MS(N) Graduate Program

Thank you for your interest in our Master's of Science (Nursing) Program. The Master's of Science (Nursing) Program Tracks include:

- Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP)
- Post-Master’s Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate Program
- Nurse Anesthesia (NA)
- Nurse Educator (NE)
- Post-Master’s Nurse Educator Certificate Program
- Nursing Leadership (NL)

Application Deadlines:

- Family Nurse Practitioner admits once per year: February 15 for Fall Semester
- Nurse Anesthesia Program admits once per year: May 15 for Spring Semester
- Nursing Educator and Nurse Leadership admit twice per year: April 1 for Fall Semester, October 1 for Spring Semester

Please follow the Apply Now link to begin the application process. For additional information regarding the MS(N) Nurse Anesthesia Program, please click on the MS(N) Nurse Anesthesia Program link. If you have questions about any MS(N) tracks or need assistance with the application process, please contact Dr. Jessica Shirley, Director of Student Services at jshirley@wcu.edu.
Family Nurse Practitioner

Western Carolina University’s graduate studies in Nursing provide students with academic and field-based experiences that lead to a Master's of Science degree. The Family Nurse Practitioner program prepares nurses in the advanced practice role of a primary care provider with competencies in health promotion, disease prevention, as well as diagnosis and clinical management of common health conditions across the lifespan. All academic courses are taught either online or on Tuesdays at the WCU Biltmore campus (located just minutes from downtown Asheville, NC). Clinical practicum days are arranged individually by students and require an average of one 8-hour day a week, with an increase in hours during the final semester. Currently, students are responsible for obtaining their clinical placements, which can be within their residing community. New classes are admitted annually for the Fall semester, enrollment is year-round and structured on a full-time basis over two years (6-semesters). The typical course load ranges from 6 to 10 credit hours a semester with clinical courses beginning during the second semester of the program.

A Post-Master’s Family Nurse Practitioner certificate program is also available to students who have earned an MS(N) degree.

Degree Requirements
The MS(N) Family Nurse Practitioner Program requires 51-52 semester credit hours and 640 clinical practicum hours. Students have the choice to complete either a scholarly project or a thesis, which establishes the overall credit hours needed. Program completion also requires passage of a comprehensive exam.

The Post-Master’s FNP Certificate Program requires 43 semester hours of study.

Tuition and Fees
For information about tuition and fees, visit the WCU Tuition and Fees website.

Additional Expenses

Purchase of textbooks is approximately $800.00 or more per year. Students must own or have daily access to a computer and some courses may require online interactive learning activities that entail purchase of computer accessories (e.g. webcam, microphone) Students will need to own a PDA or compatible smartphone for Clinical Point of Care software (Lexicomp) which will entail a $250 annual subscription cost, renewed once while in program. The Clinical diagnostic equipment purchase is a one-time cost estimated at $800 - $1000. A nominal fee for patient-tracking software is required during clinical courses and for electronic exam software during didactic courses. Students will also need a clinical nametag and lab coat. WCU student malpractice insurance is compulsory and is estimated at $20 per clinical semester.
Nurse Educator

Western Carolina University's graduate studies in Nursing provide students with academic and field-based experiences that lead to a Master's of Science degree in Nursing MS(N). The program prepares nurses in the role of nurse educator with competencies in one of three educational areas: academic educator, staff educator, or patient educator. All academic courses are taught online (with real-time online class meetings in the evening that vary in number by course). Students are responsible for obtaining their practicum placement which can occur within their residing community. Nurse Educator faculty will be available to provide assistance with placements as needed.

A Post-Master's Certificate Program in Nursing Education is also available to students who have earned an MSN degree or Master's in a related discipline. The Post-Master's Certificate Program requires 19 semester hours of study and can be completed in three to five semesters.

Degree Requirements
The MS(N) Nurse Educator program requires 38 to 39 semester hours of course work, depending on whether the thesis or project option is selected. Enrollment is year-round and structured on a part-time basis. The typical course load is 6 to 9 credit hours per semester. Students must complete a thesis or scholarly project and pass comprehensive exams in addition to the required coursework.

Tuition and Fees
For information about Distance Education tuition and fees, visit the WCU Distance Education Tuition and Fees website.

Additional Expenses
Students accepted into the program are required to be computer literate and either own or have available a computer with a CD burner, webcam, microphone and high-speed Internet access. Additional expenses will be incurred including the purchase of textbooks, a nametag and WCU student malpractice insurance at approximately $800 plus per year.
Nursing Leadership

Western Carolina University graduate studies in nursing provide students with academic and field-based experiences that lead to a Master's of Science degree in Nursing MS(N). The program prepares nurses in a variety of leadership roles in areas such as acute care, long-term care, education, outpatient care, public health, case management, consulting, and regulation. Potential types of roles you could use the skills learned in the program include charge nurse, nurse manager, director, administrative director, consultant, and chief nursing officer. All academic courses are taught online (with real-time online class meetings in the evening that vary in number by course). Students are responsible for obtaining their practicum placement which can occur within their residing community. Nursing Leadership faculty will be available to provide assistance with placements as needed. Students must complete a thesis or scholarly project and pass comprehensive exams in addition to the required coursework.

Degree Requirements
The MS(N) Nursing Leadership Program requires 40 to 41 semester hours of coursework, depending on whether the thesis or project option is selected. The typical course load is six to nine credit hours per semester (part time).

Tuition and Fees
For information about Distance Education tuition and fees, visit the WCU Distance Education Tuition and Fees website.

Additional Expenses
Students accepted into the program are required to be computer literate and own or have available a computer with a CD burner, webcam, microphone and high-speed Internet access. Additional expenses will be incurred including the purchase of textbooks, a nametag and WCU student malpractice insurance at approximately $800 plus per year.
Post-Master's Certificate Options

The certificate programs are available for those students who have earned a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree or those with a master's degree in a closely related discipline.

- **Post-Master’s FNP Certificate Program Option:**
  The post-master’s certificate program requires 43 semester hours and courses are taught online or at the Biltmore Park campus.

  Admission requirements are the same as for applicants to the MS(N) Program except for the following two criteria:
  1) The candidate must have graduated from a CCNE or NLN accredited master’s program in nursing.
  2) GRE scores are waived.

- **Post-Master’s Nurse Educator Certificate Program Option:**
  The online post-master's certificate program requires 19 semester hours equips students with the knowledge and experience necessary to teach in a nursing program.

  Admission requirements are the same as for the applicants for the MS(N) Program except for the following two criteria:
  1) The candidate must have graduated from a CCNE or NLN accredited master’s program in nursing or master’s related discipline.
  2) Standardized exam scores are waived.
Admission
Applicants will be selected for admission to the Master of Science, Nursing Program on the basis of intellectual ability, past professional and academic performance, communication skills, compatibility of professional goals with those of the program, and other qualities appropriate to graduate study in nursing. Each admission decision will be made on the basis of an appraisal of the total application using established criteria. The most highly qualified applicants will be required to participate in an interview session. Meeting minimum requirements for admission does not guarantee acceptance into the program.

Admission Requirements
In order to be eligible for admission to the MS(N) Program, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- BSN from a regionally accredited college or university and CCNE or NLN accredited nursing program
- Minimum grade point average (GPA) overall of 3.0 on the last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework
- Statistics course, undergraduate or graduate level with a grade of “C” or better
- Research course, undergraduate or graduate level with a grade of “C” or better
- Registered Nurse eligible for licensure to practice in the state in which the student intends to practice
- Minimum of one year of clinical experience as a Registered Nurse within the last five years
- Provide three professional references: one must be from a current or recent direct supervisor
- Submit a professional statement and resume to be included within the online application
- Submit transcripts from all undergraduate institutions attended
- Submit satisfactory GRE or MAT scores
Admission Procedures
Applicants apply to the MS(N) Program using the Graduate School Apply Now online application. Only complete applications by the deadline will be eligible for review. In addition to completing the online application, the applicant needs to ensure that the following steps are completed:

1. Request official college transcripts from all post-secondary schools attended be sent to the Graduate School.
2. Submit three professional references who can attest to the applicant’s ability to pursue graduate study: one must be from a current or recent employer. Applicants will list the recommender names and contact information in the Apply Yourself online application. Recommenders will receive a link from the Graduate School to complete the online recommendation form. Additional guidelines for submitting recommendations are outlined in the Apply Yourself online application.
3. Submit a professional statement and resume to be included with the online application. Click on Professional Statement and Resume Requirements for further instructions.
4. Submit an official score report of your GRE or MAT score report. Request that your scores be sent to Western Carolina University’s Graduate School.

Note: Standardized exam scores are waived for applicants to the Post-Master's FNP Certificate Program and the Post-Master's Nurse Educator Certificate Program.

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Professional Statement and Resume Requirements

You must submit a Professional Statement and a Resume as part of your application to the graduate Nursing program.

Professional Statement:

This narrative is a very important part of your portfolio. The quality of the Professional Statement is often crucial in admissions decisions, since it may provide the Admissions Committee the only first-hand example of your writing skills and your ability to express your ideas in a clear, logical, and coherent manner.

Please address EACH of the following in your professional statement:

a. Explain why you have chosen your particular nursing Master's program (e.g. Nurse Educator, Nurse Administrator, etc.) and discuss how your work experiences (paid and voluntary) will fit with this program.

b. Define your professional goals and how this program will contribute to your achieving these goals.

c. Discuss your academic and leadership strengths.

d. Discuss your academic and leadership areas in need of improvement.

e. Identify a contemporary problem in your chosen program of study and discuss, specifically but briefly, a potential solution to the problem.

Consider this your opportunity to communicate with the Admissions Committee members about your professional background and reasons for pursuing a graduate degree in nursing at this point in your career.

The professional statement should be three to four typed, double-spaced pages and should focus in detail on all the elements noted above.

Resume:

Along with standard resume information (work experience, education, professional accomplishments, etc.) include the following:

- RN License Certificate Number (including state of licensure)
- Have you ever had disciplinary action taken regarding your nursing license? If so, please explain.