

## **NursingCAS**

*The National Centralized Application Service for Nursing Schools*

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

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#### ***General Questions***

##### **What is NursingCAS?**

The Nursing Centralized Application Service (NursingCAS) offers prospective students a convenient way to apply to nursing programs offered at schools nationwide. Through NursingCAS, students only need to complete one electronic application and prepare one set of corresponding materials (i.e. references, transcripts) that will be disseminated online to one or multiple schools of nursing for consideration. NursingCAS verifies the application components for accuracy, calculates the applicant's grade point averages, and sends the materials to the nursing programs that the applicant designates.

##### **Do other health professions use centralized application services?**

Yes, successful CAS systems are already in place in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, public health, physical therapy, and most of the other health professions. Applicants find these services easy to use, and schools enjoy the convenience of having a single point of entry into their respective professions.

##### **With all the competition to get into nursing schools these days, why is NursingCAS needed?**

Filling all available seats in our nation's nursing schools is critical to addressing the nursing shortage and meeting the projected demand for registered nurses. Data from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) show that 12,000 available seats were unfilled in baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2008, even though schools turned away almost 50,000 qualified applications. NursingCAS will point students to these open seats to ensure that more qualified applicants are accommodated each year. Applicants will make the final determination about the schools they wish to attend; neither NursingCAS nor AACN will assign students to particular nursing schools or make any school's admission decisions.

##### **What levels of nursing programs will be included in NursingCAS?**

Initially, registered nursing programs offered at the baccalaureate, associate degree, and diploma levels will be included, as well entry-level master's programs. Following the successful implementation of the initial launch, we plan to include all master's and doctoral nursing programs as well. In order to develop a comprehensive, national data set related to entry into nursing programs and academic progression, it was decided that all levels of nursing education would be included in this CAS system.

**What types of data will be available from NursingCAS?**

Data collected by NursingCAS will provide a richer understanding of the applicant pool seeking education as a nurse. Data will be used to shape public policy and support arguments for increased federal and state funding. To make informed policy decisions, legislators need accurate data across all types of entry-level and graduate nursing programs. Currently unduplicated numbers of qualified applicants turned away from nursing programs each year are not available. This data will become available once CAS is implemented.

**What items will be included in the application?**

In addition to the general applicant information, the application will also include verified coursework, colleges attended, experience, test scores, writing samples, letters of reference, and foreign transcripts and evaluations when appropriate.

**When will NursingCAS be operational?**

We anticipate a March 2010 start for Fall 2010 admissions.

**Is the national CAS connected to regional efforts underway in Texas and New Jersey?**

Yes. Early discussions about NursingCAS included conversations with representatives from the West Texas Nursing Education Consortium that operates a regional CAS service for 12 schools in Texas (baccalaureate and associate degree programs) and the New Jersey Nursing Initiative that was developing a CAS for the 44 schools in the state of New Jersey (baccalaureate, associate, and diploma programs). Representatives from both of these initiatives are serving on the NursingCAS advisory group. For more information, see <https://portal.wtnec.org> and <http://www.njni.org>.

**Who is overseeing the implementation of NursingCAS?**

The development of NursingCAS is being coordinated by an advisory group formed by AACN, which includes deans of nursing schools, admissions professionals, and stakeholders from other CAS services. Dr. Timothy Gaspar, Dean of the University of Toledo College of Nursing, serves as chair for this group. For a list of advisors, see <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/ContactUs/NCASgrp.htm>. AACN is partnering with Liaison International to implement NursingCAS. Liaison is the global leader in centralized application services for health profession associations.

***Schools of Nursing*****What benefits will schools realize by participating in NursingCAS?**

The centralized application service will help schools to:

- Gain access to a wider pool of nursing school applicants
- Meet recruitment goals and enhance diversity in the nursing student population
- Access real-time data on applicants that can be easily sorted and segmented
- Move to an automated versus paper-based application system
- Maximize existing enrollment software, such as Banner and PeopleSoft

- Assist advisors looking to guide applicants through the admissions process
- Reduce administrative costs and staff time typically devoted to verifying student application data. Since applications are verified as a central component of NursingCAS, admission staff are free to focus on higher level activities.
- Create customized school-specific reports, including applicant profiles

**Is NursingCAS required for nursing schools?**

No, AACN cannot mandate participation in NursingCAS. However, we will strongly encourage schools to participate and take advantage of the many benefits provided by this service. Having a large percentage of schools participating in NursingCAS will ensure that data collected gives an accurate picture of enrollment trends.

**Do you have to be a member school affiliated with AACN to participate?**

No, the centralized application service is open to all institutions offering registered nursing programs.

**Can the centralized application be customized to meet my institution’s specific admission criteria and mission?**

Yes, all participating institutions can maintain a supplemental application which is specific to each school and can be required for all applicants.

**Is there a fee for schools interested in participating in NursingCAS?**

No, schools will not be assessed a fee to participate in NursingCAS.

**Can participating schools still collect application fees?**

Yes, though many schools participating in CAS systems opt to suspend charging students an additional application fee.

**What level of staff engagement is expected of schools participating in NursingCAS?**

Admissions and IT staff will need to be actively engaged in this new process. Some initial retraining may be necessary to more effectively use the centralized service and integrate the online CAS with existing enrollment management software. This will ensure seamless integration of data across systems.

**Will NursingCAS interface with my enrollment management software?**

Yes, CAS systems for the other health professions are operational at more than 300 schools nationwide, and most interface directly with a variety of popular and home-grown enrollment management software, including Banner and PeopleSoft. Some schools opt to manually enter information from verified applications submitted through CAS directly into their own enrollment databases.

**How will applications be received at my institution via NursingCAS?**

NursingCAS will provide schools with an Admissions Portal where staff can view the progress of their applicants in real-time and can print the formatted application on demand. NursingCAS will provide a periodic electronic file that can be downloaded directly from the portal. In addition, the software WebAdmit will serve as a management

database that sorts and stores information on all applicants to your institution. Applications received through NursingCAS will be funneled systematically, and reports can be generated and downloaded in a variety of formats (i.e. Access, Excel). WebAdmit will be made available to all participating schools at no charge.

**Is there a fee for facilitating this interface?**

NursingCAS does not charge a fee; however, schools will need IT support. If needed, an institution may seek the services of an outside vendor to fully implement the integration of CAS with current systems.

**What is the verification process?**

The verification process begins once applicants submit their applications, pay the application fees, and all official transcripts are received. During verification, NursingCAS conducts a course by course evaluation of the student's academic record and calculates numerous grade point averages, by course level and course subjects, that participating schools may later customize.

**What level of support will I receive if I participate in NursingCAS?**

Expert and dedicated NursingCAS staff will be available to answer applicant questions throughout the application process. A dedicated phone line and email address will be assigned to applicants. In addition, schools will have a dedicated phone line and email address to answer individual inquiries in a timely manner.

**Will NursingCAS facilitate background checks?**

Not initially, so schools should continue to implement their current policies regarding background checks. Over time, this level of service may be added if participating schools express an interest in incorporating background checks into the nursing application.

***Nursing Students***

**How will prospective nursing students benefit from the application service?**

- NursingCAS offers a convenient and efficient process to apply to multiple nursing programs using a single Web-based application.
- The service reduces or eliminates the need for duplicate application data, letters of reference, test scores, transcripts, and other admissions materials.
- Students may access in real-time an applicant portal which can be used to check the status of their nursing school application, including verification of transcripts and receipts of letters of reference.
- Students will have one point of contact to meet customer service and technical support needs.

**Do applicants select the schools they wish to attend or are those institutions assigned by the system?**

Students select the nursing schools to which they wish to apply. NursingCAS is working on a process that will notify applicants about schools with available seats. Such a process will be designed in coordination with participating schools.

**What is the fee to use NursingCAS?**

Applicants will be charged \$45 for the initial school designation, and \$30 for each additional school to which they apply. The incremental costs of applying to multiple nursing schools will be far less than applying directly to individual institutions. Prospective students will have access to customer service support and technical assistance throughout the application process. Applicants also will have the option of receiving information about schools with open seats if the programs they originally selected reach enrollment capacity.

**Is there a limit on the number of applications that may sent by an individual through NursingCAS?**

No, applicants may apply to as many programs as they choose. Keep in mind that after the initial fee, all subsequent applications may be sent at the reduced rate.

**Can applicants check the status of their applications via NursingCAS?**

Yes, applicants can access the status of their application in real time from any computer with Internet access and a standard browser. Applicants can maintain access to their applications as often as desired prior to submission.

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