policies.

Students must comply with all applicable privacy, confidentiality, and HIPAA requirements when using information obtained through an experiential learning experience.

Mobile and Electronic Device Use

Students must follow the policies of the experiential learning site regarding the use of mobile phones, tablets, smartwatches, and other electronic devices.

Personal use of electronic devices should not interfere with patient/client interactions, learning activities, or professional responsibilities. Electronic devices may be used for approved educational or professional purposes when permitted by the site and appropriate to the learning activity.

Students must maintain patient/client privacy and confidentiality when using any electronic device. Personal calls, text messages, email, and other non-course-related electronic communication should be addressed outside of the learning area.

Capstone Learning Expectations

Students participating in RN to BSN Capstone learning activities are expected to demonstrate professional, safe, and ethical nursing practice and to be prepared to meet the objectives of the learning experience.

Students are responsible for:

- Arriving prepared and completing practicum learning activities as scheduled.
- Communicating appropriately with the preceptor, course faculty, and other individuals involved in the learning experience.
- Following all applicable SMSU, Department of Nursing, course, and learning site policies and procedures.
- Maintaining patient/client privacy, confidentiality, safety, and professional boundaries.
- Performing only those activities that are appropriate to the approved learning experience and consistent with applicable professional and site requirements.
- Promptly reporting concerns or circumstances that may affect the safety or successful completion of the experiential learning experience.

Course faculty, preceptors, or practicum learning site personnel may remove a student from an experiential learning activity when there is an immediate concern related to safety, professional conduct, or the student's ability to meet applicable course or site requirements. Any subsequent action will be determined in accordance with applicable course, program, and University policies.

Capstone Learning and Employment

Learning activities completed for academic credit must be distinct from the student's regular employment responsibilities. Students may not count routine paid work hours toward required practicum learning hours.

Students must clearly function in the role of an SMSU RN to BSN student while completing approved practicum learning hours.

Evaluation of the NURS 450 Capstone Learning Experience

The Capstone learning component of *NURS 450: Nursing Capstone* is evaluated on a pass/fail basis. The designated preceptor provides feedback regarding the student's performance based on observations during the experience and applicable course outcomes. Course faculty are responsible for determining whether the student has successfully met the experiential learning requirements.

Preceptor feedback is documented using the **Preceptor Feedback of Student Performance** form.

Successful completion of the practicum learning component is required to pass *NURS 450*. A student who does not successfully complete the practicum learning component will not pass the course.

Graduation and Degree Check

Students preparing to graduate are responsible for completing the SMSU Degree Check process and meeting all applicable University and RN to BSN Program graduation requirements.

Students should review the [SMSU Degree Check Process](#) for current procedures, requirements, and deadlines.

Information regarding graduation eligibility, degree completion, and participation in Commencement is available through the [SMSU Graduation Policies](#).

Students are encouraged to work with their faculty advisor to ensure that all degree and RN to BSN Program requirements are completed as planned.

Additional SMSU Resources Available to Nursing Students

Student Resources <i>The link provides a list of helpful resources</i>	Student Resources Link
Deeann Griebel Student Success Center Mission: <i>The Deeann Griebel Student Success Center at Southwest Minnesota State University strives to engage each student equitably throughout their experience at SMSU. We holistically support students in achieving their academic, social, and professional success.</i>	Deeann Griebel Student Success Center Link
Tutoring Support (Tutor.com)	Tutor.com Link

<i>SMSU offers 24/7 access to free online tutoring through Tutor.com, accessible through D2L Brightspace</i>	
Career Services <i>Career Services can assist you in choosing a major, developing career plans, applying to graduate schools, or looking for internships and full time employment.</i>	Career Services Link
Mental Health Counseling Center <i>Counseling is available and free to students who are currently enrolled at SMSU and who reside in the state of Minnesota at the time of counseling. Students do not have to be in crisis to access counseling services!</i>	Mental Health Counseling Center Link
Mantra Health <i>Comprehensive mental health service that supports students across every stage of their mental health journey from self-guided wellness courses to 24/7 crisis support.</i>	Mantra Health Link
Accessibility Services <i>Coordinate accommodations for students with disabilities and serve as a resource for faculty, staff and the university community in an effort to assure equal access to learning for all.</i>	Accessibility Services
Financial Aid <i>Financial Aid & Scholarships</i> .	Financial Aid & Scholarships
Student Health Services <i>Health Services is located in BA 158 with office hours Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 3:30pm.</i>	Student Health Services
Information Technology Services <i>Provides a wide spectrum of quality information technology services and support that meet the requirements of the entire University community.</i>	Information Technology Services
Writing Center <i>Serves to help undergraduate and graduate students with their writing needs.</i>	Writing Center
Office of Online Learning & Transfer Partnerships <i>Orientation and support for online learners.</i>	Office of Online Learning & Transfer Partnerships
LGBTQ+ Center <i>Safe space training, anti-violence education, workshops, and referrals.</i>	LGBTQ+ Center
Veterans Resources <i>Support for veterans, military members, and their families.</i>	Veterans Resources
Office of Diversity and Inclusion	Office of Diversity & Inclusion

<i>Provides an inclusive, quality, and comprehensive educational experience for students from all religions, races, ethnicities, genders, ages, sexual orientations, and countries.</i>	
Mustang Market <i>Mustang Market is SMSU's permanent food and resource pantry, located in Bellows Academic 154.</i>	Mustang Market
Supporting Student Basic Needs <i>This website contains information on resources on campus and within the Marshall community.</i>	Supporting Student Basic Needs

Handbook Use and Revisions

The RN to BSN Nursing Student Handbook is reviewed regularly and may be revised to reflect changes in program requirements, policies, procedures, or applicable University and regulatory requirements.

The current version of the handbook is available on the RN to BSN Program website and in the D2L Brightspace RN to BSN Program Information Center. Students are responsible for reviewing and following the policies and requirements contained in the current handbook.

Updates may be made during the academic year when necessary. Students will be notified of substantive changes that affect program requirements or expectations. All students are required to complete the Acknowledgment of Receipt of Handbook upon entry into the RN to BSN Program.