Health Professions:

Advanced Practice Nursing

- Overview of Profession
- Application Process Timeline
- Admissions Exam

Overview of Advanced Practice Nurses

(source: www.bls.gov)

Advanced Practice Nurses (APN) are registered nurses with graduate (post-baccalaureate) academic preparation and advanced clinical skills qualifying them as experts in defined knowledge and practices. Graduate academic preparation in nursing is at the master’s and doctoral level. The following are roles for advanced practice nurses:

**Nurse Practitioner (NP)** - NPs specialize in the primary health care needs of individuals and families. They are skilled health care providers who perform many of the tasks traditionally done by physicians and can conduct complete medical exams, diagnose and treat common acute illnesses and injuries, administer immunizations, manage chronic problems, order lab services and x-rays, prescribe drugs and counsel patients. NPs work in collaboration with physicians and as independent members of the health care team, working in hospitals, clinics, HMOs private offices, nursing homes, etc.

NPs can prescribe medications, including controlled substances, in all 50 states. In 25 states, NPs have authority to practice independently.

The most common specialty areas for nurse practitioners are family practice, adult practice, women's health, pediatrics, acute care, and geriatrics. However, there are a variety of other specialties that nurse practitioners can choose, including neonatology and mental health. Sub-specialties are also available.

**Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)** - CNSs have advanced clinical expertise in a particular specialty (e.g., oncology, cardiovascular nursing, etc.), providing expert patient care or facilitating clinical research to improve patient outcomes. In addition to clinical practice or research, responsibilities may include education and consultation. They provide leadership to other nurses in hospital, ambulatory or home care settings.
Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM) - CNMs specialize in the practice of obstetrical and gynecological care of relatively healthy women. They practice in hospitals and medical clinics, and may also deliver in birthing centers and at home. CNMs provide care to women from puberty through menopause and may work closely with an obstetrician, who provides consultation and assistance to patients who develop complications.

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) - CRNAs are specially trained to administer anesthesia. They work as licensed independent practitioners or require some degree of supervision from the operating physician or surgeon, depending on state law.

1. Working Conditions:

In addition to working in clinics, office practices, managed care organizations, and hospitals, Nurse Practitioners deliver care in rural sites, inner city community health centers, college campuses, worksite employee health centers, and other locations.

NPs also work for healthcare technology companies (e.g., pharmaceutical manufacturers), perform health care research, teach in schools and universities, and serve in governmental agencies (e.g., health departments, the military, etc.).

Depending upon the type of practice, working schedules may be a conventional work week or may include weekends, and holidays, and/or being available on-call after hours.

2. Earnings:

Advanced practice nurses right out of school can expect annual salaries ranging from $60,000-$90,000, depending on geographic location and previous experience. However, some rural county health clinics start their nurse practitioners at salaries as low as $40,000 per year.

Certified nurse anesthetists and certified nurse midwives, however, draw larger salaries. Nurse midwives, for example, can draw first-year salaries as high as $90,000 per year. Areas such as the Northeast and the West Coast tend to have nurses in these fields at the higher end of the salary scale.

After five years of practice, the salary range for APNs stretches from $60,000- $100,000 a year. Again, it depends on location. After five years, nurse midwives earn salaries ranging from $65,000-$120,000 annually.
3. Job Outlook:
   a. Employment of nurse practitioners is expected to grow by 22% from 2008-2018.
   b. All four advanced practice specialties—clinical nurse specialists, nurse practitioners, nurse-midwives, and nurse anesthetists—will be in high demand, particularly in medically underserved areas such as inner cities and rural areas. Relative to physicians, these advanced practice nurses increasingly serve as lower-cost primary care providers.

Overview of Nursing Education Routes:

Individuals entering the nursing profession may choose between four educational routes, all of which include the RN licensure. To determine which degree option is right for you, consider your career goals and advancement opportunities, the cost and time it will take to complete the program(s), and your likelihood of admission. Due to the demand for nurses, many educational programs are oversubscribed or “impacted”; many have waiting lists for enrollment.

AS/ADN - the Associate’s Degree in Nursing can lead to RN licensure and is obtained at the community college level in programs lasting 1-2 years. Though faster and cheaper than a bachelor’s degree, career options with the associate’s degree are limited and the BSN or higher is becoming the expected degree for nurses.

BSN - The Bachelor of Science in Nursing is currently the most desired degree for employment. UCSC students who wish to pursue careers in nursing should consider transferring to an undergraduate institution which offers the BSN. Students who wish to earn a degree at UCSC before studying to become a nurse can attend “accelerated” or “second” BSN programs for students who already have a non-nursing bachelor’s degree. Accelerated programs are typically 18 months to 2 years long, but can be as short as 12 months.

California BSN programs accepting transfer students:

Various California State Universities
Pt. Loma Nazarene
Loma Linda University
Samuel Merritt University
University of San Francisco

MSN - The Master’s of Science in Nursing degree is typically required for the advanced practice nursing roles. The MSN can be earned in 1-2 years after obtaining a BSN or can be obtained in a “direct entry” MSN program for students with a non-nursing bachelor’s degree. Direct-entry master’s programs can
prepare students to earn their RN in 12 months and then require another 1-3 years of education and training depending on specialty area.

Most direct-entry MSN programs lead to a master’s degree in general nursing. Additional certification may be required after the general master’s to obtain an advanced practice nursing role. While some direct-entry programs can lead directly to an advanced practice role, the lack of nursing experience these graduates have after going directly from a non-nursing bachelor’s to a direct-entry APN master’s can make employment at the advanced level difficult.

SDNP or PhD - Nursing Doctorate programs are designed to prepare students for advanced clinical roles as well as research, management and nursing education. The DNP can be earned after the BSN or MSN. Programs can last 3-4 years. The DNP is expected to become the standard for advanced practice nurses by 2015. Master’s and doctoral-level programs are most appropriate for students with a clear idea of their long-term nursing interests.

**Accelerated/Second BSN programs:**
- These programs are specifically for Individuals who already hold a bachelor’s degree in another field (non-nursing degree).
- Accelerated BSN programs last 12-18 months and provide the fastest route to a BSN for individuals who already hold a non-nursing degree.
- See list of Accelerated/Second BSN programs
  www.aacn.nche.edu→search “ABSN”

**Direct-entry MSN programs:**
- Direct-entry MSN programs are available specifically for individuals who hold a bachelor's or higher degree in another field (non-nursing degrees).
- MSN degree programs usually last 2 years.
- See Direct-Entry MSN programs→search “Entry level masters programs

**Pre-Requisites for Acc. BSN & MSN programs**

Nursing programs are unique and each may have different admission requirements. You should carefully review the website and admission materials of each school to which you plan to apply. Though they vary, the table below lists the common nursing requirements*. See table on next page.

*Courses not offered at UCSC may be taken at a community college
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Subject</th>
<th># Quarters</th>
<th>UCSC course sequences most students use to fulfill requirements</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Anatomy</td>
<td>Nearly all schools require 1 quarter of human anatomy, with laboratory</td>
<td>Biol 135/L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Physiology</td>
<td>Nearly all schools require 1 quarter of human physiology, with laboratory</td>
<td>Biol 130/L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbiology</td>
<td>Nearly all schools require 1 quarter of microbiology, with laboratory</td>
<td>Biol 119/ 119L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>Nearly all schools require 1 quarter of statistics</td>
<td>AMS 5, AMS 7/L, Psych 2, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>English Composition</td>
<td>Nearly all schools require 2-3 quarters of English Composition</td>
<td>Courses that satisfy the Core Course and Composition requirement at UCSC will fulfill two quarters of the schools English coursework requirements. An additional course in Literature will usually satisfy the remaining quarter*.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Save your course syllabi in case any schools express concern that you did not complete their English requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>Some schools require introductory courses in sociology and cultural anthropology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Nearly all schools require at least 1 course in introductory psychology, and some schools require</td>
<td>Psych 1, Psych 10 &amp; Psych 170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
courses in developmental/ 
lifespan psychology and 
abnormal psychology

| Public Speaking | A lot of schools require 1 course in public speaking, 
speech, and/ or 
communications | Not offered at UCSC |
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<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>Some schools require one course in nutrition</td>
<td>Usually not offered at UCSC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Application Process Timeline:**

1. The application cycle for BSN/MSN programs varies significantly for each school. Check each school's websites or contact their admissions department to learn more about their application timeline.
2. Research each program you wish to apply to before submitting your application.
   - Admission requirements
   - Which, if any, admission test is required.
   - Pre-requisite coursework
   - Deadlines
   - Amount and preferences for letters of recommendations
3. Consider these factors when deciding upon where to apply:
   - Option for a Acc. BSN or MSN degree
   - Location
   - Cost
   - Size
   - Licensure exam passage rates
   - Faculty interests and reputation
   - Job placement history of program graduates.
   - Talk with recent nursing graduates, as well as ask nurse employers about various programs' strengths and weaknesses.

**Admission Exam:**

**Overview of Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS):**

1. Only some U.S. nursing schools require applicants to submit TEAS exam scores.
2. 3 hour and 48 minute standardized multiple-choice computerized-based exam.
3. Scores are available 48 hours after completion of the test.
Sections
Math - 45 questions covering whole numbers, metric conversions, fractions, decimals, algebraic equations, percentages, and ratios/proportions. This section lasts 56 minutes.

Reading - 40 questions covering paragraph comprehension, comprehension of longer passages, and making inferences and coming to conclusions. This section lasts 50 minutes.

Science - 30 questions covering science reasoning, science knowledge, biology, chemistry, anatomy, physiology, basic physical principles, and general science. This section lasts 38 minutes.

Language - 55 questions and covers punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, contextual words, and spelling. This section lasts 65 minutes.

Overview of Graduate Record Exam (GRE):
1. Some nursing programs require applicants to submit a GRE score.
2. Approximately 4 hour standardized multiple-choice computerized-based exam.
3. Scores are usually available 10 to 15 days after completion of the exam.
4. No GRE scores older than five years will be accepted.

Sections
Verbal Reasoning - Measures your ability to analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize information obtained from it, analyze relationships among component parts of sentences and recognize relationships among words and concepts.

Quantitative Reasoning - Measures problem-solving ability, focusing on basic concepts of arithmetic, algebra, geometry and data analysis.

Analytical Writing - Measures critical thinking and analytical writing skills, specifically your ability to articulate and support complex ideas clearly and effectively.

Score:
- The Verbal and Quantitative reasoning sections are out of 800 points, for a maximum score of 1600.
- The Analytical writing section is out of 6.0
- The maximum score is a 1600 with a 6.0 AWA.

When should students take the TEAS/GRE?:
- You should take the TEAS/GRE well in advance of applying to nursing school but definitely at least one year prior to your intended start date.
- If students want to go straight into nursing school, they will need to take the GRE/TEAS the summer of their junior year.
- Students should take the GRE/TEAS when they can do their best. After they have completed coursework covered on the test.
• If they can be preparing for the GRE/TEAS and be taking courses, and do well in both, then they should do that.
• If the student will compromise their grades and/or score by doing both at the same time, the student should prepare for the GRE/TEAS during the summer or after they have graduated.

Dates for exam:
GRE - Offered daily
TEAS – TBA

Additional Requirements:

1. Some schools require a minimum 100 hours as a volunteer in health care setting observing registered nurse in their job.

Reapplying:

Analyzing Your Previous Application:

To be a successful re-applicant, you should carefully analyze your previous application to determine if there were any factors in your control that might have contributed to your non-acceptance. Common problem areas for candidates include:

- Low overall or science GPA;
- Low admission exam score(s);
- Low grades in key classes;
- Declining GPA;
- Pre-requisites not met;
- Inadequate clinical or community experience;
- Commitment to helping people not evident
- Poor interview preparation
- Weak interpersonal communication skills;
- Poor application essay;
- Weak, inappropriate or absent reference letters;
- Unclear goals;
- Lack of motivation;
- Late application;
- Incomplete secondary applications;
- Limited extracurricular achievements;
- Light course loads.

Conduct an appraisal of your assets and liability; where possible, try to compensate for any weaknesses by developing related strengths. The strategy of school selection is also critical to your success. Applying to enough schools which match your GPA and GRE/TEAS scores is very important. Also, try to
obtain the mean GPA and GRE/TEAS scores for each school in which you are interested, and also any preferences for state residents. Sometimes, however, even students who seem to do everything right aren’t admitted.

Before deciding to reapply, it’s important to have accurate current data on admissions so that you can make a realistic assessment of your chances for acceptance. At the very least, if you haven’t already done so, try to obtain the mean GPA and GRE/TEAS scores for each school in which you are interested, and also any preferences for state residents.

Occasionally, students who seemed competitive may have received one or two interviews only, and may not have been admitted, or were merely wait-listed at a school or two without being subsequently admitted. You might gather some useful information your application by phoning admissions offices to inquire about the admission committee’s decision not to accept you, to receive feedback about your application and interview, to seek advice on how your application may be improved, and whether or not to reapply.

**Strengthening your application:**

It may not be wise use of time and financial resources to reapply until you have become a stronger candidate. Sometimes only one acute problem needs rectifying; in other cases many areas should be strengthened to be a well-rounded, generally competitive candidate. Following your analysis described above, you could consider the following strategies:

- Retake the GRE/TEAS
- Increase the breadth and depth of your nursing or community experience
- Take on a leadership role in a service organization
- Get strong, recent letters of reference
- Update the application essay
- Strengthen your interpersonal, communication, reading and writing skills
- Establish residency in another state
- Reapply early in the filling period

Sometimes additional courses (especially upper division or graduate level science courses) are necessary to demonstrate that you have the academic potential to succeed in medical school. If you applied at the end of your junior year, perhaps your final year’s grades will strengthen your record upon reapplication. There are also post-baccalaureate pre-health programs designed to help enhance your GPA and prepare you for acceptance, in addition to such problems for underrepresented or disadvantaged students. And there is the possibility of a graduate degree in science, a master’s program in public health, etc. However, taking more classes or pursuing an advanced degree may not be enough to increase your chances of admission. Other experiences or strategies may be needed as well.
Important Websites:

American College of Nurse Practitioners-www.acnpweb.org
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners-www.aanp.org
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists-www.nacns.org
American College of Nurse-Midwives-www.midwife.org
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists-www.aana.org

Searchable nursing program databases:

American Association of Colleges of Nursing-www.aacn.nche.edu
Best Nursing Degree-www.bestnursingdegree.com

Applying to nursing school-www.nusingcas.org
Graduate Requirement Exam-www.ets.org/gre
Test of Essential Academic Skills-www.atitesting.com
Explore health careers

Graduate Programs In Nursing for Students Without a Nursing Background-www.allnursingschools.com

California Nurses Association-www.calnurse.org/nnoc
Discover Nursing-discovernursing.com

Financial Assistance for Prospective Nursing Students-www.nursesource.org/education_info

Occupational Outlook for Registered Nurses
National Student Nurses’ Association-www.nsna.org
Nursing Society-www.nursingworld.org
All Nursing Schools.com
Career Profiles for Nursing Specialties
Coalition of Nursing Careers in California