

SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING

**ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES GOVERNING
THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN NURSING**

1. These policies are consistent with and supplementary to policies in the current SCSU graduate catalog and Student Handbook.
2. The provisions of this manual are not to be regarded as an irrevocable contract between the Department of Nursing and the students. The department reserves the right to change any provision or any requirement at any time.
3. All policies within apply to all master's degree candidates and post-Master's certificate candidates.

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I. Introduction

Graduate study is a process of achieving advanced education. As such, the expectations of the graduate program in the Department of Nursing include an increased level of responsibility on the part of the graduate student. This increased responsibility is reflected in professional competencies demonstrated both within and outside the classroom and clinical practicum, the student-faculty relationship, and the student role. All MSN students are expected to achieve the following student outcomes upon graduation:

A. Expected Aggregate Student Outcomes MSN Program

Upon completion of the master's program, the graduate will:

- 1. Integrate scientific findings from nursing, biological, and social sciences to advance nursing practice along the healthcare continuum.*
- 2. Conduct research, translate research findings, and critically analyze data and evidence to integrate into advanced nursing practice.*
- 3. Assume complex and advanced leadership roles to initiate and guide positive change at the individual, group, and system levels to improve practice processes and outcomes.*
- 4. Intervene at the system level through policy development and advocacy regarding regulatory, financial, and political factors to improve practice processes and outcomes.*
- 5. Facilitate open communication, collaboration, mutual respect and shared-decision-making amongst key stakeholders in the practice and/or educational environments.*
- 6. Direct and provide patient-centered care integrating advanced knowledge of nursing and relevant sciences and humanities to improve health care outcomes.*
- 7. Design interventions using advanced knowledge to promote individual and population health, wellness, and disease prevention at the global/local level.*
- 8. Integrate appropriate technologies for knowledge management, coordination of care, and complex decision making to improve healthcare quality and safety.*
- 9. Model professional behaviors incorporating advanced knowledge and awareness of social justice, legal/ethical standards, regulatory processes, and professional codes.*
- 10. Utilize safety science and quality improvement methods for continuous improvement in the delivery of safe care.*

II. Philosophical Perspectives Informing the Masters of Science in Nursing Program at Southern Connecticut State University

A. Philosophical Foundations of the MSN Program

Nursing is a practice discipline based on a specialized body of knowledge. The knowledge base continues to evolve through qualitative and quantitative research, which are both valued as a foundation for practice. The essentials of baccalaureate and master's education as described by the AACN (2011) provide the organizing framework for the curriculum. The graduate program enables students to acquire advanced knowledge and expertise in the specialized roles of family nurse practitioner, nurse educator and clinical nursing leader. The

MSN (Graduate) Program builds on the competencies of baccalaureate graduates. The MSN Program is committed to the development of the nursing body of knowledge through research and academic and clinical scholarship. Graduates of the master's program are prepared to assume leadership roles in nursing and health care, participate in health care design and public policy formation, provide leadership in the management of resources (human, physical and fiscal), and contribute to the advancement of the profession through research.

B. Southern Connecticut State University Nursing Department Vision Statement:

To be a center of excellence and innovation in nursing education.

C. Southern Connecticut State University Department of Nursing Mission:

To prepare nursing graduates to practice, educate, and lead, within an evolving, complex world.

This is accomplished by:

- *Discovering and applying the science of nursing and related disciplines in the pursuit of excellence and innovation, through scholarship and lifelong learning,*
- *Preparing graduates to incorporate professional standards to provide, safe, evidence-based and compassionate care of the highest quality to diverse populations, and*
- *Providing the foundation for students to develop professionally in order to optimize their contributions within the context of inter-professional practice.*

D. Department of Nursing's Study Abroad Mission and Vision:

It is the vision of the SCSU Nursing Department that undergraduate and graduate nursing students will have the opportunity to participate in experiential learning in areas such as global health, providing care to underserved populations, and learning about different healthcare systems within the United States and abroad.

Southern, as a university, strives to empower every undergraduate and graduate student with the knowledge, skills and perspectives essential for active participation and impassioned, ethical leadership in our rapidly changing, global society. These global opportunities will advance the mission of the department and university by enhancing student learning with opportunities to examine various healthcare environments and develop leadership skills in providing culturally congruent care.

The experiential learning outside of the traditional clinical and classroom environments will encompass work such as providing care in clinics with underserved populations in impoverished areas both within the U.S. and in countries throughout the world; visiting and examining varying healthcare systems, engaging in exchange learning with foreign nursing education systems; expanding their perspectives of a global society, and developing culturally congruent care that can be applied to practice in the U.S. and abroad.

Interested students are encouraged to identify qualified opportunities to meet clinical or course requirements through study abroad. Examples may include preceptored clinical experiences, capstone work, independent study, or elective courses to supplement the regular plan of study. Specific experiences need to be approved by the MSN advisor/Director.

III. Admission, Transfer, Matriculation, Retention, Graduation

A. Admission

The applicant to the MSN program (master's degree or post master's certificate) must be a graduate of an accredited Bachelor of Science in Nursing program or be in the process of completing Bridge course requirements and have a cumulative QPR/GPA) of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. An individual whose QPR is less than 3.0 must take the GRE or MAT and a limited number of these students will be considered for conditional admission. Students with a QPR/GPA less than 2.8 will not be considered for admission. The MSN Program Committee or Director of the MSN program will make this determination on an individual basis. Students who are conditionally accepted must meet the conditions stated in the acceptance letter to progress in the program.

1. RN students taking the Bridge Program become eligible to apply to the MSN program when they have successfully completed Bridge Program requirements.
2. Academic performance in coursework completed by applicants as non-matriculated students will be considered part of the admission process if the applicant plans to apply the coursework to the plan of study.
3. Applicants must have completed undergraduate prerequisite courses in Health Assessment (with lab), Nursing Research, and Statistics. Familiarity with word processing programs and computerized database searches is necessary prior to admission for research and scholarly writing.
4. See graduate catalog for additional requirements.
5. Students who have completed a Bachelor of Science in Nursing but do not have a health assessment course listed on the BS in Nursing transcript may be permitted to take a comprehensive written exam and a comprehensive skills exam to qualify them to enroll in the graduate health assessment course. The student must earn at least a "C+" on the written exam and must pass the skills exam by the determination of 2 faculty raters.
6. Applicants must indicate which MSN track they are applying to by the end of the admission deadline. Admission deadlines include: October 1st for the following Spring semester admission and February 15th for the following Fall semester admission.
7. Students who have submitted all admission materials, have received admission from the SGPS, and who meet the above requirements for admission will be invited by a member of the MSN Curriculum Committee for an interview. Applications will then be reviewed by the MSN Curriculum Committee in

November and March of each academic year. Admission will be determined by the committee in consideration of all admission requirements, in relation to the strength of the applicant pool, and in consideration of faculty, space, and other logistical limitations.

8. Students will be notified in writing of their acceptance or non-acceptance into the MSN program.

B. Transfer Credit/Waiver of Courses

1. Students can normally transfer in up to 25% of the total number of semester hours of credit for the Program of Study, provided that the courses are graduate level courses from an accredited institution completed with a grade of "B" or better and fulfill program requirements. Courses in pharmacology, pathophysiology, and advanced health assessment will only be considered for waiver if they have been taken within the past 5 years. The Graduate Program Director and MSN Committee may use their discretion regarding the transfer of credits for a post-Master's certificate.
2. If any course is waived for a student's program of study, credits are not granted. Therefore, students must usually complete additional coursework to meet credit requirements for the degree or certificate. Requests for waiver are reviewed on an individual basis by the MSN program Director/MSN committee and the student must provide documentation for the request.

C. Matriculation

Students attain matriculation status when they have met all requirements for admission to the SGPS and the academic program and have received a letter of acceptance from the Dean or Associate Dean of the SGPS (see SCSU graduate catalog).

An individual interested in taking classes as a non-matriculated student may request department permission to register for courses as space permits. Academic performance of non-matriculated students enrolled in graduate nursing courses will be considered when making admission decisions. Non-matriculated students who have not met QPR and/or course criteria as described in this document, may be denied admission to the program.

All matriculated students are required to register for at least one 3 credit course during each Fall and Spring semester, unless due to special circumstances, they have received approval from the MSN Director for a temporary leave of absence.

Students must maintain an active unencumbered RN license that is free of practice restrictions for the duration of the student's academic and clinical portions of the SCSU nursing program. Should a student's RN license become encumbered with practice restrictions in any state (including CT), the student must immediately notify the respective Program Director and Chairperson of the SCSU Nursing Department since this may cease or delay the student's

progress in their SCSU nursing program of study, and may include program dismissal.

D. Grading

The grading system of the Department of Nursing will be in accordance with those policies set by the governance of the Connecticut State University as indicated in the Student Handbook. The numerical ranges that are used for grading in the Department of Nursing are as follows:

A+	100 -97	B+	89-87	C+	79 - 77	D+	69 – 67
A	96 – 94	B	86 – 84	C	76 – 74	D	66 – 64
A-	93 – 90	B-	83-80	C-	73 – 70	D-	63 – 60

According to the Academic Standards and Regulations of the SGPS, the grade of “Q” is given for any Special Project, Thesis, or course in which the Special Project, Thesis or is still in progress. This grade indicates that the student is making satisfactory progress toward the completion of the Special Project, Thesis or but it has not yet been completed. For students in the MSN program who are completing Special Projects or Thesis, the “Q” grade should be the letter grade used until all work is completed and the Special Project or Thesis has been accepted by faculty member and or committee responsible for the oversight of this work and the School of Graduate & Professional Studies is so notified. At that time, all “Q” grades should be changed to the appropriate letter grade to be awarded to the student for the successful completion of the MSN Special Project or Thesis. Students should work with their capstone faculty and advisor to develop a reasonable timeline for completion, and students should be held to those timelines.

E. Academic Probation

Students failing to meet academic standards will be reviewed by the department’s graduate committee where academic decisions are made. Students should seek help from the course instructor and the Student Success Center for specific strategies for academic improvement.

*Matriculated students** will be placed on academic probation for not meeting overall QPR requirements and/or for not meeting course requirements as described below.

Students will automatically be placed on academic probation if the QPR falls below a 3.0. Students will be notified of this status by the Graduate Program Director and the SGPS. If, after attempting an additional 9 credits, the QPR is still below 3.0, the student will be dismissed from the MSN program (*see H below for policies regarding suspension and dismissal; see section F below for program progression policy*).

Students will be removed from academic probation upon achieving a QPR of 3.0.

Please note that an overall QPR of 3.0 is required for graduation.

F. Repeating Courses/Progression

1. A grade of “B” or above must be achieved in each course in the program of study or the course must be repeated. Only one course within the program

of study may be repeated and a grade of “B” (3.0) or better must be achieved on the second attempt. The course may only be repeated once. Grades achieved for both attempts are included in the calculation of the QPR (graduate school policy). Failure to achieve a “B” or better in the repeated course will result in dismissal from the program without the possibility of readmission. All prerequisite requirements must be strictly adhered to for all courses.

2. A student must request in writing by **April 1st for the Fall semester** or **November 1st for the Spring semester** any intention to repeat a course, so that arrangements can be made for clinical/practicum placements and other course requirements.

G. Grievance and Grade Appeal Procedures

1. The GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK outlines procedural information for student grievances.
2. **Grade appeals** are to be submitted by a student and directed to the course instructor. If a student believes a grade was submitted in error by the course instructor, the student will need to follow these steps:
 - a. Students submit in writing any time up until the third week of the *semester following the semester in which the grade was given* (termed the “appeal semester”), a rationale to the course instructor for the appeal.
 - b. If satisfactory agreement is not reached by the end of the fifth week of the appeal semester, a synopsis of the situation should be submitted in writing to the Nursing Department Chair. Working in good faith, the instructor, Department Chair, and student shall attempt to settle the matter.
 - c. If no agreement is reached, the Chair has until the end of the seventh week of the appeal semester to do one of the following:
 - i. Convene a committee elected by the department (Department Grade Appeal Committee, DGAC), which shall, in consultation with the instructor and student, decide whether palpable injustice occurred in the grading. This decision needs to occur by the 10th week of the appeal. The student OR faculty member also has the right to appeal to the University Grade Appeal Committee (UGAC). UGAC has until the last day of finals’ week of the appeal semester to reach its decision.
 - ii. Refer the matter to UGAC, which will decide, in consultation with the instructor and the student, whether palpable injustice has occurred.

- iii. Determine that the grade appeal has no merit, and decide not to refer the matter to either the DGAC or UGAC.
- d. If the Department Chair decides not to refer the matter to DGAC or UGAC, the student has until the end of the ninth week of the appeal semester to refer the matter to UGAC.
- e. The DGAC or UGAC shall make a decision with reference to the grade appeal following consultation with the instructor and student and others as appropriate. The meetings of DGAC or UGAC shall consist of the respective committee members, and others, only as invited by the DGAC or UGAC. A grade change may take place when DGAC or UGAC determines that a palpable injustice has occurred, and the new grade will be based on the evidence presented.
- f. If the student or instructor appeals the DGAC decision, either one may take the matter directly to the UGAC by the end of the 12th week of the appeal semester. UGAC will make a final decision on the matter.

H. Academic Suspension/Dismissal

Conditions under which students are subject to academic dismissal are found in the SCSU SGPS catalogue and the student handbook. The following occurrences result in academic suspension/dismissal from the Department of Nursing Graduate Program:

1. Students on academic probation who fail to raise the QPR to a 3.0 after completing the next 9 credits of coursework will be dismissed from the program.
2. Students whose QPR falls below 3.0 during the last semester will be placed on probation and given one semester to raise the QPR level to 3.0. Failure to raise the QPR to 3.0 will result in dismissal from the program and the SGPS.
3. A student who is dismissed from the program will not be considered for readmission into any of the tracks or specialties within the MSN program.

I. Course Withdrawal

A student is not permitted to withdraw more than once from the same course. If a student withdraws from more than 2 courses in the program of study, they must petition the MSN Program Committee, in writing, to request permission to be allowed to continue in the program. If a student withdraws with a failing grade, they must petition the MSN Committee in writing to request re-enrollment. It is up to the discretion of the MSN Committee to determine whether

to grant the student's requests. If a student withdraws from the entire program of study, the student must reapply to the SGPS to request readmission.

J. Procedure/Notification regarding Probation, Suspension, Dismissal

1. Students will be notified in writing of probation, suspension/dismissal status by the Graduate Program Director in the Department of Nursing and by the SGPS.
2. Copies of letter notification of academic status are placed in the student's department file.

K. Completion Requirements: MSN Graduation and Post Master's Certificate

Students are eligible for graduation from the MSN program or completion of the Post-Master's certificate if they have completed the following:

1. Completion of the planned program coursework.
2. An overall QPR of 3.0.
3. Master's Degree candidates elect to complete either a Thesis or a Special Project. The final Thesis and Special Project documents must be approved by the Department of Nursing. Thesis manuscripts need to be submitted to the SGPS. Specific deadlines for the Thesis and Special Project can be found on the SGPS website. Final theses and Special Projects are due to the Nursing Department Chairperson at least 10 days prior to the Graduate school deadline. Post-master's certificate students are not required to complete a thesis or Special Project.
4. Master's degree candidates must apply for graduation through the Registrar's Office in accordance with university policy, during the beginning of the last semester of course work. Specific deadlines for the graduation application are strictly enforced and can be found on the SGPS website and in the Registrar's office.
5. All requirements for a Graduate Degree at SCSU must be completed within a 6-year period. The 6-year period starts when the first graduate course to be included in the program of study begins. Extensions may be granted if there are compelling extenuating circumstances. A student may petition the MSN Program Director prior to the expiration of courses or the program for an extension. Extensions must be approved by the MSN Committee and by the Dean of the School of Graduate & Professional Studies. Revalidation of a limited number of courses may be permitted.

IV. Advisement and Program Planning

E. Advisement

a. Academic

The MSN Program Director is the academic advisor for all graduate students. *Students are expected to communicate in person, via email or by telephone at least once each semester with the MSN Program Director regarding their registration needs for the upcoming semester.* The MSN Program Director is available during the academic year, and on a limited basis during semester breaks for this purpose. Students should feel free to seek advisor consultation on matters related to professional development, research and special project plans, employment, and issues specific to the MSN program.

b. Thesis or Special Project Advisement

Students may select any doctorally-prepared member of the Department of Nursing Faculty to be their Thesis advisor. For the Constructed Case Experience Special Project, students will have the faculty member assigned prior to course enrollment.

The thesis or Special Project advisor must be a member of the graduate faculty as per SGPS policy. It is recommended that the Thesis or Special Project advisor have some expertise and/or interest in the topic being studied. The second reader does not need to be a member of the nursing graduate faculty but must be faculty at SCSU, and is identified in collaboration with the major advisor to assist in the development of the Thesis or Special Project. In addition, all advisors and readers need to agree to undertake this responsibility. Statistical and computer consultation may be obtained by an individual (faculty or another individual) with expertise in this field. Students are responsible for obtaining university guidelines for the proposal, approval from the Institutional Review Board, and completed thesis and special project requirements from the Graduate School. The Nursing Department Graduate Program Capstone website on Blackboard 9 also has helpful information and guidelines. Students are also expected to meet regularly during the semester with their advisor(s) in order to complete their requirements within the prescribed semester in which the student is registered for the capstone course(s).

F. Program Planning

Students are expected to meet with the MSN Program Director prior to registering for their first course as a matriculated student to develop a plan of study. This meeting will allow the student to identify an expected date of graduation and the semesters they should anticipate registering for each of the courses required for their program. An electronic version of this plan is kept in the student's file by the MSN Program Director. Students have 6 years from the semester in which they complete the first course to meet all program requirements.

Continuous enrollment requires that every graduate student be enrolled in a course every spring and fall semester from the time of acceptance by the School of Graduate Studies until completion of all requirements for the graduate degree. Students who are not enrolled in any course during the semester in which they are completing unfinished work for a thesis or Special Project or clinical practicum will receive a Q for this work. These students will also be required to pay the continuous enrollment fee as per the School of Graduate and Professional Programs policies until this work is completed. Students who are completing Special Project, Thesis, or clinical practicum work, but who are also enrolled concurrently in other course(s) in the MSN program will not be required to register for continuous enrollment.

Students must maintain active matriculation status during every Fall and Spring semester until completion of their program. Those who are unable to take a class must request a Leave of Absence and pay the continuous enrollment fee. Failure to register for an academic course without receiving approval for a temporary leave of absence will result in automatic withdrawal from the program. In extenuating circumstances, a student may petition for a waiver of the fee for a Leave of Absence using the appropriate form. The waiver form (included here) <http://www.southernct.edu/academics/graduate/currentstudents/forms.html>, must be signed by the MSN Program Director before sending it to the Dean of Graduate & Professional Studies.

At the beginning of the final academic semester in the program, *FNP Students* should seek certification materials from the American Nurses' Credentialing Center and/or American Association of Nurse Practitioners and licensure materials from the State Department of Public Health. It is the students' responsibility to obtain these materials and comply with deadlines. The Graduate Program Director or designee will complete forms as requested by students. The student should make such requests in a timely manner and allow at least 2 weeks for any forms that need to be filled out or signed. Similarly, CNL students wishing to sit for the CNL Certification Exam and Nurse Educator students planning to take the CNE exam shall submit the appropriate forms to the MSN Program Director for completion during the final semester of their programs or following graduation, based on their interest in taking these exams.

D. Practicums (Applies to all students in the Graduate Program)

1. Pre-Placement Requirements and Information

In order to qualify for clinical placement, the student is required to submit to [and successfully complete health and clinical screening](#) requirements, including but not limited to a background check. Students will also require proof of health insurance. [Drug screens may be required by some clinical agencies.](#)

- a. Students in FNP clinical practicums should complete clinical site and preceptor request forms and discuss these opportunities with the MSN Director and Clinical Director. Students are NOT to negotiate with clinical agencies but should discuss their clinical interests with potential preceptors prior to the start of each clinical course to determine whether the potential preceptor would be willing to work with them. Students should submit contact information for potential clinical sites to the Clinical Director. Students in Nurse Educator and Clinical Nurse Leader tracks will receive clinical placements congruent with their professional goals. These goals must be submitted to the MSN Director and Clinical Director at least one semester prior to the upcoming clinical course.

All placements must be approved by the MSN Program Director/designated course faculty. **Clinical placement contracts must be fully executed with agencies and the university prior to students beginning the practicum. Students are expected to fulfill clinical hours in assigned placements in order to meet course objectives.**

2 Placement Requirements

- a. The practicum shall be in a setting different from the place of the student's current or previous employment. FNP Students are expected to actively contribute towards finding their own preceptors. Previous sites may be used with special permission of the MSN Director in cases of limited availability of practicum sites and student learning objectives. The clinical practicum shall be in a setting in which the preceptor has a minimum of a Master's Degree (APRN, PA or MD/DO) and appropriate credentials in the clinical area of expertise.
- b. All practicum courses consist of a class and/or seminar, and twelve to sixteen (12-16) hours per week of practice for the duration of the semester. Students are expected to arrange specific days and times with the preceptor in consultation with the faculty and by mutual consent of all parties.
- c. Evidence of satisfactory completion of all course objectives must be received by the course instructor prior to the grade being submitted for the course. Validation of clinical hours by clinical preceptors must be received by the course instructor for students to receive credit for sufficient clinical hours each semester. Students are responsible for preparing themselves for any clinical skills they are required to perform in the clinical setting, and should discuss with clinical and course faculty.

3. Students are responsible for communicating any modifications to their previously approved clinical sites or preceptors to the MSN Director and Clinical Director. Additional Clinical Practice Information and Requirements:

a. Malpractice Insurance/Licensure:

Coverage is provided by the university only when students are participating in university or department clinical activities [when the university is in session. Students cannot be in clinical when the university is closed or when classes are not in session.](#)

Students must adhere to all standards set by the Nurse Practice Act and the ANA Code of Ethics as well as institutional policies while participating in clinical experiences.

[Students must maintain an active unencumbered RN license that is free of practice restrictions for the duration of the student's academic and clinical portions of the SCSU nursing program.](#) A copy of the student's current nursing license must be uploaded to their account on Castlebranch (Appendix A).

b. Southern Connecticut State University Department of Nursing Health and Safety Requirements (Appendix B): **Graduate Nursing Students:**

Documentation of compliance with meeting all health requirements is compulsory for all students enrolled in the Graduate Nursing program at Southern Connecticut State University. The determination of required health information for nursing students is a result of recommendations from the Academy of Immunization Practice (ACIP), The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), The Connecticut University System Health Requirements for all students, clinical agency requirements, and in collaboration with the Southern Connecticut State University Granoff Health Center and the Department of Nursing.

Health requirements include (see Appendices A and B for details):

- Physical Examination (Annual)
- Titers and Immunizations
- Annual Tuberculosis Testing
- Bi-annual Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) Certification **for Healthcare Providers**
- Proof of RN Licensure

*Additional clinical requirements may be needed for some clinical agencies and requirements are subject to change at any time.

**** A medical note of clearance to participate in clinical without restrictions is required to return to the clinical setting after an absence for illness, surgery, or injury. Medical notes of clearance should be from the student's primary care provider unless they are after the primary care provider's office hours or in the case of an emergency room visit.**

4. Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens Policies and Incident Reporting:

- Students are required to read the CHA (Connecticut Hospital Association) Student Orientation Curriculum Guide and pass the post-test annually.
- Students must follow the clinical agency's policies regarding occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens. A copy of the Agency Incident Report must be placed in the student's SCSU file if an incident takes place.
- The SCSU Department of Nursing Incident Report for Accidental Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids must be completed and placed in the student's SCSU file if an incident takes place.
- Students or clinical faculty who are exposed at a clinical site with on-site capability for providing appropriate care for bloodborne exposure will follow the clinical site protocol and seek initial evaluation and treatment at the clinical site. Students and/or clinical faculty are responsible for using his/her own health insurance for the initial treatment, any associated transportation costs, and for paying for the visits associated with post-exposure follow up care. If the site does not have this capability, students and clinical faculty should immediately contact their Primary Care Provider or Emergency Department for immediate post-exposure care.:
- *The above procedures and policies also apply to any other types of injuries or illness associated with clinical experiences.

V. General Expectations within the Department of Nursing Graduate Program

The advanced education achieved through graduate study requires a significantly greater level of independence, knowledge, professionalism and self-examination from the

baccalaureate student. Therefore, students are to act in accordance with the standards expected of individuals pursuing graduate study, and in recognition of the increased self-reflection, knowledge and responsibility that accompany this process as included below:

A. General Behavior

1. Professional Competencies

- a. Acts ethically
 - i. Communication is expected to be respectful to faculty, peers, preceptors, and other members of the university and health care team at all times.
 - ii. Conflicts will be handled with non-confrontational tones, and will be taken through the identified chain of command. Students should first consult with course faculty regarding a matter of concern. If satisfactory resolution has not been accomplished, the student may meet in sequence with the following individuals if satisfactory resolution has not been accomplished up to this point: MSN Program Advisor/MSN Director, Department Chair, Associate Dean or Dean of the School of Health and Human Services, Provost, President.
 - iii. Direct, professional communication that seeks to resolve differences in a constructive, and collaborative manner is a hallmark of leadership competency expected at the graduate level
- b. Delivers safe care
 - i. Students are required to communicate with preceptors if they are not confident in their ability to perform certain skills in the clinical setting. Performance of skills independently without adequate knowledge and prior experience may result in unsafe practice and is grounds for dismissal from the program.
- c. Accepts personal responsibility for professional development
 - i. Students are expected to complete classroom assignments and other course requirements by times designated on the syllabus.
 - ii. Students are expected to be able to manage the rigors of graduate study while also accommodating the multiple tasks of employment, family responsibilities, and other priorities. Although extenuating circumstances may occasionally occur, students should communicate clearly with their course faculty and MSN advisor/Director as soon as possible in the event of unforeseen circumstances which may potentially hamper their

- ability to complete coursework.
- iii. If a student is having difficulty handling work-life balance in relation to graduate coursework, they are encouraged to seek assistance from the SCSU Counseling Center.
- d. Incorporates current technology (NONPF, 2006)
 - i. Appropriate use of technology is further discussed in Section V.C.

2. Student-Faculty/Preceptor Relationship

- a. Conveys mutual respect
- b. Behaves professionally
- c. Respects timelines and deadlines
- d. Provides sufficient and advanced notification for missing class/clinical/scheduled meeting
- e. Dresses professionally in the clinical setting (Hair will be well-groomed and tied up if long; clothes will be non-revealing; nails will be short; a minimum of jewelry will be worn; a lab coat with proper identification will be worn; make up will be appropriate and not excessive; tattoos will be hidden from view, **and appearance will be considered acceptable in relation to the norms of the clinical site.**)

3. Student-Advisor(s) (i.e. Special Project and Thesis) Relationships

- a. Students will convey respect for advisors and 2nd readers
- b. Students will respond appropriately to constructive criticism
- c. Students will allow sufficient time for advisors to comment on written materials (usually at least 2 weeks)
- d. Students will provide advisors with a timeline of when corrected drafts will be returned (again, within approximately 2 weeks of receipt of faculty edits).
- e. Students will respond to advisors' requests for meetings
- f. Students will make attempt to respond to all written comments and/or corrections or provide rationale why correction is not warranted
- g. Students will be responsible for editing papers for grammar, spelling, APA mistakes to the best of their ability
- h. Students will seek help from Student Success Center for writing assistance when advised to do so
- i. Students may be expected to elicit the assistance of a professional editor if they are consistently having difficulties with writing expected at the graduate level.

4. Student Role

- a. Attends class/clinical and arrives on time

- b. Notifies faculty/preceptor if planning to be absent and presents valid excuse, in writing, if requested
- c. Participates in class
- d. Submits assignments on time and without excuses
- e. Is present for all exams
- f. Actively participates in identifying possible preceptors for clinical practicums
- g. Monitors SCSU e-mail a minimum of once per week (including during summer and school breaks)**
- h. Responds to SCSU e-mails from nursing faculty and staff in a timely manner

B. Academic Honesty

The following excerpt on academic honesty is directly quoted from the SCSU Student Handbook:

“The integrity of scholarship is the cornerstone of the academic and social structure of the university. It is the expressed policy of the university that every aspect of graduate academic life, related in whatever fashion to the university, shall be conducted in an absolutely and uncompromisingly honest manner. Violations of academic honesty are grounds for a failing grade and may result in dismissal from the School of Graduate Studies.”

Behavior that falls under the heading of academic dishonesty includes the following:

1. Use of illicit aids during examination periods
2. The giving and receiving of aid on any examinations
3. Copying another student’s examination, term paper, lab report, etc.
4. The theft of course material
5. Plagiarism: Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another writer and presenting them as your own. It is a kind of academic theft, and is therefore dishonest. Once your name appears on an essay or term paper, you are stating that the ideas and language in the paper that are not attributed to another are entirely your own, and the reader assumes that these are your work. An obvious form of plagiarism is copying the exact words from your source without providing quotation marks and without giving credit to the source. A less obvious, but equally dishonest form of plagiarism is the changing of a few words (paraphrasing) or using of an author’s original idea without properly introducing and documenting that change or usage. The ideas, interpretations, and words of an author belong to the author. They are the author’s property. They are protected by law and they must be acknowledged whenever you borrow them. The use of internet resources as representative of one's own work without citation or credit also constitutes plagiarism

An incident of academic dishonesty may be dealt with in the following ways:

1. The instructor may take direct action, including personal reprimand, re-examination, additional assignments, lowering of the grade for the paper or course, or failure in the exam or the course itself. In all cases, the instructor shall inform his/her department chairperson and the appropriate dean in writing. Students have the right to appeal the decision of the instructor or the sanction imposed by utilizing the Grade Change Policy found in the Academic Information of the current SCSU Student Handbook
2. If an instance of academic misconduct is reported by a member of the university community other than the relevant instructor, the Vice President or Dean of Student Affairs or his/her designees will inform the Academic Vice President or his/her designee. The Academic Vice President or his/her designee will inform the relevant instructor. If disciplinary action seems warranted, the case will be presented to the appropriate Judicial Officer or Board or panel by the Vice President of Student and University Affairs.” (SCSU Student Handbook 2021-22)
3. Students are not permitted to purchase (from paper mills or other sources) or share papers (or parts of a paper) and submit them for course/program written requirements in the nursing program. Students are also not allowed to submit a paper for one course that has been used in another course.

C. Social Media and Electronic Duplication and Transmission Policy

Social Media is defined as a method of communicating electronically through use of chat rooms, blogs, share sites, social networking sites, video or web broadcasting sites, and other online forums of any kind.

1. Electronic communications are not considered a secure method for transmitting confidential or private information. Examples of social media include but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia, Podcasts, Allnurses.com, Instagram, and RSS feeds.
2. Improper use of social media by nursing students may violate state and federal laws established to protect confidentiality, and can result in both civil and criminal penalties, including fines and possible jail time.
 - a. No texting, talking or cell phone use in clinical areas or classroom/lab without permission of faculty. Cell phones/smartphones are only allowed for information-gathering related to a clinical situation during clinical, laboratory, or classroom time *if permitted by faculty or agency*. Otherwise, cell phones need to be *turned off. Students are NOT permitted to take pictures or videos in clinical sites unless explicitly approved in*

writing by the site's administration for a specific purpose.

b. There shall be no videotaping or still pictures of professors, fellow students, or course materials for personal or social media use without written permission of those you are taking pictures of or videotaping. ***Any copyrighted material is strictly protected from use beyond which was the original intent of the material.***

c. Clinical agencies/sites may require further restrictions that must be adhered to.

3. Online comments by nursing students regarding faculty, peers, coworkers, and clinical sites, even if posted outside of clinical or didactic hours may constitute ***lateral violence*** or ***misuse of social media***. Lateral violence includes disruptive behaviors of intimidation and bullying which is detrimental to the Department of Nursing faculty and students, and may result in legal action against the nursing student. Nursing students are expected to represent the university in a fair and positive manner and need to keep in mind that social media sites are public, and information accessed can be traced back to the sender even after they have been deleted. Nothing posted or transmitted by social media is private.

4. Consequences: Violation of the social media and electronic duplication and transmission policies will result in departmental, university, or other disciplinary action as described in the SCSU Student Handbook.

VI. Expected Student Behaviors in Clinical and Practicum Experiences

A. The following behaviors and actions are recognized as fundamental to nursing practice. The ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses (2015) provides the framework for these student behavior expectations.

1. Demonstrates responsibility and accountability for practice by adhering to course expectations
2. Demonstrates responsibility and accountability by completing written assignments on time
3. Demonstrates respect for patients/students and the profession of nursing by adhering to the SCSU Department of Nursing and all agency policies and procedures including those regarding dress code, behavioral expectations, and clinical activities.
4. Maintains privacy and confidentiality of health and educational related information

5. Abides by social media and electronic duplication and transmission policies and other program, department, graduate school and university policies
6. Delivers care and teaches students, patients, or staff in a non-judgmental and non-discriminatory manner sensitive to client/student/human diversity
7. Realistically assesses own strengths and limitations, seeks help appropriately and is responsive to constructive criticism regarding performance
8. Seeks out new opportunities for learning and professional development
9. Demonstrates adequate preparation for clinical/ practicum responsibilities
10. Works in collaboration with team members, agencies and preceptors

B. Examples of student nurse behaviors which may result in clinical and/or practicum probation, dismissal, and/or failure include:

1. Falsifying a client's or student's record, including clinical time logs/electronic documentation systems
2. Violation of HIPPA or FERPA regulations (i.e. breach of clients' or student confidentiality)
3. Failure to adhere to principles of safe nursing practice
4. Inadequate preparation for clinical and/or practicum responsibilities
5. Inability to recognize limitations and failure to seek appropriate help in time sensitive situations
6. Dishonest communication with clients, families, faculty, agency staff, students or preceptors
7. Denying responsibility for one's actions
8. Participation in actions that may threaten the safety of clients, peers, faculty, students, preceptors or others in the clinical/practicum setting (i.e. being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, verbal, sexual, physical abuse)

C. Unsafe practice is a violation of any part whatsoever of the above identified areas of safe practice.

1. Unsafe practice, in any form, results in disciplinary action.

2. A student will be suspended from the clinical/practicum experience immediately if, in the professional judgment of a faculty member or preceptor, the student has demonstrated unsafe practice in a clinical/laboratory/or practicum area or exhibited unprofessional behavior.
3. The faculty member or the primary clinical instructor, who suspended the student will immediately notify the Course faculty, Clinical Director and MSN Program Director.

It is understood that the primary clinical course instructor (course faculty) is primarily responsible for evaluating the student and assigning the student grade for the clinical/practicum experience. The evaluation by the clinical preceptor (preceptor on site at clinical practicum) of student performance and the clinical visit (or its substitute) contributes to the clinical grade. In class assignments also contribute to the total course grade. The Clinical Evaluation Tool (CET) will be used to assess on site clinical performance. The university-assigned faculty holds the responsibility for assigning the clinical grade. The MSN Program Committee serves as a forum for record keeping and notice to the student and is not responsible for student grading (see SCSU Student Handbook). The primary clinical course instructor is responsible for notifying the student of the grade for clinical or practicum.

4. In the event that a student demonstrates unsafe practice in the clinical/practicum setting, the agency standards may take precedence over the Department of Nursing guidelines.

VII. Capstone Requirement

All graduate nursing students are required to complete either a Thesis or Special Project in nursing to complete program requirements. The following are requirements for each of these capstone experiences. The Thesis (NUR 590 and NUR 591) will generally take one (1) year for 6 credits, and the Special Project (NUR 592) may take as little as one semester (3 credits), but may require additional semesters for completion. See the SGPS for due dates for theses and Special Projects. Theses and Special Projects are due to the Nursing Department Chairperson at least 10 days prior to the due dates specified by the School of Graduate Studies.

A. Thesis

Thesis requirements and related forms can be found on the School of Graduate & Professional Studies website. Specific forms required by the Nursing Department can be found on the NUR 590 and NUR 591 Blackboard sites. The student registers for NUR 591 upon completion of the proposal (in NUR 590). The student registers for NUR 591 for each semester required to complete the Thesis. Following the required oral defense, the copy of the thesis,

signed by the thesis advisor and second reader, is submitted to the MSN Program Director for a final reading and departmental approval. Following approval, the thesis is submitted to the SGPS for approval. The MSN Program Director may name a delegate from the Nursing Department to serve as department reviewer if they are serving as thesis or Special Project advisor/reader.

The thesis is graded as pass/fail. If the student is unable to complete requirements within the semester a grade of “Q” will be assigned (see III D and Academic Standards and Regulations, SGPS, <http://catalog.southernct.edu/graduate/general-information/academic-standards-and-regulations.html>.)

It is the responsibility of the student to obtain the guidelines and forms and to submit a copy of the Thesis and Special Project Advisor or designated member of the Nursing Department to complete these requirements.

B. Special Project in Nursing

NUR 592 is generally offered in the Fall and Spring semesters as a faculty-led seminar called a “Constructed Case Experience” and does not require proposal submission prior to registering for the course. Bi-weekly deadlines for written work for this option are strictly imposed. Proposals and final projects require primary faculty, 2nd reader, and department approval. Proposals should be submitted prior to the midterm of the semester, and final projects should be submitted at least two weeks before the final deadline posted by the SGPS. A grade of “Pass” submitted by the faculty thesis or Special Project advisor serves as the official record that the project has been completed successfully.

Following the required dissemination of results, a copy of the Special Project final report, signed by the major advisor and second reader, is submitted to the MSN Program Director for a final reading and departmental approval. See the SGPS guidelines regarding the process for approval of the special project. If the student is unable to complete requirements within the semester a grade of “Q” will be assigned and the student will need to complete the project during the following semester, as specified in the SGPS website.

It is the responsibility of the student to be knowledgeable of all expectations related to the thesis or Special Project, and obtain all necessary approvals, and to submit a copy of the Special Project to the department to complete these requirements. Final thesis projects are to be submitted to ProQuest upon completion.

Appendix A

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR CASTLEBRANCH

All students are expected to complete the CT Hospital Association Health & Safety Training course which may be accessed at <https://cthosp.org/education/ct-health-and-safety-training-course/> in addition to the Castlebranch and Health and Safety Requirements described below.

Castlebranch is a secure on-line platform that allows you to post and store your health and safety documents, licenses and certifications required by Southern Connecticut State University Nursing Department. It is **ultimately the student's responsibility** to be certain all clinical requirements have been properly uploaded and accepted by Castlebranch. It is also **the student's responsibility** to assure all clinical requirements are maintained current and in compliance with the SCSU Nursing Department's clinical requirements. Failure to have all clinical requirements complete or to maintain them in a current status will result in being unable to attend clinical experiences until the requirements have been met.

To Place Your Order

Follow the instructions on the Castlebranch letter that will be sent to you by the Clinical Director. If you did not receive this letter or if you have lost this information, please contact the SCSU Nursing Department Clinical Coordinators' office: Dr. Pamela Forte at fortep4@southernct.edu. Or Diane D'Alessio at dalessiod2@southernct.edu

To View Your Results:

- Your results will be posted directly to your Castlebranch account. To log in after you have already placed your order, go to www.Castlebranch.com and sign in to your account.
- You will be notified by Castlebranch, if there is any missing information needed in order to process your order. Although 95% of orders are completed within 3-5 business days, some may take longer. Your order will show as "In Process" until it has been completed in its entirety. Your school's administrators can also securely view your results online with their unique usernames and passwords.
 - Very important: SCSU Nursing Department clinical requirements, including the background check, must be completed by the deadline date you are given. Thereafter the clinical requirements must be kept in a current status until all clinical nursing courses have been completed.

Need Help?

- If you need assistance, please contact Castlebranch, at customerservice@castlebranch.com or at 888-723-4263 and a Student Support representative will be able to assist you.

Appendix B

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS:

All **must** be complete to attend clinical

A. Physical Examination:

1. A complete physical examination is required every year. The physical must be performed by a licensed MD, DO, PA or APRN and must be documented on the health form provided by the SCSU Department of Nursing.

B. Tuberculosis Screening(Annual):

1. All students must provide documentation of annual tuberculosis screening, also known as a “TB Test”. Screening results must be demonstrated by either of the following methods:
2. 2 step PPD initially prior to starting the program, followed by an annual single PPD every year thereafter
3. Quantiferon Gold blood test yearly
4. Please note that if a student has a positive skin or blood test, he/she must submit results of a current chest x-ray, demonstrating no active pulmonary disease. Additionally, if a student has a history of active or latent tuberculosis infection that was treated with medication, he/she must submit evidence of appropriate and complete treatment in the form of a confirmatory letter from his/her primary care physician or pulmonary specialist.

C. Measles, Mumps & Rubella (MMR):

1. All students must provide documentation of immunization or a positive MMR titer.
2. For negative or equivocal results on MMR titer, students need to refer to their Castle Branch account for instructions

D. Varicella:

1. All students must provide documentation of immunizations or a positive Varicella titer.
2. For negative or equivocal results on Varicella titer, students need to refer to their Castle Branch account for instructions

E. Hepatitis B (HepB):

1. All students must provide documentation of Immunizations and a positive Hepatitis B titer
2. For negative or equivocal results on Hepatitis B titer, students need to refer to their Castle Branch account for instructions
3. **Students who decline the Hepatitis B vaccine must provide a signed Declination Form**

F. Tetanus, Diphtheria & Pertussis (Tdap):

1. All students must provide documentation of one dose of Tetanus, Diphtheria & Pertussis (Tdap) within the past 10 years. Those individuals who are unsure if they have previously received a dose of Tdap should receive a one-time dose of Tdap as soon as feasible, without regard to the interval since the previous dose of Td immunization (Tetanus & diphtheria, also known as a “tetanus shot”).

G. Influenza:

1. All students must provide documentation of vaccination with the current year influenza vaccine, administered during the current flu season, which is identified by the Connecticut Department of Health as **August 1st-March 31st**.

H. Covid Vaccination:

Covid vaccination is currently required by most clinical agencies. Agencies who do allow for an exemption or a deferment to Covid vaccination have specific policies and procedures for Covid vaccination exemption/deferment that the student must follow to be reviewed for acceptance or declination by their clinical site. SCSU Department of Nursing may not be able to place students in clinical settings if there are no available clinical sites who accept students without Covid vaccination and this may delay or cease the student’s progression in the nursing program.

I. Additional Clinical and Health Requirements per agency requirements:

1. Clinical and health requirements are subject to change at any time depending on CDC or the CT Department of Public health recommendations as well as any requirements established by our affiliating clinical agencies.

B. The student is responsible for the costs associated with the clinical and health requirements.

C. Other Clinical and Health Requirements

1. Background Checks

Clinical practice experiences in healthcare and other agencies are a required component of program completion and graduation with a pre-licensure credential or baccalaureate nursing degree. Students must meet all standards and requirements necessary to complete required clinical placements. Failure to do so will result in an inability to complete the program.

Many agencies providing clinical practice experiences are requiring that students undergo a criminal background check before commencing the clinical practice experience. The Connecticut League for Nursing (CLN) has engaged an outside contractor to perform criminal background checks on students pursuing clinical practice experiences. The results of the background check will be released to the agencies where clinical experiences are planned. Students must apply directly to CLN and pay all costs associated with the background check. CLN CORE background check must be completed before beginning the program.

It is important to understand that the results of a student's criminal background check may prevent a student from commencing or completing a clinical placement. Failure to complete all required clinical placements will prevent a student from graduating from the MSN Program.

The following is a *partial* list of crimes and offenses that may negatively impact a student's ability to complete required clinical placements: any sexual crime, any crime of violence, any drug crime, any weapons crime, property crimes, theft, robbery, burglary, embezzlement or fraud, public intoxication or substance abuse, and other felonies and serious offenses which would not be appropriate in a healthcare/patient care environment. A subsequent background check with fingerprinting **will be required** during the subsequent year for clinical experiences.

Additional background and fingerprinting may be required for specific Health Care Agencies at a cost to the students.

2. Drug Screening

According to the Connecticut Department of Labor, nursing is a high-risk occupation. Due to health and safety concerns, nurses must conduct healthcare and educational activities fully in control of their manual dexterity, mental faculties, and judgment. The presence or use of drugs, which may interfere with the judgment or motor coordination of nursing students in a health care setting, poses an unacceptable risk for patients, colleagues, the University, and affiliating clinical agencies. Southern Connecticut State University recognizes its responsibility to provide a safe, efficient academic environment for students and to cooperate with clinical agencies' requirements in providing for the safe and effective care of their patients during nursing students' clinical experiences in their facilities, the University has instituted drug testing for nursing students.

Students will be required to participate in a urine toxicology drug screening to be in compliance with clinical agency requirements. MOST clinical agencies currently require urine drug screening either annually or more frequently depending on the clinical agency's policies. When the student is notified that a urine drug screen is required, the test must be completed within the required time frame for the student to begin or continue in clinical experiences in the nursing program.

i. Pre-Clinical Drug Screening: Drug screening will occur prior to nursing students' participation in clinical. Drug screening may be repeated thereafter, if required by the clinical agency that the student is assigned to for any clinical experience. An outside vendor (e.g. Castlebranch) will oversee drug screening using certified laboratories. Any records of such tests shall be treated as confidential pursuant to Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Refusal to complete the drug screening as required may result in the student being removed from the clinical rotation, which can lead to the inability to progress or graduate from the nursing program.

ii. Prescribed Drugs: If a student tests positive for a prescribed drug other than medically certified marijuana (see section below for medically certified marijuana), they must provide written documentation to the testing laboratory's Medical Review Officer (MRO) who will then review the documentation and report the drug screen results as positive (failed) or negative (passed). A positive or failed drug screen will result in the student being unable to attend clinical experiences which can lead to the inability to progress or graduate from the nursing program. The student will be required to meet with the Dean of Health and Human Services if a drug screen is reported as positive after the review by the MRO.

iii. Nonprescribed Drugs: If a student's drug screen result is positive for a nonprescribed drug including recreational marijuana this is a failed drug screen. A positive or failed drug screen will result in the student being unable to attend clinical experiences which can lead to the inability to progress or graduate from the nursing program. The student will be required to meet with the Dean of Health and Human Services.

iv. Medically Certified Marijuana: Medical marijuana can be certified for specific approved conditions in Connecticut. However, in accordance with federal law, a positive toxicology screen for legally certified marijuana may prohibit a student from being placed in a clinical setting that accepts federal funding. If a student tests positive for marijuana, they must provide a copy of a current, valid state of Connecticut certification card to the School of Nursing Chairperson. At any time during the student's nursing program, if clinical sites accepting medically certified marijuana use are not available, this will result in the student being unable to attend clinical experiences which can lead to the inability to progress or graduate from the nursing program.

v. Dilute Drug Screens: It is very important NOT to drink large amounts of fluids before a urine drug screen. It is also recommended to have a urine drug screen early in the day when urine tends to be the most concentrated. Drinking large amounts of fluid or testing later in the day can cause a dilute drug screen result. A finding of a dilute drug screen is a failed drug screen result. The student will be allowed one drug screen retest at the student's expense. Should the student have a second dilute drug screen result, the student must meet with Dean of Health and Human Services. A failed drug screen will result in the student being unable to attend clinical experiences which can lead to the inability to progress or graduate from the nursing program.

3. Malpractice Insurance

Coverage is provided by the university only when students are participating in university or department clinical activities. Students must adhere to all standards set by the Connecticut Nurse Practice Act and the ANA Code of Ethics as well as institutional policies while participating in clinical experiences.

4. RN Licensure

All students in the MSN Graduate Nursing Program must provide a copy of their current RN license from the Connecticut Department of Public Health or verification of licensure from the Connecticut Department of Public Health website at:

<https://www.wlicense.ct.gov/Lookup/LicenseLookup.aspx>

Expiration date: To coincide with the expiration date of the student's RN license

5. Health Insurance

Students must carry their own health insurance.

6. CPR certification/recertification (Basic Life Support for Healthcare Providers)

Current Healthcare Provider level (adult/child/infant) Basic Life Support (BLS) certification is required for students to attend any clinical experience. Evidence of BLS for Healthcare Providers certification must be provided to Castle Branch by July 1 or students cannot begin clinical during

the fall semester of the junior year. CPR must be updated every 2 years (or as required by the certifying agency) and submitted to Castle Branch (by July 1) ACE students must submit this material (by June 1). Castle Branch requires a copy of the **front & back** of the card and the card **must be signed**. Renewal date will be set two years from the issue date. Students will be cleared to attend clinical when this information is on file. BLS for Healthcare Providers instruction must be an onsite course with skill performance demonstration. This is available through the American Red Cross (BLS for Healthcare Providers) or American Heart Association (BLS for Healthcare Providers).

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