NURSING, MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.S.) WITH A CONCENTRATION IN PSYCHIATRIC-MENTAL HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONER

The psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner concentration prepares graduates for advanced practice registered nurse roles by developing the knowledge and skills in areas of mental health promotion, as well as mental illness prevention, assessment, diagnosis, treatment and patient education in the care of individuals across the lifespan. Students are exposed to a unique balance of neuroscience, psychological theory and evidence-based practice. Students crystalize their understanding of this content through the use of simulation, interactive case study, discussion board activity, individual and group-based projects, writing assignments, testing and supervised practicum experiences. Informed by a balanced approach to care, students receive focused instruction in both psychotherapy and psychopharmacotherapy.

The PMHNP is prepared to assess, diagnose, treat and educate individuals, families and groups with complex psychiatric-mental health problems and do so with an interprofessional lens of quality and safety. PMHNPs work in clinical settings that include private, state or Veterans Affairs in-patient or outpatient psychiatric facilities, private psychiatric practices, and community mental health centers. PMHNPs also provide services in settings such as correctional facilities, domestic violence shelters, residential substance abuse facilities and schools.

Graduates of the PMHNP concentration are eligible to apply for the Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurse Practitioner certification exam administered by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

Program goals
Graduates will achieve advanced nursing practice competencies by demonstrating:

1. Systems and organizational leadership
2. Implementation of advanced nursing practice interventions
3. Effective use of research and technology
4. Systematic evaluation of interventions and outcomes

Student learning outcomes
Graduates will be able to:

1. Demonstrate core competencies in their advanced practice specialties
2. Integrate nursing and related sciences into the delivery of advanced nursing care to diverse populations and systems of health care delivery
3. Apply ethical analysis and clinical reasoning to assess, intervene and evaluate advanced nursing care delivery
4. Understand the implications of social, cultural, economic, policy and organizational systems that impact practice and outcomes
5. Synthesize evidence for practice to determine appropriate application of interventions across diverse populations and settings
6. Use quality processes and improvement science to evaluate care and ensure patient safety for individuals, populations and systems

7. Integrate organizational science and technology to make changes in the care environment to improve health outcomes and practice efficiency

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs
The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (http://www.graduate.vcu.edu) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reg)

Degree candidacy requirements
A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master’s or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student’s graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student’s faculty regarding the student’s academic achievements and the student’s readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reg/grad/candidacy)

Graduation requirements
As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reg/grad/graduation-info)
Other information

VCU School of Nursing Student Policy and Information handbooks (http://nursing.vcu.edu/about-us/resources) are located on the school’s website.

Our international and non-native English-speaking students bring different perspectives and new thinking to our nursing programs. To ensure that all incoming student are prepared for the school’s academic rigor, all international applicants and non-native English speaking applicants without a degree from a U.S. high school, college or university must provide additional information with their applications according to the English language proficiency guidelines on the program admission tab.

Visit the School of Nursing website for program-specific application instructions (http://nursing.vcu.edu/admission/application-instructions/masters).

Admission requirements

Degree: Semester(s) of entry: Deadline dates: Test requirements:
M.S. Fall Mar 15

To be considered for admission to the School of Nursing, applicants must:

1. Meet the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements)
2. Be eligible for readmission or in good standing at the last college attended
3. Be a baccalaureate (or higher) graduate of an accredited (ACEN, CCNE or CNEA) nursing program
4. Have a current unrestricted R.N. license or authorization to practice as an R.N. in the U.S.
5. Complete a minimum of three credit hours in statistics with a minimum grade of B
6. Provide additional information with the application according to the English language proficiency guidelines in the VCU Bulletin for applicants who are international or non-native English speakers without a degree from a U.S. high school, college or university

School of Nursing B.S. graduates who successfully completed the requirements of the VCU Honors College are eligible for guaranteed admission to the master’s program or the post-B.S. to Ph.D. program upon submission of an application form and personal statement. Requirements for references are waived.

Degree requirements

Forty-seven graduate credit hours are required for the psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner concentration.

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info), a candidate for the degree of Master of Science in Nursing must be recommended by the faculty and must:

1. Meet academic requirements of the Graduate School
2. Complete all requirements for the prescribed curriculum within six calendar years of the first registration for work to be credited toward the degree
3. Earn a minimum grade of B or pass grade in all nursing courses
4. Earn a minimum cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in all work presented for graduation
5. Conform to School of Nursing policies in respect to pass/fail grading for course work or thesis study

The degree will be granted only after all requirements have been fulfilled and all fees to the university have been paid. Degrees are not granted in absentia unless written request is made to the dean and permission is granted.

Curriculum requirements

Core courses

Course | Title | Hours
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NURS 501 | Advanced Professionalization I | 1
NURS 502 | Advanced Nursing Practice: Pharmacotherapeutics | 3
NURS 503 | Ethics, Advanced Nursing Practice and the Health Care Environment | 3
NURS 504 | Advanced Pathophysiology | 3
NURS 507 | Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Across the Lifespan | 4
NURS 508 | Policy, Processes and Systems for Advanced Nursing Practice | 3
NURS 511 | Health Assessment for Advanced Nursing Practice | 3
NURS 512 | Evidence-Based Advanced Nursing Practice | 3
NURS 601 | Advanced Professionalization II | 1

Total Hours 24

Concentration courses

Course | Title | Hours
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NURS 635 | Advanced Practice Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing Practicum I | 6
NURS 636 | Advanced Practice Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing Seminar | 3
NURS 637 | Advanced Practice Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing Practicum II | 6
NURS 656 | Diagnosis and Management of Psychiatric Disorders Across the Lifespan | 4
NURS 657 | Advanced Practice Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing: Theory and Practice Across the Lifespan | 4

Total Hours 23

Total graduate credit hours required (minimum) 47

Graduate program director
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Program website: nursing.vcu.edu/education/masters (http://www.nursing.vcu.edu/education/masters)