



## CENTER FOR CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

# Planning for Nursing School

## Nursing Education Options in Texas

### BSN ACCELERATED (FOR NON-NURSE COLLEGE GRADUATES)

- Baylor University, Dallas
- Concordia University, Austin
- Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls
- Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Nursing, Bryan (extension campuses in McAllen and Round Rock)
- Texas A&M Corpus Christi
- Texas Christian University Harris College of Nursing, Ft. Worth
- University of Houston College of Nursing, Sugarland
- Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso
- Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Nursing, Lubbock (online, with clinical hours in a variety of locations)
- UT Health Science Center at San Antonio
- UT Tyler

### ALTERNATE ENTRY MSN AND PHD (FOR NON-NURSE COLLEGE GRADUATES)

- The University of Texas at Austin

Since these programs change from year to year, please see the Texas Board of Nursing's website [https://www.bon.texas.gov/education\\_programs.asp](https://www.bon.texas.gov/education_programs.asp) for approved RN education programs and contact individual institutions to verify the type of programs available.

## The Nursing Profession

Nursing is the nation's largest health care profession and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that employment for registered nurses will grow 15 percent from 2016 to 2026, much faster than the average for all occupations.

Most health care services involve some form of care by nurses. Nurses comprise the largest single component of hospital staff, are the primary providers of hospital patient care, and deliver most of the nation's long-term care. Although 61 percent of all employed RNs work in hospitals (2016), many are employed in a wide range of other settings, including private practices, public health agencies, primary care clinics, home health care, outpatient surgicenters, health maintenance organizations, nursing-school-operated nursing centers, insurance and

managed care companies, nursing homes, schools, mental health agencies, hospices, the military, and industry. Other nurses work in careers as college and university educators preparing future nurses or as scientists developing advances in many areas of health care and health promotion.

Though often working collaboratively, nurses do not simply "assist" physicians and other health care providers. Instead, they practice independently within their own defined scope of practice. Nursing roles range from direct patient care to case management, establishing nursing practice standards, developing quality assurance procedures, and directing complex nursing care systems.

With many more RNs in the U.S. than physicians, nursing delivers an extended array of health care services, including primary and preventive care by advanced, independent nurse practitioners in such clinical areas as pediatrics, family health, women's health, and gerontological care. Nursing's scope also includes care by clinical nurse specialists, certified nurse-midwives and nurse-anesthetists, as well as care in cardiac, oncology, neonatal, neurological, and obstetric/gynecological nursing and other advanced clinical specialties.

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 healthcare team. Nurses are needed in 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 \$71,730 in May 2018. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$50,800 and the top 10 percent earned more than \$106,530.

**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 NPs was \$113,930 in May 2018. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$80,670 and the top 10 percent earned more than \$182,750.

Individuals with both BS degrees in science (e.g. biology) and BSN degrees are well-positioned to pursue advanced practice nursing, as those roles require a greater level of scientific knowledge than provided by BSN degrees alone.

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 provide 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.

## Nursing Degrees

The primary pathway to professional nursing is the four-year Bachelor of Science degree in nursing (BSN). 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 exam required for practice in all states.

Registered nurses are prepared either through a baccalaureate program, an associate degree in nursing program, or a hospital diploma program. Graduates of all three programs take the same state licensing exam, the NCLEX-RN. BSN coursework can be completed at a four-year college that offers a traditional bachelor's degree in nursing (BSN) or an accelerated entry BSN program (for holders of other bachelor's degrees).

Additionally, bachelor's degree holders in fields outside of nursing can enter the profession via alternate entry graduate programs (MSN or PhD). Graduate-level 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

These programs 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 submitted one year before enrolling while nursing prerequisites are being taken.

### ALTERNATE ENTRY MSN AND DOCTORAL PROGRAMS FOR NON-NURSE COLLEGE GRADUATES

These programs also prepare students to earn the RN license after the first 12 months of education and training. 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 (e.g. 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.

## Choosing to Become a Nurse

Learn as much as you can about nursing. There is no one career path in this field; 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 and 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 specialization. Web sites, such as [www.registerednursing.org](http://www.registerednursing.org), are good places to start. Check out job postings on the website of the National League for Nursing ([www.nln.org](http://www.nln.org)) to further your knowledge of the variety of nursing roles available. Talk to nurses. Volunteer in a healthcare setting where there are nurses. Do your research to be sure about your decision to pursue a nursing career.

## For More Information, Visit:

- Occupational Outlook Handbook: Registered Nurses  
<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>
- Occupational Outlook Handbook: Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners  
<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nurse-anesthetists-nurse-midwives-and-nurse-practitioners.htm>
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing:  
<https://www.aacn.nche.edu/students/nursing-program-search>

*\*(Adapted from Career Services Center, UC, San Diego)*