BYU College of Nursing

Graduate Degree Pathways for BSN Students

What Graduate Degrees Can I Get With My BSN?

This guide outlines graduate degree pathways available to BSN graduates, with a closer look at the MSN and its common practice specialties. Use this document to compare options, understand typical requirements, and identify programs that align with your interests. Wherever you are in your planning, there's a pathway that can match your goals and strengths.

Some important notes: the salaries depicted here in this guide are just averages based on data across the whole USA. They vary heavily on other factors, such as years in the profession, place of residence, and promotions given. If you want additional information on each specialty or degree, click on the title of the role/degree and you will be directed to a website with more information.

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📚 MSN (Master of Science in Nursing)

An MSN grants graduate-level training in a chosen nursing specialization, commonly from one of three stems: Clinical, Systems/Leadership, and Education. Clinical hours are included in degree study, often ranging from 500–750+ total hours depending on the program and specialty.

> Note: *Dual Degree Available* (Two specialties can be completed at once)

Detail	Information
Length	2 Years (Full-Time) or 3–4 Years (Part-Time)
Admission Requirements	BSN, Registered Nurse, and a Potential of 1+ Year of Clinical Experience

-Clinical Stem Specialties-

CNM (Certified Nurse-Midwife)

Focusing on women's gynecological, prenatal, and postpartum needs, CNMs handle the care for their patients' child-development and birthing stages. They prescribe medication and treatments for their patients and can oftentimes assist them outside of their pregnancy needs/stage. They help patients from adolescence through menopause.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$128,000 Annually

CNS (Clinical Nurse Specialist)

These nurses take on a more leadership-oriented role as they guide staff members on how to treat patients in an effective and efficient way. They lead out best practices for care and are experts in their specialty, both in patient and population care.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$128,000 Annually

CRNA (Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist)

In the operation room, CRNAs provide the anesthesia responsibilities that need to be carried out to ensure a patient's pain-free experience. They get to frequently interact with the patients they help, often acting as both a comforter and professional during the procedure process.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$223,200 Annually

-Systems/Leadership Stem Specialties-

DON (Director of Nursing)

Working on the more business and administration side of the profession, DONs are responsible for making various business decisions within the scope of the nursing branch, such as hiring and making plans and goals for the business. They are the ones who oversee all the nursing departments, acting as the leader and heading new procedures and equipment.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$164,000 Annually

Forensic Nursing

Intersecting with law/criminal justice system, Forensic Nurses are focused on victims and their well-being and care, all while gathering evidence and providing accurate and relevant information for case evaluations.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$73,000 Annually

Nursing Informatics

A combination of nursing and information systems/science, working in this field involves using technical skills to enhance patient experience and data. They ensure data is inputted with protection, utilizing their expertise in computer science.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$100,000 Annually

OHN (Occupational Health Nursing)

OHNs focus their nursing efforts on employees and workers across all industries. They work to provide treatment and care for workers' injuries, but are also proactive in implementing preventative measures to stop unnecessary injuries from occurring.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$93,000 Annually

-Education Stem Specialties-

CNE (Certified Nurse Educator)

Focusing on education instruction at a broader scale, CNEs spend their time creating digestible, advanced curriculum and then teaching it to aspiring nursing students. These educators often have 1 to 2 specialties that they teach with expertise, but they also need to be ready to teach general nursing practices. They usually don't have their own patients (unless they take a leave from teaching for a period of time) but rather spend their time helping other nurses learn how to treat them.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$102,200 Annually

Clinical Nurse Educator

Stepping away from the classroom, Clinical Nurse Educators are responsible for instructing nursing staff (and students) inside of a hospital setting, often focusing on clinical procedures and patient interactions. They are the bridge between classroom instruction and real-world application and are crucial to the overall atmosphere of a given hospital's environment and efficiency.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$97,000 Annually

Simulation Educator/Coordinator

These nursing educators are specialized in developing realistic scenarios/simulations and then implementing them into a nursing student's education so that they can apply the practices they have learned. These educators need to have a sound understanding of nursing practices, especially of how to apply them under pressure, in order to create and simulate effective learning roleplays.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$67,000 Annually

🏥 NP (Nurse Practitioner)

Nurse Practitioners are trained clinicians that diagnose and treat health conditions via prescribing medication and ordering tests.

Detail	Information
Length	1½–2 Years (Full-Time) or 3–4 Years (Part-Time)
Admission Requirements	BSN, Active RN License, 1+ Years of Clinical Work Experience

FNP (Family Nurse Practitioner)

A Nurse Practitioner who works with all ages, often working with a patient from childhood to adulthood. They manage patients' health via diagnosis and administering health plans and medication.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$127,900 (As of May 2023)

AGPCNP/AGACNP (Adult-Gerontology)

Caring for individuals ranging from young-adults to seniors, these NPs work with each patient's background to assess, diagnose, and help them in their health and recovery. Long-term relationships with patients are commonly built as the nurse works with them on their wellness and illness management.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$112,000 Annually

PNP (Pediatric (Primary Care) Nurse Practitioner)

Working with children from birth to adolescence, PNPs create and manage health plans that will support and care for those patients. Often dealing with chronic diseases, these nurses use evidence-based solutions and clinical experience to provide personalized, effective care.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$118,400 Annually

ENP (Emergency Nurse Practitioner)

One of the most in-demand NP programs, ENPs are valuable assets to the emergency team that deal with cases where immediate medical attention is needed. ENPs cover patients of all ages that are in desperate need of care, often diagnosing and treating these patients without supervision while in a fast-paced setting.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$130,200 Annually

PMHMP (Psychiatric Mental Health)

These NPs focus on psychiatric disorders, mental health cases, and substance use disorders that need specialized holistic treatment and care. The nurses often work independently to treat patients, using psychotherapy, medication, and other treatment plans to aid their patients' road to recovery.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$151,500 Annually

WHMP (Women's Health)

These nurses treat women of all ages and backgrounds by providing them with helpful exams like breast cancer screenings and/or pregnancy-related tests. The main stems of focus for these NPs are gynecological and reproductive healthcare issues.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$110,000 Annually

NNP (Neonatal Nurse Practitioner)

These nurses specifically tend to complications that may occur to a newborn baby, such as premature and/or high-risk birth and critical illness. They spend their time performing procedures such as intubation and also diagnosing problems like low birth weights and heart anomalies.

Detail	Information
Average Salary	$110,000 Annually

DNP (Doctor of Nursing Practice)

DNPs are dedicated students to their chosen specialty, often building upon their knowledge gained from the MSN curriculum. This degree not only enables students to perform direct patient care with expertise, but it also prepares them to lead and influence healthcare policies, research, and systems. Similar to MSN, clinical hours are implemented into the program, often being 1,000+ hours (including MSN clinical hours gained).

> Note: *Dual Degree Available* (Ph.D.)

Detail	Information
Length	**BSN** → **DNP**: 3–4 Years (Full-Time) or 4–6+ Years (Part-Time) / **MSN** → **DNP**: 1–2 Years (Full-Time) or 2–3 Years (Part-Time)
Requirements	BSN, MSN (if not doing BSN to DNP immediate track), 1+ Years of Clinical Experience
Salary	$117,000 Annually (Salary is the same as MSN in Utah, but elsewhere is different)
Career Opportunities	Like MSN, but higher-level roles with more growth and earning potential.

🔬 Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) in Nursing

For nursing students who desire to enter a more academic sphere, a Ph.D.in nursing creates opportunities to teach, research, and problem solve healthcare concerns. Stepping aside from clinical work, nursing Ph.D.'s apply their knowledge to formulate powerful solutions and teach aspiring nursing students.

Detail	Information
Length	3–4+ Years (Full-Time) or 4–6+ Years (Part-Time)
Requirements	BSN, Active RN License, MSN (Some programs don't require this though), High GPA (often 3.0+)
Salary	$97,000 Annually
Career Opportunities	Nurse Research Scientist, University Professor, Health Policy Analyst, R&D Manager

🌍 MPH (Master of Public Health)

For students who desire to make an impact on communities by solving health related issues through research, education, and advocacy. Stepping away from the treatment and diagnosis side of patient care, MPHs solve relevant healthcare problems within a larger scope.

Detail	Information
Length	2 Years (Full-Time) or 2–5 Years (Part-Time)
Admission Requirements	Completed College-Level Algebra/Statistics Courses and Relevant Experience
Average Salary	$81,000 Annually
Career Opportunities	Epidemiologist, Healthcare Consultant/Administrator, Clinical Research Coordinator

📊 DrPH (Doctor of Public Health)

For nursing students who enjoy the MPH path, the DrPH allows one to advance mid-career into high leadership positions, often solving complex issues with more refined critical thinking and researching skills.

Detail	Information
Length	3–4+ Years (Full-Time) or 5–7+ Years (Part-Time)

Admission Requirements	A Bachelor's Degree, MPH, 3–5+ Years of Professional Public Health Experience
Average Salary	$98,000 Annually
Career Opportunities	Director of Population Health, Chief Program Officer, Health Policy Advisor, Epidemiologist, Academia, Government, Business, and Principal Investigator

💰 MBA (Master of Business Administration)

For nursing students who want to transition to a business-like setting and desire more of an executive leadership role overlooking operations concerning healthcare in a company, an MBA is the right direction to take. This program helps nurses become leaders, managers, and administrators for a company, thus overseeing health operations in their specific sphere of command.

Detail	Information
Length	2 Years (Full-Time) or 3–4 Years (Part-Time)
Admission Requirements	1–3+ Years of Professional Experience, and Take GMAT or GRE
Average Salary	$100,000 Annually
Career Opportunities	Chief Nursing Officer/Executive (CNO/CNE), Director of Nursing (DON), Healthcare Manager/Administrator, Health Information Manager, and consulting roles

🏥 MHA/MHCA (Master of Healthcare Administration)

This graduate degree is ideal for students who want to become leaders and professionals specifically managing the healthcare industry and its diverse appendages (finances, regulations, and operations). These individuals organize and direct healthcare departments and facilities by encouraging the implementation of ever-changing technologies, practices, and other systems.

Detail	Information
Length	2 Years (Full-Time) or 3–4 Years (Part-Time)
Admission Requirements	A Good GPA and References
Average Salary	$100,000 Annually
Career Opportunities	Hospital Administrator, Clinical Director, Hospital Operations Manager, Healthcare Data Analyst, Healthcare Consultant, Hospital Vice President

💬 Ph.D. in Healthcare Communications

For nursing students who desire to be mediators in the healthcare industry, obtaining a Ph.D. in Healthcare Communication opens avenues in teaching, research, and communication within the framework of the medical field. These students will go on to have fulfilling careers in various hospital management roles, dealing with the experience and correspondence of individuals. They will focus on explaining medical and clinical problems to the people within their jurisdiction, being qualified to provide clear and expert analysis on the subject.

Detail	Information
Length	4–6 Years
Admission Requirements	A degree in public health, communications, or related field, a Strong GPA, a Strong GRE Score, and Research Alignment
Average Salary	$88,000 Annually
Career Opportunities	Public Relations Specialists in Healthcare, Health Educators, Medical Service Manager, Medical Research Writers

⚖️ JD (Juris Doctorate)

A JD is a great direction for students desiring to intersect their knowledge of nursing practices with the law, allowing them to tackle medical ethics with malpractice litigation and health law. These nursing lawyers will spend time conversing and/or defending potential clients who need help solving legal healthcare issues, commonly dealing with disciplinary claims or cases involving breaches of healthcare law.

Detail	Information
Length	3 Years (Full-Time) or 4–5 Years (Part-Time)
Admission Requirements	A Strong GPA and a Strong LSAT Score
Average Salary	$100,000 Annually
Career Opportunities	Nurse Attorney, Medical Malpractice Attorney, Risk Manager, Health Policy Analyst

🩺 MD (Doctor of Medicine)

For those practicing nursing who desire an even more active role in treating patients, providing diagnoses, and performing medical procedures, an MD is great avenue to take. With an MD a student aids patients in their chosen specialized field by treating disease and illnesses, often by using research, diagnosis, technology, medication, and operation.

Detail	Information
Length	4 Years of Medical School, 3–7 Years of Residency (7–12+ Years Total)
Admission Requirements	Pre-Med Prerequisite Courses, Strong GPA, and a Strong MCAT Score
Average Salary	$300,000+ Annually
Career Opportunities	Clinical Physician, Other Various Clinical Specialties, Medical Education and/or Research, Hospital Administration

🤲 OD (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine)

Like an MD, but for those nursing students who want to become physicians that really invest in patient care on a case-by-case basis, desiring to treat an entire person, not just focusing on curing a single disease. One will diagnose a patient like an MD, but will take the lead to treat the patient as a whole instead of just prescribing medicine for the disease – they will take the needed time to assess a specific lifestyle of an individual.

Detail	Information
Length	4 Years of Specialized Osteopathic Medical School, 3–7 Years of Residency (7–12+ Years Total)
Admission Requirements	Pre-Med Prerequisite Courses, Strong GPA, and a Strong MCAT Score
Average Salary	$300,000+ Annually
Career Opportunities	Clinical Physician, Other Various Clinical Specialties, Medical Education and/or Research, Hospital Administration

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Conclusion

No matter which direction you choose—advanced clinical practice, leadership, education, research, public health, business, law, or medicine—BSN graduates have a wide range of graduate pathways to explore. Use this guide as a starting point, then compare programs and talk with mentors to find the best fit for your long-term goals.

Graduating with a BSN at BYU opens the door for many academic and professional avenues, and there is nothing stopping you from branching out of the skillset you have developed while studying. Take your interests and knowledge and combine them to do somehting you enjoy, all while making a difference serving others.