



VANDERBILT  
School of Nursing



# 2025-2026 VANDERBILT PRE-NURSING UNDERGRADUATE HANDBOOK

**BS/MSN PEABODY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
BA/MSN COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**



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# Pre-Nursing Handbook

This handbook was created for Vanderbilt undergraduates interested in becoming a professional Registered Nurse (RN), or a RN and Advanced Practice Nurse (APRN).

Although Vanderbilt University School of Nursing (VUSN) does not offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree, undergraduate students and individuals with a bachelor's degree in another field may apply for admission to the **Master of Nursing (MN)** degree to become a RN. If you are interested in becoming an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, you may apply for the **MN Prespecialty program, which is the MN degree plus the Post-Master's Certificate (PMC)**. You can also earn a doctoral degree by applying for the **MN degree and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree plus the PMC**.

Our fast-moving, comprehensive MN and MN Prespecialty programs prepare highly motivated students to be RNs who deliver high-quality, comprehensive care in our changing health care environment. The MN program of study will equip you to take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN®) to become a Registered Nurse after completing just four semesters.

If you are interested in becoming an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, you have several educational pathways from which to choose at VUSN. The increase in knowledge and scope of nursing responsibilities, as well as changes in roles, functions, and practice settings, require an advanced practice education that builds on a rich liberal education base and a baccalaureate or master's entry to practice in nursing, like our MN degree.

1. **Who should apply to the MN (MN degree only)?** If you want to enter the workforce to practice as a highly skilled RN, application to the MN degree is the pathway for you. You will complete 4 semesters and graduate as a master's prepared generalist nurse ready to take the NCLEX-RN and practice as a RN.
2. **Who should apply to the MN + PMC Prespecialty program?** If you want to be a highly skilled RN and transition directly to advanced education to become an APRN (nurse practitioner or nurse-midwife), this is the pathway for you. This pathway, which consists of the *MN degree plus a Post-Master's Certificate*, enables you to secure your advanced practice specialty area of choice at the point of admission, and move directly to your specialty level education in the Post-Master's Certificate Program when you complete the



MN degree. You will complete the 4-semester MN program to earn the MN degree, take the NCLEX to become a RN, then complete the 3 – 4 semester Post-Master's Certificate program (nurse-midwifery and dual specialties are longer). You will graduate ready to take the advanced practice certification exam in your selected specialty and practice as an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse.

All students entering with a degree in a field other than nursing are required to live within daily commuting distance of the Vanderbilt campus for the entirety of the Master of Nursing program.

Students entering the *MN Prespecialty* with an undergraduate or higher degree in a field other than nursing are eligible to apply to one of the following specialties:

- [Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner](#) \*
- [Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner](#) \*
- [Family Nurse Practitioner](#) \*
- [Nurse-Midwifery](#) (hybrid format) ◇
- [Nurse-Midwifery/Family Nurse Practitioner Dual Focus](#) (hybrid format) ◇
- [Pediatric Nurse Practitioner – Primary Care](#) \*
- [Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner \(Lifespan\)](#) \*
- [Women's Health/Gender-Related Nurse Practitioner](#) \*
- [Women's Health/Gender-Related Nurse Practitioner/Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Dual Focus](#) \*

\* The Post-Master's Certificate specialty component may be completed either with clinical placements within a 150-mile radius of Vanderbilt campus or with clinical placements outside of the Middle Tennessee area (OMTA). As a rule, there are more spots available for applicants requesting OMTA placement.

◇ Required to complete the MN degree within daily commuting distance of Vanderbilt campus. The Post-Master's Certificate or Doctor of Nursing Practice plus Post-Master's Certificate will require blocks of time on Vanderbilt campus, but all students must travel to OMTA clinical sites.



The MN program requires strong commitment and continual dedication to learning. There is much to consider as you explore the options for entering nursing.

This handbook is updated annually but is not intended as a comprehensive guide to the MN degree program. Pre-Nursing students should visit the Vanderbilt School of Nursing website at <https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu> for detailed information about admission requirements.

Pre-Nursing students should:

1. Complete the online admission information form so that the School of Nursing Admissions Office is aware of your interest in nursing, <https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/admissions/request-info/>.
2. Become a member of the Pre-Nursing Society (PNS).
3. Meet with one of the VUSN-PNS advisors to discuss program questions and to select nursing prerequisite courses.
4. Attend an online or in-person information session prior to applying to the program. Sign up here <https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/admissions/index.php>; registration is required.
5. Pre-Nursing students are encouraged to send questions to VUSN Admissions via email ([vusn-admissions@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:vusn-admissions@vanderbilt.edu)).

## Pre-Nursing Society

The Pre-Nursing Society is a Vanderbilt Student Organization open to any student interested in nursing. The organization holds monthly meetings at the Vanderbilt University School of Nursing. This organization's main goals are to explore nursing and increase understanding of the role of the Advanced Practice Registered Nurse. This will be accomplished through:

- Participation in presentations, panel discussions, community service and other pertinent events;
- Exposure to clinical settings via 1-1 interviews with, or shadowing, a Registered Nurse or Advanced Practice Registered Nurse. Students are



responsible for arranging their shadowing experience in consultation with their Pre-Nursing advisor. Contact the Pre-Nursing academic advisors, Brandee Madden, [brandee.j.madden@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:brandee.j.madden@vanderbilt.edu); or Dr. Vicki Harris at [vicki.s.harris@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:vicki.s.harris@vanderbilt.edu).

- Networking opportunities in the nursing community; and
- Liaison activities between undergraduate and graduate nursing students.

## 2025-2026 Officers

- Co-Presidents: Briana Washington ([briana.m.washington@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:briana.m.washington@vanderbilt.edu)) & Olivia Seong ([olivia.j.seong@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:olivia.j.seong@vanderbilt.edu))
- Vice President: Jakob Valle ([jakob.a.valle@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jakob.a.valle@vanderbilt.edu))
- Secretary: Madison Bold ([madison.a.bold@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:madison.a.bold@vanderbilt.edu))
- Treasurer: Viridiana Camarillo ([viridiana.camarillo@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:viridiana.camarillo@vanderbilt.edu))
- Mentorship Coordinator: Brooke Chepenik ([brooke.l.chepenik@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:brooke.l.chepenik@vanderbilt.edu))
- Community Service Chair: Irene Choung ([irene.chuong@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:irene.chuong@vanderbilt.edu))

# Pre-Nursing Options and FAQs

Any Vanderbilt undergraduate student interested in nursing at Vanderbilt and meeting admission requirements may apply for admission.

## Pre-Nursing Studies at Peabody College

Peabody students interested in nursing typically choose one of these undergraduate majors:

1. **Child Development**—The Department of Psychology and Human Development. This major is recommended for students interested in pediatric primary care, family or psychiatric mental health.



2. **Human and Organizational Development/Health and Human Services Track**—The Department of Human and Organizational Development, HOD. This major is strongly recommended for students interested in nursing from a community (including counseling and working in health/human service organizations), organizational, administrative, or public health perspective or students who are unsure of their specialty area.
3. **Child Studies**—For information, contact Dr. Vicki Harris at [vicki.s.harris@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:vicki.s.harris@vanderbilt.edu).

## Pre-Nursing Studies in the College of Arts and Science

Students enrolled in the College of A&S and interested in a career in nursing can select any undergraduate major. However, the undergraduate program of studies must include satisfactory completion of human anatomy and physiology I and II, microbiology, nutrition, statistics and lifespan development. See section of prerequisite courses for details.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Pre-Nursing

- **What should be my major?** There is not a preferred major for applicants applying to the MN or MN Prespecialty programs. All students need to complete a BA/BS degree and prerequisite courses prior to enrolling. There are a variety of undergraduate majors that naturally complement the nursing profession. Examples include psychology, women's studies, medicine, health and society, child development or child studies. Students interested in the Pre-Nursing program at Peabody College usually major in Human and Organizational Development, Child Development or Child Studies. Students in Arts and Science often consider Medicine, Health and Society.
- **Should I apply to the MN or the MN Prespecialty?** If you are interested in practicing as a Registered Nurse for your career, or you are interested in practicing as a Registered Nurse before you return to school to become an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (or other options), the MN program would be a great fit for you, as it is designed for those interested in entering nursing as Registered Nurses.

Select the Master of Nursing Prespecialty if you are only, or primarily, interested in becoming an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse such as a nurse practitioner or nurse-midwife.



Regardless of which you choose, the overall Master of Nursing program will prepare you as a well-qualified, master's prepared RN. It will also provide you with advanced skills in interprofessional teamwork, health equity, clinical judgment, informatics, and prepare you with the foundational knowledge and experience needed to function as a clinical teacher or preceptor for new nurses once you are in practice or as an instructor for nursing students at a school of nursing.

- **If I choose to continue my education by getting a Post-Master's Certificate after I receive my MN degree, which specialty area should I apply to?** You are eligible to apply to one of these nursing specialties: Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner (AGACNP), Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner (AGPCNP), Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP), Nurse-Midwifery (NM), Nurse-Midwifery/FNP (dual specialty), Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP), Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Primary Care (PNP-PC), Women's Health/Gender-Related Nurse Practitioner (WHGRNP) or WHGRNP/AGPCNP (dual specialty). There are additional specialties available after obtaining RN clinical experience (e.g., Neonatal Nurse Practitioner (NNP), and Pediatric Nurse Practitioner-Acute Care (PNP-AC)). A nurse anesthesia specialty is in development and will also require nursing experience.

If you are not sure what you would like to specialize in, it is important to investigate the diverse options to make your specialty choice. It is recommended that you interview an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse in the area of interest as well as spend time volunteering in hospital and clinic settings to learn more about health care delivery and your areas of interest.

For information on the specialties, visit the Vanderbilt School of Nursing webpage at <https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu> and schedule a visit with an admissions officer. You can find links to schedule your visit by visiting the [VUSN Admissions webpage](#):

- **When should I apply?** Undergraduate students should complete their application by ***October 15 of their final year***. Students admitted to the MN degree program at VUSN can complete all course requirements to be eligible for the registered nurse licensing exam in four semesters. They can then practice as a RN while also considering when and where to continue to advance their education. Those who select the MN Prespecialty program also complete all course requirements to be eligible for the NCLEX in four



semesters, but they then continue to their specialty education and receive a Post-Master's Certificate in 3 to 4 semesters (longer for dual programs).

- **How do I learn more about the Pre-Nursing options at Vanderbilt?** There are several ways to learn more about the Pre-Nursing options at Vanderbilt:
  1. Visit the [Pre-Nursing Studies](#) webpage.
  2. Join the Vanderbilt Pre-Nursing Society. Contact the PNS Co-presidents, Briana Washington ([briana.m.washington@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:briana.m.washington@vanderbilt.edu)) & Olivia Seong ([olivia.j.seong@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:olivia.j.seong@vanderbilt.edu)), for more information.
  3. Attend information sessions. Programs host different information sessions both virtually and in person throughout each term. Please visit the [Nursing Admissions](#) webpage for a list of all upcoming events and whether they will be held virtually or in-person.
  4. Set up a meeting with the Pre-Nursing Advisor, Brandee Madden, [brandee.j.madden@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:brandee.j.madden@vanderbilt.edu).
  5. Make an appointment to meet with your admissions officer. You can meet virtually, in person, or over the phone. Based on your preferences, you can register to attend on the [Nursing Admissions](#) website.

## International Applicants

Are you an international applicant who needs an I-20 or DS-2019 issued to study in the United States? The Master of Nursing (MN) does satisfy the requirements for F-1 or J-1 study. However, due to federal guidelines, the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), Post-Master's Certificate (PMC), and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs do not satisfy the requirements for F-1 or J-1 study. The federal regulations restrict the number of courses that can be delivered via an online format within a program of study for F-1 and J-1 students. As these programs have a significant online component, the educational format is not compatible with the structure required by the federal government for F-1 and J-1 students. Please contact [Vanderbilt International Student & Scholar Services](#) for more information.



# Advice for Students, Clinical Placement, Application Information

## Advice for Students by Students

This handbook has been designed to offer you a brief overview of Vanderbilt School of Nursing and the admission process. The following are recommendations from our past and current students for consideration as you explore your interest in the health care field:

1. Volunteer, interview, or shadow.

Volunteering at Vanderbilt University Medical Center or Monroe Carroll Junior Children's Hospital is a wonderful way to explore different fields of health care and immerse oneself in the patient environment. Volunteering at one of the two Vanderbilt Hospitals is a minimal time commitment, but a unique and rewarding experience. College students can volunteer in the school year and summer. Contact Volunteer services for both hospitals at [volunteer.services@vumc.org](mailto:volunteer.services@vumc.org) or by phone (615)-322-2379, for more information and an application. ***You will also receive volunteer and community service opportunities through the Vanderbilt PNS organization.*** In addition, interviewing or shadowing a nurse, nurse practitioner, or nurse-midwife is a valuable experience. If you know a nurse in your community, request an interview to discuss their role. Contact a PNS nursing advisor for information about potential interviews with nurses or Advanced Practice Registered Nurses in the local area. A shadowing program for PNS members is available.

2. CPR certification/training is required prior to beginning the first semester of your nursing program. Contact the American Heart Association (615) 256-1818 for information. Remember to ask for the "health care provider course" when you sign up, as this is a requirement for VUSN (includes infant, child, and adult CPR).



## Required Prerequisite Courses

No matter what your undergraduate major is, the following courses, found at this link <https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/programs/prenursing/>, are required as prerequisites for matriculating into the MN and MN Prespecialty programs. Prerequisites must be from an accredited college or university. Completion of the prerequisites is required by the time classes begin but not required at the time you apply:

- 3 hours of Statistics
- Microbiology: BSCI 1110 (3 credits). If you have taken any higher-level Microbiology courses, you have met the Microbiology prerequisite requirement.
- \*\*Human Anatomy & Physiology (BSCI 2101 & BSCI 3101) (4 credits each) Fall/ Spring; must take BSCI 2101 before BSCI 3101. Also, *you must complete BSCI 1509 or 1510 and 1511 before enrolling in Anatomy and Physiology courses. Meet with the nursing advisor to discuss your options.*
- \*\*Nutrition: MHS 1600 Introduction to Nutrition and Health for a Changing World (3 credits). Please consult the [Vanderbilt Course Catalog](#) for course availability.
- Developmental Psychology: HOD 1250 or PSY-PC 1250.

## Clinical Placement

The VUSN Clinical Placement Office works collaboratively with faculty, program directors, and students to ensure all students have productive clinical experiences. Clinical sites and preceptors are chosen to provide students with clinical experiences consistent with course and certification requirements and the school's mission. Due to regulatory requirements or a lack of available and appropriate preceptors, VUSN may not be able to accommodate clinical placements in all areas of the country. See further details at <https://nursing.vanderbilt.edu/current-students/clinical-placement/>.

## MN and MN Prespecialty Clinical Rotations

During the MN and MN Prespecialty programs, all students are required to live within daily commuting distance of Vanderbilt campus. Students will be placed in group clinical experiences in the Middle Tennessee area (MTA). These group experiences may be in a hospital or community setting.



# Application Process

Vanderbilt University School of Nursing seeks to matriculate students with an array of life experiences and the potential to provide significant contributions to the nursing profession. We believe a cross-cultural learning community fosters the development of exceptional leaders, educators, clinicians, informaticists and researchers. A holistic approach is used to evaluate each candidate based on academic performance, professional goals, personal characteristics, leadership potential, commitment to service and support of cultural connectedness.

To assist in the application process and to ensure a quality application, become familiar with the [admissions process](#) early. Before starting an application, it is strongly recommended that you attend an information session offered by the School of Nursing Admissions Office. Whether you are applying or interested in learning what the application entails, this section will explain the requirements and provide recommendations and suggestions on how to create a well-rounded application. The MN and MN Prespecialty programs admit students for a fall or spring start. The fall application process opens each year in August and the spring application cycle opens in May. The fall 2026 priority review date is October 15, 2025. The online application is available on the School of Nursing webpage at <https://apply.vanderbilt.edu/apply/>.

Applications are holistically reviewed based on the following factors:

- Statement of Purpose
- Responses to application questions
- Official Transcripts
- Three Letters of Recommendation

## **Statement of Purpose and Responses to Application Questions**

All applicants should treat the Statement of Purpose and responses to application questions as seriously as an in-person interview. Assist the faculty reviewers with understanding more about you, why you want to enter the nursing profession and your plans. Respond to the questions clearly, provide examples and use your best quality writing. Communicating a comprehensive understanding of the program for which you are applying is beneficial.



For **MN** applicants, your Statement of Purpose and responses to application questions should address why you want to become a registered nurse. For **MN Prespecialty** applicants, address why you want to be a nurse-midwife or nurse-practitioner in a specific specialty. For both programs, you may want to include populations you would like to serve, the type of care you would like to provide, or how this program will help you meet your professional goals.

## Statement of Purpose

The Statement of Purpose (750 words maximum) is submitted as part of your online application and should reflect your understanding of the role of the registered nurse or advanced practice registered nurse and your interest in a particular patient population.

## Responses to Application Questions

Responses are submitted as part of the online application. Each question is to be answered in 100 – 250 words. Both the writing style (grammar, punctuation, spelling, word use, etc.) and the content of your responses will be reviewed as part of the overall application.

## Suggestions

The application questions require you to examine yourself and your role as a future professional. It is highly recommended that you ask yourself these questions early and begin to cultivate answers. There is no set length for each response, or right or wrong answer. The key is to write concise, well-reasoned answers that demonstrate your individuality and your ability to maturely handle the demands of a rigorous graduate program.

Please consider the following points:

- Include your **achievements, personal characteristics, or special talents** that contribute to your academic abilities and future in nursing including **experiences** you have had working with underserved or at-risk populations.
- Provide a comprehensive list of your activities/experiences in the Experiences section of the application.
- ***This is a competitive program with limited enrollment so consider how you might differentiate yourself from other applicants.***



## Official Transcripts

Applicants should request electronic transcripts using the Vanderbilt YES system. Please **do not** have paper copies mailed. **Please note:** Applicants must submit official transcripts from all post high school studies. To avoid errors, start your online application at <https://apply.vanderbilt.edu/apply/> before submitting transcripts.

Students admitted to this program must have earned an undergraduate grade point average of at least a “B,” or a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. **The average GPA is approximately 3.5.**

## Letters of Recommendation: Submitted Online

All applicants must provide three letters of academic or professional reference. Your letters should be submitted by faculty members, professional colleagues, or job supervisors who can evaluate your potential for success in a graduate program. It is required that at least one of your recommenders hold a master’s or higher degree. Since you are a current VU student, it is strongly recommended that at least two letters come from VU faculty familiar with your academic ability.

Make sure the people completing your references have direct knowledge of your abilities and keep in mind, more is not better; quality of the reference is more important as to their knowledge of your academic or work performance. Titles are not as important as the people who know you well. You will need to provide a valid email address of your recommenders. References from peers, family members, or friends are not appropriate recommendations. The online application system will show you how to send letters electronically.

## Seamless Transition

All MN graduates are eligible for seamless transition to a Post-Master’s Certificate program or a Doctor of Nursing Practice plus Post-Master’s Certificate. The purpose of the PMC study program is to provide an educational route to an advanced nursing practice specialization. While the PMC will meet the advanced practice specialty requirements, the stacking of credits available to those who attend the MN program makes completion of a doctorate very efficient. More information can be provided during information sessions or during your program of study.

The Doctor of Nursing Practice program prepares leaders in advanced nursing practice to bring evidence-based knowledge into the practice arena, improve health care outcomes, and strengthen the leadership role in guiding complex care delivery and nursing education. Vanderbilt’s MN program provides an



opportunity to seamlessly progress from the MN program to the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program plus PMC. Seamless progression allows students to work as Registered Nurses while completing the DNP plus PMC program in five semesters (for most specialties). See [DNP program details](#).

# Faculty & Staff Contacts

## **A&S Students**

Dr. Roger Moore, Senior Associate Dean & Director of Undergraduate Education  
(615) 322-2844

[roger.e.moore@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:roger.e.moore@vanderbilt.edu)

## **Child Development and Child Studies Majors**

Pre-Nursing Advisor

Professor Vicki Harris

(615) 343-1896

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## **HOD Majors**

Professor Kimberly Bess

(615) 343-7946

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## **Vanderbilt School of Nursing (VUSN)**

Pre-Nursing Advisor

Professor Brandee Madden

[brandee.j.madden@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:brandee.j.madden@vanderbilt.edu)

## **VUSN Admissions Office**

(615) 322-3800

[vusn-admissions@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:vusn-admissions@vanderbilt.edu)

Ernie Rushing, Associate Dean of Enrollment, Alumni and Student Affairs

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[courtney.s.peterson@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:courtney.s.peterson@vanderbilt.edu)

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