What are the pathways to Nursing?

Although Western does not offer a pre-licensure nursing degree, there are a variety of options for preparing to pursue a career as a nurse while a student at WWU. In order to become a Registered Nurse (RN) you will need to pass a state board examination (NCLEX) following completion of a certified nursing program usually in one of three settings:

- **community college** (ASN, Associate of Science in Nursing)
- **four-year university** (BSN, Bachelor of Science in Nursing)
- **graduate program** (MSN, Masters of Science in Nursing; a “direct entry masters” is a master’s program that accepts students with a bachelor’s degree but who do not have their RN credential).

To be eligible for a nursing education program, students must complete a specified set of prerequisites and obtain volunteer or paid health care experience. Students may work on completing the prerequisites at WWU and apply for entry into an ASN or BSN program elsewhere, with or without completing a degree at Western. Completion of a bachelor’s degree is required for a direct-entry MSN program. By 2020, nursing career requirements are predicted to require a BSN degree for many, or most positions. Western currently offers an RN to BSN program if you are interested in completing your bachelor’s degree after obtaining RN credentials at a community college. You can find more information about the RN to BSN program at: [http://wce.wwu.edu/bsn](http://wce.wwu.edu/bsn)

Requirements for programs will vary, so it is important to review the admissions information closely for schools you are interested in. A useful website for comparing RN programs is: [http://bestnursingdegree.com](http://bestnursingdegree.com).

Program Checkpoints:

**Freshman year:**
- Meet with Pre-Healthcare Advisor to develop a plan of study.
- Take Math 114.
- Take General Chemistry: CHEM 121 (you will also need CHEM 122, 123 to take standard Organic Chem).
- Begin General Biology series winter or spring quarter: BIOL 204, 205 or BIOL 101.
- Work on GUR courses, including ENG 101 and PSY 101.
- Begin prerequisite and co-requisite courses for possible major.

**Sophomore year:**
- Take stats class: MATH 240 (or equivalent in major, if offered).
- Take PSY 230 and other social science course
- Take ENG 202 or other English composition class.
- Take Microbiology for Health Sciences: BIOL 245 or Fundamentals of Microbiology: BIOL 345, 346.
- Declare or apply for major.

**Junior year:**
- Research nursing schools and options.
- Take BIOL 348, 349.
- Take HLED 350.
- Prepare for the Graduate Records Exam (GRE) to be taken the summer after junior year.
- Draft personal statement.
- Request letters of recommendation from professors and professionals.

**Senior year:**
- Complete major, GUR, WP, and other graduation requirements.
- Two quarters before graduation, meet with faculty advisor for major evaluation and apply for graduation.

**Additionally:**

**NOTE:** Advanced Placement is generally not recognized by professional schools as college-earned credit. Check with each school.

Most ASN programs require that you obtain a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) license before you matriculate. There are CNA programs available locally at Whatcom Community College (program is available in summer) and Bellingham Technical College.
Core Courses

Academic course requirements for nursing schools may vary but, regardless of your major, certain prerequisites are expected by most schools and include:

- Basic math courses: MATH 112, 114 (5, 5)
- One course General Chemistry with labs: CHEM 121* (122, 123 if you are taking standard Organic Chemistry) (5, 5, 4)
- Elementary Organic Chemistry: CHEM 251 (5) or standard Organic Chemistry: CHEM 351 (4)
- General Biology with labs: BIOL 204, 205 (4, 5), or BIOL 101
- Microbiology with lab: BIOL 245 (5) or BIOL 345, 346 (3, 2)
- Anatomy & Physiology: BIOL 348, 349* (5, 5)
- Nutrition: HLED 350** (3)
- Statistics: MATH 240 (4) or major equivalent
- Social Science GUR courses: including PSY 101, PSY 230, (5, 5) and one other social science course (ANTH, PLSC, HIST, etc)
- Writing & Critical Inquiry: ENG 101 (5) and additional English composition course (ENG 202, etc)

NOTE: At WWU, General Chemistry (CHEM 121) is prerequisite to General Biology. It is helpful to begin chemistry as early in the program as possible.

*BIO 348, 349 are heavily impacted courses so if they are not required for your major, you will need to ask for an override at least 3 weeks prior to registration (you can also take these courses at a community college)

**requires instructor permission if not Junior standing and in PEHR major

Declaring a Major*: refer to the department of your chosen major for prerequisites and GPA requirements for declaring.

*NOTE: To major in Biology requires a grade point average of 2.9 or better for CHEM 121, 122, 123, and BIOL 204, 205, and 206 in order to advance to Phase II of the Biology major. Admission to Phase II is required in order to take upper division Biology classes.

To major in Community Health, you must have 2.5 GPA, declare as a pre-major and complete BIOL 348, 349 and prerequisites for CHEM 251 or 351 by end of sophomore year. Application to the major happens only once per year, and is due by October 15th of the year prior to starting 400-level courses.

To major in Chemistry (BS), you will need a grade point average of 3.0 in CHEM 121, 122, 123, 351, 352 and Math 124 and 125 in order to move on to a Phase II Chemistry major.

Access to Classes:

Due to high student demand for many upper-division courses, especially in the sciences, many departments must give enrollment priority to students for whom these courses are required for their major over those who want to take them for electives. Registration details for these and other heavily impacted programs are posted at department websites.

Biology: https://cse.wwu.edu/biology/registration
Chemistry: https://cse.wwu.edu/chemistry/registration

Repeating Courses: is not typically viewed favorably by professional schools. An isolated case may be acceptable but may also require an explanation in application. Discuss your options with a Pre-Healthcare Advisor.

Additional Resources

Join the advisors' Pre-nursing Listserv by sending an email to Anna.Tognazzini@wwu.edu with this information: Subject: pre-nursing listserv, Last name, First name, student number, and major and concentration (if declared).

WWU Pre-Med Club: e-mail: wwupremed@gmail.com
WWU Allied Health Advising: www.wwu.edu/alliedhealth
WWU Pre-health Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/wwuprehealth/
American Association of Colleges of Nursing: www.aacn.nche.edu
Peterson’s Information on Nursing Schools: www.petersons.com/college-search/nursing-school.aspx
Explore Health Careers: www.explorehealthcareers.org
Explore Nursing: www.discovernursing.com

The courses below satisfy GUR requirements and may also be used to fulfill pre-nursing requirements.

ACOM: ENG 101
BCOM: ENG 202
SSC: PSY 101, 230
QSR: MATH 114
LSCI: BIOL 204, 205, 206
       CHEM 121, 122, 123