What are the pathways to nursing?

WWU does NOT offer a traditional nursing major, but as a Western student you can pursue any bachelor’s degree while taking the necessary prerequisite courses for entry into a pre-licensure nursing program. Choose a major that best fits your goals and interests, while considering financial constraints.

The two most common paths to nursing school WWU students take are 1) pursuing a major at Western and graduating with a bachelor’s degree before transferring to a pre-licensure nursing program, or 2) completing only prerequisite courses here before transferring to a pre-licensure nursing program. Students may choose to seek their Registered Nurse (RN) credentials through completing an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN), a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), or a direct-entry Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) or Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP). Note that by 2020 it is recommended that 80% of all nurses hold a BSN degree.

Requirements for programs vary, so it is important to review the admissions information closely for schools you are interested in. The WA State Nursing Commission website has a list of approved programs available here: [https://tinyurl.com/NursingPrograms](https://tinyurl.com/NursingPrograms).

Core Courses

Prerequisites vary depending on whether you are applying to nursing school after completing a bachelor’s degree. Regardless of your major, prerequisite courses expected by most schools include

**COMMUNICATIONS**
- 5 credits English Composition (UW requires an additional writing intensive course)
- 5 credits Communications

**QUANTITATIVE/SYMBOLIC REASONING**
- 5 credits of statistics (MATH 240)

**HUMANITIES & FINE ARTS** (likely waived if you complete a bachelor’s degree)
- 10 credits of humanities (Sociology, Anthropology, etc).
- 15 credits of visual, literary and performing arts (history, music, literature, etc).

**SOCIAL SCIENCES**
- 5 credits of Introduction to Psychology (PSY 101)
- 5 credits of Lifespan Psychology (PSY 230)

**NATURAL SCIENCES**
- 5 credits of General Biology (BIOL 101 or BIOL 204/205)
- 5 credits of Microbiology (BIOL 245)
- 5 credits of Chemistry (CHEM 121)
- 5 credits of Organic Chemistry (CHEM 251)
- 10 credits of Anatomy & Physiology (BIO 348/349)
- 5 credits of Nutrition (HLED 350)

*This document is for preliminary advising purposes only – consult with pre-healthcare advisors on a regular basis.*

Keep informed
- WWU students may join the Advisor’s Pre-nursing Listserv. To join, e-mail Anna.Tognazzini@wwu.edu with the following SUBJECT information: Pre-nursing listserv, Last name, First name, WWU student number, and major (if declared).
- A list of nursing programs can be found here: [www.aacn.nche.edu/students/nursing-program-search](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/students/nursing-program-search)
Notes

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP): Check with targeted schools whether they recognize AP as college-earned credit. Not all do. It is better to view any earned credits as qualifying to enroll in upper-division courses rather than as "testing out" of prerequisites.

DECLARING A MAJOR: Departments vary in how to declare majors. Behavioral Neuroscience, Biology, Chemistry, Kinesiology, and others allow students to declare as a "pre-major" while addressing their specified prerequisites. Some majors require a specific GPA across foundational courses. Declare early, even as a "pre-major", to help shorten your time to degree. While working on any pre-major content, explore many disciplines to keep your options open.

ACCESS TO CLASSES: High volume student demand exists for upper-division courses, especially in the sciences. Many departments grant enrollment priority to students declared in specific majors over those seeking enrollment for professional school purposes. Registration access procedures for impacted courses can change, and departments commonly provide procedural updates through websites, seminars, and email notifications.

REPEATING/DROPPING COURSES: Regardless of Western's policies, which are provided in the university catalog, https://catalog.wwu.edu/content.php?catoid=13&navoid=2750, these actions are not generally viewed favorably by professional schools. Whereas Western may calculate the most recent repeated course into its GPA, some professional schools will average all grades earned for a course. While an isolated case may be acceptable, it will likely require an explanation on your application. Discuss your options first with a Pre-Healthcare Advisor. Be mindful both dropping and repeating courses can have an impact on eligibility for financial aid, scholarships, and athletic participation as well. Consult advisors in each area that applies to you when making your decision.

SHADOWING: Students should gain shadowing experience with a nurse, and will likely need an RN to write a letter of recommendation. Discuss your shadowing options with Pre-healthcare advisors.

VOLUNTEERING/HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE: The more experience you have working with people in a healthcare setting the stronger your application will be (some programs require it). Becoming certified as a Nursing Assistant (CNA) is one way to show your commitment to nursing and allows you to work with patients before applying to nursing school.

Additional Resources

WWU Allied Health Advising: www.wwu.edu/alliedhealth
WWU Pre-health Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/wwuprehealth/
Association of Colleges of Nursing: www.aacn.nche.edu
Washington State Nursing Commission approved programs: https://tinyurl.com/NursingPrograms
Explore Health Careers: www.explorehealthcareers.org

Pre-Healthcare Advising Events

Typical programming events offered by Pre-Healthcare Advising include (but are not limited to):

Fall:
Health Professional School & Grad School Info Fair, October 19, 2017
Winter 2018 Pre-Registration Drop-in Advising (in BI 415): Nov 15 (10am-1pm); Nov 16 (3-5pm)

Winter:
Kaplan-sponsored practice GRE
Spring 2018 Pre-Registration Drop-in Advising (in BI 415): Feb 28 (12-3pm); March 1 (2-4pm)

Spring:
The Healthcare Professional School Application: A session overviewing the process
Fall 2018 Pre-Registration Drop-in Advising (in BI 415): May 16 (12-3pm); May 17 (2-4pm)

This document is for preliminary advising purposes only. Contact Advising for Pre-Healthcare Professions for updates and changes.