



Doctor of Nursing Practice Program FAQs

Program Contact Information

How can I contact the DNP Program?

- The DNP Program can be reached via phone or email if you have any questions and/or would like any additional information.
- Ms. Erica Reynolds serves as the DNP Program Facilitator. Ms. Reynold's office phone number is 318-677-3088 and her email is reynoldses@nsula.edu.

How can I apply to the DNP Program?

- Applications for the MSN-DNP program are being processed through NursingCAS, the centralized application for nursing. Visit www.nursingcas.org to start an application. The annual application period for the MSN-DNP program is January 15 through May 15 for the following Fall semester.
- Applications and all supporting documents for the BSN-DNP program are being accepted through dnppapp@nsula.edu. The annual application period for the BSN-DNP program is February 15 through July 15 for the following Spring semester.

Program Purpose, Goals, and Outcomes

What is the purpose of the DNP program?

- The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program at Northwestern provides a clinical doctorate for baccalaureate or master's prepared registered nurses who desire to practice at the highest level and significantly impact health care outcomes for vulnerable populations. Graduates of the DNP program have the potential to transform health care by utilizing advanced clinical skills, translating evidence into practice, implementing systems changes, establishing standards and policies, and acting as organizational leaders.

What are DNP Program routes?

- There are two routes for DNP degree obtainment: Bachelor of Science in Nursing to DNP (BSN-DNP) and Master of Science in Nursing to DNP (MSN-DNP).

What are DNP Program goals?

The goals of the DNP Program are:

- Provide advanced practice nurse leaders with expertise, specialized competencies, and advanced knowledge required for evidence-based nursing practice and mastery in an area of specialization within the larger domain of nursing.

- Prepare advanced practice nurse leaders to influence, design, direct and implement change in healthcare practice, education, and policy through the development of collaborative alliances to improve healthcare outcomes and decrease morbidity and mortality in vulnerable populations.
- Develop advanced practice nurse leaders who contribute to nursing's body of knowledge through professional development and scholarly inquiry into practice, processes, or outcomes which affect morbidity and mortality in vulnerable populations.

What are the DNP Program Objectives or Student Learning Outcomes?

Upon completion of the DNP Program, the graduate will:

- Integrate nursing science with knowledge from ethics, biophysical, psychosocial, analytical, and organizational sciences as the foundation for the highest level of nursing practice.
- Critically analyze health care delivery models based on contemporary nursing science and organizational and systems perspectives to eliminate health disparities and promote patient safety and excellence in practice.
- Systematically appraise existing literature, outcomes of practice, practice patterns, systems of care, and health organizations to design and generate best practice evidence to improve practice and health care outcomes.
- Utilize information systems technology to implement and evaluate healthcare resources, quality improvement initiatives, and programs of care that support practice decisions.
- Advocate for health care policy which addresses social justice and equity in all health care settings.
- Employ consultative and leadership skills to function on inter-and intra-professional multidisciplinary teams that work collaboratively to improve vulnerable populations' health outcomes.
- Synthesize data relevant to clinical prevention and health promotion for individuals, aggregates, and populations to guide implementation of the highest level of nursing practice.
- Demonstrate advanced practice expertise, specialized knowledge, and expanded responsibility and accountability in the care, management, and evaluation of individuals, families, and communities in a specialty practice area within the domain of nursing.

Curriculum and Time Commitment

What is the design and delivery of the DNP program curricula?

- BSN-DNP Curriculum:
 - The BSN-DNP program length is variable and dependent on population/role. The first two semesters of the BSN-DNP program are delivered online for all population/roles as the BSN to DNP Core is delivered.
 - The BSN-DNP student's role designates specific population/role requirements.
- MSN-DNP Curriculum:
 - The MSN-DNP program is delivered over six semesters in an online, asynchronous format.

How can I view the curriculum plans?

- DNP Program curriculum plans can be viewed online on the School of Nursing website under Doctoral Programs.
 - [BSN-DNP Curriculum Pattern](#)
 - [MSN-DNP Curriculum Pattern](#)

What roles are available?

- The BSN-DNP program has two role options: Organizational Systems Leadership and Nurse Anesthesia.
- The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree, nurse anesthesia role (Nurse Anesthesia Program) at Northwestern State University of Louisiana is under capability accreditation review by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) (<http://coacrna.org>, 222 South Prospect Avenue, Park Ridge, Illinois 60068-4001, and can be reached at 847-655-1160), a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Council on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education. The DNP program underwent a virtual site review by the COA on November 9–10, 2020 and the nurse anesthesia concentration will be reviewed for initial accreditation in May 2021.
- The DNP Program will admit students into the Nurse Anesthesia Role upon receiving COA accreditation.
- The MSN-DNP program has one role option: Organizational Systems Leadership.

Will I be able to work during program enrollment?

- BSN-DNP Curriculum:
 - The first two semesters of the BSN-DNP program are delivered online, allowing the registered nurse the ability to continue practice in the clinical setting. After the first two semesters, the BSN-DNP program requires continuous didactic and clinical instruction and work as a registered nurse is not recommended.
- MSN-DNP Curriculum:
 - All six semesters of the MSN-DNP program are delivered in an online, asynchronous format, allowing the registered nurse or advanced practice registered nurse the ability to continue practice in the clinical setting.

What is the DNP Scholarly Project?

- Student doctoral work culminates with the completion of the scholarly project, with nine (9) credit hours devoted to designing, implementing, and disseminating the final scholarly project.

What is the DNP Scholarly Portfolio?

- All DNP Students must clearly demonstrate how they have met the specific course objectives, clinical experience objectives, DNP Program Outcomes, DNP Essentials, and DNP Competencies. Students' achievement of these objectives, outcomes, essentials, and competencies are documented within the *DNP Portfolio*. Students will build and maintain a required portfolio during the DNP program.

Accreditation

Is the Northwestern State University DNP Program approved and/or accredited?

- Northwestern State University is accredited by the [Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools](#) (SACSCOC).
- The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree program at Northwestern State University is fully approved by the [Louisiana State Board of Nursing](#).
- The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree program at Northwestern State University is accredited by the [Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education](#), 655 K Street, NW, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20001, 202-887-6791.
- The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree, nurse anesthesia role (Nurse Anesthesia Program) at Northwestern State University of Louisiana is under eligibility accreditation review by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) (<http://coacrna.org>, 222 South Prospect Avenue, Park Ridge, Illinois 60068-4001, and can be reached at 847-655-1160), a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Council on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education. The DNP program underwent a virtual site review by the COA on November 9-10, 2020 and the nurse anesthesia concentration will be reviewed for initial accreditation in May 2021.

Admission Criteria and Application Process

How many students are accepted each year into the DNP Program?

- There are two routes for DNP degree obtainment: Bachelor of Science in Nursing to DNP (BSN-DNP) and Master of Science in Nursing to DNP (MSN-DNP). Annually, NSU will accept a maximum of 20 students into the BSN-DNP route and 10 students into the MSN-DNP route.

What are the requirements for admission?

- The admission criteria for the two routes for DNP degree obtainment are posted on the [Northwestern State University College of Nursing Website](#).

What type of degree is required for admission?

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing to DNP (BSN-DNP) applicants must have obtained a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from a fully accredited college or university in the United States.
- Master of Science in Nursing to DNP (MSN-DNP) applicants must have obtained a Master of Science in Nursing degree or degree equivalent (e.g. MN, MSNA, MN, MNNA).

How do I determine whether a college or university is “fully accredited”?

- The institution granting the degree must be accredited by a regional accreditor **and** the nursing program must be accredited by a nursing accrediting agency (Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), the Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (CNEA), or the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN)).

What is the minimum GPA? How are transcripts submitted?

- BSN-DNP applicants must have a minimum cumulative undergraduate GPA of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale.
- MSN-DNP applicants must have a minimum cumulative graduate GPA of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale.

How can I apply to the DNP Program?

- Applications for the **MSN-DNP** program are being processed through NursingCAS, the centralized application for nursing. Visit www.nursingcas.org to start an application. The application period for the **MSN-DNP** program is January 15-May 15 for the following Fall semester.
 - For the **MSN-DNP** program, all application materials will be processed through NursingCAS.
- Applications and all supporting documents for the **BSN-DNP** program are being accepted through dnppapp@nsula.edu. The application period for the **BSN-DNP** program is February 15-July 15 for the following Spring semester.
 - For the **BSN-DNP** program, official transcripts from all academic institutions attended must be submitted directly to Graduate School.
 - Mail: The Graduate School, 123 Caspari Hall, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA 71497 or Electronically: Attention Graduate School

How many years of experience as a registered nurse and/or advanced practice nurse are required?

What type of experience is required?

- BSN-DNP applicants must have a minimum of 1-year full-time experience as a registered nurse in any setting.
 - Nurse anesthesia role applicants must have 1-year full-time critical care experience at the time of application.
- MSN-DNP applicants must have a minimum of 1-year full-time experience as a registered nurse or advanced practice registered nurse in any setting.

How is “critical care experience” defined?

- Critical care experience must be obtained in a critical care area within the United States, its territories or a US military hospital outside of the United States. During this experience, the registered professional nurse has developed critical decision making and psychomotor skills, competency in patient assessment, and the ability to use and interpret advanced monitoring techniques. A critical care area is defined as one where, on a routine basis, the registered professional nurse manages one or more of the following: invasive hemodynamic monitors (e.g., pulmonary artery, central venous pressure, and arterial catheters), cardiac assist devices, mechanical ventilation, and vasoactive infusions. Examples of critical care units may include but are not limited to: surgical intensive care, cardiothoracic intensive care, coronary intensive care, and medical intensive care. Those who have experiences in other areas may be considered provided they can demonstrate competence with managing unstable patients, invasive monitoring, ventilators, and critical care pharmacology ([COA, Standards for Accreditation, 2019, p.35](#)).
- Recent experience is within the last two calendar years.

What is the GRE General Test requirement? What is the Emotional Intelligence Assessment requirement?

- All BSN-DNP applicants are required to take the GRE General Test within the last five years. The required score is a minimum of 290 total (verbal and quantitative) and a 3.0 on the analytical writing section. GRE scores must be officially reported to NSU directly from the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The institution code is 6492.
 - If an applicant has taken the GRE greater than 5 years ago, please contact the graduate school to determine the process for score submission.
 - Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, applicants may not be able to take the GRE as previously scheduled and/or may need to take the GRE General Test at home. Please see the [GRE Test at Home website](#) for more information on this process.
 - In the event an applicant is unable to take the GRE General Test, an alternative measure will be used to weigh likelihood of academic success and assess readiness for graduate education. The program will evaluate the GPA of the last 60 hours of science related courses during BSN program completion. The science-related courses will include: Anatomy, Physiology, Biology, Chemistry, Microbiology, Pathophysiology, and Nursing Theory courses (Foundations, Critical Care, Pediatrics, Obstetrics).
- GRE scores are waived for MSN-DNP applicants when the Emotional Intelligence assessment is submitted to NSU's Graduate School.
- The Emotional Intelligence assessment is required for all DNP program applicants (BSN-DNP and MSN-DNP).
 - The Emotional Intelligence assessment instructions are located [here](#). The entire score report should be submitted electronically to the [Northwestern State University's Graduate School](#) via email at Grad_School@nsula.edu.

What are applicant licensure requirements?

- BSN-DNP applicants must have a current, unencumbered, unrestricted Registered Nursing License in any state or in Louisiana or a compact license prior to program enrollment.
- MSN-DNP applicants must have a current, unencumbered, unrestricted Registered Nursing License and Advanced Practice License (as applicable) in any state.

What are applicant certification requirements?

- BSN-DNP Applicants
 - Must submit current American Heart Association Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) certifications.
- MSN-DNP Applicants
 - Must submit verification of national certification as an APRN (as applicable).

What are the technical standards requirements?

- All DNP applicants (BSN-DNP and MSN-DNP) must submit a signed attestation of the ability to meet the [College of Nursing and School of Allied Health \(CONSAH\) Essential Academic Performance and Technical Standards for Didactic and Clinical Settings](#).

What are the recommendation letter requirements?

- All DNP applicants (BSN-DNP and MSN-DNP) must submit three (3) letters of recommendation to the NSU Graduate School using the [DNP Recommendation Form](#). One recommendation must be from each of the following: (1) former faculty, (2) immediate supervisor (person who can attest to applicant's clinical abilities), and (3) character reference.
 - MSN-DNP applicants will submit references via the NursingCAS system.
 - BSN-DNP applicants will submit references to the program via dnppapp@nsula.edu and also to the Graduate School via Grad_School@nsula.edu.

What other documents are submitted during the application process?

- All DNP applicants (BSN-DNP and MSN-DNP) must submit a current curriculum vitae.
- All DNP applicants (BSN-DNP and MSN-DNP) must submit a one to two-page APA-formatted narrative essay describing the DNP degree, the role of the DNP (based on *The DNP Essentials* (AACN, 2006), and how the applicant believes the DNP will benefit his/her career goals with a reference list. BSN-DNP applicants should also include clinical specific interests and the clinical population/role the applicant will pursue after acceptance into the DNP program.
- All DNP applicants (BSN-DNP and MSN-DNP) must submit completed records:
 - [Work Experience and Technical Skill Proficiency](#)
 - [Professional Organization Membership, Certification and Licensure](#)

What are the TOEFL Requirements?

- International students must have a minimum score of 500 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) if English is a second language and meet all other University admission requirements for international students. International students should contact NSU's International Student office prior to applying for the DNP program to ensure University admission. [See the NSU Graduate School Admissions Information and Application Page.](#)

What must be submitted to the Graduate School? What must be submitted to the DNP Program?

For BSN-DNP Applicants only:

- Graduate School (via email at grad_school@nsula.edu):
 - [Graduate School Application](#) (online) with Fee
 - When filling out Graduate School Application, select plan of study-select "Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)". A box will open with the two choices. Select "Organizational Systems Leadership (for non-APRNs)".
 - At this time the default entry semester is Fall. Your application will be manually changed for entry into the Spring semester by the Graduate School
 - Official Academic Transcripts from all Institutions (Electronic Submission Preferred)
 - If you are a NSU BSN Alumnus (your BSN degree is from NSU), you do not need to send your transcripts (all prerequisite institution transcripts would have been submitted when applying to NSU's BSN Program). NSU will retrieve your transcript information (from all previous institutions and your NSU BSN degree).
 - Emotional Intelligence Assessment Results
 - Three (3) Letters of Recommendation
 - GRE General Test scores (for BSN-DNP only)

- **DNP Program:** (via email at dnpapp@nsula.edu)
 - [DNP Program Application](#) (attach all supporting materials to application) *
 - Curriculum Vitae
 - DNP Narrative Essay
 - CONSAH Essential Academic Performance and Technical Standards for Didactic and Clinical Settings Attestation (Signed)
 - Work Experience and Technical Skill Record
 - Professional Organization Membership, Certification and Licensure Record
 - Copy of RN License and APRN License (as applicable)
 - Copy of Certifications

*Please note: All application materials should be downloaded and saved prior to completion. Once completed, please save all files with applicant name and description (i.e. **DoeJ_DNPApplication**) prior to submission. Submit all materials via **one** email to the DNP program.

When is the application deadline?

- The application deadline for BSN-DNP applicants is July 15th each year, with all supporting application materials received prior to August 1st.
- The application deadline for MSN-DNP applicants is May 15th. Only a completed application via NursingCAS will be submitted to the DNP program for consideration.

When and how are interviews conducted?

- BSN-DNP applicant interviews will be scheduled each August with notification of acceptance by September 15th each year.
- MSN-DNP applicant interviews will be scheduled each June with notification of acceptance by July 15th each year.
- BSN-DNP applicants will participate in on-campus interviews in Natchitoches, Louisiana or via WebEx.
- MSN-DNP applicants will participate in virtual interviews via WebEx.

How do I apply for a specific route/role?

- Once accepted and enrolled in the BSN-DNP program, BSN-DNP students can apply for their role of choice during the A Term of the first semester.
- Once accepted and enrolled in the MSN-DNP program, MSN-DNP students are automatically enrolled in the OSL role.

Clinical Practice Experience

How many clinical practice hours are required for DNP program completion?

- BSN-DNP Students:
 - Must complete 1000 hours of post-baccalaureate clinical hours prior to graduation. The exact number of hours is individualized for BSN-DNP students and based upon the APRN role/population; however, each student will accrue a minimum of 1000 post-baccalaureate clinical hours prior to program completion.

- During each Scholarly Project Practicum (SPP) course (NURG 7010, 7011, 7012) students complete 180 clinical hours. Each credit hour is equivalent of 60 hours of clinical hours. Each credit hour is equivalent of 60 hours of clinical hour time.
- During each Clinical Practicum course (specific to role/population) students complete a variable number of clinical hours depending on the course credit hour equivalent. Each clinical credit hour is a 1:4 ratio with the practicum hours delivered over a 16-week semester.
- MSN-DNP Students:
 - Must complete 1000 hours of post-baccalaureate clinical hours prior to graduation. The exact number of hours is individualized for MSN-DNP students and based upon earned clinical practice hours accrued during MSN program completion, however each student will accrue a minimum of 1000 post-baccalaureate clinical hours prior to program completion.
 - During each Scholarly Project Practicum course (NURG 7010, 7011, 7012) students complete 180 clinical hours. Each credit hour is equivalent of 60 hours of clinical hours. Each credit hour is equivalent of 60 hours of clinical hour time.

How are clinical practice hours obtained?

- BSN-DNP Students:
 - Most clinical practice hours are obtained during BSN-DNP students' immersion in the Clinical Practicum courses to obtain role/population competencies in preparation for eligibility to sit for national, advanced specialty certification.
 - Additional clinical practice hours are obtained during BSN-DNP students' immersion in the Scholarly Project Practicum (SPP) courses (NURG 7010, 7011, and 7012).
- MSN-DNP Students:
 - Most clinical practice hours are obtained during MSN-DNP students' immersion in the Scholarly Project Practicum (SPP) courses (NURG 7010, 7011, and 7012), additional experiences are often needed to help students meet their learning needs self-identified in the *DNP Competency Self-Assessment Tool*.

What clinical sites/agencies are associated with the DNP program?

- BSN-DNP Students: Clinical sites have been obtained to provide students with unique clinical experiences specific to the population/role and are designated as a "Required" or "Enrichment" Clinical Site.
 - *Required Clinical Sites*: A required site is a primary clinical site that meets one or both of the following criteria: An institution (1) where students receive 50% or more of their total clinical experience and/or (2) that is necessary to enable a program to meet accreditation standards. Required clinical sites are:
 - Christus St. Frances Cabrini Hospital (Alexandria, LA)
 - Ochsner LSU Health Shreveport (Shreveport, LA)
 - Rapides Regional Medical Center (Alexandria, LA)
 - Willis-Knighton Medical Center (Shreveport, LA)

- Enrichment Clinical Sites: An enrichment site is a nonprimary clinical site that meets one or more of the following criteria: an institution (1) where students receive less than 50% of their total clinical experiences; (2) that is not necessary to enable a program to meet accreditation standards; (3) that is unlikely to have a significant impact on a program's ability to continue complying with accreditation standards and policy/procedural requirements; and/or (4) that is utilized solely as an enriching experience. To provide optimal learning experiences, students typically rotate to the facility for a two-month period. Enrichment clinical sites are:
 - Avoyelles Hospital (Marksville, LA)
 - Natchitoches Regional Medical Center (Natchitoches, LA)
 - Ochsner LSU Health Monroe (Monroe, LA)
 - Willis-Knighton Bicknell Surgery Pavilion (Shreveport, LA)
 - Willis-Knighton Bossier Health Center (Bossier City, LA)
 - Willis-Knighton Eye Surgery Center (Shreveport, LA)
 - Willis-Knighton Pierremont/Portico Ambulatory Surgical Center (Shreveport, LA)
 - Willis-Knighton South and the Center for Women's Health (Shreveport, LA)
- There are over 210 clinical sites and agencies associated with NSU's College of Nursing that can serve as clinical experience activity sites for Scholarly Project Practicum courses (NURG 7010, 7011, and 7012).
- MSN-DNP Students:
 - There are over 210 clinical sites and agencies associated with NSU's College of Nursing that can serve as clinical experience activity sites for Scholarly Practicum courses (NURG 7010, 7011, and 7012).

Are students able to choose their clinical sites/agencies?

- BSN-DNP Students:
 - During enrollment in Clinical Practicum courses to obtain role/population competencies, students indicate clinical site preference from the required and enrichment site list.
 - During enrollment in Scholarly Project Practicum courses (NURG 7010, 7011, and 7012), students identify a clinical advisor who is preferably doctorly prepared or an expert in the student's scholarly project field of interest, and willing to be the student's clinical advisor at the student chosen clinical agency.
- MSN-DNP Students:
 - During enrollment in Scholarly Project Practicum courses (NURG 7010, 7011, and 7012), students identify a clinical advisor who is preferably doctorly prepared or an expert in the student's scholarly project field of interest, and willing to be the student's clinical advisor at the student chosen clinical agency.

Tuition and Fees

What is the cost of the DNP program?

- BSN-DNP: Students pay a flat fee for tuition and registration each semester as well as the role professional fee. There is no out-of-state fee.

NSU's BSN-DNP PROGRAM COST			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Spring	8,213.55	8,271.55	8,315.55
Summer	8,355.05	8,375.05	8,355.05
Fall	8,370.05	8,360.05	8,360.05
Total Cost per Year	24,938.65	25,006.65	25,030.65
Total Program Cost			74,975.95

- MSN-DNP: Students pay a flat fee for tuition and fees (\$475 per credit hour) up to nine (9) credit and then \$100 per credit hour thereafter. DNP students also pay professional fees. See [NSU's eNSU Global Campus](#) for a full cost analysis.

What are the expected additional expenses?

PROGRAM EXPENSES PAID OUT-OF-POCKET BY NSU's BSN to DNP STUDENTS			
Expense	Amount	Total Expense	Frequency
Parking Tag	45.00	135.00	Annual
Health and Safety	150.00	150.00	Variable
Graduation Fee	150.00	150.00	Last semester
Board Certification Fee	995.00	995.00	Last semester
RN Licensure	200.00	200.00	Per renewal schedule
Conference Attendance	2500.00	2500.00	Variable
Computer	1000.00	1000.00	Variable
Books	3000.00	3000.00	Variable
Clinical Travel/Housing	0.00	0.00	Students do not pay for clinical travel/housing
Total		8130.00	

PROGRAM EXPENSES PAID OUT-OF-POCKET BY NSU's MSN to DNP STUDENTS			
Expense	Amount	Total Expense	Frequency
Graduation Fee	150.00	150.00	Last semester
RN Licensure/ APRN Licensure/Certification (as applicable)	200.00-600.00	200.00- 600.00	Variable
Conference Attendance	500.00	500.00	Variable
Computer	1000.00	1000.00	Variable
Books	1500.00	1500.00	Variable
Clinical Travel/Housing	0.00	0.00	Students do not pay for clinical travel/ housing
Total		3350.00-3750.00	

Is financial aid available?

- Financial aid is available for both BSN-DNP and MSN-DNP students. For more information, please visit the [NSU's Financial Aid Webpage](#).

Are grants and/or stipends available to benefit DNP students?

- The DNP program seeks funding on behalf of students by pursuing U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grants and clinical agency specific stipends for students.
- Current grants/stipends include:
 - Clinical agency stipends for (10) BSN-DNP students from a private clinical agency with future employment agreement.