

# Degree Requirements, Nursing

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Graduate handbook information is updated and maintained by each program. Graduate handbooks are available within each program's office and online at <https://utexas.box.com/v/UTAustinGraduateHandbooks>. Please contact the program with concerns or questions.

## Master of Science in Nursing

All students are expected to complete an approved upper-division statistics course before the first semester of enrollment.

The advanced practice registered nurse tracks (Adult-Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Family Nurse Practitioner, Primary Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Acute Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, and Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner) require a minimum of 48 semester hours of coursework. The Leadership in Diverse Settings track requires a minimum of 39 credit hours.

Note: The MSN advanced practice registered nurse tracks will transition to a DNP advanced program beginning fall 2026.

Practicing nurse and nursing students are held to high standards of professionalism and competence to perform responsible and safe care. Successful completion of the nursing program requires that students demonstrate the ability to perform essential skills effectively and safely. Additionally, students must demonstrate proficiency in interpersonal and organizational skills, as well as ethical comportment. Students considering this major must meet the required standards.

Preparation of a thesis is optional; when this option is chosen, an additional three to six semester hours are required.

Program components are (1) core courses that provide advanced theoretical and empirical knowledge and a deeper understanding of professional issues; (2) courses in the student's track/concentration; (3) advanced practice core courses; and (4) supporting/elective courses, which may include course from outside nursing.

## Master of Science in Nursing: Alternate Entry

Prerequisite courses in upper-division statistics and the natural and behavioral sciences must be completed prior to enrollment. Of the required prerequisites, the courses in anatomy and microbiology and any three of the other courses must be completed by December 31 of the application year. All students must be fully compliant with program requirements prior to starting the program, including but not limited to completing all seven required prerequisite courses, criminal background clearance from the Texas Board of Nursing prior to beginning the alternate entry pre-licensure summer courses. All pre-licensure courses must be completed with a grade of at least C to progress to the post-licensure alternate entry curriculum.

Practicing nurses and nursing students are held to high standards of professionalism and competence to perform responsible and safe care. Successful completion of the nursing program requires that students demonstrate the ability to perform several essential skills effectively and safely. Additionally, students must demonstrate proficiency in interpersonal and organizational skills, as well as ethical comportment. Students considering this major must meet the required standards.

The alternate-entry student MSN student is eligible to take the licensure examination to become a registered nurse (NCLEX-RN) in the state

of Texas after completing 38 semester hours of foundation courses. The student must pass all foundation year courses and have an unencumbered nursing license to enroll in graduate nursing courses beyond the foundation year. Students must complete a minimum of 77 semester hours of coursework.

Preparation of a thesis is optional; when this option is chosen, an additional three to six credit hours are required.

Program components are (1) accelerated foundation courses in all major clinical areas of nursing; (2) core courses that provide advanced theoretical and empirical research knowledge and a deeper understanding of professional issues; (3) leadership core courses; and (4) advanced practice core courses.

## Doctor of Nursing Practice: Advanced Practice Registered Nurse\*

All students are expected to complete an approved upper-division statistics course before the first semester of enrollment.

The advanced practice registered nurse tracks (Adult-Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Family Nurse Practitioner, Primary Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Acute Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, and Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner) require a minimum of 63-77 credit hours of coursework depending on the concentration.

Practicing nurses and nursing students are held to high standards of professionalism and competence to perform responsible and safe care. Successful completion of the nursing program requires that students demonstrate the ability to perform essential skills effectively and safely. Additionally, students must demonstrate proficiency in interpersonal and organizational skills, as well as ethical comportment. Students considering this major must meet the required standards.

Program components are (1) DNP core courses; (2) specialty APRN courses; and (3) advanced leadership practicum courses. Within these leadership practicum seminars, students will select and develop an area of focus that will culminate in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) scholarly project.

## Doctor of Nursing Practice: Advanced Practice Alternate Entry

Prerequisite courses in upper-division statistics and the natural and behavioral sciences must be completed prior to enrollment. Of the required prerequisites, the courses in anatomy and microbiology and any three of the other courses must be completed by December 31 of the application year. All students must be fully compliant with program requirements prior to starting the program, including completing all seven required prerequisite courses and criminal background clearance from the Texas Board of Nursing prior to beginning the alternate entry pre-licensure summer courses. All pre-licensure courses must be completed with a grade of at least C to progress to the post-licensure alternate entry curriculum.

Practicing nurses and nursing students are held to high standards of professionalism and competence to perform responsible and safe care. Successful completion of the nursing program requires that students demonstrate the ability to perform several essential skills effectively and safely. Additionally, students must demonstrate proficiency in interpersonal and organizational skills, as well as ethical comportment. Students considering this program must meet the required standards.

The alternate-entry DNP student is eligible to take the NCLEX-RN licensure examination to become a registered nurse (NCLEX-RN) in the state of Texas after completing 38 credit hours of foundation

courses. The student must pass all foundation year courses and have an unencumbered nursing license to enroll in graduate nursing courses beyond the foundation year. Depending on the chosen track, students must complete a minimum of 110 to 115 credit hours of coursework.

Program components are (1) accelerate foundation courses in all major clinical areas of nursing; (2) DNP core courses; (3) specialty APRN courses; and (4) advanced leadership practicum courses. Within these leadership practicum seminars, students will select and develop an area of focus that will culminate in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) scholarly project.

## Doctor of Nursing Practice: Post Masters

Students will complete nine hours of core courses before enrolling in supporting or practicum courses. Following the completion of the core courses 24 credit hours of supporting courses are required. Additionally, a minimum of 12 hours of leadership practicum courses are taken in sequential order after the core courses are completed. Within these leadership practicum seminars, students will select and develop an area of focus that will culminate in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) scholarly project. Students must complete a minimum of 45 semester hours of coursework.

All courses required for program completion are offered in accordance with university policies that govern non-formula-funded (Option III) programs.

## Doctor of Philosophy

All students are expected to complete an approved upper-division statistics course prior to the first semester of enrollment. In addition, all students must pass a doctoral preliminary examination in their second year before entering candidacy for the degree. Students must complete at least 57 semester hours of coursework. Established milestones must be completed for students to progress and complete the Doctor of Philosophy program in nursing.

The degree program requires completion of the following coursework: (1) core courses focused on advanced theory, analytical, and research methods and skills; (2) seminars and related supporting courses in a focused area of study; (3) research practicum courses; and (4) dissertation courses leading to the completion of approved research for the dissertation. Additionally, for those who enter the PhD program with a bachelor's degree in nursing, three master's level bridge courses, which provide advanced theoretical and research knowledge and a deeper understanding of professional issues, are required (9 hours).

## Doctor of Philosophy: Alternate Entry

Prerequisite courses in upper-division statistics and the natural and behavioral sciences must also be completed before enrollment. Of the required prerequisites, the courses in anatomy and microbiology must be completed by December 31 of the application year. All students must be fully compliant with program requirements, including but not limited to completing all seven required prerequisite courses and clearance of a background check from the Board of Nursing before beginning the alternate entry pre-licensure summer courses. All pre-licensure courses must be completed with a grade of at least C to progress in the alternate entry curriculum.

Practicing nurses and nursing students are held to high standards of competence to perform responsible and safe care. Successful completion of the nursing program requires that students demonstrate an ability to perform several essential skills effectively and safely. Additionally, students must demonstrate proficiency in interpersonal

and organizational skills, as well as ethical comportment. Students considering this major must meet the required standards.

The alternate-entry Ph.D. student is eligible to take the NCLEX-RN licensure examination to become a registered nurse in the state of Texas after completing 38 semester hours of foundation courses. The student must pass foundation year courses and have an unencumbered nursing license to enroll in graduate nursing courses beyond the first semester of courses following the foundation year. Established milestones must be completed for students to progress and complete the Doctor of Philosophy program in nursing, including passing a doctoral preliminary examination before entering candidacy for the doctoral degree. Students must complete at least 106 semester hours of coursework.

Program components are: (1) accelerated foundation courses in all major clinical areas of nursing; (2) master's level bridge courses, which provide advanced theoretical and research knowledge and a deeper understanding of professional issues; (3) doctoral core courses focused on advanced theory, analytical, research methods and skills; (4) seminars and related supporting courses in a focused area of study; (5) research practicum courses; and (6) dissertation courses leading to the completion of approved research for the dissertation.

## Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Certificate

The post-master's Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Certification (APRN) certificate programs are designed for those nurses who have a master's degree in nursing from a program accredited by the National League for Nursing or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education or a recognized degree from a foreign academic institution and wish to complete the course work necessary to sit for national certification as an APRN. Students choose a certificate track as an Acute Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Family Nurse Practitioner, Primary Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, or Adult-Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist. Depending on the chosen track, students must complete a minimum of 24 to 29 semester hours of coursework.

Practicing nurses and nursing students are held to high standards of competence to perform responsible and safe care. Successful completion of the nursing program requires that students demonstrate an ability to perform essential skills effectively and safely.

Additionally, students must demonstrate proficiency in interpersonal and organizational skills, as well as ethical comportment. Students considering this major must meet the required standards.

Upon completion of the advanced practice coursework, one of the following will appear on the student's transcript: Acute Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Family Nurse Practitioner, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Primary Care, Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, or Adult-Gerontology Clinical Nurse Specialist.

## Nursing: Teaching Certification

The Certificate in Nursing: Teaching is designed for nurses who are seeking to enhance their teaching pedagogy and skills and for those who are seeking an academic career in teaching nursing. For those students who hold a master's or higher degree, the Certificate in Teaching Nursing will qualify them to sit for the National League for Nursing's certification exam, Certified Nurse Educator. Students must complete at least 9 semester hours of coursework.

All courses required for program completion are offered in accordance with university policies that govern formula-funded and non-formula-funded (Option III) programs.

## Legal Requirements

In the interest of public safety, there are legal restrictions on enrollment in some nursing courses and on eligibility for RN licensure. Factors that may make an individual ineligible for licensure in Texas include prior denial of a license by a licensing authority; disciplinary action by a licensing or certifying authority; conviction for a crime other than a minor traffic violation; diagnosis, treatment, or hospitalization in the past five years for schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders, bipolar disorder, paranoid personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, or borderline personality disorder; addiction or treatment for addiction to alcohol or any other drug during the previous five years; and having been issued a declaratory order concerning eligibility for NCLEX examination or licensure or having received a proposal of ineligibility by the Texas Board of Nursing.

To avoid delay in course enrollment, delay or denial of licensure, or possible disciplinary action and criminal prosecution for later discovery of falsified records, those with a history of any of the factors listed above are strongly urged to apply for a determination of eligibility for licensure. Request for a determination should be made as early as possible, prior to or upon enrolling in the nursing program. Such a determination, called a Declaratory Order, is issued by the Texas Board of Nursing. Issuance of a Declaratory Order takes a minimum of three to six months. More information is available on the Texas Board of Nursing [website](#).

## Compliance

Students must provide documentation confirming completion of compliance requirements prior to commencement of any degree program. Log in to the [School of Nursing intranet site](#) for more information.

- Medical clearance requirements—immunizations.
- Criminal background check—required of alternate entry students and registered nurses who received initial licensure prior to 2003. Students with concerns about eligibility are urged to seek an official determination from the [Texas Board of Nursing](#) six months in advance of beginning clinical courses to allow sufficient time for Texas Board of Nursing approval.
- Drug screen—a clear drug screen to be completed one month prior to the first day of class in the first semester of a student's program.
- CPR certification (Basic Life Support for Health Care Providers, offered by the American Heart Association).
- Basic first aid certification for alternate entry students only.
- Health Insurance
- Professional liability insurance (purchased each year through the School of Nursing).
- Completion of School of Nursing orientation training modules.
- Completion of School of Nursing scholastic dishonesty and professional integrity and honor code forms.
- Licensure as a registered nurse in Texas or holds a license that allows the student to practice as a registered nurse in Texas (except for alternate-entry students in foundation courses).
- Employment background check.

\* Pending THECB approval at time of publication