

## **FNP Program: General Information and Quick Facts**

**Overview:** Western Carolina University's Master's in Nursing/Family Nurse Practitioner program is a 24-month full-time graduate program. Embedded within the curriculum are six doctoral-level credit hours that may be transferred to WCU's post-master's DNP program. A part-time program of study is currently not available. Currently, 25 seats are available for each fall start.

**Post-Masters Certificate FNP Program:** Individuals who have already earned a Masters of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree may apply for this option. It is offered as full-time curriculum including all the courses listed in the FNP curriculum except the two advanced nursing courses (NSG 814 and NSG 823) and the completion of a graduate project or thesis (NSG 679/699). The exempt courses are delineated in the FNP brochure with asterisks. Students interested in this option apply for the program through the normal admissions process.

**Application Requirements:** The application requirements of a statistics course, BSN degree, and one year of clinical experience as a registered nurse (within the last 5 years) may be in progress at the time of application but must be completed prior to beginning the program. All other application requirements must be completed by the application deadline. A missing transcript or a missing reference results in an incomplete application which will not be considered.

**Application Process:** Once all completed applications are read, scored, and ranked by the FNP faculty, selected applicants will be asked to schedule a virtual interview. Interviews typically occur during the last two weeks in March. Additional rounds of interviews may be scheduled as needed after this date. A few weeks following the interviews, Student Services will send another email informing applicants of their admission status.

**Schedule:** Students are required to attend classes at the Biltmore Park instructional site each Tuesday throughout semester, as well as online courses. Once a semester, student will be required to be on campus on a Monday or Wednesday, for the day but are notified way ahead of time for scheduling purposes. On-site classes are typically held between 9am to 3pm but this varies by semester. Since classes do not begin until 9 am, students who reside 2-2 ½ hours away have been able to make it work.

**Clinical Training Schedules:** Clinical courses start the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester. This when many students experience the need to cut back at work to part-time or prn, when possible. Clinical days are arranged individually between students and preceptors each semester and average one 8-hour day per week for most semesters. During the final semester, clinical days increase to twice a week.

**Clinical Rotations:** Students are responsible for selecting and establishing their clinical sites per the *Guidelines for FNP Student Clinical Rotations*. WCU does have a clinical placement coordinator for the FNP program who facilitates the process and keeps a list of sites with

current contracts. FNP students have access to the FNP Clinical Site Database to assist in arranging clinical placement with sites currently under contract with WCU. If a student secures a clinical site not currently under contract, a clinical contract will need to be established.

**Attrition Rate:** Historically, the program has experienced a very low attrition rate of 0-1 student out of each cohort; reasons have always been related to a change in the student's family circumstances, not grades. Since the onset of the pandemic, the attrition rate has slightly increased but this increase has not been related to academic or clinical performance.

**Pass Rate:** Most graduates pass the national certification exam on their first attempt. WCU's FNP program has had a 96-100% first-time pass rate on the national certification exam for the last 10 years.

**Study Abroad Opportunities:** Study abroad opportunities have been halted due to the pandemic. In the past, students had an opportunity to study abroad in Scotland. It is hoped these opportunities will resume and expand once the pandemic subsides.

**Scholarships:** The University has scholarships and financial aid opportunities that students can inquire about through the Graduate School or Student Services. Full-time graduate student status allows students to apply for federal financial aid and other scholarships that would not otherwise be available under part-time status.

**DNP information:** A DNP is currently not required to practice as a nurse practitioner. However, the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties has made the commitment to move all entry-level nurse practitioner education to the doctoral level by 2025. While no mandate has happened yet, it's possible this could happen in the future. Both national certifying bodies, the American Nurses Credentialing Center and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board, continue to require a MSN with a nurse practitioner population focus for certification exam eligibility.

There are plans for WCU's FNP program to transition from a full-time 2-year master's program to a full-time 3-year doctoral program in summer of 2022. More information about the FNP-DNP program will be posted on the website as program development unfolds.

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