

Quick Facts: Pre-Nursing

<p>Is this career right for you?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you welcome the opportunity to listen and be present with people when they are most vulnerable? • Do you want to serve as an advocate for patients and their families? • Would you enjoy working as a key member of a team who, together, provides the best care possible? • Are you willing to commit to lifelong learning and to engage in evidence-based practice? • Are you good at working under pressure? <p>Though nursing is characterized by its emphasis on collaborative work, nurses 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.</p>
<p>Pre-Nursing at CU Boulder</p>	<p>CU Boulder does not have a nursing school. Thus, traditional undergraduate students at CU Boulder who want to pursue a career in nursing have a choice to make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are dedicated to a career in nursing and place a high priority on time efficiency, you may want to transfer to another undergraduate institution that offers a traditional bachelor's of science in nursing (BSN) degree. If you choose to pursue this option, you must first complete certain prerequisites and a certain number of credit hours (refer to Pre-Nursing Prerequisites handout) • If you place a priority on completing a liberal arts education in a non-nursing major, you can graduate from CU Boulder and then apply for accelerated BSN programs or direct-entry MSN programs. If you decide to take this educational pathway, we encourage you to choose the major at CU Boulder that you will find most interesting and engaging. There is no preferred major. Nursing schools seek applicants who demonstrate intellectual curiosity, have taken the prerequisite courses, have done well in their coursework, and have engaged in quality clinical experience. You are most likely to do well academically if you are highly interested in what you are studying. <p>Career-changers who already hold a non-nursing bachelor's degree can also choose among the options listed above, but often can complete fewer prerequisites. Refer to the final page in this handout for a summary of all types of nursing programs.</p>
<p>What is a nurse practitioner?</p>	<p>Nurse practitioners are advanced practice registered nurses who can prescribe medications. In about half of the states in the U.S., nurse practitioners have authority to practice independently. There are four main types of nurse practitioners; all have graduate degrees (MSN or DNP) and certification in a particular specialty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified Registered Nurse-Anesthetist (CRNA) • Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM) • Advanced Practice Nurse (ANP – includes many different sub-types) • Clinical Nurse Specialist (CSN – primarily hospital practice)

The information provided on this handout was adapted from the ExploreHealthCareers.org website, the [NursingCAS Glossary of Nursing Degrees](http://NursingCAS.org), and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing website.

<p>Pre-Nursing Clinical Experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are planning to transfer to a traditional BSN program, you should have sufficient clinical experience (typically about one year of volunteering in a patient interaction role for a few hours per week, plus a few days of shadowing clinicians) to make an educated career choice. • If you are planning to apply to the accelerated BSN program at the University of Colorado’s Anschutz campus, be aware that this program expects applicants to have engaged in <i>extensive</i> patient care experience by the time they apply. Aim for 1,000 to 2,000 hours of paid work as a CNA, medical assistant, EMT, or other related position before applying. Typically, hospital volunteer positions do <i>not</i> offer sufficient depth of hands-on patient care experience.
<p>Other Desired Traits and Experiences</p>	<p>Refer to the List of Core Competencies for Pre-Health Students, taking note that nursing schools especially emphasize the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Orientation: Nurses typically have strong altruistic motivations. Most successful applicants have consistently engaged in paid and volunteer positions involving non-clinical service to others since high school. Examples include retail/restaurant jobs, working as a tutor, and volunteering in roles that allows you to directly help others who are in need. Greater consideration is given to long-term efforts that exemplify the applicant’s dedication and depth of commitment to the service chosen. • Teamwork: Nurses work in a collaborative team setting; thus, a past history of working successfully on a team in a professional setting is valued. • Cultural Sensitivity: Each nurse must care for patients with a wide variety of racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Experiences with people of other ethnicities and cultures are deemed valuable. Such experiences may include participation in study abroad programs, involvement with multicultural organizations, or other unique life experiences. • Intellectual Curiosity and/or Research Experience: Nurses who are oriented toward inquiry and lifelong learning will keep abreast of current developments in evidence-based practice. (Although involvement in research is not an absolute requirement, it is valued for this reason.) • Leadership: Leadership roles provide valuable experience in influencing the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of others. For that reason, a history of serving as a leader of a team of people in an organized environment (such as a student group leader, manager in a workplace, captain of an athletic team, advancement in the military, etc.) is valued.
<p>GPA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative GPA of accepted students who seek to transfer into a traditional BSN program: Varies by program, but typically 3.0 or above. • Cumulative GPA of accepted students who seek to enter an accelerated BSN program or direct-entry MSN program: Varies by program, but range is 3.0 to 3.7. • <i>Prerequisite</i> GPA is also important. Minimum is typically 3.0, but higher is better. <p>Although it is ideal to apply with a GPA that is at or above the mean for accepted students at any given program, you can become a strong candidate with a lower GPA <i>if your recent academic history demonstrates a long-term trend of academic success.</i></p> <p>If your GPA is currently below the mean for accepted students, you can still become a competitive applicant if each of your term GPAs <i>for the four consecutive terms leading up to the time of application</i> are at or above the value of the mean GPA for accepted students at your programs of interest. If you have already completed the prerequisites, consider taking completing additional semesters with upper-division science elective courses or completing a one-year pre-health master's program before applying to accelerated BSN or direct-entry MSN programs.</p>
<p>Admissions Test</p>	<p>If you are applying to a traditional or accelerated BSN program, you typically do not need to take a standardized entrance exam.</p> <p>If you are applying to a direct-entry master’s or doctoral program in nursing after completing a non-nursing bachelor’s degree, you will be required to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) General Test, which is comprised of the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal Reasoning • Quantitative Reasoning • Writing Sample <p>Generally, a score at or above the 50th percentile on each section of the GRE is considered competitive. On average, successful GRE test-takers devote a total of about 150 hours to test prep.</p>

Common Application Service	Many nursing programs participate in the Nursing Centralized Application Service (NursingCAS), though some still maintain their own separate applications.
Application Fee Assistance	NursingCAS offers a limited number of fee waivers to applicants who qualify based on income levels. You may apply for a fee waiver at the start of the application cycle (mid-to-late August each year). Each fee waiver covers the initial application fee (with a single school designation). If you wish to apply to additional programs, you will be responsible for the remaining balance. Refer to http://www.nursingcas.org/prepare-to-apply/fees/ for more information.
Timing of Application	<p>The timing of the application season varies significantly from school to school, and some schools offer multiple start dates per year (each with its own set of deadlines). For this reason, it is strategic to identify your schools of interest early on so that you can create a spreadsheet listing the opening date, closing date, and start of interviews at each of your schools.</p> <p>If any of your schools of interest conduct their admissions processes on a rolling basis, be aware that early applicants gain a significant advantage in the application process. You should aim to have your entire application file complete (i.e., either the NursingCAS application with supplemental materials OR a school's individual application, plus letters of recommendation) by the time your top-choice schools begin their interview process.</p>
Resources for School Selection	<p>NursingCAS maintains a “Program Homepage” in the “Program Materials” section. (You must set up a NursingCAS account to access this section.) There, you will find each program’s prerequisites, minimum GPA, academic background, standardized tests, required references, required past experiences, etc.</p> <p>You can find the links to the websites for all AACN-accredited nursing programs here: https://www.aacnursing.org/Students/Find-a-Nursing-Program</p> <p>We recommend looking up the NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examination) pass rates for graduates of the programs that you are considering. Do a web search for “Yearly NCLEX-RN Pass Rates for Graduates of Colorado Nursing Schools” to see a list of pass rates for Colorado nursing schools. At the best schools, 90% or more of graduates pass the test on the first try.</p>
Letters of Recommendation	<p>Each nursing program sets its own assortment requirements for letters of recommendation. Letter authors must submit their letters <i>directly</i> to the application service. A typical assortment would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One from a faculty member, ideally one who has taught you in a science lecture or seminar course (though a non-science instructor or professor would be preferred if that person knows you better) who can comment upon your intellectual engagement as a student. • One from a supervisor from a work or volunteer experience who can attest to your intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. • One from another supervisor. If applying to accelerated BSN programs, it would be ideal for this letter to come from a clinical supervisor who can comment upon your passion for patient care and your communication skills with patients and colleagues in that setting.

Types of Nursing Programs

Below is a quick summary of the various types of nursing programs. You can find in-depth information on each of these nursing pathways by visiting:

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/nursing-education-programs>

Associate's

- **Associate Degree in Nursing:** A program that requires at least two academic years of full-time equivalent college academic work and awards an associate degree in nursing. In addition to earning this degree, you become eligible to sit for the NCLEX exam to become a Registered Nurse (RN).

Bachelor's

- **Undergraduate Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Traditional):** Admits students with no previous nursing education and awards a baccalaureate nursing degree. Some of these programs are structured such that it is possible to work part-time during nursing school, making them appealing to traditional undergraduates and career-changers alike. In addition to earning this degree, you become eligible to sit for the NCLEX exam to become a Registered Nurse (RN).
- **Accelerated BSN for Non-Nurses (Second Baccalaureate Degree):** An accelerated program that admits students with baccalaureate degrees in other disciplines and no previous nursing education and awards a baccalaureate nursing degree. These programs are typically quite intense, so outside work is discouraged. In addition to earning this degree, you become eligible to sit for the NCLEX exam to become a Registered Nurse (RN).
- **ADN to BSN (Associate Degree in Nursing to Bachelor of Science in Nursing):** A program that is for registered nurses (RN) that leads to a bachelor of science in nursing.

Master's

- **BSN to MSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing to Master of Science in Nursing):** Admits students with baccalaureate nursing degrees and awards a master's nursing degree usually through a combination of "bridge"/transition and core courses.
- **Master's Entry Program in Nursing (Entry-Level Master's for Non-Nurses):** Admits students with baccalaureate degrees in other disciplines and no previous nursing education. Program prepares graduates for entry into the profession and awards a master's degree in nursing.

Doctoral

- **Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP):** Admits RNs with a baccalaureate degree in nursing who want to pursue a doctoral degree that focuses on practice. This program prepares graduates for the highest level of nursing practice beyond the initial preparation in the discipline and is a terminal degree.
- **Doctor of Nursing Science (DNS):** Admits RNs with master's degrees in nursing and awards a doctoral degree. This program prepares students to pursue intellectual inquiry and conduct independent research for the purpose of extending knowledge.
- **Doctor of Nursing Anesthesia Practice (DNAP):** Admits nurses with a baccalaureate or graduate degree in nursing who want to pursue a doctoral degree that focuses on practice specializing in anesthesia.
- **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD):** Admits RNs with baccalaureate or master's degrees in nursing and awards a doctoral degree. This program prepares students to pursue intellectual inquiry and conduct independent research for the purpose of extending knowledge.

Dual Degree Master's or Doctoral programs

- Admits RNs with baccalaureate degrees in nursing and awards a master's or doctoral degree in nursing and a degree in another field (e.g., Master of Business Administration, Master of Public Health, Master of Public Administration, Master of Hospital Administration, Master of Divinity, or Juris Doctor). Not all programs offer dual degrees. You can expect dual degree programs to take some extra time to complete, but less time than completing each degree separately.
- The most common type of dual degree for students attending Nurse Practitioner programs is an NP/MPH, for those who want training in both public health and direct patient care. These NPs generally opt for careers in community health or epidemiology, where the focus is to affect healthcare outcomes for an entire population, in addition to clinically treating individuals.