

# University of Rochester Nursing Scholars Program Handbook

## Introduction

This handbook serves as a central resource for students (referred to as Scholars) participating in the University of Rochester Nursing Scholars Program (the URNS Program). It outlines and references policies, procedures, expectations, and responsibilities applicable to Scholars across the full lifecycle of the URNS Program, from enrollment in the academic curriculum through completion of the post-graduation employment commitment.

To provide clarity as Scholars transition through the two phases of the URNS Program, this handbook is divided into **two sections**:

- **Part I: Academic Phase – UR Nursing Scholars as Students**
- **Part II: Employment Phase – UR Nursing Scholars as Employees**

During the academic phase, all Scholars are subject to the [University of Rochester School of Nursing \(URSON\) Student Handbook](#). During the employment phase, Scholars are subject to the policies, procedures, and employment terms of the participating University of Rochester Medicine hospital to which they are assigned (referred to as the Designated Hospital).

Participation in the URNS Program includes a post-graduation employment commitment in clinical nursing roles within the Designated Hospital. Scholars should understand that these positions are frontline, patient-care roles that are classified as essential healthcare positions.

As essential employees, Scholars must be prepared to work nontraditional schedules, which may include nights (including overnights), weekends, holidays, and variable shifts, in accordance with hospital staffing needs, unit requirements, and applicable labor agreements. Schedule assignments during the employment phase of the URNS Program are determined by the employing hospital and are not guaranteed to align with personal preferences. The ability to work night shifts (3:00pm-11:00pm) and overnight shifts (11:00pm-7:00am) may be considered an essential function of these nursing positions. Employers are **not** required to eliminate essential functions of a position regardless of disability status.

By participating in the URNS Program, Scholars acknowledge and accept the demands and responsibilities inherent in essential healthcare work, including service during periods of high patient volume, public health emergencies, and other circumstances requiring continuous hospital operations.

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## Part I: Academic Phase – UR Nursing Scholars as Students

This section applies to Scholars from acceptance into the URSON's Accelerated Bachelor's in Nursing (ABSN) program through graduation.

### 1. Program Overview

The URNS Program is a collaborative initiative between the URSON and participating University of Rochester Medicine hospitals designed to address workforce needs while expanding access to nursing education. The URNS Program provides full tuition coverage by participating University of Rochester Medicine for eligible students enrolled in the 12-Month ABSN program in exchange for a required post-graduation employment commitment at the Designated Hospital.

### 2. Mission

The mission of the URNS Program is to expand access to high-quality nursing education, strengthen the nursing workforce, and improve health outcomes across the communities served by University of Rochester Medicine.

### 3. Eligibility and Admission Requirements

Eligibility for participation in the URNS Program is contingent upon admission to the URSON 12-Month ABSN program. All academic and prerequisite requirements established by the URSON apply. Refer to [SON Admissions Bulletin](#) for detailed information on ABSN admissions requirements, processes, and procedures.

Admission to the ABSN program does not guarantee selection as a Scholar in the URNS Program.

In addition to being admitted into the ABSN program, students must be a U.S. citizen, permanent U.S. resident, or DACA student. Students who require immigration sponsorship are not eligible for the URNS Program.

### 4. Hospital Assignment Process

During the ABSN application process, applicants review participating hospitals and rank their preferences. Hospital assignments are determined based on program capacity and workforce needs. Placement at a first-choice hospital is not guaranteed.

Once assigned, Scholars must meet with the Financial Aid Office to review and sign the Loan Agreement and Master Promissory Note (referred to collectively as the Loan

Documents). **Please be aware that these documents are legally binding, and they outline service obligations, repayment terms, and tax considerations. Scholars should take time to review and understand the implication of these documents before choosing to sign them.**

## 5. Requests for Change in Hospital Assignment

At the beginning of the third semester of the ABSN program, the Office of Student Affairs will distribute a formal communication inviting Scholars to submit requests for a change in hospital assignment. This is the only designated window during the academic phase in which the participating University of Rochester hospitals will consider change requests.

Requests for a change in hospital placement are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the participating University of Rochester hospitals and are contingent upon approval by both the current assigned hospital and the proposed receiving hospital. Approval of a hospital change is not guaranteed and is dependent on workforce needs, unit availability, and managerial approval.

### Procedures and Expectations

- **Step 1: Review Eligibility and Intent**

A Scholar's submission of a request for change in hospital assignment indicates a serious and informed intent to change hospitals. Scholars should not submit a request unless they are prepared to commit to the proposed change in hospital assignment if approved. Requests submitted solely for exploratory purposes or to "gather information" will not be considered.

- **Step 2: Student-Led Information Gathering**

Scholars are solely responsible for gathering relevant information about the hospital they are seeking to switch into prior to submitting a request. Relevant information may include:

- Available nursing units and anticipated hiring needs
- Work schedules, shift structures, and unit expectations
- Benefits, onboarding timelines, and employment conditions
- Shadowing opportunities or informational meetings, if offered

To obtain this information, Scholars must independently contact the appropriate Nursing Recruitment team at the prospective hospital. The URSON does not facilitate introductions or coordinate exploratory conversations on behalf of students.

- **Step 3: Submission of the Hospital Change Request Form**

Once the Scholar has gathered sufficient information and confirmed their intent to seek a change in hospital assignment, they must submit the official Hospital Assignment Change Request Form by the stated deadline communicated by the Student Affairs Office. Submission of the form signifies that the Scholar:

- Has completed due diligence regarding the proposed hospital
- Understands that approval is not guaranteed
- Is prepared to accept the new assignment if approved

Incomplete forms or requests submitted without evidence of prior engagement with the prospective hospital may be denied.

- **Step 4: Review and Approval Process**

All requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and require approval from both the Scholar's currently assigned hospital **and** the proposed receiving hospital.

Approval decisions are based on workforce needs, unit availability, hiring capacity, and institutional priorities. Final determinations will be communicated in writing by the Office of Student Affairs.

- **Step 5: Final Confirmation**

Hospital assignment changes are not official until confirmed in writing. Scholars should not assume approval or make employment-related decisions until formal notification is received.

## 6. Tuition Coverage and Financial Structure

Tuition is covered through a combination of scholarship funding and a forgivable loan.

- Tuition is covered for the duration of the ABSN program
- Certain fees, books, uniforms, and licensure expenses remain the responsibility of the student
- Repeated coursework is not covered and must be paid by the Scholar out of pocket

Failure to meet URNS Program requirements, which includes completion of the ABSN programs, is subject to the loan repayment obligations set forth in the Loan Documents.

## 7. Academic Standing, Withdrawal, and Non-Completion

Scholars who withdraw, fail to meet academic requirements, or do not complete the program are subject to repayment as detailed in the Loan Documents. Scholars are encouraged to consult Student Affairs and Financial Aid prior to making enrollment changes.

## 8. Leave of Absence (Academic Phase)

Requests for an academic Leave of Absence must follow University policy. Scholars remain part of the URNS Program upon approved return. Scholars should meet with Financial Aid to discuss other implications of taking LOA.

## 9. Mentoring and Professional Development

Throughout the ABSN program, the Nurse Recruitment team from each participating hospital host mentoring sessions for Scholars. These sessions are designed to support Scholars' professional development and assist with the transition from student to employee.

Mentoring sessions may include:

- Information about hospital culture, expectations, and unit environments
- Guidance on the transition from academic learning to clinical practice
- Preparation for onboarding, residency, and employment
- Opportunities for questions and individualized guidance

Participation in mentoring sessions is required, as these sessions provide valuable insight into the employment environment and support a successful transition into professional nursing practice.

## 10. Communication Expectations

All official communications related to the URNS Program will be sent through University-issued email accounts. Scholars are responsible for regularly monitoring their email and responding in a timely manner to requests from URSON, University or hospital representatives.

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# Part II: Employment Phase – UR Nursing Scholars as Strong Memorial Hospital Employees

This section applies after graduation and successful RN licensure.

## 1. Transition to Employment

Upon graduation and licensure, Scholars transition from student status to employee status at Strong Memorial Hospital (SMH). At this point, Scholars are subject to SMH employment policies and procedures, as applicable.

## 2. Licensure Requirements

Scholars must successfully pass the NCLEX-RN and obtain New York State RN licensure to be eligible for the employment phase of the URNS Program. If NCLEX failure occurs, the SON and hiring hospital team will work with participants on a retesting timeline. Failure to obtain licensure prevents fulfillment of the employment obligation and triggers loan repayment requirements, as detailed in the Loan Documents.

## 3. Employment Commitment and Loan Forgiveness

Scholars must begin full-time RN employment within the timeframe specified in the MPN and complete a three-year, full-time service commitment.

- Loan forgiveness is earned incrementally
- Approved job-protected leaves pause the forgiveness timeline
- Resignation, termination, or failure to meet requirements triggers repayment

## 4. Payroll, Benefits, and Taxation

As SMH employees, Scholars are subject to standard payroll practices, benefits enrollment, and tax withholdings of the employing hospital.

Loan forgiveness is considered taxable income under current IRS regulations. Scholars are responsible for understanding and managing any resulting tax liability.

## 14. Unit Placement and Transfer Requests

### 14A. Initial Unit Placement

Initial unit placement is determined by the SMH based on operational needs and hiring processes.

### 14B. Unit Transfer Requests During the Employment Commitment

Scholars may request unit transfers in accordance with SMH policies. Approval is not guaranteed and is determined solely at the discretion of SMH. The URSON does not oversee or influence unit transfer decisions.

## 15. Leave of Absence (Employment Phase)

All employment-related leave must follow SMH policies, as well as state and federal law, as may be applicable. Approved leaves do not breach the employment obligation but extend the service timeline accordingly.

## 16. Failure to Meet Employment Obligations

Scholars who do not complete the required employment commitment are subject to loan repayment under the terms of the Loan Documents.

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## 17. Acknowledgment and Agreement

Participation in the URNS Program constitutes acknowledgment and acceptance of this handbook, the Loan Documents, and applicable employment policies.

## 18. Key Contacts

Topic	Contact
Admissions & Eligibility	<b>Office of Admissions</b> Phone: (585) 275-2375 Email: SON_Admissions@urmc.rochester.edu
Academic Policies & Hospital Assignments	<b>Office of Student Affairs</b> Phone: (585) 276-4190 Email: SONStudentAffairs@urmc.rochester.edu
Financial Aid & Loan Terms	<b>Financial Aid Office</b> Phone: (585) 275-3226 Email: FinAid@rochester.edu
Tuition Billing	<b>Bursar's Office</b> Phone: (585) 275-3931 Email: Bursar@admin.rochester.edu
Employment, Units, Transfers	<b>Nursing Recruitment</b> Phone: (585) 275-3478 Email: Nursing_Recruitment@URMC.rochester.edu
Benefits & Leave	<b>Human Resources</b> Phone: (585) 275-2537
Payroll & Taxes	<b>Hospital Payroll</b> Phone: (585) 396-6414
Scheduling & Orientation	<b>Nurse Time Management</b> (585) 275-9513