

NURSING SCHOOL

PLANNING GUIDE

## THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

#### Introduction 3

#### What is Nursing? 4

Nursing Career Options 4

Characteristics of a Successful Applicant 4

Academic Preparation for Applying to Nursing School 5

Choosing a Nursing School 6

Applying to Nursing School 6

Nursing Entrance Exam 6

Nursing College Application Service (NursingCAS) 6

Managing the Timing of the Application Process 6

Nursing Related Experience 7

Letters of Recommendation/Evaluation 7

Financing Nursing School 7

Nursing at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing 8

Applying to Schools of Nursing Direct Entry to Combined Programs 8

Nursing Resources 8

#### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet is to describe the process of preparing for and applying to nursing school. The most important challenge for students is deciding that nursing is the career for you and assessing the implications of that decision. It is our hope that you have consulted your pre-health adviser at several points during your undergraduate career at Hopkins, as well as practitioners in the nursing field, in order to help you clarify your motivation to become a nurse. In making the decision to apply to nursing school, it is important to consider the range of health career options that are available to you.

Nursing is a field that the U.S. Department of Labor estimates will grow much faster than average during the next few years, with growth rates of 20-40% depending on the specialty area.  Hospitals throughout the country are looking to hire additional nurses in a variety of areas.  There is also great demand across the country for nursing faculty members.  The Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition (<http://www.bls.gov/OCO/>) details numerous specialty fields within nursing, including trauma, gynecology, hospice and palliative care, radiology, transplant, addiction, mental health, orthopedics, and many other fields.

If you proceed with your application, the initiative is and must be yours. It is essential that you complete the tasks outlined here on time and do a thorough job of putting together the best possible presentation of yourself. We are here to support you throughout the application process and wish you every success in achieving your goals. A majority of the information in this booklet is provided by the American Nurses Association (ANA) and the Association of American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

We wish you success in your health career pursuits,

Katie Cruit, MS

Advisor to Pre-Nursing Students

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***What is Nursing?***

The American Nurses Association (ANA) defines nursing as “.. the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities, and populations.”

Nurses provide holistic, patient-centered care through the following responsibilities:

* Performing physical exams and health histories
* Providing health education and counseling
* Administering medications, and other personalized interventions
* Interpreting patient information and making critical decisions about needed actions
* Coordinating care, in collaboration with a wide array of healthcare professionals
* Directing and supervising care delivered by other healthcare personnel like LPNs and nurse aides
* Conducting research in support of improved practice and patient outcomes

***Nursing Career Opportunities***

Nurses work in a variety of healthcare settings. The most common settings include hospitals, nursing homes, medical offices, community health centers and clinics, and schools. Some non-traditional settings include corporate offices, shelters, and summer camps.

Nurses with a BS degree can pursue advanced degrees such as Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and PhD. These degrees allow nurses to practice in more specialized areas with targeted populations. Advanced practice degrees can lead to positions including Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Midwife, Flight Nurse, Clinical Nurse Specialist, and Forensic Nurse. Nurses with a DNP frequently pursue careers in nursing education, hospital administration, and advanced clinical practice. PhD prepared nurses typically work in research or education.

***Characteristics of a Successful Applicant***

Those considering applying to a nursing school often ask what they need to do to get accepted or what the schools are seeking in candidates. What the schools seek in applicants are:

###### “Strong Academic Record”

* Demonstrated mastery of the basic science requirements
* Demonstrated a broad and successful exposure to the humanities and social sciences
* Maintained or further developed an ability to read rapidly and understand sophisticated material in the humanities and social sciences (especially important for those taking a test like the GRE)
* Demonstrated interest in being a lifelong learner, and have shown “mature and independent scholarship,” etc
* Established a relationship with at least two faculty members (and in the case of fields like nursing, a relationship with a professional in the field) who are able to write a letter of recommendation

“Firm and Clear Motivation:

* Demonstrated care for fellow human beings and their welfare
* Demonstrated understanding of the role of a nurse from direct personal contact

“Outstanding Personal Qualities”

* Demonstrated personal traits such as maturity, stability, integrity, responsibility, trustworthiness, leadership, enthusiasm, etc.
* Demonstrated accomplishment of something worthwhile, and development of skills and abilities to contribute to the profession of nursing
* Demonstrated ability to communicate with varied populations
* Demonstrated ability to deal effectively with those of other cultural backgrounds

***Academic Preparation for Applying to Nursing School***

The Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BS/BSN) degree is generally a four-year degree offered at colleges and universities. Some schools offer second degree programs for students who have already completed a baccalaureate program. These programs are frequently in accelerated formats and can be completed in as little as one year. There is no particular major required for nursing school, but there is generally a prerequisite of certain courses. These prerequisite courses typically include:

Anatomy and Physiology I with Lab (4 credits)

Anatomy and Physiology II with Lab (4 credits)

Microbiology with Lab (4 credits)

Chemistry with Lab (4 credits)

Nutrition (3 credits)

Statistics (3 credits)

Human Growth and Development (across the lifespan) (3 credits)

Johns Hopkins University does not offer all of these courses. Students needing to complete prerequisite courses that are not offered at Johns Hopkins University may take courses at other area colleges and universities through the Johns Hopkins University Academic Cooperative Program (<http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/health/cooperative_programs.html>). In some cases students can also complete these courses through accredited online programs or at community colleges. Students will need to meet with their academic advisor and an advisor in the Pre-Professional Programs and Advising Office about these options.

Generally, students have to complete several application essays, submit transcripts and a current resume, and provide 3 letters of recommendation (at least 2 from academic sources).

Nursing programs carefully review admissions applications with attention placed on the applicant’s understanding of and dedication to the nursing profession, as well as commitment and motivation toward learning. Complete academic records, essays and personal statements, letters of recommendation, and extra-curricular activities are all considered.

It is important that nursing school applicants research the different nursing programs and identify specific program requirements, prerequisite coursework, and application deadlines.

***Choosing a Nursing School***

Choosing which nursing schools you apply to is a personal decision, so relying on any rankings you find may be misleading. Instead, below are questions you should consider as you review each school’s material to make your choices:

* What is the focus of the nursing school’s training, and does it match my interests and needs?
* What is the structure of the curriculum in terms of what is taught and when?
* What academic resources are available?
* What services are available to the students?
* Where is the school located? Does the school give preference to in-state residents?

***Applying to Nursing School***

**Nursing Entrance Exam**

Some nursing programs require applicants to complete an entrance exam as part of their application. The most common entrance exams used are the NET (Nursing Entrance Test), the TEAS (Test of Essential Academic Skills), and the HESI (Health Education Systems, Inc.) Admission Assessment. Students should check with the schools they are applying to and find out which tests, if any, they will be required to take.

**Nursing College Application Service (NursingCAS)**

NursingCAS is the national centralized application service for students applying to registered nursing programs in the U.S. Please note that not all nursing programs participate in NursingCAS and will require applicants to complete and submit separate admissions applications.

Information on NursingCAS requirements and the process of completing a NursingCAS application can be found at: <http://nursingcas.org>

**Managing the Timing of the Application Process**

Most schools of nursing have deadlines in the fall/winter for students hoping to begin programs over the following summer or the following fall.  For example, the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing early decision deadline for the accelerated BSN is November 1st and the regular decision deadline is November 15th.  Students should have a majority of their pre-nursing requirements completed but do not need to have

all of them finished by the time they apply.

**Nursing Related Experience**

While nursing related experience is not always required for admission, it is definitely valuable. Having nursing related experience demonstrates to nursing schools that you have a general understanding of what nursing is and how it applies to patient care. During your pre-professional work, either during the semester or during summer and winter breaks, seek nursing related experience. Work or volunteer in places such as hospitals, community clinics, shelters, summer camps or non-profit healthcare organizations. Keep a record of the time you spend in each nursing related experience and the type of knowledge you gained from it. Nursing schools are not usually interested in a daily account of your experiences, but a log will help you summarize the benefits of your experience and accurately account for the length of time. Working with a nurse will also help you decide if nursing is the career for you.

**Letters of Recommendation/Evaluation**

Nursing program applicants will be required to submit letters of recommendation as part of the application process. Generally, programs will require two to three letters with two recommendations coming from faculty or individuals who can evaluate your academic performance. Applicants should check with the individual nursing schools to confirm their requirements for submitting letters of recommendation. Some programs require recommenders to complete an evaluation form and others will accept recommendation letters.

Keep in mind that an important part of your application consists of letters of recommendation written by people who know you personally. It is your job to solicit the strongest possible letters of recommendation/evaluation.

Select your recommenders to reflect a variety of your strengths. A strongly supportive letter from someone in your major field of study can be very important. If you are taking a tutorial, or have done independent research, ask your supervisor to write a letter for you. Be thoughtful about what each person can contribute.

Whenever possible, ask for your letter in person. Request a brief interview and use the opportunity to discuss your application. We advise you to prepare a statement of why you wish to attend nursing school to help the writer.

Be respectful of demands on your recommender. Allow approximately a month for your letter to be written. Follow-up with a written thank-you note, and later advise them of your admissions decision. Your recommenders are interested in you.

***Financing Nursing School***

Everyone knows that the cost of nursing school is expensive and getting more expensive. In general, nursing schools do not consider ability to pay when selecting applicants. They expect each student will manage with the help of parents, spouse, and other family members to pay for the tuition and costs. Fortunately, however, additional help is available from a variety of other sources, including federal and state government loans, institutional loans and scholarships, and private foundations.

As you complete the application process, your main source of information will be the financial aid offices of the nursing schools themselves. They will help you put together a financial aid package based on your estimated costs and ability to pay. The financial aid is usually an important consideration in finalizing your choice of a nursing school.

***Nursing at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing***

Students who complete a degree in any discipline and who wish to pursue a career in nursing may do so through one of the accelerated second degree program options at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing (JHUSON) located on the East Baltimore Campus with the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions (JHMI).  Please contact the JHUSON for advisement regarding the program offerings, requirements, application process, or to schedule a visit:

Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing  
Office of Admissions and Student Services  
525 North Wolfe Street, Student House  
Baltimore, MD 21205  
Phone: 410-955-7548   Fax: 410-614-7086      
[jhuson@son.jhmi.edu](mailto:jhuson@son.jhmi.edu); [www.nursing.jhu.edu](http://www.nursing.jhu.edu)

To review second degree accelerated BS and BS/MSN options, go to:  <http://nursing.jhu.edu/academics/programs/bachelors/>

***Applying to Schools of Nursing Direct Entry to Combined Programs***

Many schools of nursing, including Johns Hopkins, have an option for students to enter a combined BS-MSN program to earn both a bachelor’s and a master’s in nursing.  Students opting for this program receive both the baccalaureate and master's degree in nursing in approximately the same amount of time, if not less, than receiving only a master's degree in a generic direct entry master's program.  Students interested in this option may need to take the GRE in addition to completing the application steps listed above.

***Nursing Resources***

A number of sites offer information about careers in nursing, preparing for admissions and financial aid for nursing students.

U.S. Nursing School Websites:

<http://www.nlnac.org/forms/directory_search.htm>

American Nurses Association (ANA):

[www.nursingworld.org](http://www.nursingworld.org)

Information Guide for students: <http://www.nursingworld.org/Content/EspeciallyForYou/StudentNurses/GettingStarted.html>

American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC):

[www.nursecredentialing.org](http://www.nursecredentialing.org)

Financial Aid Information: <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/students/financial-aid>

Association of American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN):

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/>

Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing:

[www.nursing.jhu.edu](http://www.nursing.jhu.edu)

National Student Nurses Association:

[www.nsna.org](http://www.nsna.org)

Nursing Career Specialties:

<http://www.allnursingschools.com/nursing-careers/article/careers>

Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program: <http://www.hrsa.gov/loanscholarships/repayment/nursing/>

Nursing Spectrum:

[www.nurse.com](http://www.nurse.com)

Additional resources: <http://www.nurse.com/resources/>

Nursing College Application Service (NursingCAS):

http://nursingcas.org

Johns Hopkins University Academic Cooperative Programs:

<http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/health/cooperative_programs.html>