Doctoral Admissions Q&A Workshop – Monday, Dec. 4th, 2023

Application Process

Q: Can you share some tips on how to build a strong application?
Review the essay questions! These are the areas that the Admissions Committee is particularly interested in.

Pay attention to your CV as well. It should be tailored to the doctoral application. Please use the headings listed on our website (for PhD: https://bloomberg.nursing.utoronto.ca/learn-with-us/how-to-apply/how-to-apply-phd-program/required-documents/ and for DN: https://bloomberg.nursing.utoronto.ca/learn-with-us/how-to-apply/how-to-apply-doctor-of-nursing/required-documents/). Be specific in your CV. For instance, if you're listing publications, be sure to include the full citation so the Admissions Committee can look up the article. If you co-authored a publication, include details on any sections where you're the first author.

For DN, please be sure your CV includes details about all your leadership experience (formal and informal). For any formal leadership experience (e.g. you are a manager or director), don't assume the title tells us everything. Please do include details about your leadership roles and tasks. For any informal leadership, please also include details about the type of involvement you've had. For instance, if you list committee membership, please include your role on the committee (co-chair, secretary, etc.) and list any of the committee's outputs (e.g. publications, policy revisions, etc.) and your role in bringing those about.

Q: What are the expectations for the 1000-word questions about the project topic? Do we use references?
Please be very specific in answering this question. For PhD applicants, please ensure there is a research question stated and ensure it is worded like a research question.

For DN, since the focus is more on leadership and the application of knowledge (less on research), we don't ask for a research question for the DN. Be sure the scope of the project is manageable for the DN (remember, it's only a 3-year program).

Q: What is classified as relevant volunteer work?
Anything that you are comfortable sharing that fleshes out who you are as a person or that demonstrates skills and abilities you feel strengthen your application (e.g. community involvement, leadership, commitment to a cause, interest in research, etc.).

Q: I've published as part of a group. Can I include publications where I am not the sole author?
Please do not submit a multi-authored publication as the sample of your scholarly work. However, please DO include the publication on your CV and indicate your contribution (e.g. research, percentage of contribution, specific passages you authored, etc.).

Supervisor and research-related questions

Q: Tips on identifying and connecting to potential supervisors.
A good step-by-step process is outlined in our website: https://bloomberg.nursing.utoronto.ca/learn-with-us/how-to-apply/how-to-apply-phd-program/find-your-phd-supervisor/

After you pass the doctoral pre-screening (email connect.nursing@utoronto.ca to be pre-screened), please review our List of Faculty Available to Supervise Doctoral Students: https://bloomberg.nursing.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/PhD-Supervisor-List-2023-2024.pdf

Please read the Keywords for Research Interests to identify a faculty member who might be an appropriate match with your research interests or research methods. Take some time to become familiar with the faculty member's research by reading a selection of his/her publications.

You can then reach out directly to the faculty member. Let them know that you have passed the pre-screening, include your CV, outline your research plans and why you think there might be a supervisory match.

Q: How to navigate conversation with possible supervisors.
Get pre-screened first (email connect,nursing@utoronto.ca)! Once you've been told you're eligible to apply, do some preparation before you reach out. Take some time to become familiar with the faculty member's research by reading a selection of his/her publications. Outline your own research interests. In your initial outreach, outline why you think there might be a supervisory match (research topic, research methods). Be prepared to meet with the prospective supervisor by Zoom or phone to discuss your research plans.

Be intentional: don't email all faculty members. When you reach out, include your CV and describe the project that you're thinking of doing.

For DN, prospective applicants often connect with Dr. Kimberley Widger, Doctoral Programs Director (kim.widger@utoronto.ca). The matching processed is quite nuanced and Kim can help determine who might be a good fit based on your proposed project.

Q: Are there any tips on how I find my future supervisors if they don't respond to my e-mail?
Not all supervisors are able to accept new students every year. They may decline to take a student if they are already at capacity or if they are on research leave. If you don't hear back, please reach out to us at connect.nursing@utoronto.ca for assistance.

Please also ensure that you have passed the pre-screening *before* you reach out to any potential supervisors. Start reaching out to prospective supervisors only once you have been told you're eligible to apply. Be intentional: don't email all faculty members. When you reach out, include your CV and describe the project that you're thinking of doing.

Q: Does the doctorate supervisor need to be someone from Bloomberg Nursing? Or could there be joint supervisors from other disciplines/faculties?

Yes, the primary supervisor does need to be a Bloomberg Nursing faculty member. The supervisory committee could certainly include faculty members from other departments.

Eligibility

Q: What are the English Language Proficiency requirements and exemptions?
Applicants from universities outside Canada where English is not the primary language of instruction must provide results of an English language proficiency examination as part of their application. Tests must have been taken **within the last 24 months** at the time of submission of their application.

Tests & Required scores: https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/future-students/admission-application-requirements/english-language-proficiency-testing/

English Language Proficiency Exemptions
Normally, if applicants meet any one of the following conditions, they are not required to submit proof of proficiency in English (please consult the graduate unit to determine whether proof of ELP will still be required):

- Native language is English (language first learned and still used on a daily basis)
- A Canadian citizen who studied at a Canadian university where the language of instruction is French
- Has obtained their admitting degree from an institution recognized by the University of Toronto and where the language of instruction and examination is uniformly English
- Completed their admitting degree in one of the following countries/regions: Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Botswana, Ghana, Guyana, Hong Kong, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Malta, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

Note**:** Some applicants from the above mentioned countries/regions may be required to provide proof of English proficiency as English is not the sole language of instruction at all universities.

Q: Should students complete a thesis-based Master of Nursing (MN) program in order to complete a PhD or DN?
No! Here are UofT we only offer a course-based MN. Applicants to our doctoral programs are not required to have completed a thesis-based master's degree.

Q: How much research experience is required? Is a publication mandatory?
To be competitive for our PhD program, we expect applicants to have significant research experience and resultant scholarly outputs such as journal articles and presentations at conferences, as those are markers for future success as a PhD student engaged in research. You may already have those activities listed in your CV. If so, great! If not, to strengthen your application, we strongly recommend gaining some experience working on research projects in the coming year so you can put this on your CV when you apply.

Q: What if we are unsure of what area of research we want to pursue? Are there ways we can explore what we are most interested in?

Applicants will need to outline their research plans in order to find a supervisor and to apply. Applicants may want to think about engaging in research or work on topics of interest to determine what they might want to focus on for their PhD or DN. If you have a general idea but need some guidance on refining your topic, please discuss with your supervisor who will be able to help.

Q: I am a registered nurse (RN) in the UK. Am I eligible to apply? Do I need to be a registered nurse in the US or Canada to be able to apply?
We accept applicants to the DN program from any jurisdiction. You do not have to licenced in Ontario or even in Canada. For the PhD program, students do not actually need to be RNs, however, if your research work hinges on accessing patients or study groups, you may need to be licenced in order to carry out your work.

Q: Is a formal leadership role/title required to fulfill the 2-year leadership experience requirement? And is it 2 years from the application date or program start date?
Yes, 2 years in a formal leadership role is required to be eligible to apply to the DN program. The 2 years must be completed prior to the program start date.

Letter of Intent & CV

Q: How to strengthen my CV.

Leadership (for DN): minimum of 2 years work experience *after* completing your master's degree (e.g. manager, director role, etc.). DN applicants can also list informal leadership roles. When doing this, be sure to outline your role/contribution (e.g. participation in committees: name the cttee AND include your role (chair, co-chair, secretary, etc.) AND outline what the committee accomplished/contributed).

Research (for PhD): to be competitive for our PhD program, we expect applicants to have significant research experience and resultant scholarly outputs such as journal articles and presentations at conferences, as those are markers for future success as a PhD student engaged in research. You may already have those activities listed in your CV. If so, great! If not, to strengthen your application, we strongly recommend gaining some experience working on research projects in the coming year so you can put this on your CV when you apply.

References

Q: How to obtain academic reference if completed the Masters program > 10 years ago?
There is space in the application to explain why you don't have an academic reference so please do explain your situation if you need to use an alternate reference.

Since you're applying to an academic program, you will still want to find someone who can comment on your academic abilities. Think about someone you know from the nursing community -- work or committee involvement, etc. – who can comment on your ability to do reading, research, academic writing, oral presentations, etc. You might ask an instructor from a continuing education course, a senior figure in the nursing community whom you know through research work or committee work, etc.

Admissions Stats

Q: How many international students are admitted?

This can vary year to year and program to program. This year we had 6 international applicants to the PhD program and 3 were offered admission. We did not receive any international applicants to the DN program but we absolutely do accept international students so please don't be discouraged from applying!

Other

Q: Can the thesis be built from existing research work that the applicant may already be undertaking?
Absolutely!

Q: Are there opportunities for part-time employment, such as serving as a teaching assistant for Ph.D. candidates within the program?
YES! PhD students in the funded cohort undertake ~140hrs of Teaching Assistantships (TAships) annually. All PhD students can apply for TAships, even if they are out of the funded cohort.

Q: What percentage of students graduate from the program?
Our DN program is still in its infancy, so we haven't had a cohort graduate yet (that will happen in 2024!). In our PhD program, we have a very low withdrawal rate. We've had just 1 withdrawal in the previous 5 years.

Q: How can I get support from employer?
This is a great question to explore with your employer. We know from our own students that many are able to get support. For some, support is financial. For others, support can come in the form of flexible scheduling, time-off, saving up vacation to use when assignments are due, etc.

Q: Is there an option to connect with a current student to discuss the program?
Yes! Please email us at connect.nursing@utoronto.ca and we'd be happy to connect you with a current student to discuss the program you're interested in (PhD or DN).

Q: Time management while working. What is the time commitment for PhD and DN coursework? Is it doable with a full-time job?
You are applying to a doctoral program. Please think about all the other responsibilities in your life (eg. work, family, volunteer, personal, etc). How will you make space for a full-time doctoral program in your life? This is an application questions so please be prepared to give a full answer with examples when you apply.