

Yale School of Nursing

Policy on Change in Residential MSN Clinical Specialty does not apply to concentrations.

Effective Academic Year: 2025–2026

Approved by: YSN Executive Policy Committee on 11.11.2025

Approved by: YSN BPO on 01.06.2026

I. Purpose

The Yale School of Nursing (YSN) recognizes that students' academic and professional interests may evolve. Clinical specialty placement, however, is determined at admission through a holistic review that considers applicant qualifications, stated goals, and school capacity. Students are expected to remain in the specialty to which they were admitted. Requests to change to a different clinical specialty will be considered only in rare, exceptional circumstances and only when all eligibility and process requirements in this policy are met.

II. Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all matriculated students in the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program at YSN. Students admitted to a dual specialty, must also request a change in specialty if they wish to drop one of their two specialties.

All requests must follow the complete process outlined in this policy.

III. Eligibility Criteria

To be considered, **all** of the following must be satisfied:

1. Pre-consultations. Meet with both the current (home) Specialty Director and the requested Specialty Director prior to submitting an application.
2. Submit a complete and compliant application by **August 1** of the year preceding entry into the specialty year.
3. Standing. Be in good academic and professional standing (no active remediation or professional conduct actions).
4. Program requirements. Meet all admissions requirements of the requested specialty (e.g., RN licensure, GPA, prerequisites, additional benchmarks).
5. Preparation and commitment. Provide evidence of adequate preparation and commitment for the requested specialty (e.g., shadowing, relevant coursework, certifications, interviews).
6. Capacity. Obtain verification that program capacity exists, including clinical placements/preceptors and sufficient faculty resources.

7. Justification and documentation. Provide a clear written rationale for the request and supporting documentation, as applicable.
 - o Privacy note: Health/disability documentation must be submitted to Student Accessibility Services (SAS) or Title IX, not to faculty or program staff; the application should indicate that documentation is on file with SAS/Title IX.
8. Frequency. One request per student

Applications not reviewed: ineligible, late, or incomplete applications; requests for specialties with known clinical placement shortages where capacity cannot be secured.

IV. Additional Considerations (strongly recommended before applying)

- Academic advising: Consult your academic adviser to discuss fit, timing, and alternatives.
- Financial aid: Consult Enrollment Management regarding implications for tuition, aid, and enrollment status.
- International students: Consult the Office of International Students & Scholars (OISS) to assess visa implications.
- Accessibility: Students with health or disability-related needs should consult SAS.
- Program impacts if approved: May include a step-out year, part-time status, additional semesters/coursework, **tuition/aid adjustments**, and a **potential delay in graduation**.

V. Special Provision: Dual Specialty

Students in programs that permit adding a second specialty must:

- Follow this policy, process, and timeline.
- Meet all admissions criteria for the second specialty.
- Understand that approval depends on space and clinical placements.
- Submit all materials by the deadline. Late/incomplete requests are not reviewed.

Dropping one specialty (students admitted to dual programs):

- The deadline to drop one specialty is *April 1 of MSN Year 2*.
- Requests submitted after April 1 of MSN Year 2 will be considered only in rare, compelling circumstances and require clear justification with appropriate documentation (see privacy note above).

VI. Application Process (with timeline and process controls)

1. Pre-consultations (required). Meet with both Specialty Directors (current and requested). If both agree the request may be viable, proceed.

2. Submit application (by *August 1*). File through the YSN Change of Specialty Application Portal and include:
 - Rationale statement explaining the change.
 - Evidence of preparedness (shadowing, coursework, certifications, interviews, as appropriate).
 - Signed impact disclosure acknowledging potential academic, financial, enrollment, and graduation effects.
 - Clear justification and supporting documentation, as applicable. (*Health/disability materials go to SAS or Title IX; indicate that such documentation is on file.*)
3. Completeness check (within 3 business days). Enrollment Management verifies completeness; incomplete files are returned without review.
4. Capacity verification. The requested specialty confirms clinical placement feasibility and faculty capacity before academic review proceeds.
5. Academic review & decision (within 15 business days of a complete file).
 - Review panel includes the MSN Program Chair, current and requested Specialty Directors, and Enrollment Management (with consultation from OSLB and others as needed).
 - Criteria: eligibility met; capacity verified; academic alignment; feasibility of progression plan; impact on cohort balance.
6. Decision & next steps.
 - Approval (conditional): Student receives a Change Plan (revised curriculum map, clinical strategy, financial/visa notes). Student must accept in writing within 5 business days; otherwise, approval expires.
 - Denial: Written rationale provided.

VII. Appeals

- A student may appeal a denial by submitting a written appeal to the MSN Program Chair within 10 business days of the decision. The appeal must include:
 - (a) a concise appeal rationale; (b) any new, relevant documentation; and (c) an explanation of alignment with policy criteria.
- A final determination will be issued within 10 business days of receipt.
- Conflict safeguard: If the MSN Program Chair participated in the original decision, the appeal is routed to the Deputy Dean for final determination. No further appeals are permitted.

VIII. Oversight and Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the YSN Executive Policy Committee in collaboration with the MSN Program Chair, Office of the Deputy Dean, Enrollment Management, and the Office of Student Life & Belonging, with revisions made as needed to maintain alignment with accreditation standards and institutional priorities.

Quick Timeline

- By July 1 (recommended): Complete meetings with both Specialty Directors.
- By *August 1* (firm): Submit complete change-of-specialty application. Absolute deadline.
- Deadline to drop the specialty. By *April 1, or the withdrawal date on the academic calendar last semester of MSN Year 2*
- Deadline to drop one specialty (firm for dual-specialty students): By *April 1, or withdrawal date on the academic calendar last semester of MSN Year 2*
 - Within ~3 business days: Completeness check by Enrollment Management.
 - Within ~15 business days of a complete file: Decision issued.
 - Within 5 business days of approval, the student accepts the Change Plan in writing.

YSN Change of Specialty Application Portal:

[<https://apply.nursing.yale.edu/register/specialtychange>]