

University of South Alabama, College of Nursing
Women's Health Nurse Practitioner Specialty Option, Frequently Asked Questions

What is a women's health nurse practitioner?

A women's health nurse practitioner (WHNP) is a master's or doctoral-prepared advanced practice nurse who provides advanced nursing care across the continuum of primary care, gynecologic, and obstetrical services. Care of the female patient from puberty to older adult and the male patient with a reproductive system concern is within the scope of practice for a WHNP. The emphasis of care rests within health promotion, disease prevention, health maintenance, and health restoration.

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

Classes are online. All WHNP students come to campus at least one time during the program for Clinical Skills intensives. This session is required and scheduled during the first semester in Women's Health Specialty Option courses.

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

A clinical preceptor may be a nurse practitioner or a physician (MD or DO) with a current state license and board certification if required. Some states have more specific requirements for eligible preceptors. Specific state requirements will be discussed during Women's Health Specialty Option orientation.

MCN 543 – Spring semester – 90 hours in a primary care site (family practice or internal medicine). This rotation allows the student to become prepared to provide primary care of women in OB and GYN settings during later clinical rotations and in practice. The remaining 90 hours will be completed in a Women's Health setting.

MCN 545 – Summer semester – 180 hours in a women's health setting.

Primary care hours may be completed during MCN 545 if necessary.

MCN 546 – Fall semester – 240 hours in a women's health setting.

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

The majority of WHNP 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. USA College of Nursing has a robust list of facilities that we have an affiliation agreement with to facilitate student placement. It remains the responsibility of the student to identify a preceptor within the site. An affiliation is not a required for a student to complete hours in a facility if the facility is willing to sign our paperwork without an agreement in place. Faculty may be able to help by providing names of preceptors of previous students.

Students may be offered an opportunity to work in a site out of state but must first acquire licensure within that state. Students are responsible for personal travel expenses.

Our Standard Response.

Specialty tracks within the College of Nursing's graduate program require a practice component. Although faculty assist students in locating appropriate practice/clinical sites, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to secure a site and preceptor if indicated. 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>

Remember: Not all sites will require an affiliation agreement. There is a process in place for requesting that the affiliation process be started if the facility requires it.

Can I complete clinical hours in the hospital or nursing home or home health agency where I work for pay?

Care continuum sites for WHNP practice include ambulatory care settings (such as OB/GYN private physician practices, rural/urban health clinics, VA clinics, and state public health facilities) and minimum rotation to hospital facilities (antepartum, postpartum and GYN units) The role of the WHNP is in the outpatient/ambulatory care setting.

The WHNP practices in any setting in which patient care requirements include acute and chronic illness care within the specific scope of primary care practice. Rotations through outpatient urgent care facilities will not be approved. WHNP students are not allowed to obtain specialty option clinical hours while working for pay.

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 a list of clinical agencies with which USA has previously negotiated a long-term affiliation agreement. Many WHNP students use clinical sites that are not on the website list. The contract process is 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 WHNP program?

WHNP students must learn the role of provider. A great deal of planned study time is necessary to do well in the program. Many WHNP students work full time while they are taking core and support courses. Once enrolled in the clinical courses, many students find it necessary to decrease to part time work hours.

How much experience do I need to be accepted for admission to the WHNP specialty option?

All nurses have some experience caring for women. As the program focuses on primary care as well as gender-specific care for women and men, at least one year of bedside staff nursing is recommended. For students who have not worked in areas such as L&D, PP,

GYN units, or OB/GYN clinics, additional hours may be required to gain acceptable experience to enter the specialty option clinical courses. Students will be notified of this requirement upon acceptance and will be enrolled in a clinical course.

Is there a “state board” test for WHNPs?

Rules and regulations for practicing WHNPs are determined by state boards of nursing and vary from state to state. Most states require WHNPs to pass a national certification examination to practice. Only one WHNP certification exam is available and is offered by the National Certification Corporation (NCC). Information on the test may be found at www.nccwebsite.org. Graduates of this program, University of South Alabama College of Nursing Women’s Health Specialty option, are eligible to sit for this exam.