Nurse Anesthesia Program
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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 will be scheduled for its next onsite visit in Spring 2019 followed by the Council’s review of the program for continued accreditation in Fall 2019.

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.

The following links will provide additional information regarding the Doctor of Nursing Practice

**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.

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 year (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, 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. It must be completed by the time of application.

**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 the USM NAP. Use the following links to access the applications to the USM
Graduate School, which will direct the applicant to the application instructions and required forms.

http://apps.usm.edu/graduate-school/grad-school-apps/?utm_source=top-nav&utm_medium=web&utm_content=grad-apply&utm_campaign=admissions

https://www.usm.edu/nursing-health-professions

When is the deadline for applications?

The deadline for applications to be submitted is June 1st 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 1st 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.

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 mid June. Notification of acceptance can be expected in June/July.

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 http://apps.usm.edu/graduate-school/grad-school-apps/ 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.sheffield@usm.edu or by phone at 601-266-5454.
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. Students are expected to refrain from working during the program.

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. Follow link below to access the Graduate School Bulletin. http://www.usm.edu/sites/default/files/groups/office-registrar/pdf/2011-2012_complete_grad.pdf

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).
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 year (preferably 2 years) at time of application.
5. Completion of an approved graduate statistics course achieving a grade of B or better, unless applicant already holds an MSN. (The course must have been completed within the past 5 years.) This course may be taken the fall AFTER admission.
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 (grad school and nurse anesthesia program) by the stated deadline.
9. Personal interview with Admissions Committee (if invited).
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 is 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.

http://apps.usm.edu/graduate-school/grad-school-apps/

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 (600 level or higher) 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.

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
- 1000 or higher (on the 200-800 scale) when combining the verbal and quantitative scores
• Analytical Writing Score of 4.0 or higher

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. 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.

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 24 hours observation is required, with 2 more 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. If you do not obtain your license by November 1st, you will forfeit your spot in the program.

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

Cost of tuition to attend the NAP can be accessed at:
https://www.usm.edu/financial-aid/cost-attendance
In addition to this, there is a program fee of approximately $550 per semester.

Is financial aid available?

Graduate School Funding Resources which include financial aid in the form of grants, loans, and scholarships can be found at https://www.usm.edu/financial-aid

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

Additional fees and expenses are associated with the program. This is approximately $550 per semester at this time (subject to change).

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 14 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. This is subject to change.

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

Yes, the students will be afforded 25 days of vacation/sick/personal leave/interview (etc.) time during the 36 months.

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

Yes, students are required to have health insurance during the entire program of study.

**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, un-lapsed, during the entire clinical portion of the program.