Specialty Practice
Master of Nursing Science (MSN)
Programs

2015 - 2016

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# Table of Contents

General Information............................................................................................................... 3  
Characteristics of Graduates............................................................................................... 3  
Specialty MSN Curriculum Overview................................................................................... 4  
Clinical Site Policies........................................................................................................... 4  
Competencies and Compliance.............................................................................................. 5  
Clinical or Practicum Activities Outside Virginia .............................................................. 5  
Tracks..................................................................................................................................... 5  
   Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Clinical Nurse Specialist (AGAC-CNS) Track.................. 5  
   Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Track.................................................. 5  
   Family or Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Tracks .................................................................. 6  
   Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Track......................................................... 6  
   Post-Master's Certificate Tracks ...................................................................................... 6
General Information

Characteristics of Graduates
The disciplinary and professional domains of nursing give direction to current and evolving nursing practice. The Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree at the University of Virginia prepares nurses for practice as advanced generalists as Clinical Nurse Leaders or Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs).

The Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) is prepared through graduate nursing education as an advanced generalist nurse who provides and leads care at the point of care to individuals and groups or populations in all settings in which health care is delivered. The CNL designs, implements, and evaluates client care by coordinating, delegating and supervising care provided by the health care team. Nurses implementing these roles are prepared to provide leadership and assume accountability for client care outcomes through assimilation and application of evidence-based information to design, implement, and evaluate client plans of care.

MSN-prepared nurses in specialty practice demonstrate in-depth knowledge and skills in nursing and health care systems with diverse populations. Components of their roles are expert clinical practice or leadership, assessment of outcomes, research, teaching, collaboration, and consultation within health care systems or in the community. Nurses prepared through graduate nursing programs with advanced practice knowledge, critical thinking, and decision-making skills can function in a variety of nursing roles. Examples of such roles include clinical nurse specialist or nurse practitioner. Nurses implementing these roles demonstrate specialized knowledge and skills. For example, nurses engaged in advanced clinical practice conduct in-depth assessments and demonstrate expertise in judgment and decision-making for purposes of health promotion/disease prevention, intervention, and follow-up in specified populations. Implementation of a particular role may emphasize some role attributes more than others and reflect the advanced practice nurse’s area of expertise.

Purpose
The purpose of the master’s program is to prepare nurses with strong critical thinking and decision-making skills for generalist practice as a clinical nurse leader, or as an advanced practice registered nurse in acute care, primary care, or psychiatric mental health.

Program Objectives
Graduates of the MSN program are expected to:

1. Integrate theoretical and research based knowledge as a generalist leader or in an advanced nursing practice specialty.
2. Provide care and comfort to individuals, families and groups experiencing complex health care needs.
3. Provide care that reflects sensitivity to differences among culturally and ethnically diverse populations.
4. Assume a leadership role in establishing and monitoring standards of practice to improve patient care in collaboration with other nursing experts.
5. Use ethical principles to guide decision-making in nursing practice.
6. Evaluate clinical practice in relation to professional practice standards and relevant statutes and regulations.
7. Apply the research process to improve evidence based clinical practice and contribute to knowledge development.
8. Engage in self-directed and purposeful activities in seeking necessary knowledge and skills to enhance career goals.
9. Examine economic, political, and social forces affecting nursing care delivery in complex health care systems.
10. Promote multidisciplinary collaboration to ensure quality, cost effective care.
11. Contribute to the development of peers, colleagues, and others to improve patient care and foster the growth of professional nursing.
12. Act as change agents to create environments that promote effective nursing practice and patient outcomes.

These core characteristics are in accordance with national guidelines for the Clinical Nurse Leader and professional standards of advanced nursing practice specialties.

Specialty MSN Curriculum Overview
There are six specialty tracks for the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree at the University of Virginia for nurses preparing to provide direct care as Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs). These specialty tracks include: Adult-Gerontology Acute Care (A-G AC) Nurse Practitioner (NP), A-G AC Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), A-G AC CNS/NP Dual, Family NP, Pediatric NP, or Psychiatric-Mental Health NP.

The Plan of Study for the specialty tracks includes 26 credits of core courses taken by all students and between 45 – 57 specialty credits. The plans of study can be found on the program-specific links from the Academics webpage of the School of Nursing website.

Clinical Site Policies
Clinical Agencies: Formal affiliation agreements are executed with all agencies prior to placement of students in clinical sites to provide direct care to patients. Students will be placed in clinical sites only when enrolled in a credit-bearing course for which he or she paid tuition and in which participation in the clinical experience is a course requirement. This applies to all clinical experiences that require the student to have patient contact.

The faculty member placing students and the students assigned to agencies are responsible for knowing and adhering to the terms of the agreement, including its conditions and responsibilities.

The School does not provide legal advice to the student regarding whether to submit to the conditions set by the facility. The School does not pay any student costs related to the clinical experience. If the student declines or fails to participate in or complete the clinical experience and the experience is a requirement for the course, the student will not successfully complete the course and will not graduate. The student is solely responsible for the consequences of his or her
decision regarding whether to submit to the conditions or requirements established by the facility.

**Competencies and Compliance**

Students must meet the required competencies, screenings, and trainings of the clinical agency to which they are assigned as outlined in the clinical agency contract. This may include requirements such as infection control training, criminal background investigation, and mandatory drug screening. See the *Graduate Academic Policies and Procedures* handbook for additional information about competencies and compliance.

**Clinical or Practicum Activities Outside Virginia**

State laws require colleges/universities to be authorized to deliver educational instruction in their states. Students at the School of Nursing generally do clinical/practicum activities within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Clinical/practice activities may be conducted in another state as long as that state participates in the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements. A list of participating states can be accessed at [http://nc-sara.org/](http://nc-sara.org/).

**Tracks**

**Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Clinical Nurse Specialist (AGAC-CNS) Track**

45 credits, 560 clinical hours. See plan of study for specific courses.

This track prepares nurses for advanced practice in the care of young adults, adults, elderly and frail elderly patients over a continuum of wellness, acute illness and chronic illness. The AGAC-CNS track allows students to determine the focus of their specialization (i.e., cardiology, wound/ostomy/continence, neurology or neurosurgery, general surgery, ER/trauma, pulmonary, transplant, diabetes, geriatrics, etc.) and the areas of practice in which they would like to focus their clinical experiences (critical care, acute care, or chronic care). Emphasis is placed on providing students with the advanced theoretical knowledge and practice skills needed to care for practice in wide variety of medical and surgical critical care, acute care and specialty clinics. The roles of clinician, educator and researcher, as well as clinical consultant and leader are key aspects of this specialty. Evidence-based practice, outcomes management, clinical research, and advanced clinical decision-making are emphasized. The required 560 hours of preceptorship exceeds the recommendation of the National Association of CNS’s for 500 hours. At the completion of this track, students are qualified to sit for the American Nursing Credentialing Center certification examination for either the AGAC-CNS certification.

**Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Track**

47 credits, 560 clinical hours. See plan of study for specific courses.

This track prepares nurses for an advanced practice role providing direct patient care in medical/nursing subspecialty areas in collaboration with other members of the health care team. A-G ACNPs deliver care along the continuum of critical, acute, and chronic care. Students determine the focus of their specialization (i.e., cardiology, nephrology, wound/ostomy/continence, neurology or neuro-surgery, digestive health, general surgery, ER/trauma, pulmonary, transplant, etc.). In this track, students gain the advanced theoretical knowledge and practice skills needed to manage acutely and chronically ill patients through all
phases of their hospitalization and clinical follow-up. Emphasis is placed on diagnostic and clinical decision-making, preparation for prescriptive authority, collaboration with physicians, and outcomes management, as well as evidence-based practice and clinical research. Upon completion of this track, students are qualified to take the American Nursing Credentialing Center (ANCC) certification examination for the Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner.

Family or Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Tracks
49-51 credits, 616 clinical hours. See plan of study for specific courses.

Students in the FNP or PNP tracks are provided with the necessary knowledge and skills to practice as NPs in primary care settings. UVA’s program places particular emphasis on understanding the specific healthcare needs of underserved and rural communities with one of the two practicum rotations occurring outside of Albemarle County.

At the completion of the FNP track, students are eligible to write either the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) or American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) Family Nurse Practitioner examination. Graduates of the PNP track are qualified to sit for the National Certification Board of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners Exam.

Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Track
45 credits, 500 clinical hours. See plan of study for specific courses.

This track prepares nurses for advanced practice in the field of psychiatric-mental health nursing. Students complete core nursing courses, core advanced practice courses, and specialty specific courses. Major emphasis include the neurostructural, neurochemical, cognitive, behavioral, social, and cultural correlates of psychiatric illness in the context of the advanced practice of psychiatric-mental health nursing. Supervised clinical practice is directed toward applying this emerging scientific knowledge to patient care through psychiatric-mental health nursing interventions including prescriptive practice. The faculty works closely with students to develop individualized clinical experiences in appropriate settings. Graduates are prepared to practice in the PMHNP role and are qualified to sit for American Nurses Credentialing Center PMHNP certification.

Post-Master’s Certificate Tracks
Each of the specialties above is available to master’s-prepared nurses for certification in that specialty. To enroll in one of the certificate programs, a student needs to either already have a MSN degree or be currently enrolled in one of the MSN programs at the University of Virginia. The plans of study can be found on the program-specific links from the Academics webpage of the School of Nursing website.