



RN to BSN Student Handbook 2026-2027

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Welcome from the Dean of the School of Nursing

A Message from the Dean

Welcome to the School of Nursing at USC Aiken! We are excited that you have chosen USC Aiken to complete your BSN. We look forward to helping you achieve this goal so that you can provide quality, evidence-based care/services to individuals, families, and communities locally, nationally, and internationally.

As one of three professional schools at USC Aiken, we pride ourselves on maintaining a caring learning environment in which you can fulfill your educational goals. School of Nursing graduates acquire valuable knowledge and skills that help them meet the ever-changing challenges in healthcare and advance within the profession.

Our nursing program is fully accredited by CCNE, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. A BSN degree from USC Aiken compares with those granted by much larger universities, but with a more personalized experience. School of Nursing faculty strives to know their students by name, and the learning experience often goes far beyond the classroom.

Our award-winning faculty holds advanced terminal degrees from prestigious institutions and are active in applied and pedagogical research. Additionally, faculty integrate their clinical experience and expertise into classroom discussions/activities to enhance student's critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills. Actively involved in the local community, the nursing faculty also work closely with our clinical partners to maximize your learning experience.

On behalf of the faculty and staff, welcome to the School of Nursing. We want each of you to succeed, and we are here to help you in any way that we can.

Wishing you much success,

Katie A. Chargualaf PhD, RN, CMSRN, CNE, FAMSN, FAAN
Dean, USC Aiken School of Nursing
Wells Hanly/Bank of America Endowed Chair for Nursing

Mission

USC Aiken School of Nursing seeks to prepare students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to care for diverse individuals and populations across the lifespan and in various healthcare settings regionally and globally.

Vision

To empower the next generation of nurses to optimize healthcare in local, national, and global communities.

Philosophy

The faculty believe:

- Nursing, as an art and science, is a vital component of health care.
- High impact teaching practices facilitate connections between theories and principles from the liberal arts and competency-based nursing education.
- Nursing practice utilizes clinical judgement and evidence-based practice to deliver safe, quality care to individuals, families, and populations, respecting the individuality of each client.
- Graduates will be prepared to practice in a rapidly changing, complex healthcare system.
- A commitment to professional development and lifelong learning is necessary to maintain nursing competence.

Core Values

- Caring
- Integrity
- Diversity
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Advocacy
- Respect
- Excellence
- Innovation
- Leadership

Program Outcomes

USC Aiken School of Nursing prepares students for successful practice based on the 10 standards specified by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education* (2021). Graduates will demonstrate evidence of these competencies:

1. Knowledge for Nursing Practice

Demonstrate clinical judgment in the delivery of competent care that is supported by a broad knowledge and theoretical base in nursing and other sciences, liberal arts, and humanities.

2. Person-Centered Care

Cultivate caring relationships that respect the dignity of individuals, families, and communities through advocacy, health assessment, planning, facilitation of care, education, and evaluation of outcomes across the four spheres of care.

3. Population Health

Assess and apply strategies for the health and well-being of communities through advocacy, prevention, prioritization, and mobilization of care for endemic as well as emerging health problems.

4. Scholarship for the Nursing Discipline

Identify, synthesize, and apply research evidence into the design, delivery, and evaluation of evidence-based nursing care across the wellness-illness continuum.

5. Quality and Safety

Participate in the identification, development, delivery, and ongoing evaluation of individual and multidisciplinary services, activities, and functions that facilitate delivery of safe, high-quality care.

6. Interprofessional Partnerships

Collaborate with members of the multidisciplinary healthcare team using professional verbal and written communication to promote effective problem-solving and delivery of holistic care.

7. Systems-Based Practice

Articulate the interconnectedness of nursing and the complex healthcare delivery system, emphasizing the role of the professional nurse within an organizational structure and in the provision of cost-effective, high-quality care across the wellness-illness continuum.

8. Informatics and Healthcare Technologies

Utilize digital resources and technologies and interact with telehealth platforms to deliver safe patient care and facilitate communication between patients and healthcare providers in a variety of settings.

9. Professionalism

Provide nursing care that represents the professional identity of nursing, is grounded in ethical principles, and is in accordance with the scope and standards of practice for professional registered nurses.

10. Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development

Demonstrate personal and professional responsibility through self-care, life-long learning, and the development of capacity for leadership.

School of Nursing: Organization

Dean of the School of Nursing

The Dean is responsible for ensuring the academic rigor and organizational integrity of the School of Nursing. In this capacity, the Dean addresses day-to-day challenges as well as anticipates and plans to ensure the success of the School of Nursing students and faculty.

Faculty of the School of Nursing (FT/PT clinical)

Faculty members of the School of Nursing are experienced nurses with expertise in a wide range of nursing roles and settings. Based on input from the South Carolina Board of Nursing, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), and local healthcare agencies, the faculty designs and administers the curriculum. Individual faculty members are responsible for preparing instructional activities and assessing learning outcomes in the courses that they teach. In courses with a clinical component, the course coordinator is also responsible for ensuring that students engage in clinical experiences that will enhance classroom learning.

Academic Advisors

Responsibilities of academic advisors and students in the advisement process and maintenance of student records:

Academic Advisor

The academic advisor will document advisement activities and decisions on the “Advisement Notes” form at the conclusion of the advisement session or in the “Notes” section of Navigate.

The assigned academic advisor will be responsible for advisement of assigned advisees to plan an orderly progression through the prescribed and published program of study and complete a Periodic review of the assigned advisees’ progress.

Student

The student advisee is expected to become knowledgeable about all USC Aiken and School of Nursing policies, e.g., pre-registration, and graduation requirements.

Students hold the ultimate responsibility for their progression and program completion, i.e., students are expected to monitor their own credits earned as well as grades earned and be knowledgeable of program requirements for graduation.

It is the student’s responsibility to adhere to procedures regarding advisement appointments, pre-registration, registration, and fee payments.

Clinical Agencies

The USC Aiken School of Nursing maintains relationships with numerous clinical agencies. Access to these sites is a privilege. As guests, students are expected to demonstrate professional behaviors such as, adhering to policies and procedures of the clinical site, providing safe care within the scope of practice, respecting the dignity of staff, patients, and families, and being a good steward of equipment and other resources.

Program of Study

Academic Advisement

Students enrolled in the RN to BSN nursing program will receive academic advising through an online program advisor in the Office of Academic Advising.

Registration for Nursing Courses

Courses in the nursing program, regardless of track, are designed to be taken in a specific sequence. For guidance, students should consult with their academic advisors and refer to the RN to BSN [program of study](#) to determine the sequence. Students in the RN to BSN program may not register for courses in the traditional track.

Completion Time

Students must complete all nursing courses in three calendar years from the start of the first course.

Student Success Center

Nursing students have access to resources through the USC Aiken [Student Success Center](#). These services include, among others, tutoring and academic advising.

To support success in the program, the School of Nursing provides additional resources for the RN to BSN students.

School of Nursing Orientation

- **On-line self-study modules:** Students will complete a series of modules in the Blackboard learning management system as part of orientation to program. Students admitted to the program will receive information about how to access the course with their acceptance letters.
- **Evidence-based study strategies:** Nursing students are responsible for processing and assimilating large volumes of information in a relatively short time. Courses in the program build on knowledge developed in previous courses, including prerequisite courses, and prior nursing degrees. Prior to starting the nursing program, many students rely primarily on memorization to be successful in their courses. To ensure successful completion of *nursing* courses, students need to expand their repertoire of learning strategies so that they can make connections between existing knowledge and new knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences.
- **Maximizing Microsoft Office product use:** Students enter the nursing program with a range of computer-related skills and need to expand on these skills for success in writing intensive courses, collaborative work on a single document, and to ensure access to documents from more than one device.

Core Performance Standards for the School of Nursing

Americans with Disabilities Act

Applicants and current students are entitled to reasonable accommodations for disabilities.

According to the [US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division](#), a disability is defined as a “physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.”

Students with physical, psychological, and/or learning disabilities that could influence success in the nursing program should contact the [Disability Services | USCA](#) to ensure access to programs, activities, and services.

In addition to academics, all students must be able to perform specific actions that are essential for professional nursing practice. The USC Aiken School of Nursing is committed to supporting qualified applicants and students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodation(s) to be successful in the nursing program.

Ability	Standard	Examples
Mobility	Ability to move from room to room and in small spaces	• Move between patient care areas • Move within crowded patient care environments
Motor skills	Ability to perform gross and fine motor tasks	• Deliver effective compressions and airway management (bag-valve-mask use) • Assist with patient positioning • Insert intravenous or urinary catheters • Open single-dose pill packages
Hearing	Ability to assess and monitor patient and environmental information	• Distinguish patient’s physiological sounds • Hear and distinguish calls for help • Hear and differentiate between multiple patient monitor alarms
Visual	Ability to assess and monitor patient and environmental information	• Inspect patient/environment for abnormalities • Assess patient for response to therapeutic interventions
Tactile	Ability to assess and monitor patient and environmental information	• Palpate patient for abnormalities • Palpate to ascertain response to therapeutic interventions

Core Academic Standards

Grading Scale

Passing Grades	Failing Grades
A = 91 – 100	C = 77 – 79
B+ = 89 – 90	D+ = 75 – 76
B = 83 – 88	D = 70 – 74
C+ = 80 – 82	F = below 70

A final grade of “C+” or better is required in all nursing courses for successful completion and progression to the next level of the BSN program. Final grades will not be rounded up at the end of the semester.

Clinical Grades

Failure to reach the standard required to pass the clinical portion of the course will result in not passing the entire clinical course (clinical and classroom) and students will not be able to progress to the next clinical level. The assignment of a non-passing grade (C, D+, D or F) will be at the discretion of course faculty in consultation with the Dean of the School of Nursing.

Assessment of Learning

Competency-Based Assessment

In accordance with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing guidance, the USC Aiken School of Nursing prepares graduates to expand nursing expertise by building on foundational knowledge to foster advanced critical thinking, leadership, evidence-based practice, and population health management. The faculty deliver a scaffolded education that gradually develops competency as represented by several entrustable professional activities (EPAs) that are necessary for professional nursing. The EPAs address knowledge, skills, attitudes, and clinical judgment related to clinical and non-clinical behaviors.

Clinical Expectations

Across the RN-BSN program, students will complete direct and indirect clinical experiences. Most of these clinical experiences will be completed outside of a traditional clinical facility. Students will complete a capstone clinical project as part of coursework in seven of nine RN-BSN program classes using a patient selected by the student. The project integrates multiple elements of professional nursing (ex: evidence-based practice, quality improvement, systems thinking, leadership, and community/population health) used to inform clinical judgment. Individual learning activities form a cohesive body of work through direct and indirect patient care experiences which demonstrate attainment of the program outcomes.

In the last semester of the program, students will observe a nurse leader in a clinical setting (NURS A460: Leadership & Management in Nursing for RNs). This requires a clinical affiliation agreement between the clinical facility and USCA School of Nursing (SON). A current list of clinical affiliations may be found on the USCA SON website (<https://www.usca.edu/academics/son/clinical-information/>).

If a student wishes to complete this clinical experience at a site where we don't have a clinical affiliation agreement, one must be established. This can take up to 3 months to establish. Therefore, the student must contact the RN to BSN Program Clinical Coordinator faculty (Professor Mary Kennedy) at least 14 weeks (or 1-semester) prior to taking this course to ensure there is a clinical affiliation agreement in place between USC Aiken and the facility in which the clinical experience will take place. **Clinicals may take place in the same facility in which the student works, but not the same unit.** This clinical experience is a precepted experience, and the student is responsible for finding an appropriate preceptor after consultation with the course instructor for NURS A460. The following information is needed to execute a new clinical affiliation agreement: the name and contact information for the facility in which the student desires to have their clinical experience, and the

name and contact information of the preceptor the student wishes to shadow. The course instructor will communicate with the preceptor about the clinical experience and evaluation of the clinical experience.

Clinical Capstone Project Expectations

NURS 360: Health Assessment for RNs

For this course, students will complete an interview, comprehensive and holistic health history, thorough head-to-toe assessment, and medication reconciliation for a selected patient. Based on these findings, students will identify three patient problems and provide patient education on one of those problems. Students will also submit video recordings of the assessment, documentation of findings, and patient education. Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to accurately perform and interpret findings from both the interview and physical examination.

NURS 370: Pathophysiology for RNs

Using information from the holistic assessment and medication reconciliation, students will identify two wellness opportunities for the client and create a brochure/pamphlet to guide a patient teaching experience to promote wellness and well-being. The wellness opportunities must be evidence-based and cited using APA format. Students will evaluate client understanding and change in knowledge. Students will submit a reflection about the process of reviewing assessment and medication reconciliation findings to identify wellness opportunities and the experience of teaching and evaluating the client.

NURS 380: Ethical-Legal Issues in Nursing for RNs

For this course, students will develop a PowerPoint presentation addressing an ethical or legal dilemma related to their selected client, such as in the context of chronic illness, hospice, or palliative care. The presentation should clearly define the issue, apply relevant ethical principles, and examine the dilemma from multiple stakeholder perspectives. Students will present possible resolutions, evaluate the ethical and legal implications of each, and identify a selected resolution supported by evidence-based, ethically sound reasoning. Relevant cultural factors should also be considered.

NURS 420: Nursing Care of the Client with Complex Health Needs

Readmission Risk Assessment: The purpose of this assessment is to provide the student with an opportunity to formulate a cumulative document that serves as a holistic approach to caring for the client's chosen complex, chronic patient. Using assessment data collected in previous courses (NURS A360), the student will identify critical gaps in their patient's care and consider specific risk factors that increase the likelihood of readmission. The student will determine interventions that can address those inadequacies. The assessment highlights the importance of a holistic approach to caring for patients with complex, chronic health issues as well as the impact of healthcare delivery through the lens of nursing leadership.

Readmission Prevention Action Plan: Students will develop a personalized Chronic Condition Action Plan based on the chosen complex patient with a chronic condition. Modeled after evidenced-based tools such as CDC's Asthma Action Plan, this assignment is designed to help students translate assessment data into meaningful patient-centered care strategies. The plan will be tailored to the specific needs of their patient and chronic illness to include clear, practical

interventions to reduce admission risk, promote self-management, and stabilize chronic disease. The assignment also encourages collaboration and real-world application by bridging clinical experience with proactive planning. The assignment has two parts in addition to the action plan infographic: Patient Contracts for Care Document (a single document that lists the different ways the patient may contact their providers) and a Reflection Note (allowing for reflection of their teaching/communication strategies, assessment of patient's understanding/response to teaching, and identification of any changes they would make to the action plan).

NURS 440: Healthy Aging and Life Transitions

Spiritual Assessment Project: Students will complete a spiritual assessment of the patient utilizing one of three spiritual assessment tools provided. Complete a guided reflection after completion of the spiritual assessment. Living Will Literacy Project: Provide patient education regarding different options for healthcare decision-making when patients are in an incapacitated state (advanced directives-HCPOA, durable POA, living will).

NURS 450: Community Health Nursing

The clinical component for this course is different from the other courses with a clinical component. A preceptor is not needed for this clinical. The student selects a specific community to complete an independent community assessment. The clinical journal each week will provide small check points and directions/suggestions for completing the required hours and activities.

NURS 460: Leadership & Management in Nursing for RNs

In this course, the student continues to work with the previously selected patient living with a complex, chronic condition. Students shift their focus to their workplace, collaborating with a nurse leader to evaluate system-level leadership and advocacy strategies to improve outcomes for patients with similar high-risk profiles. This course emphasizes the student's role as a nurse leader and advocate, utilizing real-world clinical experiences and organizational insights to develop and implement system-level solutions that enhance care transitions and minimize preventable readmissions.

Clinical Placement

The School of Nursing is fortunate to have affiliations with a wide variety of clinical sites. Because these sites are scattered across a large geographical area, students must have access to reliable personal transportation. Students can select their clinical site and preceptor. The first step is to ensure that USCA has an active clinical contract with the site that you plan to complete clinical. Please see the tab located under "Clinical Information" in the RN to BSN Orientation Module.

Dress Code

Personal appearance is an important factor in the effective delivery of health care. Students are expected to wear business casual attire with a white lab jacket and their USCA student ID.

Clinical Experience Attendance

Clinical experiences contribute to the development of necessary competencies for nursing practice. The South Carolina Board of Nursing requires students to engage in a minimum number of hours in clinical settings to be eligible for licensure. Therefore, attendance at all

assigned clinical experiences (e.g., direct patient care, observation, and simulation) is obligatory for successful completion of courses requiring clinical experiences.

Universal Clinical Agency Requirements

In addition to knowledge, faculty and clinical agencies need documentation related to the general safety of students, staff, patients, and visitors at clinical sites. Based on assessment of these documents, clinical agencies reserve the right to deny students opportunities for clinical experiences.

Health Requirements and Annual Updates

Nursing students are required to meet all health requirements described in the USC Aiken Bulletin. When students enter the nursing program, they are required to comply with all health requirements established by affiliated clinical agencies. Students are responsible for maintaining all documentation necessary to demonstrate compliance with affiliated clinical agencies' requirements. For more information, please refer to the USC Aiken School of Nursing Policy and Procedure Manual.

Healthcare Provider Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification

All clinical agencies require students to maintain Healthcare Provider BLS certification from the American Heart Association. Students are responsible for maintaining this certification throughout their time in the nursing program. For more information, refer to the USC Aiken School of Nursing "Basic Life Support Certification Policy." Please note that for RN to BSN students, BLS certification from accrediting bodies other than the American Heart Association (AHA) or the American Red Cross may be accepted, depending on the clinical facility's requirements. Approval will be determined on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the facility's policies.

Criminal Background Check

All students are required to submit to a criminal background check prior to beginning the program and annually thereafter. Please refer to the Criminal Background Check policy.

Annual Drug Screening

The USC Aiken School of Nursing adheres to strict standards of professional conduct mandated by the South Carolina Board of Nursing and by those required of area healthcare agencies. To ensure patient safety and maintain the trust of the public, the USC Aiken School of Nursing requires all students to submit to annual drug screening tests. The cost of the drug screening is covered by university fees. Screening must be completed before starting the nursing program and annually until all clinical coursework is done. Students are responsible for making any appointments necessary to complete the drug screening. Please consult the School of Nursing Drug and Alcohol Policy and the USC Aiken [Use of Alcohol](#) and [Use of Drugs](#) policies.

Name Badge

A USC Aiken School of Nursing name badge will be required for all clinical experiences. Badge information is listed in the RN to BSN Orientation on Blackboard.

Attendance

In an asynchronous online course, students are still expected to actively engage with the instructor and fellow students as required by each course. To fully benefit from learning activities provided by faculty and guest speakers, students should participate in discussions, assignments, and other interactive components. As adult learners, students are responsible for managing their education and being accountable for their engagement. While personal matters or illness may occasionally impact participation, students are expected to stay up to date with course materials and communicate with their instructor as needed. If unable to engage in course activities, students should notify the instructor in advance when possible and take responsibility for catching up on missed content.

Scheduled Exam Attendance

Students are required to complete exams on the scheduled date and time. In the event of a documented incapacity, an exam may be rescheduled at the discretion of the course faculty. Students must notify the faculty before the exam begins, provide supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor's note or funeral program), and, if the absence is excused, complete the exam within two days of their return to course activities. Failure to meet these requirements will result in a zero for the missed exam.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity, defined as respect for one's own work and the work of others, is the guiding principle for all aspects of the educational process. All USC Aiken students are expected to conform to the [Academic Code of Conduct](#) found in the USC Aiken Student Handbook. For all assignments, exams, and any other academic work, a score or grade is awarded. All nursing students are expected to read and electronically sign the Academic Code of Conduct upon entry into the School of Nursing. Nursing students who violate the Academic Code of Conduct will be subject to consequences such as failing grades for associated assignments, exams, or courses, and possibly dismissal from the nursing program. Nursing students who witness or become aware of violations are expected to report these to the associated course faculty and/or the Dean of the School of Nursing. For further information regarding the use of Plagiarism and Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) use, please refer to the USC Aiken School of Nursing Policy and Procedure Manual found under the "Academic Integrity Policy."

Technology

The delivery of healthcare is facilitated by technology used for patient monitoring, diagnostic procedures, information management systems, and many other purposes. Because of this, the curriculum is designed to develop information literacy and computer skills necessary for professional practice. Students should anticipate using their laptop computers and other connected devices for assignments, collaborative activities, data collection and processing, and information management.

Communication

All electronic communication originating from the School of Nursing and its faculty will be through USC Aiken-approved channels. These include USC Aiken email, Blackboard, and USC

Aiken websites. Nursing students are responsible for checking USC Aiken email and Blackboard daily.

To develop skill with written professional communication, nursing students are to follow several guidelines when using email to communicate with School of Nursing faculty and staff. Please address the recipient by title (e.g., Dr. or Prof., Mrs. or Ms.). In the body of the email, do not write as though composing a phone text message.

Students may find that using a standardized email signature is helpful to recipients. The recommended contents of the signature include the full name of the student, VIP number, and level in the nursing program. Students in leadership positions with student organizations may want to include their role in the email signature.

Social Media Use

Social media are web-based technologies used for interactive communication. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g., X, Telegram), content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Reddit), and virtual gaming or community sites. Content contributed on these platforms is immediately searchable and shareable, regardless of whether that is the intention of the contributor. Social media postings that are threatening, intimidating, inciting violence, libelous, falsely stated, or obscene are not protected under the First Amendment. Once posted online, the content forever leaves the contributing individual's control and may be traced back to the individual in perpetuity.

Social media are effective tools for communicating with family, friends, and others with shared interests. To illustrate, the School of Nursing maintains Instagram and Facebook pages to showcase the many aspects of the nursing program, its faculty, and the students; however, the School of Nursing's social media accounts do not identify clinical sites, patients, or reveal sensitive or confidential information.

Before entering the nursing program, many students likely maintained personal social media accounts, posting content that, in some cases, may contain sensitive information or images. Nursing students are advised to post content and images that show more professional/mature ideas and behaviors. Many future employers review the social media accounts of prospective hires to identify individuals who they perceive as lacking moral character or sound judgment. For more information about expected behaviors related to social media use, please visit the [National Council of State Boards of Nursing](#) refer to the social media policy.

To maintain faculty objectivity, nursing students are advised to avoid requesting or accepting requests to "follow" or "friend" nursing faculty during their time in the nursing program.

Student Organizations

One student organization is active in the School of Nursing RN to BSN program.

South Carolina Student Nurses Association (SNA)

The USC Aiken chapter of the SC SNA is a pre-professional organization that exists to:

- Provide learning opportunities related to the profession of nursing.
- Engage in service activities that benefit the School of Nursing or the wider community.
- Develop opportunities for students to engage with a broader network of nursing students at the state and national levels.

The SNA meets monthly. The chapter is led by elected officials, and students in all levels in the nursing program are encouraged to participate as either a member or as part of the leadership team. For more information, see the bylaws on the School of Nursing website.

Representation of the School of Nursing Committees

Student representatives are members of the faculty-led School of Nursing Student Support Committee and Curriculum Committee. At least two students, who may be from the SNA, SNG, an eighth semester cohort, or the RN to BSN completion program, may be asked to serve as student representatives on the SON Student Support Committee. Students who agree to serve on these committees have voting privileges in most situations. If interested in serving on one of these committees, students should contact the Dean.

Student Honors, Awards, and Scholarships

Outstanding RN to BSN Student Award

A graduating senior who has demonstrated excellent critical thinking skills and consistently exhibited professionalism throughout the program is selected to receive the Outstanding RN to BSN Student Award. This award is announced during the Pinning Ceremony on the day of graduation.

Scholarships

The School of Nursing is fortunate to have many benefactors that support student learning financially. Many of the scholarships have stipulations or criteria about eligibility. Scholarships are awarded by the School of Nursing Student Support Committee based on input from the USC Aiken Office of Financial Aid, USC Aiken Advancement Office, School of Nursing faculty members, and in some cases, the students themselves. All scholarships are designated for full-time nursing students unless otherwise noted on the scholarship criteria. Students may apply by completing a single [online application form](#) by February 1st each year.

Professional Expectations

Students, across a variety of settings, need to maintain conduct that supports teaching, learning, and the public's trust. In the event of behaviors that are unbecoming of a professional nurse, students will experience consequences appropriate for the situation. These can include removal from the classroom or clinical setting and/or formal contracts. Contracts define the behaviors that must be avoided to prevent failure of the course or dismissal from the program. The duration that the contract is in effect can range from the remainder of the semester to the duration of the time in the nursing program.

Examples of unacceptable behaviors include repeated failure to meet deadlines or participate in required course activities, inappropriate or disruptive communication in course interactions, emails, or virtual meetings, violations of academic integrity policies, and unprofessional interactions with faculty, peers, patients, or healthcare staff in any course-related setting.

Critical Incidents

Critical incidents are events resulting from behaviors that are unprofessional, compromise patient safety, demonstrate lack of integrity, and/or violate the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics. These incidents, because of the egregious nature of the behavior, will result in failure to pass the course(s) in which they are associated and could result in dismissal from the nursing program. For further information, please refer to USC Aiken School of Nursing Policy and Procedure Manual under “Critical Incidents Policy.”

Progression and Retention

University of South Carolina School of Nursing Retention Policy A minimum grade of C+ (80%) is required in each course in the nursing curriculum. A student may repeat one nursing course. A second failure in any nursing course will result in dismissal from the nursing program. A student is allowed a maximum of two (2) withdrawals from nursing courses and may enroll in a single nursing course a maximum of two (2) times. All students must also maintain a minimum 2.0 system cumulative grade point average (GPA) in all USC Aiken courses to remain in good standing and progress in the nursing program. Grades are reviewed at the end of each semester. These policies may be found in the University of South Carolina Aiken Undergraduate and Graduate Programs Bulletin [Registrar](#) and the USC Aiken BSN Student Handbook (<https://www.usca.edu/nursing>).

Student records are regularly audited by School of Nursing staff and faculty. Students are encouraged to meet with the academic advisor and the Financial Aid counselor when considering withdrawal from courses to ensure understanding of the repercussions of withdrawals.

Students who are facing dismissal from the program or wish to challenge decisions that affect standing in the program may appeal to the School of Nursing Admissions, Progression, and Graduation Committee. Please refer to the USC Aiken School of Nursing Policy and Procedure Manual for how to initiate the appeals process.

Student Grievances

Students enrolled at USC Aiken are provided with a standard, formal process for seeking a resolution when, in the student's judgment, he or she has been treated unfairly or improperly. This includes a situation in which a student's academic progress has been adversely affected due to problems in the instructor's ability to write or speak English. Information regarding grievances and the grievance procedure is contained in the [USC Aiken Student Handbook](#), which is available on the USC Aiken web site.

Graduation Requirements

Academic Curricular Enrichment (ACE): A total of 4 are required for all students. Students will not be approved to receive their degree until they have met the ACE requirement. Students will view/attend at least 2 ACE events before the last nursing course.

Writing Intensive (WI): 3 required; at least one in the major. Transfer students: 1 WI for each 30 hours. WI courses are built into the RN to BSN curriculum and there is no need for additional courses to meet this requirement.

The University of South Carolina Aiken is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award baccalaureate and master's degrees. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the status of the University.

The School of Nursing offers the Bachelor of Science in Nursing. This program is approved by the South Carolina State Board of Nursing and is fully accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 530, Washington, DC 20036-1120; Telephone number: 202-887-6791; Fax number: 202-785-8320; e-mail address: www.aacn.nche.edu