

Practical Nursing Fact Sheet

WHAT DOES A PRACTICAL NURSE DO?

The Practical Nurse (LPN) is a nurse who practices within the guidelines of the Nurse Practice Act and under the general supervision of a Registered Nurse or the direction of a physician, podiatrist, dentist or optometrist. LPNs provide basic nursing care, record nursing care given, and report to the appropriate person changes in the condition of a client. LPNs assist with the collection of data, development and revision of nursing care plans, reinforce teaching provided by RNs or other appropriate health care personnel, and participate as part of an interdisciplinary team in meeting basic client needs.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME A PRACTICAL NURSE?

It takes discipline and hard work. Practical Nurses are expected to work in a stressful, multidisciplinary environment. They need to be mature, independent thinkers who are assertive and able to advocate for the health care needs of individuals and families. They must be able to care for clients in all phases of the health-illness continuum and throughout the lifespan.

HOW LONG IS THE PROGRAM AT WESTERN?

The Practical Nursing program at Western is two semesters long. The Practical Nursing program is part of the Wisconsin Technical College state curriculum and is identical to the first year of the Associate Degree Nursing program. The Practical Nursing program is approved by the Wisconsin Board of Nursing. Students who have a “secured seat” in the program may take the first semester nursing theory course Nursing Fundamentals only (not Nursing Pharmacology) one semester prior (or summer session) to beginning the first semester clinical course. (i.e., Students slated to start in the fall may enroll in summer session theory course. Students starting in the spring may enroll in the preceding fall session.) **General Anatomy & Physiology is required prior to entry into the Nursing Program.**

WHAT ARE THE SPECIAL PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS?

The Practical Nursing program has a challenging curriculum that will prepare you to provide direct care for individuals in long-term care agencies, doctor’s clinics, home health agencies, the armed services, and other sites. This program is designed for the adult learner. It features a learning environment that fosters independence, problem solving, organization, goal attainment and communication through faculty guided learning and performance-based evaluation. Only students accepted in the Nursing program are allowed to register for nursing courses. Courses provide learning tasks based on course competencies and facilitate mastery of theoretical and clinical performance standards. Classes, the skills and simulation labs, and clinical settings provide opportunities to share knowledge, ask questions, and practice newly mastered skills.

The distance learning option (ITV) for support courses is offered at all Western campuses. Learning resources (CDs, DVDs, computer programs, journal articles, internet access and nursing skills lab, etc.) are available at the Viroqua and Mauston Campuses for the nursing courses in the program. The general education and science courses are offered at the Black River Falls, Mauston, and Tomah Campuses. The Anatomy and Physiology and Microbiology labs are only offered in La Crosse.

DO I NEED A COMPUTER WITH INTERNET ACCESS?

Because nursing faculty use Internet-supported teaching strategies, nursing students need access to a computer that has internet access and email capabilities. We highly recommend that you have computer access with internet in your home as Blackboard and internet are the main communication methods in the Nursing program. Internet-supported learning strategies include use of a Web Board (Blackboard) for questions/answers/ discussions; email and learning plans with hot links to related web sites. Information about computer needs is available at <http://www.westerntc.edu/onlinelearning/systemrequirements.asp>. DSL is recommended as dial-up access is slow.

IS THE PROGRAM APPROVED?

Yes, the State of Wisconsin Board of Nursing and the Wisconsin Technical College System approved the program.

WILL I BE REQUIRED TO TRAVEL?

The Practical Nursing program utilizes clinical sites in the Western Technical College District during the program. Students are responsible for their own transportation to all clinical sites. Overnight travel is not required.

ARE THERE HEALTH RISKS?

Students in nursing programs are exposed to selected health risks related to the environment of their learning experiences. Clinical labs are held in medical centers, clinics, and in various clinical locations. Entering the nursing program is a choice and students need to be aware of possible health risks in practice settings. The nature of nursing in an acute care center is that there may be unintended exposure to health risks. Students enrolled in nursing have potential for exposure to communicable diseases or may sustain injuries in the clinical setting.

STUDENT ACCIDENT INSURANCE

Student Accident Insurance: All students involved in a clinical course as part of their program will be automatically enrolled in Western Technical College's Accident Only Insurance Plan.

This insurance covers injuries that you may incur on the way to or from any clinical experience, and any injury that you may sustain at the clinical site while performing your clinical duties as a Western Technical College student. This insurance ONLY covers you for injuries related to these student experiences; your choice of insurance for other portions of your life remains your responsibility. This insurance is considered a secondary insurance to any primary insurance you may have. There is no deductible for this coverage at this time. Once you are enrolled in your clinical course, your instructor will provide further information and details on how to obtain your insurance card. Answers to questions can be found at Gallagher Koster [website](#).

HOW MUCH TIME WILL I SPEND IN THE CLIENT CARE SETTING?

Clinical experience begins during the first semester of the program. Clinical schedules vary from course to course and may include six to sixteen hours of clinical practice each week. All students are required to participate in orientation to the clinical agency. The nursing program reserves the right to reassign students for such reasons as balancing the number of students in each section and other considerations. Students are expected to improve in their clinical performance throughout the semester and from semester to semester. This improvement will be reflected in the clinical evaluations which are based on objectives found in each clinical course syllabus.

HOW DO I GET INTO THE PROGRAM?

An application for admission can be obtained from the Enrollment Services Office at the Welcome Center or by calling (608) 785-9553. Applications are also available online at <http://www.westerntc.edu/admissions>. They will assist you with the application and program admission process. The following admission requirements must be met **prior** to acceptance to the nursing program:

Step I. Application to the College:

1. Submit WTCS Application Form and \$30 application fee. <http://www.westerntc.edu/admissions>. Then click on Application PDF.
2. Submit copies of Transcripts: High School and College, if applicable. Please complete and submit a Transfer Credit Evaluation Form found under Transfer Forms at <http://www.westerntc.edu/transfer>.
3. Complete Reading, Writing, and Math course/placement testing requirements. Contact the Assessment Center to schedule at (608) 785-9566.

Step II. Application to the Program:

1. Read the Mandatory [Online Program Overview](#). (Complete the Intent to Enroll Process.)
2. Submit [Background Information Disclosure form](#) and fee .
3. Meet reading requirement as outlined in the online program overview.
4. Meet math requirement as outlined in the online program overview.
5. Meet writing requirement as outlined in the online program overview.
6. Completion of a Wisconsin Department of Health Services approved Nursing Assistant course. This requires a minimum of 120 hours of instruction and must include a clinical component.
7. Completion of one year of High School or one semester of Developmental or College Biology with a C or better.*
8. Completion of one year of High School or one semester of Developmental or College Chemistry with a C or better.*
9. Satisfactory performance on the [Nursing Pre-Admission Examination](#) (Licensed Practical Nurses applying for advanced placement in the third semester are exempted.)
10. Complete American Heart Association BLS Healthcare Provider and submit copy of CPR card. Must be maintained throughout the program.
11. Read program [Essential Functions](#)
12. Submit completed [Immunization form](#), including TB. TB test to be maintained annually through out program.

13. Completion of General Anatomy and Physiology #10-806-177 with a C or better.

*This is a pre-requisite for taking General Anatomy and Physiology.

Testing is available in La Crosse at the Western Technical College Campus Assessment Center or at the Regional Learning Center sites in Independence, Black River Falls, Tomah, Mauston, or Viroqua. Visit the following website at <http://www.westerntc.edu/admissions/assessment.asp> for more information. If you take a placement test at another location, you must request that your scores be sent to Western.

Test Area	Associate Degree		
	COMPASS	ACT	ASSET
Writing	75+	19+	45+
Reading	84+	20+	44+
Math	58+ (Pre-Alg)	19+	44+ (Numeric)
Remediation via Instructional Support Services (GOAL) with COMPASS scores below 56 for Writing, below 75 for Reading, or below 43 for Pre-Algebra with retest upon completion. Only two retests per area allowed. Retest scores must meet appropriate placement scores.			

Remediation courses are available for you if you do not meet the placement scores for the program. All remediation courses must be completed prior to being accepted to the program. Students must retest after the remediation.

Access to clinical may be delayed or denied to students who have been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony or have a finding of abuse or misappropriation against them on the Nurse Aid Registry or with the Department of Regulation and Licensing. Program counselors are available to advise students regarding implications of findings resulting from the background check.

If you interrupt your program in any semester, you will be required to commence a Success Plan and be re-entered on a **space-available basis**. All nursing courses within a semester must be successfully completed before progression is permitted.

WHAT IF I AM UNSUCCESSFUL IN A NURSING COURSE?

Anyone receiving less than a C in a nursing course will be allowed to repeat the course on a space available basis only pending the initiation of a success plan. Students are required to comply with the conditions of an individualized success plan. Students who don't abide by a success plan may experience delays in completing the program. Any deviation from the set program sequence will result in a space available status for all subsequent nursing courses. All required courses within the curriculum plan for a given semester must be completed before progressing forward. **Students who enroll in a course without satisfactory completion of prerequisites will be dropped. Only students accepted in the nursing program in good standing are allowed to register for nursing courses.** Students must attain a C or credit grade in all nursing courses each semester to be allowed to progress in nursing courses for the following semester. (Students who are unsuccessful in a theory course may be required as a condition of reentry to repeat the course in a face-to-face section.)

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I GRADUATE?

After successfully completing the Practical Nursing (PN) program, the graduate becomes eligible to apply to take the national licensing exam for Practical Nursing. The Western Nursing Program is a rigorous course of study that prepares students to pass the NCLEX Exam on their first attempt. Western's pass rate for the past 8 quarters is 98%. If you pass the examination you may work as a Licensed Practical Nurse. The average salary range six months after graduation is \$25,000 – \$40,000. As a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) you will work in the health care field under the direction of a Registered Nurse (RN). **Practical Nursing graduates are also eligible to apply to the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program and continue their education to become an RN. Articulation of a PN graduate into the ADN program will be based on seat availability. Please do not apply until you have nearly completed the first two semesters of the nursing program.**

MAY I TAKE A THEORY COURSE ONLINE ELSEWHERE?

Students who take theory courses online through another Wisconsin Technical College must provide the official transcript verifying coursework has been completed with a “C” or better to Western Technical College’s Registrar’s Office.

Students who take online courses elsewhere may encounter academic delays and/or difficulties with registration in a timely manner. Entry into clinical lab placement may be affected due to transfer of courses. Placement into clinical lab is on a space-available basis only.

WHAT IF I HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS?

Essential Program Functions and Program Specifications have been identified. These are available for review from the College’s special needs counselor, Kristine Puent (608) 785-9875, or the program counselors which are listed below.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Contact Counselors and Enrollment Services Advisors:

Counselors can be reached at:

La Crosse Campus (608) 785-9553
Black River Falls Campus (715) 284-2253
Independence Campus (715) 985-339
Mauston Campus (608) 847-7364
Tomah Campus (608) 374-7700
Viroqua Campus (608) 637-2612

Enrollment Services Advisors:

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