

The University of Texas at Austin, School of Nursing
Graduate Student Affairs Office
Frequently Asked Questions About Graduate Programs, 2008-2009

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General Information

What degrees and concentrations does the School of Nursing offer?

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 Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)
- Adult Health – Administration or Teaching Role Specialty
- Child Health Nursing – Administration, Public Health, or Teaching Role Specialty
- Maternity Nursing – Administration, Public Health, or Teaching Role Specialty
- Public Health
- Nursing Administration and Healthcare Systems Management
- 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 with **at least two years of full-time clinical experience** as a registered nurse within the last five years)

A Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing (PhD)

Must I have a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree in order to enter the MSN or PhD programs?

No. Students may 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)

How do I schedule an appointment with an advisor to talk about the graduate programs?

Appointments are strongly preferred as opposed to walking in unannounced. Most of the time, the Graduate Student Affairs Office staff is available to meet with prospective students during regular business hours. However, their availability may be very limited during peak times, such as the weeks at the beginning and end of each semester, around the admission deadline, and around new student orientation dates. You may call (512) 232-4701 or (512) 471-7927 to schedule an appointment.

Please read the FAQs and review the School of Nursing web site before contacting the graduate office.

Where are the School of Nursing and the Graduate Student Affairs Office located?

The School of Nursing is located at 1700 Red River, Austin, Texas 78701. The Graduate Student Affairs Office is on the main entrance floor (2nd level) in Rooms 2.104N and 2.104L.

Can you mail me a packet of information?

No. We do not have any additional information in our office to mail to you beyond what is already on our web site.

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

No.

Admission and the Application Process

How do I apply to the graduate program in Nursing?

Applying to graduate study at UT-Austin involves submitting separate application materials to the Graduate and International Admissions Center (GIAC) and to the School of Nursing Graduate Student Affairs Office. All materials are due to each location by December 1. Applications that are incomplete or not received by December 1 will not be considered for admission.

Graduate and International Admissions Center:

GIAC, P.O. Box 7608, Austin, TX 78712-7608

www.utexas.edu/student/giac

- ❑ Online application for admission (www.applytexas.org)
- ❑ Application fee (\$50.00 for US applicants, \$75.00 for International applicants)
- ❑ Official copies of transcripts from each four-year college or university attended (GIAC does not need community college transcripts.)
- ❑ Official report of GRE scores (UT-Austin GRE Code: 6882)
- ❑ Official report of TOEFL scores (International applicants only)

School of Nursing Graduate Student Affairs Office:

School of Nursing, Graduate Student Affairs Office, 1700 Red River, Austin, TX 78701

www.utexas.edu/nursing

The following materials must be submitted directly to the School of Nursing Graduate Student Affairs Office, AT ONE TIME, IN ONE PACKAGE, INCLUDING REFERENCES.

- ❑ Resume or Curriculum Vitae
- ❑ Official copies of transcripts from all colleges or universities attended
- ❑ Three references (School of Nursing Reference Forms are provided in the online application for admission and on the School of Nursing web site. Please collect the forms and include them in

your packet for the School of Nursing. Have the recommender sign over the seal of each envelope to show that the reference is confidential.)

- Personal Statement (Two submission options: 1. In the essay/statement section of the online application. 2. In writing, directly to the School of Nursing by including it in your application package. Please do not do both. Program-specific instructions are listed on the reverse of this page.)

Alternate Entry Program Applicants Only: Final grades for any prerequisite courses in progress during the semester of application (Fall) must be received by the School of Nursing Graduate Student Affairs Office by January 5. Applicants can mail (address above) or FAX (512 232-4777) these final grades. Transcripts, grade reports and online grade report printouts are all acceptable. Failure to submit final Fall grades by the deadline will result in your application not being considered for admission.

What is the deadline for submitting an application for admission?

The application deadline for admission to all graduate programs is December 1. The AE programs start in the Summer only and the MSN and PhD programs start in the Fall only. It is recommended that the online application for admission be submitted one month prior to the application deadline to allow for a timely review of applications.

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.

Do I have to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) to be admitted?

Yes, the GRE is required for all graduate applicants, including students who already have a graduate degree. This requirement cannot be waived.

What is the minimum score required on the GRE?

There is no minimum score required. The School of Nursing recommends a combined total score of at least 1000 on the Verbal and Quantitative sections of the exam to be competitive. The Analytical Writing section score is not considered in the admission process.

I took the GRE 10 years ago. Will UT accept my old scores?

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

My GRE scores aren't so good. May I still apply?

Yes.

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 November 1 of your application year.

How much weight is given to the personal statement?

The personal statement is considered very carefully. Applicants are encouraged to highlight relevant experiences and professional goals as part of their personal statement. See the “Application Information” section on the School of Nursing web site for more information.

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.

What is most important to the Graduate Admission Committee?

The committee considers each applicant as a whole student. No decisions are based solely on GRE scores, GPA, or any other single factor. There is no one part of the application considered more important than any other part.

When are admission decisions sent out?

Applicants may expect to receive admission offers (or denials) by early March.

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

- Alternate Entry: approximately 60
- MSN: approximately 15
- FNP: 10-12
- PNP 6-8
- PhD: approximately 20

Prospective MSN and PhD Students**What are the prerequisites for the MSN and PhD programs?**

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

- Statistics (3 credit hours)

The MSN Bridge program requires the following prerequisites:

- Statistics (3 credit hours)
- N377 Leadership and Management of Nursing Care (offered in Fall and Spring)
- N 484Q Public Health Nursing (offered in Summer only) OR N 275 Public Health Nursing AND N 375P Public Health Nursing Practicum (both offered in Fall and Spring)

Applicants to the PhD program who do not hold a MSN also must complete a minimum of 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 MSN and PhD programs must complete their statistics requirement prior to enrolling in the program or during their first semester enrolled.

Prospective Alternate Entry Students

What are the prerequisites for the Alternate Entry programs?

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 (3 credit hours)
- Microbiology (minimum 2 credit hours)
- Genetics (minimum 2 credit hours)
- Pharmacology (3 credit hours)
- Human Growth and Development (3 credit hours)
- Nutrition (3 credit hours)
- Statistics (3 credit hours)

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 1).

How do I request a transcript review to determine which of the Alternate Entry required prerequisites I've already taken and still need to take?

In most cases, prospective students have a good idea of which prerequisites they have taken and still need to take. Most likely, you will be able to determine which courses you've taken and still need to take once you've referred to the **Alternate Entry Prerequisite Course Equivalencies** chart on the School of Nursing web site. It lists the prerequisite courses and their equivalencies for many Texas colleges and universities.

If, after referencing the chart, you still wish to have your transcript reviewed by the Graduate Student Affairs Office staff, please mail or fax a written request, your contact information, and copies of your transcripts to: School of Nursing, Graduate Student Affairs, 1700 Red River, Austin, TX 78701. FAX: (512) 232-4777. Please allow at least two business days for a response and up to five business days for a response during peak periods.

Please note that we only review prospective Alternate Entry students' transcripts to determine whether or not they have taken the required prerequisite courses. We do not evaluate transcripts or applicants on the likelihood of being accepted to a graduate program.

Where should I take the prerequisite courses?

Prospective students may take the prerequisite courses at any community college or university. You do not need to take the prerequisite courses at the University of Texas at Austin. Some courses are offered in an online or distance education format. Please see the **Approved Distance Learning Courses for Alternate Entry Prerequisite Course Requirements** list on the School of Nursing web site for more information.

Does it look better to the Admission Committee if I take the courses at a university as opposed to a community college?

No.

Can I still apply with some prerequisites in progress or incomplete?

Yes. Prerequisites do not have to be complete by the December 1 application deadline. Prerequisites must be complete by the time the Alternate Entry program courses begin, typically around June 1.

How many people apply to the Alternate Entry program and how many are accepted?

On average, 130 students apply to the Alternate Entry program each year. We may offer admission to approximately 60 applicants per year.

What is the average GPA and GRE of those admitted to the Alternate Entry program?

Application Year	Average GPA (admitted)	Average Prerequisite GPA (admitted)	Average GRE (admitted)
2008	3.34	3.49	1109
2007	3.37	3.43	1091
2006	3.21	NA	1136
2005	3.38	NA	1090

How do I acquire volunteer experience in a healthcare environment?

Research and then contact local volunteer organizations, charities, clinics, and hospitals. Most of these places have a Volunteer Coordinator who may be able to assist you in acquiring a volunteer position.

How can I become a Nurse Practitioner (NP) through the Alternate Entry program?

It is not possible to become an NP via the Alternate Entry program. This is because there is a full-time nursing experience requirement for both NP programs (see above). Graduates of the Alternate Entry program may apply to a post-Master’s NP certificate program to take the required NP courses only after they have met the full-time nursing experience requirement.

When does the program start?

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

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 2.5-3 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.

I don’t know if I have the right background for this program. Are there some college majors that are 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.

Do I have to choose a concentration area at the time of application?

Yes. Alternate Entry MSN students must select a concentration area at the time they apply.

Concentration areas available to Alternate Entry MSN students are: Adult Health Clinical Nurse Specialist, Adult Health – Administration or Teaching Role Specialty, Child Health Nursing – Administration, Public Health, or Teaching Role Specialty, Public Health, and Nursing Administration and Healthcare Systems Administration. Alternate Entry PhD applicants do not select a concentration area.

How do I know which concentration area is best for me?

Prospective AE MSN students are encouraged to conduct as much research as possible on the concentration areas that interest them so that they can select the best fit. The School of Nursing website is a good place to begin this research and provides information on each area. Additionally, prospective students are encouraged to contact faculty members that teach in the concentration areas that interest them to ask about the programs, courses, and career opportunities available to graduates. A complete listing of faculty, by concentration area, is available on the School of Nursing web site. Prospective students should also visit nursing websites such as Discover Nursing (www.discovernursing.com) to research careers in Nursing.

Can I change concentration areas once I have been admitted?

Possibly. Students in good academic standing may apply to change their concentration area if the concentration area they wish to switch to has a space available for a new student.

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 require continuing education for credential renewal.

Once Admitted

When are Nursing courses offered?

Courses are typically scheduled between the hours of 8:00 am and 7:00 pm on weekdays.

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 workload 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 since 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.

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.

Financial Considerations

How much are tuition and fees?

Tuition and fee information can be found online on the Office of Accounting website (http://www.utexas.edu/business/accounting/sar/t_f_rates.html). Graduate tuition and fees are based on the number of hours taken per semester. Most full-time students take an average of nine credit hours per semester. Please refer to the tuition and fees chart on the Office of Accounting website for the most up to date information.

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.