University of South Alabama, College of Nursing
Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Track, Frequently Asked Questions

What is a neonatal nurse practitioner?

A neonatal nurse practitioner (NNP) is a master’s or doctorally prepared advanced practice nurse who provides advanced nursing care to neonates up to two years of age in a variety of clinical settings including neonatal intensive care units (NICU) in both the academic and community setting, delivery services, and follow-up clinics. NNPs work collaboratively with other health team members to provide holistic health care that includes resuscitation, stabilization, health promotion, disease prevention, and diagnosis and management of acute and chronic illnesses. The scope of NNP practice encompasses acute and primary care.


Is the entire program online or do I have to come to campus for some classes?

Classes are online. All NNP students come to campus at least one time during the program for an intensive class and skills lab session that usually lasts 3-4 days. This session is scheduled, during the first specialty course (MCN 568).

What type clinical preceptors and clinical sites do I need and how many clinical hours do I need?

Clinical preceptors can be MDs, Dos, or nurse practitioners (NPs). Students will complete 600 hours in a level III or above NICU. Every NNP student must have a minimum of 360 clinical hours (60 percent of total clinical time) with an NNP. Seventy-five percent of the student’s clinical hours must occur in a hospital with a delivery service, attending deliveries (460 hours). The remaining twenty-five percent of clinical hours may be spent in a surgical center; however, this is not a requirement.

MCN 573 - Spring semester – 180 hours in a level III or above NICU
MCN 575 – Summer semester – 180 hours in a level III or above NICU
MCN 576 – Fall semester – 240 hours in a level III or above NICU

Can I complete clinical hours where I live and who arranges clinical sites?

The majority of NNP students complete clinical hours in their home communities or within driving distance of their home communities. Students in remote areas have sometimes had to travel outside their communities to find clinical sites. Students are responsible for finding appropriate clinical sites. Please see the clinical affiliations list found on the College of Nursing’s Website to see if USA has a current clinical affiliation in your area. If not, we can request to establish an affiliation agreement with the hospital where you hope to complete clinical, if you are able to secure a willing preceptor.
Specialty tracks within the College of Nursing’s graduate program require a practice component. Although faculty assists students in locating appropriate practice/clinical sites, it is ultimately the student’s responsibility to secure a site and preceptor. Students who are unsuccessful in being accepted by an agency in their home community may have to travel to another area to complete practice requirements or withdraw from the program. Please review the list of clinical affiliations found under the “Current Student” tab on the College of Nursing Web Site at http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/con/students/clinicalagencies.html. If there is not a clinical site listed near you or you are interested in a site not listed, negotiations should be initiated as soon as you begin the program through the Track Coordinator for your specialty.

**Can I complete clinical hours in the hospital where I work for pay?**

Students may complete clinical hours for pay if approved by the track coordinator and the Dean, when contracted by the facility for this purpose.

**I see names of clinical affiliation sites for:**
http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/con/students/clinicalagencies.html
*but none of the sites are near me. What does this mean?*

The affiliation list on the webpage is simply a list of clinical agencies with which USA has a long-term affiliation agreement. NNP students may clinical sites that are not on the website list. The contract process is just a little different for sites that are not on the list and will be explained by faculty after students are enrolled in a clinical course.

**Can I work full time and do well in the NNP program?**

NNPs work alongside physicians and do many of the same things that physician do. NNP students must learn to provide this high level care for acutely ill neonates so a great deal of planned study time is necessary to do well in the program. Many NNP students work full time while they are taking core and support courses. Once enrolled in the clinical courses, many students find it necessary to cut back to part time work.

**Is there a “state board” test for NNPs?**

Rules and regulations for practicing NNPs are determined by state boards of nursing so they vary, somewhat, from state to state, but most states require that all NNPs pass National Certification Corporation (NCC). Completion of NCC is strongly encouraged upon graduation regardless of state board requirements, so that students may practice unhindered across the U.S. and abroad. Program graduates are eligible to sit for this exam upon graduation.