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 doctorally-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 adolescence to the elderly and the male patient with sexual dysfunction, infertility, and sexually transmitted infection diagnoses are within scope of practice. 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 an intensive class and skills lab session that usually lasts 3 days. This session is required and scheduled during the first clinical course (MCN 539).

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

Clinical preceptors may be women’s health nurse practitioners or physicians (MD or DO) and certified in the field of practice.

MCN 539 – Fall semester – 60 hours in a primary care site (family practice or internal medicine where primary care skills may be obtained). This rotation allows the student to become prepared to provide primary care of women in OB and GYN settings in later clinical rotations.
MCN 543 - Spring semester – 180 hours in a women’s health site. Women’s health must include primary care, pre- and postnatal care, and routine gynecological care. Men’s sexual health needs should also be available.
MCN 545 – Summer semester – 180 hours in an women’s health site.
MCN 546 – Fall semester – 180 hours in an women’s health site.

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. If a student cannot locate a clinical site in their home area, faculty may be able to provide names of nearby sites that have been used by previous WHNP 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 assists 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. 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 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 for up to 10% maximum per semester and only as approved by faculty/state boards of nursing).

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 to provide high-level care. 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 assisted to obtain the hours needed.

**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](http://www.nccwebsite.org). Program graduates are eligible to sit for this exam.