

The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill School of Nursing  
Admissions Policy

**Overview**

The School of Nursing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is committed to equality of educational opportunity and does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, veteran status, citizenship status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. The School welcomes individuals from diverse cultural, economic, geographic, and academic backgrounds to apply to our undergraduate and graduate programs of study.

**Programs of Study:**

The School of Nursing (SON) offers an undergraduate program of study designed to provide students with the knowledge, skill, and understanding necessary to function effectively in all areas of professional nursing. The curriculum leading to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree offers two options for study: 1) two years of upper-division courses in the School of Nursing which follow two years of lower-division courses (BSN Option), which is open to first degree students on this campus, first degree transfer students from other two-year colleges or four-year universities, and students pursuing a second bachelor's degree; and 2) an accelerated second degree option open to students with a previous bachelor's degree in another field (ABSN Option). Courses in the nursing major build on a strong foundation in the sciences and humanities to develop the knowledge and skills needed to practice nursing in contemporary society. Clinical experiences take place in a broad variety of settings that reflect current patterns of health care delivery and provide opportunities for students to develop competence in empathetic care, critical thinking, technical skills, clinical judgment and decision making, interdisciplinary collaboration, and management of care. All graduates are eligible to take the national licensure examination (NCLEX-RN).

The Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program offers two advanced nursing tracks: (a) advanced clinical practice specialization focused on direct patient care (e.g. nurse practitioner), and (b) health care systems (HCS) specialties focused on nursing areas that support clinical practice (e.g. administration; leadership). The program requires course content in research, professional and clinical cores, and an advanced practice area within a selected focus. Nurses are educated for practice that is evidence-based, collaborative, and reflective of an understanding of current health care delivery, as well as, economic, ethical and professional issues. The APRN specialties offered are Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner (AGPCNP), Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP), Pediatric Nurse Practitioner-Primary Care (PNP-PC), and Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP). The HCS curriculum prepares students with knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a variety of leadership positions in health care organizations. Graduates are prepared with a breadth and depth of knowledge and skills needed to develop, implement, and measure the impact of innovations in care delivery at all levels within health care organizations. Specialty options include: administration, clinical nurse leader, education, informatics and outcomes management. All graduates are eligible to take the national certification examinations reflective of their area of specialization.

The Post-Master of Science in Nursing (PMSN) Certificate Program provides additional opportunities for master's prepared nurses to further specialize. The PMSN Certificate Programs in Health Care

Systems are designed for nurses who have earned a master's degree in nursing and desire to expand their advanced nursing knowledge and skills into the areas of nursing leadership or informatics. The second option is designed to prepare nurses who are master's prepared APRNs and wish to pursue education and training necessary to become a clinically competent and culturally sensitive Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP).

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program builds upon baccalaureate education and expands current MSN education to prepare nurses for leadership and hands-on advanced practice. This practice-focused doctorate is the appropriate graduate education for advanced practice and leadership in highly complex, fast-paced health care environments. Graduates of the DNP program receive preparation in such key areas as evidence-based practice, organization and systems leadership, finance, health policy, information technology, population health, patient safety, and translational research with the goal of improving patient and population health status and outcomes. BSN prepared nurses may pursue their DNP through the health care systems track which prepares nurses for roles that support clinical practice such as administration, informatics and outcomes management, and the direct care track which prepares graduates to be nurse practitioners in the same specialties as noted for the MSN. Master's prepared nurses may pursue the DNP through a separate pathway that provides enhanced education to those who are already prepared as nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, nurse anesthetists, nurse midwives, nurse administrators or other health care systems leaders.

The SON's Doctor of Philosophy program prepares nurse scholars for nursing science through a rigorous curriculum in theory development and testing, research methods, statistical analysis, research practica and core knowledge. Graduates are prepared to conduct research in a culturally competent manner using appropriate design and analysis techniques, and to evaluate, critique, synthesize and translate research findings for the purpose of adding to the science that improves health and health care systems.

#### **Admissions Framework:**

The number of students to be admitted and enrolled in a given admission cycle is determined by the School's capacity to meet the educational needs of the students, to include availability of quality clinical practica experiences and faculty capacity to mentor students with program required projects, as well as budgetary restrictions of the University and the SON. The enrollment capacity of each degree program is reviewed annually by the Academic Affairs Council. Limitations of graduate clinical program enrollment are detailed to the capacity of specific specialty area and program. Selection of applicants for admission is based on each Admissions Committee's (AC) collective judgment of an applicant's qualifications, and expectations for successful performance in the curriculum as well as post-graduation licensure/certification examination, as applicable. Each AC is committed to holistic admission review and to selecting a well-rounded cohort that exemplifies academic excellence; a keen interest in and commitment to the role offered by the program; demonstrated leadership, scholarship and service to others; personal and professional accomplishments; and suitability for, and potential for success in, the rigorous program of application. As a result, the admissions process by its nature is competitive. However, competitiveness does not preclude an AC from selecting applicants who will add to the student body diversity of background and scholarly interests.

**Admission Committees:**

An Admissions Committee (AC) is established for each degree program by the respective Executive Committee<sup>1</sup> (EC). Primary responsibilities of each AC are to: develop and implement EC-approved policies relevant to admission; admit students to the appropriate curriculum based on faculty policy; report admission characteristics of the applicant pool (those offered and refused admission); and suggest future recruitment needs to the faculty (source SON Faculty By-Laws). Each AC is composed of, at minimum, four SON faculty members who teach or advise students in the respective program.<sup>2</sup> The full membership of each AC annually elects the chair, who may continue in the role for subsequent years as long as he/she is duly elected each year; the chair of each AC is a member of the respective EC. The respective Program Director, the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, and the Director of Multicultural Affairs serve as ex-officio (non-voting) members of each AC<sup>3</sup>.

Meetings are held at least once per month during fall and spring terms. The Office of Student Affairs staffs each committee, prepares the agenda with the AC chair, circulates the agenda at least one week prior to the meeting, and records all meeting discussions, votes, and decisions. The resulting minutes serve as the official record of AC business.

Members are expected to attend all meetings; a quorum of 50% of voting members plus 1 is required for official business (i.e. that which requires membership vote) to be conducted. Members sign a confidentiality statement per Office of Human Resources and complete the FERPA training module prior to their first committee meeting. Any AC member who has an in-depth knowledge of an applicant that may create the appearance of a conflict of interest must recuse him/herself from the discussion of the applicant and subsequent vote on that applicant's admissibility.

**Admission Criteria:**

Applicants to all programs must be eligible to return to all institutions previously attended, i.e. all transcripts must indicate academic eligibility at the time of separation. Applicants must submit a complete application by the deadline; incomplete or late applications will not be reviewed. Minimum criteria for admission to each program follows. Application requirements are included in program specific application instructions annually updated and posted on the School's website:

<http://nursing.unc.edu/admissions/applications/>

International applicants must demonstrate English fluency sufficient to communicate quickly and clearly in spoken and written English; achievement of minimum scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam or International English Testing System (IELTS) exam.<sup>4</sup> The academic history of an applicant educated outside the US must include a full evaluation of all courses and degrees completed by an accredited education credentialing service<sup>5</sup>. Program specific criteria follow:

**BSN Program<sup>6</sup>:**

Science pre-requisite courses for all applicants to this program are: human anatomy, human physiology, microbiology, introduction to statistics and introduction to psychology; courses must have been completed within 10 years of matriculation. A grade of C or better is required

in statistics and psychology courses; a grade of B- or better is required in the remaining three courses.

**BSN Option:** A minimum 2.8 cumulative GPA (on a 4.0 scale) and completion of three of five key science courses are required for application. First degree students must also complete all UNC-Chapel Hill's General Education course requirements prior to matriculation into nursing<sup>4</sup>.

**ABSN Option:** A minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA (on a 4.0 scale), completion of all five pre-requisite science courses, and an earned first bachelor's degree are required for application. A prior bachelor's degree must have been awarded by a four-year college or university accredited by a regional accrediting organization recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

**MSN Program:**

Applicants must hold an unencumbered license to practice professional nursing in North Carolina and an earned BSN from a nursing program accredited by the appropriate state board of nursing (or equivalent) and a national or regional nurse accreditation agency officially recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, or have completed pre-requisite courses required in the RN-MSN Option.<sup>7</sup> Competitive applicants will possess a 3.0 GPA (on a 4.0 scale) in their nursing program (or, for RN-MSN applicants, the 51 pre-requisite course credits), and have completed both one-year of appropriate clinical experience<sup>8</sup> and an introduction to statistics course by the date of matriculation.

**DNP Program:**

Competitive applicants to the BSN to DNP pathway meet the same criteria as those of BSN to MSN applicants. MSN to DNP applicants must hold an earned master's degree in nursing from a nursing program accredited by the appropriate state board of nursing (or equivalent) and a national or regional nurse accreditation agency officially recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and have earned a 3.25 GPA (on 4.0 scale) in that program.

**PhD Program:**

Eligible applicants will hold an earned Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree or Master of Science in Nursing degree from a nursing program accredited by the appropriate state board of nursing (or equivalent) and a national or regional nurse accreditation agency officially recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education or an international equivalent, or who will earn either of these degrees prior to matriculation. Applicants who have completed an RN to MSN program and are without an earned bachelor's degree in any field must submit additional documentation about the curriculum of their specific RN to MSN program.

Competitive applicants will present a grade point average of at least 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) in the major courses of their undergraduate nursing program. Competitive applicants with a master's degree in nursing are expected to have earned a 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) cumulative grade point average in graduate coursework. Applicants will articulate a research interest(s) that matches the work of a doctoral faculty member/researcher. Neither clinical experience nor professional nursing licensure is required.

**Review Process and Outcomes:**

Each AC, in conjunction with its respective EC, annually reviews admission criteria, application review process and application instructions. Currently, all properly submitted applications are processed by OSA staff to ensure minimum admission criteria are met, thus eligible for full review by the AC. Application processing includes recalculation of GPAs, ensuring pre-requisite coursework and recommendation requirements are met, and arranging interviews as indicated. Complete applications are assigned a primary reviewer and at least one secondary reviewer. These AC members carefully read the full application, rating each component against the objective, program-specific review rubric. The comprehensive review and rating for each applicant is thoroughly discussed and an admissibility decision is made by the full committee. At the conclusion of the review of all eligible applicants in the pool, all admissible applicants are reviewed again for final outcome determination. During this final discussion, factors related to the diversity of applicants' background and scholarly interests are included. Rendered outcome decisions for each applicant are admit, wait list, or deny. Due to program capacity limitations, "rolling" admission notification is not utilized, rather all decisions are held until final decisions are completed on all applicants. Of note, an applicant can be denied admission on the basis of the application being deemed: incomplete, to have failed to meet minimum criteria, non-competitive, or competitive but admission space not available. Program specific review elements are:

**BSN Program:**

The Admissions Sub-Committees critically evaluate each applicant's academic performance, descriptive essays, community service history, and special talents, skills and abilities that have the potential to affect care delivery or contribute overall to the nursing profession. The ideal applicant will clearly demonstrate a strong academic history as well as a commitment to the ideology of nursing and service to others. Performance in required science courses is particularly important.

**MSN Program:**

The Admissions Committee critically evaluates each applicant's academic performance, professional statement, clinical history<sup>8</sup>, recommendations, and unique factors (such as special skills, professional achievements, scholarship, and demonstrated leadership) that have the potential to effect advanced care delivery or contribute overall to the nursing profession.

**Post-MSN Certificate Program:**

The purview of the MAC also includes admission to the Post-MSN Certificate Program. As this is a non-degree program, the SON has full authority for admission of applicants. Review elements include academic and clinical history<sup>8</sup>, professional statement, recommendations and professional achievements.

**DNP Program:**

The Admissions Committees critically evaluate each applicant's academic performance; professional statement of goals, background and clinical interest; clinical history<sup>8</sup>; recommendations; unique factors (such as special skills, professional achievements, scholarship, and demonstrated leadership) to determine the applicant's potential to effect advanced care delivery or delivery systems, or contribute overall to the nursing profession.

**PhD Program:<sup>9</sup>**

The Admissions Committee critically evaluates each applicant's academic performance, statement of goals and research interests, scholarly writing sample, faculty interview, recommendations, and research match with possible SON faculty mentor, to determine the applicant's potential as a researcher who can contribute to nursing science.

**Outcome Notification:**

AC admission decisions are submitted as "recommendations" to the appropriate University admission office for review and final approval. First degree transfer and second degree admittees for the BSN program<sup>10</sup> undergo final review/approval by The Office of Undergraduate Admissions, while final review/approval for MSN, DNP and PhD recommended admittees are conducted by The Graduate School. Once the appropriate University admission office has approved the SON admission decision and notified the applicant of the University's admission offer, notification letters are sent to all applicants by the SON regardless of outcome decision. Wait listed applicants are rank ordered by the AC and subsequently offered admission upon the declination of the admission offer by an admitted applicant. Upon written request an applicant who is waitlisted or denied admission may request feedback on his/her application to include recommendations for improvement should the applicants choose to reapply.

## Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> The BAC is further comprised of two sub-committees, one specific to each option, which conduct the formal review of all admissible applicants to the respective option.

<sup>2</sup> The Master's and DNP ACs must include representation from each APA admitting students to the degree program.

<sup>3</sup> The PhDAC also includes the T32 research traineeship program directors as ex-officio members. [Note: PhDEC is exploring the addition of HSP Director or HSPAC chair as an ex-officio member]

<sup>4</sup> International applicants must achieve a minimum total score of 575 (with a minimum of 50 in each section) on the written version of the TOEFL or minimum of 89 on the internet-based test with the following minimum section requirements: Reading, 21; Listening, 22; Speaking, 24; Writing, 22. This is not a requirement of applicants who are residents of a country where English is the sole official language of instruction or if applicants hold a degree from an accredited United States institution of higher education. A score of 8 is required on IELTS.

<sup>5</sup> Additional instructions for international applicants are found in program-specific application instructions at this site: <http://nursing.unc.edu/admissions/applications/>

<sup>6</sup> A detailed explanation of pre-requisite course requirements is available in the current edition of the [Undergraduate Bulletin](#).

<sup>7</sup> Detailed information about the RN-MSN Option is available at <http://nursing.unc.edu/academics/options-for-rns/rn-to-msn/>

<sup>8</sup> Within the past 3 years, applicants must possess a minimum of one year of clinical work experience as a Registered Nurse by the date of matriculation\*. The following specialties have additional requirements:

- AGPCNP applicants must have direct care experience in community, hospital or ambulatory settings that serve adult or geriatric patients.
- FNP applicants should have experience as a Registered Nurse in a public health/community or hospital or ambulatory care setting that serves patients across the life span.
- HCS applicants must have experience within a health care setting.
- PNP-PC applicants must have, within the past 3 years, the equivalent of 6 months of full-time clinical work experience as a Registered Nurse in a neonatal or pediatric setting, or community setting that serves children and families
- PMHNP applicants should have, within the past 3 years, the equivalent of 6 months of full-time clinical work experience as a Registered Nurse in an acute or community setting that serves patients with psychiatric illness or substance abuse.

\*Note: Effective July 1, 2016 this requirement must be met by date of application; accordingly this new requirement is applicable to all MSN and DNP applicants seeking admission for fall 2016.

<sup>9</sup> The Hillman Scholars Program in Nursing Innovation (HSPNI) is a grant-funded program that offers a unique opportunity for undergraduate BSN/ABSN students interested in becoming PhD-prepared researchers through an integrated BSN/PhD program of study. Admission to the HSPNI is a two-phased, competitive process: (1) students apply to the HSPNI while in their junior or senior years of BSN coursework and are reviewed by the HSPNI-AC which is comprised of members of the BAC and PhDAC as well as at large members; (2) applicants approved by the HSPNI-AC are recommended for admission to the PhDAC for final review and PhD program admission decision. Review elements include: academic history, letters of recommendation, faculty interview, CV, writing sample and statement of goals and research interests. A minimum 3.3 cumulative GPA and an earned 3.4 GPA in all required upper division nursing courses are required for admission.

<sup>10</sup> First degree applicants from this campus were admitted to the University by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions as First Year students. As such, if a first degree applicant from this campus is selected for admission to the BSN program, the applicant is admitted to nursing by the SON.

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