

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL INFORMATION

? What are the academic programs offered by the School of Nursing?

The School of Nursing offers the following programs of study for individuals interested in pursuing a career or continuing their studies in nursing:

A Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)

A Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) in any one of the following concentration areas:

- + Holistic Adult Health CNS
- + Parent-Child Nurse Clinician
- + Public Health
- + Nursing Systems
- + Family Nurse Practitioner (for graduates of NLN or CCNE-accredited BSN programs with **at least two years of full-time clinical experience** as a registered nurse within the last five years)
- + Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (for graduates of NLN or CCNE-accredited BSN programs with **at least one year of full-time clinical experience** as a registered nurse with children/adolescents within the last five years)

A Post-Master's Certificate program preparing Family or Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (for graduates of NLN or CCNE-accredited MSN programs who have the required minimum years of clinical experience)

A Doctor of Philosophy in any one of the following concentration areas:

- + Holistic Adult Health
- + Parent-Child Nursing
- + Public Health
- + Nursing Systems
- + Women's Health

? Must I have a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree in order to enter the MSN program?

No. Students can enter our master's program with:

- + No nursing background and a Bachelor's degree in a non-nursing field (Alternate Entry MSN and Alternate Entry PhD programs)
- + An Associates degree in Nursing or Nursing Diploma AND a Bachelor's degree in a non-nursing field (MSN Bridge program)

? Does the School of Nursing offer any on-line or distance learning courses or degrees?

No.

? Must I be enrolled as a full-time graduate student?

Students in the first 15 months of the Alternate Entry MSN and Alternate Entry PhD programs **must** be enrolled full-time (approximately 12-14 hours per semester). All other graduate students may be enrolled part-time, however, all degree courses must be completed within six years.

? Will I be able to work while enrolled in a graduate program?

Even though the work load is heavy, some full-time students do work part-time while enrolled in courses. However, students who work full-time generally cannot carry a full course load. Alternate Entry students are highly encouraged NOT to work during their first 15 months in the program as their training is very rigorous and demanding.

? What grades are expected of graduate students?

The Office of Graduate Studies requires a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average) for admission to, retention, and graduation from the University of Texas at Austin.

? If I have started a graduate program at another institution, will I be able to transfer my credits if admitted to your program?

Possibly. A student seeking to use coursework from another institution must provide the School of Nursing Graduate Advisor with an official transcript, the official explanation of the course numbering system, grading system, and the course description from the catalog of the institution at which the course was completed. If the Graduate Advisor deems the course appropriate for your degree plan, she/he will submit a petition to the Office of Graduate Studies on your behalf. The Dean of the Graduate School must then approve the petition.

The course you wish to transfer into your graduate degree plan **must** meet the following criteria:

- + The student must have earned a grade of B or better in the course.
- + The course must be graduate level. If the course is open to both undergraduates and graduate students, the student must provide proof that extra work was required for graduate credit, that only graduate students were enrolled in the course, or that the course is required for a master's degree.
- + The course may not be taken at another institution during the semester of intended graduation.
- + The course may not have been used to fulfill requirements toward another degree.
- + If approved, the course must be used within a six year time limit.
- + A maximum of six (6) semester credit hours from a different institution may be approved.

ADMISSION TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN NURSING

? How do I apply to the graduate program in Nursing?

Application to the graduate program in Nursing is a *dual application process*. Applicants must submit materials to both the Graduate and International Admissions Center (GIAC) and to the School of Nursing.

Application materials to submit directly to GIAC include:

- + Online application for admission to graduate study (www.applytexas.org), which is available as of September 1st of your application year
- + Application fee
- + Official transcripts from all 4-year institutions of higher education attended
- + Official GRE scores taken within the last five years
- + TOFEL scores (for international students only) with a minimum score of 550 (paper exam) or 213 (computer-based exam) [Students with scores of less than 500 (paper) or 213 (computer) will be required to take GRS 389W as a condition of their admission].

Application materials to submit directly to the School of Nursing include:

- + Official transcripts from **ALL** institutions of higher education attended (including community and junior college transcripts)
- + Three References (forms available via the online application for admission)
- + Personal statement of purpose
- + Resume or curriculum vitae

? What is the deadline for submitting an application for admission?

The application deadline for admission to the MSN, AE MSN, PhD, and AE PHD is December 1st. The AE programs start in the Summer only and the MSN and PhD programs start in the Fall only. The application deadline for admission to the MSN Bridge program is November 1st for Spring and December 1st for Fall

It is highly recommended that the online application for admission be submitted **one month** prior to the application deadline.

? Does the School of Nursing require any prerequisite courses?

The Alternate Entry programs require the following prerequisites:

- + Human Anatomy (4 credit hours including a lab)
- + Human Physiology (4 credit hours including a lab)
- + Chemistry (4 credit hours including a lab)
- + Genetics (2 credit hours)
- + Microbiology (2 credit hours)
- + Human Growth and Development (3 credit hours)
- + Pharmacology (3 credit hours)—**must be an upper-division course**
- + Nutrition (3 credit hours)
- + Statistics (3 credit hours)

The Master of Science and the Doctor of Philosophy programs require the following prerequisite:

- + Statistics (3 credit hours)—**must be an upper-division course**

The MSN Bridge program requires the following prerequisites:

- + 3 upper division undergraduate Nursing courses (taken concurrently with your MSN course work)
- + Statistics (3 credit hours)—**must be upper division course**

Applicants to the PhD program who do not hold a MSN also must complete a minimum of nine (9) semester credit hours of master's level Nursing courses before they can begin their PhD course work.

? Must all the prerequisite courses be completed prior to applying for admission to the School of Nursing graduate programs?

No. Applicants to the AE MSN and AE PhD programs must, however, complete the required prerequisites by the start of the program (typically around June 1st). The **only** exceptions are Nutrition and Statistics, which can be completed prior to enrollment by the end of the first fall semester.

Applicants to the MSN and PhD programs must complete their statistics requirement prior to enrolling in the program or during their first semester enrolled.

? Do I have to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) to be admitted? If so, what score do I need to earn to be considered a strong candidate for admission?

Yes, the GRE is required for all graduate applicants, including students who already have a graduate degree. The School of Nursing recommends a combined total score of at least 1000 on the Verbal and Quantitative sections of the exam. Applicants who earn scores below 1000 still will be considered for admission as the GRE is only part of the application.

? I took the GRE 10 years ago. Are the scores still valid?

No. GRE scores are valid only for 5 years after the test date.

? How and when do I arrange to take the GRE?

Information regarding the GRE, test dates, and test locations is available via the GRE website at www.gre.org. The School of Nursing strongly recommends that you plan to take the GRE no later than October 1st of your application year.

? Is there a minimum GPA required for admission?

Yes, the Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin requires an upper-division GPA of at least a 3.0. This requirement is calculated based on the grades earned in your upper-division (junior and senior level) undergraduate and graduate courses.

If you do not have a 3.0 GPA, you still may be considered for admission. If all other components of your application are strong, except for your GPA, you may be admitted *with conditions*. These conditions may be placed on the student by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School, or by the Graduate Admission Committee in the School of Nursing.

? How many students do you admit into your program each year?

- + Alternate Entry: approximately 60
- + MSN: approximately 30
- + FNP: 10-12
- + PNP 8-10
- + PhD: approximately 12

? I live in another state now. I will be considered a Texas resident after I finish a year of graduate school?

No. A person who has not lived and worked in Texas for one calendar year before enrolling in a public institution is generally not re-classified as a resident for tuition purposes. Please visit the Texas Residency home page at <http://www.utexas.edu/student/admissions/residency> for additional information.

? How much weight is given to the personal statement of purpose?

The personal statement is considered very carefully. Applicants are encouraged to highlight relevant experiences and professional goals as part of their personal statement.

? From whom should I request references?

References should include at least one from someone who has seen you as a student and one from someone who has seen you work with people in a professional setting. For the MSN and PhD programs, we need to see at least one letter from someone who has seen you in a clinical setting. For Alternate Entry applicants, if you have volunteered or worked in a clinical setting, we would like to see a reference from someone who worked with you, or supervised you, during your volunteer or work experience.

ALTERNATE ENTRY MSN (AE MSN) and ALTERNATE ENTRY PHD (AE PHD)

? How long will it take to complete the program? Can I attend the program as a part-time student?

The minimum time to complete the Alternate Entry MSN program is 3 calendar years for full-time students. The minimum time to complete the Alternate Entry PhD program is 4 calendar years plus dissertation. All Alternate Entry students must be enrolled full-time for the first 15 months of the program, after which, upon successful completion of the NCLEX, students may complete the program as a part-time student. Part-time study, however, will extend the length of time necessary to complete the degree.

? When does the program start?

All Alternate Entry students will begin course work in the summer, typically around June 1st. The AE MSN and AE PHD are summer start programs only. We do not offer admission to these particular programs for the Fall or Spring semesters.

? I don't know if I have the right background for this program. Are some college majors better preparation for the AE MSN or AE PhD than others?

No. There is no right academic or experiential background that guarantees success in the AE MSN or AE PhD program. We have students enrolled with such varied backgrounds as biology, history, agriculture, psychology, sociology, business, nutrition, dance, music, medicine, public policy, and mathematics. Common characteristics across individuals in the AE MSN and AE PhD programs are a strong motivation to work closely with people and doing something that has career-advancement possibilities. Nursing provides opportunities to achieve both goals, and the diversity of people involved in Nursing careers provides a stimulating environment in which to learn and work.

? I've been out of school for more than 10 years. Is this too long to try such a rigorous graduate program?

No. Students in the program have completed previous degrees as long as 20 years ago and as recently as one semester ago. Students range in age, background, and experience.

? When do I take the licensing exam to become an RN?

AE MSN and AE PHD students are eligible take the NCLEX to become licensed RN's in Texas after successfully completing all foundation courses, the last of which is taken during the students' second summer enrolled in the program. AE students must be licensed in order to enroll in the MSN concentration courses. **RN licensure is not to be construed as an exit point or a substitute for the BSN degree.**

? Will I be able to work as an RN while I am a graduate student?

Yes, when you are granted your RN license, you can legally be employed as an RN in the state of Texas. Students who acquire work experience as an RN during the program typically find master's level coursework more meaningful and move into their first full-time position after graduation with increased ease and confidence.

? Will I be eligible for licensure in states other than Texas?

Yes, however, application for licensure in other states can only be made after all MSN degree requirements are completed. It is highly unlikely that an individual will be granted a license in another state without a degree in Nursing.

? What is the difference between RN licensure and CNS certification?

RN licensure is controlled by a regulatory agency in each state and assures the public that the individual has the basic competency to practice professional nursing as a generalist. The CNS certification is a national designation awarded to qualified individuals who demonstrate competency for advanced practice nursing in a particular specialty area. Besides completion of a CNS program, certification typically requires a specified amount of post-master's experience and satisfactory performance on a national exam. (The amount of required experience varies with specialties.) National certification and Texas licensure both required continuing education for credential renewal.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

? Does the School of Nursing offer any financial aid for graduate students?

Yes, in limited amounts. The School of Nursing offers scholarships ranging from approximately \$200-\$2000 per semester. Competitive fellowships also are offered through the Office of Graduate Studies. In addition, full-time students holding an RN license are eligible to receive a monthly advanced traineeship stipend of about \$120-\$150 for up to 36 months. There also are a limited number of Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant positions available. Some tuition assistance is provided to students who are awarded fellowships and to students holding Assistant positions.

Applications for the School of Nursing scholarships are available at www.utexas.edu/nursing (applicants to the graduate programs are eligible to apply).

Applicants are encouraged to begin searching for financial aid at least 9 months prior to the semester in which you enroll. There are many private scholarships and grants whose application deadlines are in the Fall semester.

All financial aid applicants must complete a FAFSA form. Please visit the Student Financial Aid website at www.utexas.edu/student/finaid for more information.