

Practical Nursing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

There are always a lot of questions about how to apply for the Practical Nursing program. Many people rely on what they hear from others because they don't feel comfortable asking questions or maybe they asked a few questions, but have more and don't feel comfortable asking them. I'll try to address the most frequently asked questions here. Feel free to ask more, I'll answer be happy to answer them as best I can. If I don't have an answer, I'll find one for you. Don't rely on what other schools do or what some else said they did several years ago. Check here or contact the school. We're here to help.

Q: I want to apply for the Fayetteville class. Can I do that in Fayetteville?

A: Unfortunately, no. All of the paperwork is handled through the main campus in Shelbyville. Our phone number is (931) 685-5013 and the physical address is 1405 Madison Street in Shelbyville. Information about the application procedures and test dates is available on the website or call and we'll be happy to mail the information to you.

Q: What is the cost of the entrance test?

A: The test (COMPASS) will cost you \$15 every time you take the full test or \$8 for each portion if you desire to take only one section. This needs to be paid in cash.

Q: When do I pay for the test?

A: You must pay for the test when submitting the general Center application and making your appointment. The fee is not refundable or transferrable. That means - if you don't keep your appointment, you have lost your money.

Q: Do I need an appointment for the test?

A: Yes, you must make an appointment for the test. The dates available are listed on our website and are available by calling our Student Services Department. If you show up for the test and do not have an appointment you run the risk of not being able to take the test. We have a limited number of seats available (20) and will take those who make appointments.

Q: How long does it take to take the test?

A: How long the test takes will depend upon you. The test is scheduled to last two hours. Many will finish in a shorter period of time and others may take longer. It is not timed and is adaptive. That means – if you know the material, you will answer fewer questions. If you don't know the material, it will ask more and more questions, to either give you a chance to improve or find out what your weaknesses are.

Q: How long does it take to get the results of the test?

A: As soon as you finish the test, the results print.

Q: Is there a limit to how many times I can take the test?

A: You may only take the test once every thirty days. Think logically - if you didn't do well, you need to take some time to study before taking the test again.

Q: I know someone who took the test three months before I did. Do they have a better chance of getting in than I do?

A: The date on which you took the test makes no difference on when you can get into class.

Q: Should I study for the test?

A: Studying for the test is highly recommended. After all, you are paying for it and your career as an LPN depends on the outcome of the test.

Q: What should I study?

Math and Reading. The math portion is pre-algebra and reading is at a 12th grade level of ability.

Q: Do I have to (should I) take a study course?

We cannot require you to take a study course and not everyone needs it. Sometimes we might recommend it, but the decision about taking a study course is entirely up to you.

Q: What is a passing score?

Passing is 50% in Math and 80% in Reading. Keep in mind that "just" passing is not necessarily a good thing. Applying for the program is competitive. You want the best possible score you can get.

Q: How long are the test scores good?

Your test scores are good for two years.

Q: I took the ACT while I was in high school. Can I use those test scores?

You may use those scores if you are under the age of 20 and no individual score is under 19 and the composite is 19 or higher. Keep in mind that "just" passing is not necessarily a good thing. Applying for the program is competitive. You want the best possible score you can get.

Q: I missed the deadline for testing. What do I do?

If you missed the deadline, then you will have to apply for the next program. We have to have a cut-off somewhere and we set it on the last possible date we could. We do regret that you missed it, but there is nothing we can do about it.

Q: A person at work says their score on the test is much higher than mine, should I still try to apply for class?

You have a 100% chance of not getting into the class if you don't apply. If you haven't seen that person's score, you don't really know they scored better on the test do you? Some people feel that they can better their chances of getting into the class by keeping others from applying. If you don't apply, they just improved their chances by one.

Q: I keep taking the test and still don't get in, what am I doing wrong?

That is a tough question to answer. Are your scores competitive? If not, then that is your problem. What does your application look like? There are so many factors involved. Schedule a sit down talk with Student Services. They can help.

Q: I have a college degree, do I still have to take the entrance exam?

Your level of education is not a factor in determining whether or not you take the entrance exam. Everyone must take the exam. By taking the exam it gives the same criteria for everyone for us to look at.

Q: I have taken an entrance exam for a nursing program elsewhere, can I use that test score?

What exam did you take and where did you take it? If you took the COMPASS at another school, we'll be happy to accept that score, if it was within the last 2 years.

Q: I filled out the general school application, is that good enough?

Applying for the Practical Nursing program is a two application process. The general school application is the first application. If that is the only application you complete, then you have not completed the process and you will not get into the program.

Q: I haven't applied yet, but my friend says she (he) has already been accepted. Is it worth my time to go ahead and try to get in?

There are two problems with that statement. Number one, if your friend truly has been accepted already, you have missed the deadline and you can't apply at this time. Second, if we are still accepting applications then your "friend" has not received an acceptance letter. You might ask to see it.

Q: I'm an "older" applicant, do I have a chance of getting into the program?

Absolutely! Age is not a determining factor when we look at applications, in fact, most of the time we cannot determine your exact age from the application. Once you enter the program you will find that you are not alone being an older student. Many people return to school after their children get into school or graduate from school, so you won't be the first. You may have a difficult time at the beginning getting used to studying again, but you'll adapt soon.

Q: I'm straight out of high school, do I have a chance of getting into the program?

Yes! You may have a little harder time since you don't have as much educational background and work history as older people do, but with a competitive score and a little effort on your part you should be able to get in.

Q: My work history has nothing to do with the medical field – why should I list it on the application?

We don't interview applicants anymore so the application must serve as our "interview". By submitting information about your work history that is not related to the medical field, you are letting us know that you haven't just sat around doing nothing for the last 10 years – you have been developing a strong work ethic. The type of work you have done says a lot about you whether or not you realize it.

Q: The places I worked at years ago shut down and don't exist any more – do I still have to list them?

Don't worry, we don't intend to contact them. We simply want to know where they were, what kind of work you did and how long you worked there.

Q: I'm from a foreign country, do you need to know my work history?

We still want to know your work history. The country doesn't matter, we won't be contacting them, we just want your work history. The type of work you have done says a lot about you whether or not you realize it.

Q: I have a GED, is that okay?

A GED is fine. As far as we are concerned (and the State Board of Nursing as well) there is no real difference between a high school diploma and a GED.

Q: Do I have to get a copy of my high school transcript? I graduated years ago or the school burned down or it is out of state, etc.

We need proof of high school completion or a GED. If you have attended college, that transcript usually has your date of high school or GED completion. We can also accept a copy of your diploma. If you have it in a frame, don't take it out, just pull it off the wall and we can make a copy of it. Some schools also issue a wallet copy of the high school diploma, we can accept a copy of that as well. If you cannot satisfy proof of completion with any of the above suggestions, you will have to contact the school as soon as possible. If the school doesn't exist, then contact the board of education in that county or department of education in that state. If all else fails, you will have to take the GED test. Don't put it off until the last minute or your application will be incomplete and we won't accept it.

Q: Do my grades in high school (or college) matter?

For the most part we don't look at your grades. We do give credit for having had previous education in the healthcare field and therefore you must have passed that particular class or program, but we do understand that you may not have been the best student in high school or college. Many of us didn't enjoy the basic education requirements such as English, History, and such. Hopefully you had good grades in classes that you were interested in.

Q: I'm from a foreign country, what do I do about proof of high school completion?

If you graduated from high school in a foreign country, you will need an English translation of your high school transcript. This must be done at your expense.

Q: I was an alternate last year, does that mean I automatically get in this year?

No, each year is a new year when it comes to applications. We do not hold applications from one year to the next. If your score was low last year, you need to do something to improve it this year or you still won't get in this year.

Q: Who should I use as my references?

The best people to use would be current or former employers. The questions on the forms ask about your cooperativeness, reliability, work characteristics, personal appearance and reasoning ability. The best judge of those characteristics is going to be a current or former employer. If you don't have enough supervisors, you could use co-workers, or if absolutely necessary you could use former teachers. You never want to use family members of any type unless they are supervisors, but try not to use them if at all possible.

Q: How many references should I get?

We will give you five forms to hand out and require that you return no fewer than three. When you turn them in, we will average the score so that everyone looks the same no matter how many they turn in. Five is no better than three or four.

Q: Can I turn in extra references?

No more than five may be turned in on the questionnaire form because you will only be given five. You may turn in references that are in some other format, but they will not add to your score. However, sometimes they do give insight to other things we want (need) to know about you. Feel free to enclose the additional information about yourself, but understand that it is additional and cannot take the place of the required three references.

Q: I want to apply at Murfreesboro and McMinnville how do I do that?

Murfreesboro, McMinnville, Pulaski, Nashville and other schools are separate from us. You are wise to think about applying to other schools besides ours – it is competitive out there. Keep in mind that we all have different criteria and different applications. Contact the other schools for their information.

Q: I live in Murfreesboro, can you mail the application to me, or can I do it on-line?

We can mail the first application to you (the general school application), but the application for the Practical Nursing program must be picked up at the information session. No exceptions.

Q: Can someone else pick up the packet and return it for me?

You must pick up your packet at the information session, but someone else may return it for you. Keep in mind there are some critical deadlines and if they miss them, we can't make an exception because they messed up.

Q: When will I find out if I am accepted into the program?

Approximately one month before the program begins, you will be notified as to your status in the program.

Q: How will you notify me?

Everyone who applied will get a letter. There are three types of letters – you're in, you're an alternate, or we're sorry, but we simply don't have enough room in the program for you.

Q: Can I call and find out?

Please don't call to find out your status. For the Shelbyville program there are usually 100+ applicants and that means 100+ phone calls. We don't have the manpower to handle that many calls. Please wait for your letter, then if you have questions, you may call.

Q: I was accepted at another school, but don't want to go there, can I transfer that acceptance to yours?

No. Each school has different acceptance criteria and deadline dates. In order to be considered for our school, you must adhere to our application deadlines and criteria.

Q: I was accepted last year but couldn't start, will that hurt my chances this year?

No, we understand that sometimes life interferes with our plans and what we start out to do isn't always what we end up doing.

Q: I was accepted last year but couldn't start, does that mean you will accept me automatically this year?

No, each year is a new application year. In order to be considered for admittance this year, you will have to apply this year. Be sure that your COMPASS scores are current – they are good for two years only.

Q: I live in Winchester, can I do my clinicals in Winchester only?

Everyone must rotate through all clinical facilities. If you didn't, you would miss out on very valuable training experiences and those experiences might influence what area you choose to work in the rest of your life.

Q: I need to leave early every day to go to work (pick my children up from school), will that be a problem?

Yes, that will be a problem. Classes meet Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m. until 2:15 p.m. with some variance due to clinical assignments. We do have an attendance policy here as well. While this is not a job, we are preparing you for a job and a job would not allow you to leave early every day.

Q: I'm pregnant and will deliver while in school, do you have maternity leave?

We have an attendance policy that allows a full-time student to be absent for a maximum of 42 hours in one trimester. There is no special provision for maternity leave. If you are pregnant and expect to deliver during the trimester, you will be expected to adhere to the attendance policy the same as anyone else. Any violations of this policy will have an adverse affect on financial aid and your status as a student.

Q: I missed the deadline to apply for school, do you accept late applications?

If you missed the deadline, then you will have to apply for the next program. We have to have a cut-off somewhere and we set it on the last possible date we could. We do regret that you missed it, but there is nothing we can do about it.

Q: I'm moving here from another part of the state and was in their PN program, can I start in the middle of your program?

There is no way to answer that question without talking one on one with you. Get a copy of your transcript and come see our Student Services Coordinator. If the program you were in follows the identical curriculum as ours does, we will consider allowing you to enter late, if we have any openings.

Q: I failed out of an RN program, can I start in the middle of your program?

Once again, there is no way to answer that question without talking one on one with you. Get a copy of your transcript and come see our Student Services Coordinator. There are many things to be considered since you were not successful in the other program.

Q: How do I apply for financial aid?

You may apply on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov Our school code is 005379. If you need additional assistance, please contact the Financial Aid office located in Student Services.

Q: When do I apply for financial aid?

As soon as possible, the tendency for many people is to wait and see if they get into the class before they apply, but that is waiting awfully late. Apply when you apply for class.

Q: I want a student loan, what do I do?

We do not participate in the Federal Student Loan program.

Q: I want to continue my education after the Practical Nursing program, what do I do?

You need to contact the school that you would like to attend after completing our program. We cannot tell you what other schools will or will not accept from us. It is up to them, not us. Some schools have a successful bridge program and others do not. It is up to you to do the "leg work".

Q. Who is the ideal candidate?

Ideal candidates come in all shapes and sizes. Study for the test and do well. If you don't have a good score at first, study some more and do it again. The number of times you take the test is not important. It is important that your final score is good. 50% is passing in Math and 80% is passing in Reading. We operate on a point system – maximum points for the test is 12. To achieve maximum points you will need to score 80% or higher in Math and 95% or higher in Reading. If you only score 50% in Math and 80% in Reading you will only have 2 points. We also look at your application. Points are given for having had health related education and for having taken college courses. You will be required to provide proof of either (or both) to get the points. Your references will also have an impact. Make sure you use people who know you well and will say good things about you. Your work history is also looked at extensively. Having worked in the health care field previously will help some, but an excellent work history (all time periods accounted for since leaving high school, excellent reasons for termination, reasonable number of jobs for time frame taking into account type of work performed and the current economy) will have even more weight. Total points possible on the application is 12. The test is 65% of your overall score and the application is 35% of your application. While an excellent test score is ideal, an excellent application can pull up a less than perfect test.