The Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program prepares nurses for roles as family nurse practitioners (FNPs) or nurse educators (NEs) in healthcare or academic settings. Graduates formulate clinical, administrative, or policy decisions to promote health among patients, families, or communities along the continuum of wellness and illness. The MSN curriculum is based on competencies and guidelines established by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), Quality and Safety Education for Advanced Nursing Practice (QSEN), National League for Nursing’s (NLN), and the National Task Force for Quality Nurse Practitioner Education (NTF). Graduates of the MSN FNP track are eligible to take the national FNP certification examination and are eligible for state licensure as FNPs. Graduates of the MSN NE track are eligible to take the national certified nurse educator (CNE) examination. Graduates may also pursue doctoral education.

MSN students choose one of two tracks as their substantive area of study: FNP or NE. MSN courses are delivered on-line, allowing students to reside in their home communities. However, students may choose to travel for completion of clinical hours (e.g. rural health), objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs), and graduate program student intensive (GPSI) sessions.

MSN coursework, regardless of track, includes advanced pharmacology, advanced pathophysiology, advanced health assessment, nursing theory, and evidence-based practice. The FNP track includes coursework in primary care across the lifespan (pediatrics, adults, older adults) and care of rural/underserved populations. Students in the MSN FNP track are required to complete a minimum of 700 clinical hours in direct care.

The NE track includes coursework in curriculum evaluation and design, technology in the classroom, and teaching strategies. Students in the MSN NE cognate are required to complete a minimum of 250 clinical hours, 90 of which must be in direct care. Clinical rotations vary but may include academic settings, and inpatient, long-term care, community-based, and primary care sites.

MSN coursework ends with a capstone project during which the student partners with health care and/or academic stakeholders to develop, implement, or evaluate a variety of projects. Students present their capstone projects publicly prior to graduation and submit their original work for presentation at area conferences.

Admission to the MSN Program

Students must have the following for the duration of their time in the Graduate Nursing Program.

- Unencumbered registered nurse (RN) license from a US state or territory.
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for health care providers.
- Malpractice insurance as a graduate nursing student. FNP students must hold malpractice insurance as a FNP student upon the start of their clinical rotations.
- Criminal background check.
- Drug screen.
- Current immunizations. Exemptions are accepted by the program, based on the state of Colorado’s policies outlined at https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/vaccine-exemptions. Immunization status may be evaluated by health care organizations prior to student placement.
- Evidence of training for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
- Evidence of training in cultural competency.

General Policies

Up to nine credit hours may be taken as a non-degree seeking status and later applied to program requirements. Up to 18 credits of applicable courses, with a grade of “B” or higher, may be transferred from an accredited institution. Additional information may be found in the Transfer Credit section.

Requirements

The Department of Health Sciences offers two Master of Science in Nursing cognate options. See the programs below for complete overviews of all requirements, important information, and suggested course sequencing.

- Family Nurse Practitioner, Nursing (MSN)
- Nursing Education, Nursing (MSN)