NURSING DEGREE COMPARISON

DEGREE TYPE	DEGREE DESCRIPTION	LEVEL
LPN/LVN		
LPN/LVN (Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse)	A program that requires at least one year of full-time equivalent coursework and awards a diploma or certificate of completion as a LPN/LVN.	Undergraduate
LPN/LVN to BSN/BS (for Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses)	Admits licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and awards a baccalaureate nursing degree.	Undergraduate
CERTIFICATE		
Post-Bachelor's Certificate	Admits students with baccalaureate nursing degrees and awards at completion, a certificate.	Undergraduate
Post-Graduate Certificate	Admits nurses with a graduate degree in nursing, and, at completion, awards either a certificate or other evidence of completion, such as a letter from the program director.	Graduate
ASSOCIATES		
RN Diploma	A program that is typically housed within a hospital based structural unit and awards a diploma or certificate of completion as a Registered Nurse (RN).	Undergraduate
Associate Degree in Nursing	A program that requires at least two academic years of full-time equivalent college academic work and awards an associate degree in nursing.	Undergraduate
BACHELOR'S		
BSN/BS (2nd Degree) for Non-Nurses with a Bachelor's Degree	An accelerated program that admits students with baccalaureate degrees in other disciplines and no previous nursing education and awards a baccalaureate nursing degree.	Undergraduate
BSN/BS (for Non-Nurses)	Admits students with no previous nursing education and awards a baccalaureate nursing degree.	Undergraduate
RN to BSN/BS (for Registered Nurses)	Admits RNs with associate degrees or diplomas in nursing and awards a baccalaureate nursing degree.	Undergraduate
MASTER'S		
Master's (Entry-Level) for Non-Nurses with a Bachelor's degree	Admits students with baccalaureate degrees in other disciplines and no previous nursing education. Program prepares graduates for entry into the profession and awards a master's degree in nursing. Although these programs generally require a baccalaureate degree, a few programs admit students without baccalaureate degrees.	Undergraduate
Master's (MSN/MS/MN)	Admits students with baccalaureate nursing degrees and awards a master of nursing, master of science with a major in nursing, or a master of science in nursing, respectively.	Graduate
RN to MSN/MS/MN (for Nurses without a Bachelor's degree)	Admits RNs without baccalaureate degrees in nursing and awards a master's of science degree in nursing. Typically these programs require students have an associate degree to be admitted.	Undergraduate
DOCTORAL		
DNP (Post-Bachelor's)	Admits nurses with a baccalaureate degree who want to pursue a doctoral degree that focuses on practice. This program prepares graduates for the highest level of nursing practice beyond the initial preparation in the discipline and is a terminal degree. Also known as BSN to DNP.	Graduate
DNP (Post-Master's)	Admits nurses with a master's degree who want to pursue a doctoral degree that focuses on practice. This program prepares graduates for the highest level of nursing practice beyond the initial preparation in the discipline and is a terminal degree.	Graduate
DNS (Doctor of Nursing Science)	Admits RNs with master's degrees in nursing and awards a doctoral degree. This program prepares students to pursue intellectual inquiry and conduct independent research for the purpose of extending knowledge.	Graduate
DNAP (Doctor of Nursing Anesthesia Practice)	Admits nurses with a baccalaureate or graduate degree in nursing or an appropriate major with an unencumbered license as a registered professional nurse and/or an APRN in the United States or its territories or protectorates who want to pursue a doctoral degree that focuses on practice specializing in anesthesia. This program prepares graduates for the highest level of nursing practice beyond the initial preparation in the discipline and is a terminal degree. A minimum of 1 year full-time work experience, or its part-time equivalent, as a registered nurse in a critical care setting. (Source: The Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs).	Graduate
PhD (Post-Bachelor's)	Admits RNs with baccalaureate degrees in nursing and awards a doctoral degree. This program prepares students to pursue intellectual inquiry and conduct independent research for the purpose of extending knowledge.	Graduate
PhD (Post-Master's)	Admits RNs with master's degrees in nursing and awards a doctoral degree. This program prepares students to pursue intellectual inquiry and conduct independent research for the purpose of extending knowledge.	Graduate
NON-DEGREE NURSING		
Non-Degree Nursing	Coursework in nursing, often required as prerequisites or to fulfill pre-nursing requirements.	Undergraduate

BACCALAUREATE-PREPARED NURSES ARE ESSENTIAL TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE

AACN SUPPORTS NURSES IN THEIR PURSUIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) is the national voice for academic nursing representing more than **865 member schools** throughout the country.

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AACN member schools educate more than **530,000 students** and employ more than **54,000 faculty**.

CONTACT

To learn more about AACN's policy and advocacy initiatives, contact Brenda Baker, Director of Policy, at **bbaker@aacnnursing.org**.

Connect with AACN on Twitter: @AACNursing @AACNPolicy

The Impact of Nursing Education on Patient Outcomes

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) recognizes that higher levels of education significantly improve patient outcomes. Nurses with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree have demonstrated abilities that benefit patients and healthcare providers. BSN education focuses on knowledge development, critical thinking, leadership, case management, and health promotion.

Benefits of the BSN

24% greater odds of surviving cardiac arrest

An increase in BSN-prepared nurses was associated with 24% greater odds of survival among patients who experienced in-hospital cardiac arrest.

25% lower odds of mortality

Hospitals staffed with 80% BSN-prepared nurses compared to hospitals staffed with only 30% BSN-prepared nurses had 24.6% lower odds of inpatient mortality.

10% lower odds of death in patients with ADRD

An increase of BSN-prepared nurses was associated with 10% lower odds of death in patients with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD).

32% decrease in surgical mortality cases

A cross-sectional study showed that hospitals that increased their proportion of BSN-prepared nurses over time had a 32% decrease in surgical mortality cases.

8% decrease in length of stay

Hospitals that increased their proportion of BSN-prepared nurses over time had a decrease in length of stay from 5.1 days to 4.7 days (7.8% decrease).

HAVING HIGHER RATES OF BSN-PREPARED NURSES IN HOSPITALS IS ASSOCIATED WITH

LOWER RATES OF HEART FAILURE, DECUBITUS ULCERS, FAILTURE TO RESCUE, MEDICATION ERRORS, & PROCEDURAL ERRORS

To review the research highlighted in this piece, see **AACN's Fact Sheet on the Impact of Education on Nursing Practice.**