

University of Central Arkansas  
**Masters of Science in Nursing Online Degree Program**

In fall 2006 the UCA MSN degree began to be placed online. Prior to that date the courses had been taught on site in Conway and via compressed video to 3 remote sites.

<u>Enrollment:</u> Fall 2005 (prior to beginning online courses)	32 students
Fall 2008 (after entire program placed online)	130 students (306% increase)
Current enrollment, fall 2012 (enrollment is capped due to resources)	161 students

Quality Indicators:

- The passage rate for students preparing to be nurse practitioners was 98% prior to placing the courses online and has remained above 98% since that time.
- Graduation rate is an average of 83.6% for the last five years of complete data.
- 95% are employed in positions requiring the graduate degree. A few remain in positions where the degree is not required, but the preparation enhances their job performance and selection for the position.

Tracks: UCA offers the following graduate specialties: Adult-Gerontology Nurse Practitioner, Family Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Nurse Leader, and Nurse Educator with Clinical Specialty.

Characteristics of the UCA Graduate Nursing Online Degree Program:

- Students come to campus each semester for activities that cannot be accomplished online.
- Students live throughout the state, with a small number from out of state. Students are practicing RNs, usually working full-time in hospitals and other clinical facilities. Students engage in their clinical practicums in their home communities and tend to remain in the community after graduation, thus meeting the need of rural areas for nurses with advanced education.
- Courses are offered asynchronous, i.e. students are not required to all be online at the same time. This allows for the varied working schedules of RNs.
- Faculty to student ratios – 1:20-25 for theory courses and 1:5-8 for clinical courses. This allows for individualized attention by the instructor for each student. Coaches or assistants are not used to provide this learning guidance.

Best Practices of the UCA Graduate Nursing Online Degree Program, Examples:

- To maintain ongoing engagement in the course, online participation is required weekly by students, with weekly faculty responses. The instructor engages students one-on-one and in groups. In addition, assignments are paced throughout the semester.
- Online learning communities are developed through routine presence of the instructor in the course, creation of avenues for students to get to know each other and to know the instructor, online small group work, open forums where students can post questions, and others
- In addition to the grade, all students receive individualized feedback from the instructor on their performance on assignments, i.e. comments and suggestions on written assignments, guidance for improving their online discussion, feedback regarding group work.
- A variety of approaches are used for online learning, beyond powerpoint slides, readings, and papers - including videotapes of lectures to enhance and supplement readings, linkage to other online resources, small group and individual work, case studies that build during the semester, evidence-based projects, and others.
- Clear expectations are communicated by the instructor through use of grading criteria, grading rubrics, course expectations, course time requirements, etc.

\* See other side for information regarding UCA's distance education degrees and courses \*

**Distance Education at the University of Central Arkansas**  
Fall 2012

Degree Programs – 10 degree programs are offered by distance education, many offer various tracks or specialties within the degree. These degree programs are:

Masters of Science in Health Sciences

Masters of Science in Nursing

Masters of Science in School Leadership, Management, and Administration

Masters of Science in Instructional Technology

Masters of Science in Special Education

Masters of Science in School Counseling

Masters of Science in Library Media and Information Technologies

Masters of Science in Community and Economical Development

Masters of Geographic Information Systems

Education Specialist in Educational Leadership

Courses – 358 UCA courses have been approved for distance delivery. These are from a wide variety of disciplines at both the undergraduate and graduate level. At the undergraduate level, some courses are lower division while others are upper division. The majority are at the graduate level.

Some of these courses are within majors that are in the process of being placed online. For instance, the College of Business offers online the required business courses for the BBA in General Business.

Attending the 9/20/2012 Legislative committee meeting from UCA:

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