Planning for Nursing School

Career Services

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Here to help you get ahead.

Nursing Education Options in Texas

BSN Accelerated (for non-nurse college graduates)
Baylor University, Dallas
Chamberlain College of Nursing, Houston
Texas A&M Health Science Center, Bryan-College Station
Texas Christian University Harris College of Nursing, Ft. Worth
Texas Woman's University, Dallas (weekend program)
University of Houston, Victoria, Sugarland Campus
Texas Tech University Perry School of Nursing at El Paso
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
- Abilene Campus
- Highland Lakes Campus in Marble Falls
- Lubbock (Online Program)

UT at El Paso
UT at Tyler
UT Health Science Center, Houston
UT Health Science Center, San Antonio
UT Medical Branch, Galveston

Alternate Entry MSN (for non-nurse college graduates)
Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi
Texas State University St. David's School of Nursing, Round Rock
The University of Texas at Austin
The University of Texas at Tyler

Alternate Entry PhD (for non-nurse college graduates)
The University of Texas at Austin
The University of Texas at Tyler
UT Health Science Center, San Antonio

Since these programs change from year to year, please see the **Texas Nurses Association** website (http://www.texasnurses.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=284) and the **Texas Board of Nursing**'s website (http://www.bne.state.tx.us/nursingeducation/approved-programs.html) for approved RN education programs and then contact individual institutions to verify the type of programs available.

Nursing Degrees

The professional nurse is a "registered" nurse (RN) who has completed a college-level program of coursework and clinical training and has passed a licensing examination required for practice in all states. The college level coursework can be completed at a community college which offers the associate degree in nursing (AS or ADN), a four-year college which offers a bachelor's degree in nursing (BSN) or at a college or university which offers a master's degree (MSN) or doctoral degree (ND) in nursing for college graduates who do not have a degree in nursing. The latter two are generally referred to as direct entry programs. Thus individuals entering the nursing profession may choose between these four education routes. The MSN and ND programs are designed to prepare students for advanced clinical roles as well as research and management. These degree programs are most appropriate for students who have a clear idea of their long term interests in nursing.

Admission Requirements

Accelerated (or second degree) BSN programs for non-nurse college graduates focus on preparing students to complete the BSN and requirements for RN licensure. Some programs accomplish this in as little as 12 months while others require a few months more. Pre-admission requirements include a bachelor's degree in a non-nursing discipline, a strong academic record and pre-requisite coursework in human anatomy, physiology, microbiology, chemistry, nutrition, developmental psychology, psychology, statistics, sociology and ethics. Admission prerequisites vary and should be carefully checked. Applications can be made one year before enrolling while nursing prerequisites are being taken.

Alternate Entry MSN and doctoral programs for non-nurse college graduates also prepare their students to earn the RN license after the first 12 months of education and training in the program. Master's programs then require another one, two or sometimes three years depending on specialty area. Doctoral programs require another three years beyond the first year needed to prepare for RN licensure. These programs are typically designed for students who have decided on an advanced practice specialty area in nursing before applying to nursing school. Individuals who are not already RNs have a lot to explore and learn before making such a decision. Some programs require only a BS or BA, a minimum GPA of 2.75 or 3.0, GRE scores, and just a few courses such as a lecture course and lab in biology and in chemistry, a course in statistics and course in psychology. Others require coursework in anatomy, physiology and biochemistry. Admission prerequisites may include additional courses and recommendation letters. It is critical to review each program's specific admission information. Application deadlines vary but can be as early as October 1 for a program starting in June.

The Nursing Profession

The registered nurse is trained to select and apply theory and research findings to nursing practice in a variety of patient situations and settings, to identify and respond to acute and chronic health problems, to promote health and prevent illness, to evaluate completed nursing research, to participate in professional and community organizations relevant to nursing and to provide leadership as an essential member of the health care team. Nurses are needed in such settings as acute care hospitals, community health agencies, homes, outreach programs, public schools, HMOs and clinics serving poor and rural populations. Career opportunities are particularly good for bilingual persons or minority members. Upon completion of additional academic and practical training, RNs may serve as surgical nurses, psychiatric nurses, public health nurses, nursing administrators, nurse educators or researchers. The median annual wage for registered nurses was $65,470 in May 2012. The lowest 10 percent earned less than $45,040, and the top 10 percent earned more than $94,720. About 20 percent of registered nurses worked part-time in 2012.

Advanced practice nurses are RNs with graduate (post-baccalaureate) academic preparation and advanced clinical skills qualifying them as experts in a defined area of knowledge and practice. Graduate academic preparation in nursing is at the master's and doctoral level. Advanced practice roles include nurse practitioner (NP), clinical nurse specialist (CNS), certified nurse midwife (CNW) and certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA). The median annual wage for nurse anesthetists, nurse midwives and nurse practitioners was $96,460 in May 2012. The lowest 10 percent earned less than $66,330, and the top 10 percent earned more than $161,030.

The ***nurse practitioner*** is an advanced practice nurse who specializes in the primary health care needs of individuals and families. Nurse practitioners are skilled health care providers who perform many of the tasks traditionally done by physicians. They can conduct complete medical examinations, diagnose and treat common acute illnesses and injuries, administer immunizations, manage chronic problems like high blood pressure and diabetes, order lab services and X-rays, prescribe drugs and counsel patients on health problems. The NP works in collaboration with physicians and as an independent member of the health care team, working in hospitals, clinics, HMOs, private offices, nursing homes, etc.

Clinical nurse specialists are advanced practice nurses who have advanced clinical expertise in a particular specialty (e.g., oncology, cardiovascular nursing, etc.) in which they provided expert patient care or facilitate clinical research to improve patient outcomes. In addition to clinical practice or research, their responsibilities may include education and consultation. They provide leadership to other nurses in hospital, ambulatory or home care settings.

Choosing to Become a Nurse

Learn as much as you can about nursing. There is no one career path in nursing. Career opportunities for nurses are rich and varied. A flight trauma nurse, a pediatric nurse practitioner, a forensic nurse, a psychiatric nurse, an academic nurse, an infection control nurse, a nurse anesthetist – the list is long; possibilities are everywhere. Learn as much as you can about the distinction between BSN-prepared nurses and master's-prepared nurses. Learn about advanced practice roles and about the many areas of specializations. Web sites, such as http://www.nurse.com/students/careersinnursing.html, are places to start. Check out job postings on the website of the National League for Nursing (www.nln.org) to further your knowledge of the variety of roles for nurses. Talk to nurses. Volunteer in a health care setting where there are nurses.

For more information visit:

Registered Nurses: Occupational Outlook Handbook
http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm

Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners: Occupational Outlook Handbook
http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nurse-anesthetists-nurse-midwives-and-nurse-practitioners.htm

Career Services also offers several publications about nursing careers in our Resource Center, as well as materials to prepare for graduate school admission:

Career Opportunities in Health Care (2nd Ed.). 2007. Shelly Field.

201 Careers in Nursing. 2012. Fitzpatrick and Ea.

Your Career in Nursing: Manage your Future in the Changing World of Healthcare (6th Edition). 2011. Annette T. Vallano, MS, RN, CS.

There are also many other publications about related health care professions.

Learn about the educational options for becoming a nurse by reading information on American Association of Colleges of Nursing's website:
http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education/nurse_ed/nep_index.htm

Prepare yourself to apply by knowing the admission requirements and planning ahead to fulfill them. If the GRE is required, learn more about it at www.gre.org. If letters of recommendation are required give some thought to who might provided them for you.

(Adapted from Career Services Center, University of California, San Diego)