



NORTHWESTERN STATE

College of Nursing and School of Allied Health

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 at DNPapp@nsula.edu or (318) 677-3139.

How can I apply to the DNP Program?

- Applications for the Organizational Systems Leadership (OSL) concentration are being processed through NursingCAS, the centralized application for nursing. Visit [NursingCAS.org](https://nursingcas.org) to start an application. The annual application period for the OSL program is February 15 through July 15 for the following Spring semester.
- Applications for the Nurse Anesthesia (NA) concentration are being processed through NursingCAS, the centralized application for nursing. Visit [NursingCAS.org](https://nursingcas.org) to start an application. The annual application period for the NA 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 the DNP Program routes?

- There are two routes for DNP degree obtainment:
 - Bachelor of Science in Nursing to DNP NA (Nurse Anesthesia)
 - Master of Science in Nursing to DNP OSL (Organizational Systems Leadership)

What are the DNP Program goals?

The goals of the DNP Program are:

- Provide advanced nurse practice 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 nurse practice 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 nurse practice 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 healthcare 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 that 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?

- Nurse Anesthesia Curriculum:
 - The NA program length is 36 months. The first two semesters are delivered in an online, asynchronous format.
- Organizational Systems Leadership Curriculum:
 - The OSL 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.
 - [DNP NA Curriculum Pattern](#)
 - [DNP OSL Curriculum Pattern](#)

Will I be able to work during program enrollment?

- DNP NA Curriculum:
 - The first two semesters of the DNP NA program are delivered online, allowing the registered nurse the ability to continue practice in the clinical setting. After the first two

semesters, the Nurse Anesthesia program requires continuous didactic and clinical instruction and work as a registered nurse is not recommended.

- DNP OSL Curriculum:
 - All six semesters of the DNP OSL 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 and Approvals

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 fully accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) (<http://coacrna.org>, 10275 W. Higgins Rd., Suite 906, Rosemont, IL 60018-5603, and can be reached at 224-275-9130), a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Council on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education. The Nurse Anesthesia program received full accreditation in May 2021 with the next accreditation review in 2026.

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 (NA) and Master of Science in Nursing to DNP (OSL). Annually, NSU will accept a maximum of 20 students into the NA route and 10 students into the OSL 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?

- Nurse Anesthesia applicants must have obtained a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree from a fully accredited college or university in the United States.
- Organizational Systems Leadership 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?

- Nurse Anesthesia:
 - Applicants must have a minimum cumulative undergraduate GPA of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale.
 - Official academic transcripts from all institutions must be submitted via the [NursingCAS](#) portal.
- Organizational Systems Leadership:
 - Applicants must have a minimum cumulative graduate GPA of 3.00 on a 4.00 scale.
 - Official academic transcripts from all institutions must be submitted via the [NursingCAS](#) portal.

How can I apply to the DNP Program?

- All applications for the DNP program are being processed through NursingCAS, the centralized application for nursing. Visit [NursingCAS.org](#) to start an application. The application period for the DNP program is February 15-July 15 for admission the following Spring semester.

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

What type of experience is required?

- Nurse anesthesia applicants must have 1-year full-time critical care experience at the time of application. The critical care experience must be recent (within two years).
- OSL 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?

- All **NA 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 the NSU Graduate School directly from the Educational Testing Service (ETS). Unofficial scores may be reported via NursingCAS; however, the official scores must be received by the Graduate School before any admission offer is made. **The institution code is 6492.**
 - GRE scores MUST be within the last five years. If an applicant has taken the GRE greater than 5 years ago, it must be re-taken to be considered for NA Program admission.
 - 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.
- GRE scores are waived for OSL (MSN-DNP) applicants when the Emotional Intelligence assessment is submitted via the NursingCAS portal.

What is the Emotional Intelligence Assessment requirement?

- The Emotional Intelligence assessment is required for **all DNP** program applicants.
 - The Emotional Intelligence assessment instructions are located [here](#). Follow the link to the EI website. You are required to purchase the book to obtain the code for the assessment. The entire score report should be submitted electronically via the [NursingCAS](#) portal.

What are applicant licensure requirements?

- NA applicants must have a current, unencumbered, unrestricted Registered Nurse license issued by any state.
 - Once students are admitted to the NA program, they must submit evidence of a current, unencumbered, unrestricted Registered Nurse license authorized to practice in Louisiana.
- OSL applicants must have a current, unencumbered, unrestricted Registered Nurse License authorized to practice in any state.

What are the applicant certification requirements?

- NA Applicants
 - Must submit current American Heart Association Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) certifications via the [NursingCAS](#) portal.

What are the technical standards requirements?

- All DNP applicants 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 must submit three (3) letters of recommendation via the [NursingCAS](#) portal. One recommendation must be from each of the following: (1) a former faculty member/program administrator, (2) an immediate supervisor (person who can attest to the applicant's clinical abilities), and (3) a character reference.
- Narrative letters are not required but may be submitted in addition to the required Likert-scale form. Narrative letters may be submitted to DNPapp@nsula.edu.

What other documents are submitted during the application process?

- All DNP applicants must submit a current curriculum vitae.
- All DNP applicants must submit a one to two-page APA (7th ed.)-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. NA applicants should also include clinical-specific interests. Please submit this as a **Word document**, not a PDF.
- All DNP applicants must submit completed records:
 - [CONSAH Essential Academic Performance and Technical Standards](#)
- NA Applicants must submit the following completed records:
 - [Work Experience and Technical Skill Proficiency](#)
 - [Professional Organization Membership, Certification, and Licensure](#)
- NA Applicants who have previously matriculated into a Nurse Anesthesia Educational Program must submit a Letter of Good Standing from the former program's Program Director.

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

For all DNP Applicants:

- [The Graduate School \(grad_school@nsula.edu\)](mailto:grad_school@nsula.edu):
 - [Graduate School Application](#) (online) with Fee
 - NA Applicants:
 - Major Selection: 25 Doctor of Nursing Practice
 - Doctor of Nursing, Nurse Anesthesia
 - Select Term: Spring of the following year
 - OSL Applicants:
 - Major Selection: 25 Doctor of Nursing Practice
 - Doctor of Nursing, Organizational Systems Leadership
 - Select Term: Spring of the following year
 - Official GRE General Test scores. Sent **directly from Educational Testing Service (ETS)**: College Code **6492** / (for NA only)

- Alternatively, official test results from within the last 5 years may be submitted by emailing the Graduate School at grad_school@nsula.edu:
 - A notarized copy of the Official Test results
 - A letter from a previous university including the results and date of the original test results
- DNP Program: (via [Nursing CAS](#))
 - Official transcripts from ALL post-secondary academic institutions.
 - 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 Nursys verification of RN License and APRN License (as applicable)
 - Copy of BLS/ACLS Certifications
 - Emotional Intelligence scores
 - Three (3) Letters of Recommendation
 - Copy of GRE General Test scores (for NA only)
 - Verification of current Immunization Record or completed waivers (Tdap, MMR, Hep A, Hep B, Varicella, Flu, COVID) must be received prior to being admitted to the Graduate School.
 - NA Applicants who have previously matriculated into a Nurse Anesthesia Educational Program must submit a Letter of Good Standing from the former program's Program Director.

When is the application deadline?

Only completed applications submitted via [NursingCAS](#) will be considered for DNP Program admission.

- The application deadline, including all supporting documents for the DNP Program and a completed Graduate School application, is **July 15th** each year.

When and how are interviews conducted?

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

DNP Program Re-Application Process

- NA Applicants
 - Applicants who have previously applied to the DNP Nurse Anesthesia program should follow the process outlined in the [DNP NA Reapplication Process](#) document.

Clinical Practice Experience

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

- NA Students:
 - Must complete 1000 hours of post-baccalaureate clinical hours prior to graduation. The exact number of hours is individualized for NA 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 to 60 hours of clinical hours. Each credit hour is equivalent to 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.
- OSL Students:
 - DNP students are required to obtain a minimum of 1,000 post-baccalaureate clinical hours upon degree completion (AACN, 2006). Of these 1,000 post-baccalaureate clinical hours, a minimum of 540 direct/indirect clinical hours must be obtained within the program, regardless of post-baccalaureate clinical hours.
 - During each Scholarly Project Practicum course (NURG 7010, 7011, 7012), students complete 180 clinical hours. Each credit hour is equivalent to 60 hours of clinical hours. Each credit hour is equivalent to 60 hours of clinical hour time.

How are clinical practice hours obtained?

- NA Students:
 - Most clinical practice hours are obtained during NA 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 NA students' immersion in the Scholarly Project Practicum (SPP) courses (NURG 7010, 7011, and 7012).
- OSL Students:
 - Most clinical practice hours are obtained during OSL 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?

- NA 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.

- **Primary Clinical Site:** A primary site is a 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. Primary clinical sites are:
 - [Christus St. Frances Cabrini Hospital \(Alexandria, LA\)](#)
 - [Rapides Regional Medical Center \(Alexandria, LA\)](#)
 - [Willis-Knighton Health System \(Shreveport, LA\)](#)
- **Enrichment Clinical Site:** 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- or four-month period. Enrichment clinical sites are:
 - [Avoyelles Hospital \(Marksville, LA\)](#)
 - [Central Louisiana Surgical Hospital \(Alexandria, LA\)](#)
 - [Christus Cabrini Surgery Center \(Alexandria, LA\)](#)
 - [Christus Good Shepherd Health System \(Longview, TX\)](#)
 - [Christus Highland Medical Center \(Shreveport, LA\)](#)
 - [Lafayette Surgical Specialty Hospital \(Lafayette, LA\)](#)
 - [Monroe Surgical Hospital \(Monroe, LA\)](#)
 - [Natchitoches Regional Medical Center \(Natchitoches, LA\)](#)
 - [Northern Louisiana Medical Center \(Ruston, LA\)](#)
 - [Ochsner Lafayette General Medical Center \(Lafayette, LA\)](#)
 - [Ochsner LSU Health Monroe \(Monroe, LA\)](#)
 - [Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center \(Baton Rouge, LA\)](#)
 - [Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center \(Lafayette, LA\)](#)
 - [Specialists Hospital Shreveport \(Shreveport, LA\)](#)
 - [St. Francis Medical Center \(Monroe, LA\)](#)
 - [St. Francis P & S Surgery & Heart Center \(Monroe, LA\)](#)
 - [Willis-Knighton Bossier Health Center \(Bossier City, LA\)](#)
 - [Willis-Knighton Bossier Medical Pavilion Surgery Center \(Bossier City, LA\)](#)
 - [Willis-Knighton Eye Institute \(Shreveport, LA\)](#)
 - [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 Project Practicum courses (NURG 7010, 7011, and 7012).
- **OSL 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 Project Practicum courses (NURG 7010, 7011, and 7012).

Are students able to choose their clinical sites/agencies?

- NA 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 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.
- OSL Students:
 - During enrollment in 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?

- **NA** Students pay a flat fee for tuition and registration each semester as well as the nurse anesthesia fee. There is no out-of-state fee.

NSU's NA PROGRAM COST			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Spring	8,322.05	8,312.05	8,312.05
Summer	8,177.55	8,227.50	8,267.55
Fall	8,307.05	8,327.05	8,307.05
Total Cost per Year	24,806.65	24,866.65	24,886.65
Total Program Cost	74,559.95		

- **OSL** Students pay a flat fee for tuition and fees (\$475 per credit hour) up to nine (9) credits per semester and then \$100 per credit hour thereafter. DNP students also pay professional fees. See the [eNSU Global Campus](#) website for a full cost analysis.

NSU's DNP OSL COST		
	Year 1	Year 2
Spring	3,800	2,850
Summer	2,850	2,850
Fall	2,850	2,850
Total Cost per Year	9,500	8,550
Total Program Cost	18,050	

What are the expected additional expenses?

PROGRAM EXPENSES PAID OUT-OF-POCKET BY NSU's NA 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 OSL 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 NA and OSL students. For more information, please visit [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 NA students from private clinical agency with future employment agreement.