



# NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## ASSOCIATE DEGREE REGISTERED NURSE PROGRAM

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*The Nursing Program is approved by the Arkansas State Board of Nursing.*

*Make a career decision for life -- Choose Nursing -- Choose NWACC!*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Nursing Faculty and Staff have designed this question and answer sheet for persons interested in obtaining an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) Degree in Nursing at NWACC. For a better understanding of how to enter and be successful in the Nursing Program, read the questions and answers thoroughly.

You are welcome to call, email or visit the Nursing Department. For advising and specifics about the program, plan to attend a **Pre-Nursing Advisement Session**. These sessions are held frequently, and the dates, times and location are posted on the Nursing Department website. If you are unable to attend any of the Advisement Sessions, you can meet with the Director of Nursing Education or one of the Faculty during the workweek business hours. It is best to call (479) 619-4151 to schedule an appointment for individual advising.

### **Q1. What level of nursing education does NWACC offer?**

A. We have an Associate of Applied Science Degree (A.A.S.) in Nursing, also called an Associate Degree Nurse (ADN) Program. Upon completion of the NWACC Registered Nurse Program, graduates are eligible to take the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) through the Arkansas State Board of Nursing (or the board of the state in which you choose to practice) to become a licensed registered nurse. For other Northwest Arkansas nursing education opportunities, see question Q27.

### **Q2. When does the Nursing Program start?**

A. The Nursing Program Track I begins every Fall semester and continues for a total of four semesters (Fall, Spring, Fall, Spring). We accept approximately 40 students each Fall. Track II begins each Summer and continues for a total of four semesters (Summer, Fall, Spring, Summer). A maximum of 30 students are accepted into this track. Refer to specific information sheets about the various tracks.

### **Q3. How do I get into the Nursing Program?**

A. You must complete an application independent of the General Admission application to NWACC. Nursing Program applications are available in the Nursing Office (CEC Room 2050) from on or about February 1st through on or about March 1st of each Spring for entrance into the Summer and Fall class. However, before you can receive an application, you must meet certain eligibility requirements. We strongly encourage you to come to a **Pre-Nursing Student Advisement Session** and visit with Nursing Faculty and Staff to answer your questions and discuss your class schedule.

**Q4. Will I be required to take an entrance exam prior to entering the Nursing Program?**

A. Yes. The TEAS (Test of Essential Academic Skills) is used as a part of the application process. Anyone entering college for the first time will be required to take the COMPASS test or be able to provide current ACT or SAT test scores which are no more than 5 years old.

**Q5. What is the COMPASS test and how do I know if I need to take it?**

A. The COMPASS is a state law required placement test. It is a comprehensive computerized adaptive testing system that helps place students into appropriate courses and maximizes the information post-secondary schools need to ensure student success. Scores on this test determine your placement into college level or remedial courses in English/writing, math and reading. The COMPASS is required of all students unless you have other placement scores like the ACT or SAT or you have a college transcript which demonstrates you have successfully completed (with a "C" or better) college level English/writing, math and reading. For additional information on placement testing requirements or for test scheduling, see the current NWACC *College Catalog* or contact the Testing Center (479-619-4317).

**Q6. How is the selection made for the Nursing Program?**

A. After the application deadline, applicants contact the Nursing Office to schedule attendance at mandatory testing (TEAS). Testing is scheduled in the months of March and April. Applicants accrue points based on the number of pre/corequisite courses completed, courses grades and the TEAS score. They are then placed in ranked order. Selection for admission is made by the Nursing Admission Committee in descending order of scores until the class is filled. **A letter informing the applicant of the Committee's decision is mailed in late May for Track II and in mid-June for Track I admission.** An alternate list is maintained for filling positions that are declined. **The alternate list is not maintained as a waiting list.**

**Q7. How long will it take me to get through the Nursing Program?**

A. The Nursing Program takes 15-22 months to complete, depending on which track you enter. There are two pathways for entry into the Track I. Pathway A requires that you complete at least 15 credit hours of the total 34 credit hours of general education courses. Pathway B is based on your assessment test scores. Come to a Pre-Nursing Advisement Session to discuss with Faculty what is best for you. Some students choose to complete all the general education courses before applying to the Nursing Program to increase their selection status and decrease their semester load once accepted into the Nursing Program. Track II requires that all general education courses be completed prior to beginning nursing courses. Thus, the time to complete the general education courses will vary depending on your decision.

**Q8. Are the nursing courses offered in the evening or on a part-time basis?**

A. The general education classes can be taken on a part-time or full-time basis, during the day or evening. However, Nursing Program courses are NOT available on an evening or part-time basis. Nursing courses must be taken in the sequence of the degree plan. Lectures are usually during daytime hours. After the first semester of the Nursing Program, clinicals are both evening and daytime, depending on the content being taught.

**Q9. What can I do to increase my selection score to enter the Nursing Program?**

A. Since the Selection Committee looks at grades, the higher the better. Nursing is a profession, so your attitudes and attire should be professional.

**Tips to increase your selection into the Nursing Program:**

- 1) It is important to come to a **Pre-Nursing Advisement Session**. Keeping in touch with nursing faculty and staff while you are taking general education courses is to your benefit.
- 2) Complete the required courses with the best grades that you can! All general education

and nursing courses must be passed with a “C” grade or better. The Learning Lab has many tutors available. Go the extra mile to do well.

- 3) Maintain a professional appearance and attitude. Nursing is more than knowledge – it is the pursuit of excellence!
- 4) Prepare your finances with savings, scholarships and employment. Make sure you can provide your needs while you are going to school.

**Q10. I am still in high school and am thinking about a career in nursing. When can I begin taking the general education courses for this program?**

- A. Contact your high school counselor or refer to the *College Catalog* for general NWACC entrance requirements. Plan to visit the Learner Development Center to speak with an advisor, attend an orientation session and certainly come to a **Pre-Nursing Advisement Session** to meet with Nursing Faculty! Check the NWACC website ([www.nwacc.edu](http://www.nwacc.edu)) and the Nursing webpage ([www.nwacc.edu/nursing](http://www.nwacc.edu/nursing)) for current dates.

**Q11. Will credits from NWACC transfer to another college?**

- A. Yes. NWACC is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association (NCA) of Colleges and Schools. NWACC achieved its accreditation status through the NCA Commission in August 1995 and received 10-year continuing accreditation in 2000. **The Nursing Program meets the standards of NWACC and is approved by the Arkansas State Board of Nursing.**

For individual course transferability, students need to check with the Admissions & Records Office (479-619-4398). When the Admission Application and college transcripts are received at the Admissions & Records Office, you can request a Degree Audit. This is a free service to show you which of the courses you have already taken will fulfill the Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) Nursing Degree Requirements. You can get a Degree Audit Request form from the Admissions & Records Office or download the form from the web.

**Q12. Are financial aid and / or scholarships available?**

- A. Yes. Contact the Financial Aid Office at (479) 619-4329 or [finaid@nwacc.edu](mailto:finaid@nwacc.edu) for further information. One of the first things to do is complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application (see website [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)). Also, area hospitals offer tuition assistance if you are an employee. Contact the hospital personnel office about these opportunities. Many organizations offer scholarships, but you will need to contact them directly. Many scholarships are advertised on the Internet.

**Q13. I must work while going to school. Can I work a full-time job while in the program?**

- A. Full-time employment is strongly discouraged during enrollment in the Nursing Program. Since the nursing courses include lecture, lab practice and clinicals, it is like having a demanding full-time job! While you are a pre-nursing student, you can arrange your schedule with the general education courses and maintain employment. However, once you are accepted into the Nursing Program, you should minimize all other demands on your time so that you will have more opportunity for success.

A normal academic course load for a full-time student is 15 semester hours. Factors such as academic background, grade point average and family and / work responsibilities should be carefully considered as you determine your class schedule. Some students are not successful in college because their other responsibilities are too demanding. This is especially true for students in the Nursing Program.

The number of hours of employment considered “too much” will vary for each student; however, the following is offered as a general guideline:

Semester Hours Carried	Homework Minimum Hours	Employment Maximum Hours
8-11 hours	20-40 hours/week	20 hours/week
12 +	40-50 hours/week	8-16 hours/week

**Q14. How much time per week will I spend coming to classes and clinicals?**

A. The number of hours spent in classes and clinicals will vary each semester. For example, the first semester has one course, NURS 9108 Fundamentals of Nursing, which meets four days per week both in classroom, skills lab, and clinical settings. During the second, third, and fourth semesters there are two nursing courses per semester, each with clinical components. Students should maintain a flexible schedule that allows for any unforeseen circumstances that may arise.

**Q15. Will I get hospital / clinical experience in this program?**

A. Yes. Each nursing course has a clinical component and uses a variety of agencies/settings in Northwest Arkansas, i.e. hospitals, nursing homes, community agencies, clinics, physician’s offices, etc.

**Q16. How hard are the courses?**

A. Some students say “really hard!” You are advised to complete as many of the general education courses as possible prior to entering the Nursing Program. You are not expected to know everything before you enter the Program, but you are expected to have a teachable and professional perspective. You should have retained the information acquired in the prerequisite courses. Anticipate spending a great deal of time in preparation for each class in the Nursing Program. Most of the required reading is technical and involves bio-psycho-social content. Written assignments are also required. Many hours are spent in classroom, skills lab and clinical settings. It will take individual effort to grasp the concepts and skills in the curriculum, but the staff and faculty of the Nursing Program are always available to advise you. Get ready to work hard and join the team in a memorable life experience!

**Q17. Will I receive nursing specialty education in the Nursing Program?**

A. No. The Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program offers a technical, competency-based education that prepares students as generalists, providing direct care to clients having common recurring health problems with predictable outcomes. During the nursing sequence students gain experience or practice in numerous healthcare areas such as obstetrics, pediatrics, critical care, dialysis, gerontology, medical-surgical, perioperative, psychiatric, community based, physicians’ offices, and clinics. Nurses desiring specialized training or employment in specialty areas of practice seek additional education after completion of a generic/general registered nurse program.

**Q18. If there is a shortage of nurses, why doesn’t the Nursing Program accept more students into the program or make the program more accessible?**

Yes, there is a nursing shortage. Many factors effect nursing education, such as budgetary funding, shortage of nursing educators, competition for clinical sites, and classroom/lab facilities. Expansion of the NWACC Nursing Program depends upon multiple factors. It is a difficult choice, but the priority of the Program must always be for quality over quantity.

**Q19. What is the NCLEX-RN?**

A. The National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN) is the competency examination for licensure. Licensure permits the person to offer special skills to the public, but it also provides legal guidelines for protection of the public. The board of nursing licenses all registered nurses in the state where they practice. Licensure regulations may require that nurses be 21 years of age, be U.S. citizens or have work permits, and exhibit good moral character. The requirements for licensure vary among states in the United States and provinces in Canada.

**Q20. Will the Nursing Program help me find a job after graduation?**

A. No. The Nursing Program does not place students after graduation. However, in the last semester of school many agencies invite students to recruitment gatherings where they explain opportunities for employment. See questions Q22 and Q24 for some task requirements and types of employment.

**Q21. I would like to pursue my BSN after graduating from the RN program. How much longer would it take me and would there be a salary increase for a BSN graduate?**

A. After graduating from the NWACC Nursing Program it would take about two more years to receive a BSN degree. Depending on the geographical location and/or the institution there may be a salary differentiation for the BSN-RN. See question Q25 for degree descriptions.

**Q22. What work-related tasks are required of an RN?**

A. The registered nurse is required to be able to perform the following tasks:

- Bend, squat, lift hands above head
- Hear soft sounds
- Lift and transfer heavy objects
- Perform effectively and professionally in a stressful environment/situation
- Read small print
- Speak to, hear and use tactile and visual skills to assess clients
- Stand strong smells
- Think critically and problem solve
- Walk and stand on feet for long periods of time
- Work 8-12 hour shifts
- Work well with others
- Administer medications accurately, including computation of math calculations
- Analyze assessment data
- Assess client needs
- Assist clients with toileting
- Bathe clients
- Change surgical dressings
- Communicate accurately effectively
- Start IV's, administering IV fluids/medications
- Take vital signs and interpret data

The above lists are by no means inclusive of all essential tasks. It could be said that the ideal student would have the following characteristics: "A strong back, nerves of steel, a bladder the size of a basketball, Duracell feet, thick skin, the mind of a computer, adaptability, and 'the patience of Job'".

**Q23. After I graduate from the Nursing Program, where can I work?**

A. After successfully passing the State Board examination, you will be a registered nurse. The Nurse Practice Act of the State of Arkansas defines the scope of practice (what RNs can and cannot do). Working within this you may be employed in healthcare settings such as:

- Community health
- Emergency care / critical care

- Home health
- Mental health
- Women's health
- Long-term care (e.g., nursing homes, retirement centers)
- Occupational health (i.e., industrial nurses involved in health education / promotion)
- Physicians' offices and/or group clinics
- Hospitals
- School health (i.e., school nurse)

**Q24. What is the typical salary of a new RN graduate and how good is the job market outlook for this field?**

A. New graduates working in Northwest Arkansas may start in acute care settings at approximately \$18-20 an hour. Generally speaking, the hourly wage for an RN will range from \$18-30 an hour depending on work experience, education, and geographical location of employment. Graduates working in large cities or other parts of the country may start at a substantially higher wage. Practice area and level of nursing education are important factors for increase of salary. For example, nurse administrators with many years of experience and a Baccalaureate or Masters degree in nursing may make \$60,000+ a year.

**Q25. What are the different levels of nursing education?**

A. A licensed practical nurse (LPN), or a vocational (LVN) nurse, is trained in basic nursing techniques and in direct patient care. The LPN practices under the supervision of a Registered Nurse (RN) in a hospital or other healthcare setting. The LPN receives one year of education and training. Practical nurse graduates receive a diploma and take the state board examination for licensure (NCLEX-PN). Some community colleges, such as NWACC, offer LPN to RN Transition Tracks.

The RN associate degree program is a two-year program offered at a community college. General education and nursing courses will transfer to other institutions of higher education. Some institutions have RN to BSN advanced placement tracks. Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) graduates take the state board examination for RN licensure (NCLEX-RN).

The RN baccalaureate degree program involves four years of study at the university level. The program focuses on sciences, arts, nursing theory and clinical practice. Graduates receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing (BSN). They also take the state board examination for RN licensure (NCLEX-RN).

The master's and doctorate in nursing degree programs are at the graduate level of higher education. These RNs can choose to focus in specialized practice, administration, education and/or research. Professional advanced practice nursing, i.e., the anesthetist, clinician, midwife, or specialist, requires education at or beyond the master's level.

**Q26. What are the different levels of licensed nursing positions?**

A. An LPN works in direct patient care under the supervision of an RN. Their scope of practice is limited in the area of medication administration, management, care planning, etc. An RN with an associate degree or a diploma works in direct patient care, often in a charge nurse or supervisory role. A BSN-RN fills managerial positions in hospitals, clinics, and community agencies. An MSN-RN and a Ph.D.-RN are in administrative, teaching, research or advanced practice roles.

**Q27. What schools offer nursing programs in Northwest Arkansas?**

A. Certified Nurses Assistant (CNA):	Petra Allied Health, Springdale (479) 756-6038 Northwest Arkansas Community College (479) 619-4165 Health Careers Training Center, Lowell (479) 659-5304
Patient Care Assistant Plus (PCA+)	Northwest Arkansas Community College (479) 619-4165
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN):	Northwest Technical Institute, Springdale (479) 751-8824 <a href="http://www.nti.tec.ar.us">www.nti.tec.ar.us</a>
Associate Degree Nursing (ADN):	NorthWest Arkansas Community College (479) 619-4151 <a href="http://www.nwacc.edu/nursing">www.nwacc.edu/nursing</a>
Baccalaureate Nursing (BSN):	University of Arkansas, Fayetteville (479) 575-3904 <a href="http://www.uark.edu/depts/coehp/NURS.htm">www.uark.edu/depts/coehp/NURS.htm</a>

For other Arkansas and nationwide nursing schools see the website [www.discovernursing.com](http://www.discovernursing.com).

**Q28. Are there organizations for student nurses that I can join now, before I am accepted into the Nursing Program?**

A. YES! There is the Arkansas Nursing Students' Association (ANSA), the state chapter of the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA). Contact the District II Director for information about joining the NWACC chapter. The ANSA website is [www.ark-nursing-students.com](http://www.ark-nursing-students.com). You can contact NSNA at the website [www.nsna.org](http://www.nsna.org). Also check out the website [www.hospitalsoup.com/studentnurse.htm](http://www.hospitalsoup.com/studentnurse.htm).

**Q29. Are there any other requirements for the Nursing Program that I should know about? If accepted into the nursing program, all students must provide the following:**

- Proof of Current Physical exam
- Proof of Medical Insurance
- Proof of TB skin test
- Proof of CPR certification
- 9 panel urine drug screen
- Criminal background check

Further information, (including deadline dates) related to all of the above, will be included in the letter of acceptance into the Nursing Program.