



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.

Program Purposes & Types

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 types of DNP Programs offered?

There are two routes (baccalaureate in nursing (BSN) or master's in nursing (MSN)) to the DNP Degree. There are also three concentrations of the DNP Degree: 1) Nurse Anesthesia [NA] offered through the BSN to DNP route; 2) Executive Leadership [ExL] offered through the MSN to DNP route; and , Educational Leadership [EdL] offered through the MSN to DNP route.

Curriculum and Time Commitment

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

- Nurse Anesthesia Curriculum:
 - The NA program length is 36 consecutive months. The first two semesters are delivered in an online, asynchronous format, followed by 7 semesters of synchronous didactic and clinical instruction.
- Executive Leadership (ExL) and Educational Leadership (EdL) Curricula:
 - The ExL and EdL programs are delivered over six consecutive semesters in an online, asynchronous format.
 - The ExL concentration focuses on knowledge and competency development related to leadership in a variety of healthcare settings.
 - The EdL concentration focuses on knowledge and competency development related to leadership in higher education settings.

How can I view the curriculum plans?

- DNP Program curricula plans can be viewed online on the School of Nursing website under Doctoral Programs.
 - [DNP Nurse Anesthesia Concentration Curriculum](#)
 - [DNP Educational Leadership Concentration Curriculum](#)
 - [DNP Executive Leadership Concentration Curriculum](#)

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 to continue practicing in the clinical setting. After the first two semesters, the nurse anesthesia program requires continuous didactic and clinical instruction and working as a registered nurse is not recommended.
- DNP ExL and EdL Curricula:
 - All six semesters of the DNP ExL and EdL programs are delivered in an online, asynchronous format, allowing the masters prepared registered nurse to continue practicing in the clinical setting.

What is the DNP Project?

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

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 fully accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) (<http://coacrn.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.

Admissions and Applications

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

- There are two routes for DNP degree obtainment: Bachelor of Science in Nursing to DNP (NA) and Master of Science in Nursing to DNP (ExL and EdL). Annually, NSU will accept a maximum of 25 students into the NA route and 20 students into the ExL and EdL routes.

What are the requirements for admission?

- The admission criteria for the two routes for DNP degree obtainment are posted on the [NSU 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.
- Executive and Educational 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 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).
- Executive and Educational Leadership 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)
- 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. If an applicant has taken the GRE greater than 5 years ago, it must be re-taken to be considered for NA Program admission. 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).

- Official scores sent directly from Educational Testing Services (ETS) must be reported through NursingCAS prior to interview and admission decisions. **Use NursingCAS code 6274.**
- 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.
- GRE scores are waived for Executive and Educational Leadership (MSN-DNP) applicants when the Emotional Intelligence assessment is submitted via the NursingCAS portal.

What is the Emotional Intelligence Assessment requirement?

- An 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 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, 2021), and how the applicant believes the DNP will benefit their 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 the following 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 Record
- 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 before applying for the DNP program to ensure University admission. [See the NSU Graduate School Admissions Information and Application Page.](#)

When are applications accepted?

- Annually
- February 1st through June 30th

How do I apply to the DNP Program?

- The application process occurs through 2 systems: NursingCAS and Northwestern State University's (NSU) Graduate School website. Completion of applications through both systems (NursingCAS and NSU's Grad School) is required.
 1. Visit the [NSU Graduate School website](#) (contact email grad_school@nsula.edu) to start an application. [Graduate School Application](#) (online) with Fee
 - NA Applicants:
 - Term Selection: Choose the Spring of the following year
 - Degree Selection: Choose Doctor of Nursing Practice
 - Academic Program Selection: Choose Nursing Practice, DNP
 - Concentration Selection: Choose Nurse Anesthesia (901C)
 - EdL and ExL Applicants:
 - Term Selection: Choose the Spring of the following year
 - Degree Selection: Choose Doctor of Nursing Practice
 - Academic Program Selection: Choose Nursing Practice, DNP
 - Concentration Selection: Choose either Executive Leadership (901D), or Educational Leadership (901E)
 2. Visit [NursingCAS.org](#) to start an application. Submit all required documentation (listed in the table below) for the program you are applying (NA, ExL, EdL)

Required Documentation	BSN to DNP NA Applicants	MSN to DNP ExL Applicants	MSN to DNP EdL Applicants
Official Transcripts from ALL post-secondary academic institutions	YES	YES	YES
Curriculum Vitae	YES	YES	YES
DNP Narrative Essay	YES	YES	YES
CONSAH Essential Academic Performance and Technical Standards for Didactic and Clinical Settings Attestation (Signed)	YES	YES	YES
Three (3) Letters of Recommendation	YES	YES	YES
Copy of Nursys verification of RN License and APRN License (as applicable)	YES	YES	YES
Emotional Intelligence scores	YES	YES	YES
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.	YES	YES	YES

Required Documentation	BSN to DNP NA Applicants	MSN to DNP ExL Applicants	MSN to DNP EdL Applicants
A copy of American Heart Association or American Red Cross Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) certifications	YES	NO	NO
Work Experience and Technical Skill Record	YES	NO	NO
Professional Organization Membership, Certification and Licensure Record	YES	NO	NO
Copy of GRE General Test scores	YES	NO	NO

NOTE: 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 and how are interviews conducted?

- NA, ExL, and EdL applicant interviews are scheduled annually in July and August, with notification of acceptance by September 15th.
 - NA applicants will participate in on-campus interviews in Natchitoches, Louisiana, or virtually via Webex.
 - ExL and EdL applicants will participate virtually via Webex.

Nurse Anesthesia Re-Application Process

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

Clinical Practice Experience

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

- ALL DNP Students:
 - All DNP Students must complete a minimum of 1000 post-baccalaureate practicum hours prior to degree completion. The exact number of clinical hours is individualized and based upon the role/population (AACN, 2021).
 - During each DNP Project Practicum course (NURG 7032, 7010, 7011, 7012) all DNP students complete 180 clinical hours. Each credit hour is equivalent to 60 hours of clinical hours.
- NA Students:
 - During each Clinical Practicum course (specific to role/population), students complete a variable number of practicum 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.
 - NA students must complete all requirements of the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) and the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA) for program completion and meet program required nurse anesthesia practicum hour requirements.

- ExL and EdL Students:
 - ExL and EdL students' practicum hours are individualized and are determined by an evaluation of prior practicum hours obtainment in an accredited MSN program. Regardless of the amount of post-baccalaureate clinical hours obtained prior to entering the program, all ExL and EdL students are required to complete a minimum of 585 direct/indirect practicum hours within the program.
 - During the final role-specific practicum course, students complete 45 practicum hours. Each credit hour is equivalent to 15 hours of practicum time.

How are clinical practicum hours obtained?

- NA Students:
 - Most practicum 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 practicum hours are obtained during NA students' immersion in the DNP Project Practicum courses (NURG 7032, 7010, 7011, and 7012).
- ExL and EdL Students:
 - Most clinical practicum hours are obtained during ExL and EdL students' immersion in the role-specific practicum courses and in the DNP Project Practicum courses (NURG 7032, 7010, 7011, and 7012). Additional practicum experiences are obtained in the final practicum courses and throughout the program to help students meet the DNP Competencies as outlined in the AACN (2021) Essential document.

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

- NA Students:
 - The NA program utilizes over 30 clinical sites to facilitate student obtainment of the requisite nurse anesthesia clinical and experiences as defined in the COA standards and program requirements. Most clinical sites are geographically located near the University's campus (within one hour of driving time) and off-campus learning sites (Natchitoches, Shreveport and Alexandria, LA).
 - Over 210 clinical sites and agencies associated with NSU's College of Nursing can serve as clinical experience activity sites for Role Practicum and Project Practicum courses (NURG 7010, 7011, and 7012).
- ExL and EdL Students:
 - Over 210 clinical sites and agencies associated with NSU's College of Nursing serve as agencies where students obtain required practicum experiences for Role-Specific Practicum courses and Project-Practicum courses.

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 DNP Project Practicum courses (NURG 7032, 7010, 7011, and 7012), students identify a DNP Project mentor who is preferably doctorly prepared or an

expert in the student's scholarly project field of interest and willing to be the student's project mentor at the student chosen clinical agency.

- ExL and EdL Students:
 - During enrollment in DNP Project Practicum courses (NURG 7032, 7010, 7011, and 7012), students identify a DNP Project Mentor who is preferably doctorly prepared or an expert in the student's scholarly project field of interest and willing to be the student's project mentor at the student chosen clinical agency.
 - During enrollment in role-specific practicum courses, students identify a clinical advisor who is preferably doctorly prepared or an expert in the student's chosen role and willing to provide clinical expertise to the student in role-specific immersion experiences.

Tuition and Fees

What is the cost of the DNP program?

- NSU's Student Accounting and Cashiering page can be found at [Student Accounting & Cashiering](#)
- 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. [BSN to DNP NA Tuition and Fees](#)
- ExL and EdL 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 complete cost analysis.

What are the expected additional expenses?

- Additional student expenses for items such as books, health and safety costs, licensure, certifying agency fees, computer technology, etc. typically range from \$2,500 to \$3,000 per year.

Is financial aid available?

- Financial aid is available for both NA and ExL/EdL 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 agencies with future employment agreements.