



## **Nurse Anesthesia Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

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### **Is the program currently accredited?**

The USM Nurse Anesthesia Program (NAP) received initial accreditation by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Program effective October 12, 2012. This signifies that all of the procedural steps have been successfully completed up to this point in time. This decision recognizes that the program will provide a graduate level curriculum leading to the award of a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree. Accordingly, the program just completed its last onsite visit in Spring 2019 and in Fall 2019 was granted a 4 year accreditation by the Council on Accreditation of the AANA.

The USM School of Nursing is fully accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and The University of Southern Mississippi is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and The Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL).

### **What degree plan does the USM Nurse Anesthesia Program offer?**

The program will provide a graduate level curriculum leading to the award of a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree. The curriculum is designed as a post-baccalaureate to Doctor of Nursing Practice (BSN-DNP) with an emphasis in anesthesia.

### **How long is the USM NAP?**

The USM NAP is a 36 consecutive month integrated curriculum. The Council on Accreditation requires that doctoral programs be a minimum of 36 months.

### **Why should I choose a DNP program?**

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) have adopted the entry-to-practice doctorate degree requirement by 2025 for Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists. Many nurse anesthesia programs have already made the transition to a doctoral program or are in the process of transition.

The DNP title is the accepted title for the terminal practice doctorate degree in nursing. A CRNA with a DNP will have the credentials necessary to not only function in the clinical setting, but also assume leadership position in healthcare systems, and to participate in academia and research.

### **How many students will be accepted?**

There will be approximately 20 applicants accepted into the program each year.

### **May I apply for or receive advanced standing in the USM Nurse Anesthesia Program if I have previously attended another nurse anesthesia program?**

Advanced standing is not granted to students even if they have attended another nurse anesthesia program. The BSN-DNP program is a uniquely integrated curriculum that builds on past education and experiences and progresses from basic to complex. All students must complete the program in its entirety in the sequence listed.

No students will be admitted if they have attended another anesthesia program with the exception of military transfer (Spouse or Self). No exceptions.

BSN-DNP applicants that have previously attended another nurse anesthesia program must meet all the admission requirements of the USM NAP. All applicants will be considered within the usual admission cycle; off-cycle admissions are unavailable.

### **How many years of practice as a licensed Registered Nurse are required? What type of clinical experience is preferred?**

Applicants must be **currently working full time** as a licensed registered nurse in an area of intensive care nursing (ICU, CVICU, SICU, Neurosurgical ICU, MICU, etc.) for **at least one and half years** (two years preferred) at the time of application. Level III neonatal and pediatric ICU experience is accepted; however, additional part time adult experience is needed to supplement experience.

Areas that **do not** meet ICU requirements are: CCU, PACU, OR Surgery, step-down units, and emergency room. Individual consideration will be given to these areas that serve as an "overflow" unit for acutely ill patients requiring intensive care nursing as described in the previous paragraph.

Applicants must have experience in continuous ECG monitoring, invasive monitoring, vasoactive infusion management, and ventilator management.

### **Is the CCRN certification required?**

The CCRN certification is required for admission to the program.

### **How do I apply to the USM Nurse Anesthesia Program?**

Online application forms are available. The applicant must apply to the USM Graduate School and complete the USM CONHP NAP application found online through the graduate school.

## **When is the deadline for applications?**

The deadline for applications to be submitted is **June 1<sup>st</sup>** of the prior year to which admission is being sought. Supporting documents from external sources (GRE Scores, official transcripts, reference letters, pending BSN completion degrees, etc.) must also be received by the Graduate School on or before the June 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. Incomplete applications will not be considered after the deadline. Application fees must be paid in full to the USM Graduate School and the Nurse Anesthesia Program for the application to be considered complete.

**To be considered for an interview**, the nurse anesthesia application fee **must be received by June 1<sup>st</sup>**.

A payment of \$100 application fee must be mailed to :  
Ms. Cindy Sheffield  
118 College Drive #5095  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406

## **Are all applicants granted an interview?**

Only complete applications will be reviewed. The applications process is very competitive therefore; the applicants will be screened and only the top most qualified candidates will be granted an interview with the NAP Admissions Committee. **The program reserves the right to decline interviews based on previous interviews or contact.**

## **When can I expect to be notified if I am granted an interview?**

Applicants selected for an interview will be notified in early June. Interviews will be in the month of June or early July. Notification of acceptance can be expected after interviews within 2 weeks. An exception to this is due to the COVID-19 issue and may delay notification.

## **If I am accepted into the program will I have to make a deposit to secure my position?**

Yes, applicants that are offered a position in the program are required to make a \$1500 deposit to secure their position. The **deposit must be received within two weeks** of our offer, or the position will be forfeited to an applicant on the alternate list. The deposit will be credited toward the student's tuition at the time of matriculation. All deposits and application fees are non-refundable.

## **Who can I contact at USM regarding the applications process?**

Please utilize the link to the USM Graduate School for information regarding the application process. The Office of Admissions should be contacted with questions regarding the application process or the status of your application file.

Questions regarding specific information about the USM NAP can be directed to the NAP by contacting Ms. Cindy Sheffield via email [cynthia.sheffeld@usm.edu](mailto:cynthia.sheffeld@usm.edu) or by

phone at 601-266-5454.

### **Does your program follow the academic calendar?**

For the first didactic year, the program primarily follows the academic calendar with the exceptions of announced meetings or activities. Graduate students in a professional program are often required to attend events outside of the normal class hours. It is an expectation of the program. Once in the program and when clinical rotations begin, we do not follow the academic calendar.

### **Is there a part-time plan of study?**

No. The only plan of study in the nurse anesthesia program is full-time. The program is 36 consecutive months which includes didactic and clinical components.

### **Can I work while I am enrolled in the program?**

Employment is strongly discouraged for the BSN-DNP students because of the rigorous academic demands. If students seek outside employment, they must remain in academic good standing to proceed in the program. Students are prohibited from working in any capacity that involves the administration of anesthesia.

### **Admission Requirements**

Applicants to the BSN-DNP program in nurse anesthesia must meet the admissions criteria of the USM Graduate School in addition to the criteria set by the USM Nurse Anesthesia Program. Admission criteria to the USM Graduate School can be found on their website.

To be considered for admission into the BSN-to-DNP Nurse Anesthesia Program the applicant must fulfill the following requirements:

1. Bachelor of Science or Master of Science in Nursing from a fully accredited, National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, college or university in the United States. BSN must have been completed at the time of application.
2. Cumulative undergraduate grade point average of 3.0 or better (where A = 4.0). To be competitive, a GPA overall of 3.2 is strongly encouraged.
3. Completion of the Graduate Record Examination (verbal, quantitative, and analytical writing sections) within the past five years. An analytical score of at least 3.0 on the GRE is required.
4. Must be currently working full time, as a licensed RN, in an area of intensive care nursing for at least one and half years (preferably 2 years) at time of application.
5. Completion of an approved graduate statistics course achieving a grade of B or better, . **This course may be taken after admission to the program** in the fall via online from USM or another accredited university. The course needs to be a 600 level course or higher. If you have taken graduate statistics, the course must have been completed within the past 5 years.)
6. A current, unencumbered license to practice nursing in any state with eligibility for licensure in Mississippi.

7. Proof of current certification of advanced cardiac life support (ACLS), pediatric advanced life support (PALS), basic life support (BLS), and critical care nurses certification (CCRN).
8. Completion of the official application materials and payment of application fees by the stated deadline. (Graduate school fee, NAP application fee mailed to Cindy Sheffield)
9. Personal interview or video interview with Admissions Committee (if invited).
10. Proof of immunization against hepatitis B and MMR, recent health examination, and TB skin test yearly.
11. Criminal background check and drug screening upon matriculation into program.

### **Is an undergraduate degree in nursing required in order to apply to the program?**

Yes, applicants must possess a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (at the time of application) from a fully accredited, National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, college or university in the United States to be eligible for acceptance into the BSN-DNP program.

### **Are pre-requisite courses required for admission?**

Yes. An approved graduate level statistics course is required as a prerequisite to the NAP. Students may enroll and be granted Conditional Admissions in order to take DPH 623 as a pre-requisite. Conditional Admission does not mean that the student has been accepted into the USM NAP, nor does it imply that the applicant will automatically be accepted. If accepted into the NAP, an official transcript documenting completion of the course (DPH 623) with a "B" or higher must be submitted prior to enrollment in the USM NAP. See the link to the USM Graduate School application to get information on registering for this course.

### **What if I have already completed a graduate level statistics course within the last five years?**

If you have already completed a graduate level statistics course with a "B" or better, an official transcript and course syllabus that includes course content must be submitted for review prior to transferring the credit.

### **Are there other approved graduate level statistics courses that will be accepted?**

An official transcript and course description that includes course content will be required in order to determine if the substitution will be permitted. Biostatistics is preferred. Please visit the website for program and curriculum updates.

### **Will I be required to submit an essay with my application?**

Yes. You will be required to submit a **two page** double-spaced essay (Times Roman 12 font) articulating the reason you have chosen nurse anesthesia as a career, your personal/professional accomplishments, your strengths and weaknesses, and your short/long range professional goals. **Only the first two pages will be read if your essay goes over the limit.**

### **Is there a score requirement on the GRE?**

It is recommended that to be competitive an applicant should have a GRE score of:

- 300 or higher (on the 130-170 scale) when combining the verbal and quantitative scores. Competition is difficult. A score of approximately 150 in each verbal and quantitative and a 4.0 analytical will be competitive.
- Analytical Writing Score of 4.0 or higher, a lower analytical score may be accepted.

### **How old can the GRE scores be?**

The GRE exam scores must be within the past five years.

### **Should I spend time with a CRNA observing cases in the operating room?**

You must contact a CRNA and arrange a time to observe them administering anesthesia. This should be done early in the application process to allow you time to understand the role of the CRNA, the profession to which you are applying. The CRNA that you shadow will also need to provide you with a letter of recommendation that references the number of hours you have observed the CRNA, as well as the types of cases you observed. We prefer CRNAs to be shadowed rather than anesthesiologists (MD anesthesia providers). Ask questions about the role of the CRNA as well. We prefer 24 hours of shadowing or more.

Additionally, you will be required to upload a shadowing log that indicates dates, times, and hours spent observing the CRNA as part of your application. A minimum of 16 hours observation is required, with 24 being preferred.

### **Must I have a Mississippi license to apply to the program?**

Applicants must have a valid unencumbered/unrestricted RN license in one of the 50 United States which must be submitted at the time of application. A Mississippi RN license is not required at the time of **application**. Enrolled students must possess and submit a valid, unencumbered MS RN license **prior to admission in January by November 1st** and at all times during the program. A compact license accepted by the Mississippi Board of Nursing will be accepted.

### **What is the cost of tuition for the USM Nurse Anesthesia Program?**

Cost of tuition to attend the NAP can be accessed on the USM Business Office website.

### **Is financial aid available?**

Yes. Information on financial aid can be found on the Office of Financial Aid USM website. Prior to Starting the program, the FAFSA will need to be completed (typically the fall prior to admission). Most of our students do have financial aid and there are a number of options available. The Office of Financial Aid at USM can help you with your choices.

### **Are there additional expenses associated with the USM Nurse Anesthesia Program?**

Additional fees and expenses are associated with the program. A program fee of approximately \$500 per semester is charged for graduate nurse anesthesia students. This fee is covered by financial aid and covers most all of your program incurred expenses (software, parking, liability insurance, course fee, graduation fees, etc). Travel and housing at distant clinical sites beginning in the second year of the program is expected and is not covered in the program fees. These are the responsibility of the student.

### **Do I need to live in Hattiesburg?**

Honestly, yes or very nearby. Distant travel has not worked out well for us in the past. Students struggle with finding time to study when traveling 1-3 hours a day. It is noticeable in their grades after a time. It is not required but highly recommended. You will be held to standards as if you are living locally and travel or vehicle related issues are not an excuse to miss class or tardiness.

### **How many clinical sites are affiliated with the USM NAP? Will I be required to rotate to all of the sites?**

The USM NAP has 17 clinical sites. This number may change as more sites are added and any are deleted. The NAP boasts a variety of settings that include two Level II Trauma Centers, two military hospitals, CRNA-only practices, ambulatory surgery centers, and office-based anesthesia. Additional sites will be sought if there is an increase in the number of students enrolled in the program to ensure that all students meet the minimum number of required cases set by the Council on Accreditation of Educational Programs. Students should expect to rotate to all of the clinical sites. Students will be assigned to the clinical sites in order to maximize learning opportunities.

### **Will I be expected to cover call shifts and Holidays while in clinical?**

Yes, to meet the accreditation requirements the NAP has provided opportunities for students to obtain clinical experiences outside the regular clinical schedule by a call experience or other mechanism. Students will be assigned to call shifts and rotational shifts (e.g. 3-11, 11-7, weekends, and Holidays) to maximize clinical learning experiences.

### **Will I be allowed to select my clinical sites?**

No. Sites are assigned. This is to ensure all students have equal clinical experiences.

### **Will the students be afforded vacation time during the 36 months?**

Yes, you will be assigned vacation beginning in your second year (when you start clinical). During your first year, you will follow the academic calendar and will be "off" quite a bit. You are expected to schedule your vacations and trips during this time. Once in clinical, you are assigned vacation, one week in May, one week in August, and one week in December for the two clinical years. You will be expected to take your vacation and travels during this time. You will have 5 additional days that are to be used for interviewing and other administrative purposes that may be taken in your last two years.

### **What if I am sick?**

You must visit a healthcare provider and get a medical release to return to class. This is a professional program and "call ins" are not acceptable. You are expected to be in class on class days and in clinical on clinical days. You will be assigned make up days in clinical and they may be outside the normal shift you are assigned or on weekends. This is at the discretion of program administration.

You will not be granted time off or excused when class is held. Classes are mandatory. The volume of material covered in one 3 hour class is equivalent to 6 hours of study and 3 hours of reading.

What if your child is sick? These arrangements need to be made before you enter the program. We have no course for remediation in this graduate program and family illness is not an acceptable excuse for missing class or clinical. Make sure you have strong back ups for child care, family obligations, etc. Your entire family needs to know this is a priority and you will need help.

**Is health insurance required while attending the NAP?**

Yes, students are required to have health insurance during the entire program of study. Failure to maintain will result in dismissal.

**Is liability insurance required while enrolling in the NAP?**

Yes, students are required to have liability insurance before entering the clinical setting (by October of the year they are admitted to the program). It is the student's responsibility to maintain a current policy, unexpired, during the entire clinical portion of the program.

The program pays for the insurance through program fees but it is the student responsibility to complete forms and renew their insurance online.