

Clinical Placement Guide for AGACNP Students Outside the Middle TN Area

Welcome to the AG-ACNP program at VUSN! For students who live more than two hours away from Vanderbilt, VUSN is excited to work with you to secure clinical placement outside the Middle TN area. There are many advantages to placement outside of Middle TN such as staying in your hometown and/or making contacts in the area in which you hope to one day be employed. VUSN views clinical placement as a collaborative endeavor, and we are here to support you throughout the process of securing your site. Note that it takes approximately 3-4 months to secure a contract with any hospital or clinic where you would like to do your clinicals, so it is important that we start the process now.

AG-ACNP students complete 2 clinical rotations:

Course	Start date	End date	Total hours	Days/week in clinical setting
6115, 6135	January 8	April 19	280	3-4, average 3
6155, 6195	April 29	August 2	280	3-4, average 3

Preceptors may be a physician or nurse practitioner (ACNP or AG-ACNP)

- An ACNP or AG-ACNP is preferred. Acute care NPs can provide learning experiences addressing both patient care as well as the role of the AG-ACNP.
- A physician (MD or DO) may be used with faculty approval if an NP preceptor is unavailable. The MD or DO needs to be supportive of the philosophy of an AG-ACNP.

Appropriate sites include:

- **Hospitals** with service lines that provide either a specialty focus, such as cardiology, orthopedics or trauma, an ICU, or an internal medicine service that serves as a hospitalist coverage.
- **Clinics** that are specialty-focused or clinics that evaluate acute and complex patient presentations and admits patients to a hospital for advanced levels of care.

Note that AG-ACNP's manage acutely ill and critically ill adults and older adults, so the clinical sites need to focus on the management of adult patients. To be well-prepared for the national certification exam, one semester can be a specialty focus, and the other semester needs to be more of a hospitalist or a generalist/internal medicine practice within a hospital setting. As you begin to seek out preceptors and appropriate hospitals, you may want to decide if you want the more general focus to be in the spring semester and the specialty focus saved for the summer semester, or vice versa. Now, we need you to begin to identify a preceptor whom you think would be a great mentor for the spring semester, and identify the hospital where they practice so we can begin the contracting process. Note that you may complete clinicals in your own hospital, if your hospital permits, but you cannot use your staff RN (or current employment as a NP if you are a Post-master's certificate student) work hours as clinical hours for the AG-ACNP program.

Getting started:

1. Be sure that you have filled out your Student Profile Form (SPF form) as soon as you are given access to the form and enter this information into the Exxat system. Exxat is the platform VUSN uses for loading both your personal information as well as your preceptor's information.
2. Think about personal contacts in your area. If your hospital will permit you to practice in their facility, think about either a NP or MD that you either know or currently work with who would

be a good preceptor. Then ask them if they would be willing to precept you for approximately 20 hours per week in the spring semester. I typically tell preceptors who are physicians that they should consider your role similar to that of a “first year intern”, with the focus on performing appropriate histories and physicals, developing a lists of differentials, and then developing appropriate treatment plans. If your preceptor is an experienced NP, let them know this is your first clinical rotation, and that you are focusing on the same learning experiences including histories and physicals, lists of differentials and treatment plans. Also if you decide to make the clinical for the spring semester a specialty clinic, the same guidelines apply, but remember you also need experience in working with hospitalized patients who have hypertension, diabetes, COPD, coronary artery disease and other commonly encountered diagnoses.

3. For the spring be sure you have an active, unencumbered RN license in the state where you intend to complete clinicals. If you are in a compact state, you must have a “multistate” license issued by a compact state.
4. Assemble information including:
 - Preceptor packet including course objectives and updated student CV/resume/cover letter (see “Sample Preceptor Packet” online for more information)
 - Develop a personalized script for emails or direct conversations with a potential preceptor.
5. On your SPF Form, if you have checked the box requesting to receive a list of sites that other students have previously used in your area, your faculty/or the clinical placement department will contact you with that information as soon as it is available. It has been our experience that personal connections and/or knowledge of your local area are most useful, but this list may give you some additional ideas for potential sites.

Next steps:

1. Begin making contact with potential preceptors. If possible try to meet them in person and explain that you are a Vanderbilt graduate student in your first clinical rotation, and you are interested in knowing if they would be a preceptor. If they decline the opportunity to be a preceptor, then you might ask who they would recommend. If you can’t reach them personally, then an email might be another alternative. Again let them know why you are contacting them, that you are a Vanderbilt graduate student in the AG-ACNP program, and what your interest and focus is. It would also be helpful for you to briefly tell them what your current clinical experience is, and then also provide a CV for them to review.
2. If the individual you contacted agrees to be a preceptor then make an appointment to meet with them personally, and provide them with a copy of the syllabus, and include your clinical objectives. Dress professionally and wear your VUSN nametag. If you plan to use a specialty clinic, you will want to not only meet your preceptor but also introduce yourself to the Office Manager.
3. Other talking points for this conversation include:
 - Ask your potential preceptor about their clinical practice and background

- Discuss clinical needs/objectives (e.g., “Will need to do approximately 20 hours of clinical per week starting January 13th through April 17th).
 - It may also be useful to mention that you intend to stay in the local area after graduation.
 - There are benefits to precepting, primarily that preceptors may become adjunct VUSN faculty which will provide them access to our digital library, and for AG-ACNP’s, hours spent precepting students may count toward their recertification requirements.
 - If you don’t know the answer to their question, tell them you or your faculty member will be happy to get back to them. If they have never been a preceptor before, let them know that your faculty will follow up with them to talk to them about your clinical objectives and answer any questions about what your clinical rotation will entail.
 - If they are willing to precept, ask them for a copy of their CV/resume and license (can be electronic or paper).
4. It often requires multiple contacts and follow-ups to receive a firm answer for a site. Be prepared for multiple contacts prior to an official “yes” or “no.”
 5. Once a preceptor says “yes,” you will go the Exxat system to enter preceptor information for your clinical faculty to review. This starts the process of the clinical contract. Again clinical contracts with large health systems typically take 3 to 4 months to secure. Contracts with independently owned/operated sites may be a little faster, but you can’t start your clinical rotation until we have contracts cleared on both the preceptor and the hospital or clinic site.
 6. If your preceptor has privileges at more than one hospital, we can try to get a contract for a second facility, but we limit the number of contracts to no more than two clinical sites per student. Also in some cases students will stay at the same hospital but have a different preceptor for the summer rotation. If that is the case the contracting process for the summer semester becomes much easier.
 7. If you are having trouble finding a site, your clinical placement faculty member is always available to talk, troubleshoot and assist in any way that might be helpful. This is a team effort, but note that we really need your help in identifying any given preceptor.

While this letter is focusing on the steps necessary to secure a clinical preceptor and clinical site for the Spring semester, please note that for the **Fall semester** your clinicals will be here at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. If you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact me at Sharon.Bryant@vanderbilt.edu! Again, all of the faculty in the AG-ACNP program welcome you to Vanderbilt, and we hope it will be an exciting year for you!

Sharon Bryant, DNP, ACNP-BC
 Assistant Professor of Nursing,
 Director, AG-ACNP Specialty
sharon.bryant@vanderbilt.edu