Frequently Asked Questions for Regular BS in Nursing Students

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Who is my advisor?

Netty Provost is the academic advisor for undergraduate nursing students until about halfway through the semester in which they are enrolled in the pre-clinical nursing labs (NUR 300/301, 306/307). Before you register for your first nursing clinical (NUR 323/325, NUR 330/331) semester, you will be assigned a faculty advisor, who will assist you as you progress through the clinical part of the program. Brenda Webster is the advisor for students in the RN to BS program.

What is the “Core Curriculum?”

All students seeking a degree at USM must meet general education requirements, including an EYE (Entry Year Experience), College Writing, creative expression and cultural interpretation courses. Other Core requirements are met through courses taken in the Nursing curriculum. For more information, visit http://www.usm.maine.edu/core
Are there other Core curriculums that I might complete?
Student might alternatively complete the Honors program curriculum or the Russell Scholars curriculum.

What are “Clinical Prerequisite Courses?”
Specific sciences and social sciences must completed before starting the first semester of Nursing clinicals (NUR 323/325):

Clinical prerequisite Humanities and Social Sciences:
- College Writing
- Introductory Psychology
- Introduction to Sociology
- Multicultural Human Growth & Development

Clinical prerequisite sciences:
- Anatomy & Physiology I & II with labs
- Chemistry for Health Sciences
- Microbiology with lab
- Human Nutrition
- Pathophysiology

What grades do I need in these courses?
A minimum grade of ‘C’ is required in the above courses. In addition, students must have a minimum 2.67 GPA in the prerequisite sciences in order to start clinicals (NUR 323/325).

How do you calculate my science GPA?
We keep a spreadsheet of the science grades of all nursing students. This is updated each semester.

Do I need to take all courses at USM?
USM Nursing students must take all required NUR and CON courses at USM. This includes CON 252-Human Nutrition, CON 302-Pharmacology, CON 321-Health Related Research, CON 356-Concepts in Community Health. Other courses may be transferred from regionally accredited institutions other than USM as long as they have been determined equivalent to the required course.

Is it possible to take courses part-time?
While it is possible to complete the program on a part-time basis within this time frame, it is not recommended, and may make scheduling courses in sequence difficult. Clinical courses must be completed within a maximum of 4 years.
Am I required to take a Genetics Course?
Students who matriculated at USM in fall 2013 and later are required to take NUR 424, Clinically-Applied Genetics in senior year.

What are the academic policies of the program and what GPA must I maintain?
First year students must achieve a USM GPA of 2.5 in freshman year to be in good standing in the program. Students in sophomore year and later must maintain a GPA of 2.75 throughout the program.

A minimum grade of C+ is required in all graded NUR courses and a C or higher in required CON courses (CON 302, CON 356, CON 321, CON 252).

Further information on academic policies may be found in the USM catalog Additional information is available in the Nursing Student Handbook.

Is tutoring available in any of the subject areas?
The Learning Commons on each campus offers assistance to students who need extra help in math, writing, chemistry, and anatomy & physiology. Tutoring may also be available with current Nursing students who have work study funds. The CONUNDER email list may be used to connect with other nursing students who may be willing to offer tutoring services.

What if I need other help?
Your advisor can direct you to appropriate campus resources such as:

Disability Accommodations: If you need course accommodations because of a disability or injury, please make an appointment with the Disability Service Center (207) 780-4462 http://usm.maine.edu/dsc

USM Counseling Services are available to all USM Students. The Mission Statement of Counseling Services says that “University Counseling Services supports the mission of the University of Southern Maine of teaching, research and public services by providing brief, confidential clinical treatment, outreach services, and community referrals to students who experience academic, personal, vocational and emotional concerns.” USM Counseling Services are available on both the Portland and Gorham campuses (207 780-4050).

What are health requirements?
Health requirements are formal documentation of immunizations, CPR certification, and proof of health insurance that must be provided before NUR 306/307 Art and Sciences of Nursing and the Fundamentals lab begins, and must be kept current through each clinical course. See below for specific deadline dates for each semester. USM has contracted with CertifiedBackground to track these requirements for students. Visit the Health Requirements page for more information. Please note that the nursing clinical health requirements are in addition to the immunization record that USM requires for matriculated students.
When are the Health Requirements due?
Students entering the Nursing Fundamentals lab (NUR 307) in fall semester must submit the health requirements by June 1. Students entering the lab in spring semester must submit the requirements by November 1. Students with incomplete health records will be removed from Nursing lab or clinical courses.

Will a CPR course be offered on campus to fulfill the requirement or should I take CPR before classes start?
CPR classes are usually held in June at USM but students should not rely upon a school-sponsored class to fulfill the requirement. We only accept CPR for Health Care Provider from the American Heart Association.

I had to have a criminal background check for my job. Can I submit that one?
No, you must request a criminal background check through Certified Background. Please see the Health Requirements page for more information. Fingerprinting is not required.

What is the sequence of courses for nursing labs and clinical courses?

Junior year nursing courses:
NUR 100 Introduction to Professional Nursing 3 credits
*NUR 300 and 301 Health Assessment and lab 5 credits
*NUR 306 and 307 Arts and Science and Fundamentals in Nursing Lab 5 credits
*CON 302 Pharmacology* 3 credits

*must be completed no more than one year prior to NUR 323/325

First clinical semester (fall or spring):
NUR 323/325 Introduction to Adult/Older Adult Health Nursing-lecture and clinical; 7 credits, 14 week clinical
NUR 330/331 Mental Health Nursing-lecture and clinical; 5 credits, 7 week clinical
NUR 339 Community Nursing Partnership I; 2 credits
CON 356 Concepts in Community Health 3 credits (co- or prerequisite to NUR 339)
NUR 332 Nursing Care of the Older Adult in the Community; 3 credits

Second clinical semester (fall or spring):
NUR 421/422 Reproductive & Sexual Health Nursing-lecture and clinical; 5 credits, 7 week clinical
NUR 427/428 Child Health Nursing-lecture and clinical; 5 credits, 7 week clinical
NUR 341 Community Nursing Partnership II; 2 credits
CON 321 Health Related Research; 3 credits
Third clinical semester (fall or spring):
NUR 423/425 Management of Critically Ill Adult/Older Adult Health Nursing-lecture and clinical; 5 credits, first 7 weeks of this semester
NUR 413 Advanced Nursing Skills Lab; 2 credits, first 7 weeks of this semester
NUR 470 Leadership, Management & Ethics; 3 credits, second seven weeks of this semester
NUR 480 Practicum/Care Management; 3 credits, second seven weeks of this semester
NUR 424 Clinically Applied Genetics; 3 credits (for students who matriculated in fall 2013 at later)

May I take any of the courses out of sequence?
Nursing students beginning clinicals are assigned to a cohort of other students who are at the same place in the program. The cohort moves through the sequence in a set order which cannot be changed except for extenuating circumstances that must be approved by faculty in the nursing program.

May I take a lecture and a clinical at different times?
Clinicals must be taken concurrently with their associated lecture courses.

Can I take a nursing lecture on one campus and the lab on the other campus (Portland or Lewiston)?
Nursing lecture courses with a corresponding lab (i.e: NUR 306 and 307) must be taken on the same campus.

What do I wear to the nursing lab classes (NUR 300/301, 306/307)?
Generally, you’ll be expected to be in uniform starting at the second lab class. Specific information will be outlined in the course syllabus that you will receive the first day of class. Student uniform requirements are listed on the Nursing Resources web page [http://www.usm.maine.edu/nursing/nursing-uniform-requirements](http://www.usm.maine.edu/nursing/nursing-uniform-requirements). The official student uniform consists of white or royal blue pants and tops and a white lab coat, name pin, USM/SON emblem and white shoes. Please check the web page for more information.

What are the expected costs (not including tuition) for nursing students (e.g., stethoscope, lab fees, cost for NCLEX review, etc.?)
Course fees for clinicals are subject to change year to year and range from $100 to $250. Required uniforms can either be purchased second-hand from other students or from local uniform stores, and as such, the cost will vary. The USM School of Nursing emblem purchased from Uniforms Express in South Portland costs $3.50 and a name pin is $7.95 (prices are subject to change). Personal stethoscopes are not required but are helpful during lab times; stethoscopes vary in price from $20 and up, depending upon quality. To fulfill health requirements each student will need to enroll and set up an account with CertifiedBackground. The cost is approximately $95. Students will also need to consider provider fees, immunization fees, and the cost associated with CPR courses in order to fulfill health requirements. Financial Aid information may be found at [http://usm.maine.edu/fin/](http://usm.maine.edu/fin/).
What is “clinical”?
Clinical is a health-care agency-based experience with a small group of students and a faculty member. Our acute care clinical affiliates include Maine Medical Center, Mercy Hospital and Spring Harbor Hospital in Portland, Mid Coast Hospital in Brunswick, Central Maine Medical Center and St. Mary’s Hospital in Lewiston. Our community health clinical associations involve partnerships with such groups as Sagamore Village, the Casco Bay Fishing Community, the Bayside community, and Southern Maine Area on Aging (see more information of community partnerships below).

A clinical may be from four to eight hours long, depending on the number of credits. The credit-to-clinical ratio is 1:2, one credit hour equals two clinical hours. Clinical courses are taught in combination with an associated lecture course. As an example, Adult/Older Adult Health Nursing lecture (NUR 323) is taught in combination with Adult/Older Adult Health Nursing clinical (NUR 325). Attendance at clinical is mandatory.

How do I select my clinical?
There is a set order in which clinical courses are taken. Each semester you will meet with your faculty advisor to discuss courses for the following semester. Students enroll in one large clinical section and are then assigned to a small clinical section based on clinical availability, student’s schedule, etc.

Clinical time preferences may be sent to Liz Elliott, Coordinator of the Undergraduate Nursing Programs, at eelliott@maine.edu, but requests are not guaranteed. Clinical assignments are available approximately two weeks prior to the start of the semester.

How do I know where to go for clinical?
Each semester the faculty member teaching your clinical section will post a Clinical Letter to the Blackboard site for the class one to two weeks before the clinical begins. The letter will include instructions on what to wear, when to meet, where to meet, what to bring, where to park.

What do I wear to clinical?
Student uniform requirements are listed on the Nursing Resources web page http://www.usm.maine.edu/nursing/nursing-uniform-requirements. The official student uniform consists of white or royal blue pants and tops and a white lab coat, name pin, USM SON emblem and white shoes. Please check the web page for more information.

Do I wear the same uniform at each clinical (pediatrics, adult health, reproductive health, mental health)?
Adult health and reproductive health requires you to wear the student uniform. Child health clinical allows you to wear a more colorful top and mental health clinical requires you to wear professional attire.
If school is cancelled because of weather, is clinical also cancelled?
Yes.

What are “care plans”?
Care plans and clinical preparation worksheets are tools that clinical faculty utilize in patient care assignments. You can find the prep worksheet at the Nursing Resource web page. Individual faculty will review the worksheet at the orientation when clinical first begins. These clinical preparation worksheets are mainly used in the Adult/Older Adult Health Nursing courses.

Do I pick up my clinical assignment the night before clinical?
Adult Health and Child Health clinicals require that students pick up the clinical assignment prior to attending clinical. Mental health and Reproductive health clinicals do not require students to retrieve an assignment prior to clinical hours. Your clinical faculty will review this information with you at the orientation when clinical first begins.

How can I best prepare for my first clinical?
Make sure to access your Clinical Letter which will be posted on the course Blackboard site. If you are starting your first clinical (NUR 325 Introduction of Adult/Older Adult Health Nursing), it is helpful to review fundamental skills such as sterile fields, body mechanics, and medication administration. Your clinical faculty will let you know more specific areas based on the clinical unit.

Some clinical agencies require students to pick up ID badges and complete computer training prior to the clinical start date. Email messages will be sent through the student list serve with information about badges and training dates.

What will be expected of me in each clinical? (e.g., Repro vs. Med-Surg)
Clinical instructors will outline their specific expectations at the beginning of clinical. In adult/older adult and child health clinical rotations, students start by working with one patient. A student/patient assignment is posted prior to the clinical time and students research the patient’s conditions and begin work on a clinical preparation worksheet. The student identifies areas of concern and plans care for the patient the night before as well as learning about any medications the patient takes based on review of the patient’s medical record. During the clinical day, the student will assess and monitor the patient; communicate with patients, families, and other health care providers; provide basic care (bathing, feeding, etc), perform medication administration as well as any procedures (dressing changes, ROM exercises, foley/NG tube insertion, etc.) if needed and as deemed appropriate by the clinical instructor. As the clinical rotation proceeds the student may be assigned more than one patient if both student and instructor are comfortable with the student’s progress. Care plans may be expected each clinical for the week’s assigned patients.

In Mental Health clinical, students will practice therapeutic communication techniques with patients. Depending on the clinical site the student will either be assigned a patient the day of the clinical, may pick a patient to practice communication skills with, or may observe therapy groups or mental health nurses and their practice. Process recordings often take the place of care plans during this rotation.
process recording, the student will analyze his or her responses in the therapeutic communication process.

In Reproductive Health clinical students work with mother and baby couplets completing assessment skills, documentation, and minimal medication administration. Students may rotate to the nursery where they care for multiple newborns alongside a nurse and perform assessments, bathing, feeding, car seat testing, and hearing tests. It is sometimes possible for many students to observe vaginal or Caesarean deliveries.

**How much direct supervision will I be given at my first clinical?**

Students are closely supervised by their clinical instructor during clinical. Each new procedure and medication administration the student performs is observed by the instructor until he or she is comfortable with the student’s abilities. Patients assigned to students are also followed by a staff nurse who must be kept aware of the patient’s condition and will sometimes be available to aid the student.

**What is “partnership?”**

*Partnership* is a sequence of two, 2-credit courses (NUR 339 and NUR 439) that addresses identified health needs of a community. Community partnership is based on the concept of partnership building, risk identification, and health promotion within a community. Students will collaborate with community partners to develop an understanding of both short- and long-term needs of the community. Problem-posing and problem-solving will come from the community. Students will engage in ongoing community assessment, support communities in developing long term interventions/approaches, and engage in evaluation of community level practice. Students will identify individuals and families within their communities who would benefit from individual and family-based nursing assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation. Prior to or concurrent with NUR 339 students must take CON 356, Concepts in Community Health.

Students must stay with one partnership. If a student leaves or withdraws from one partnership, the student must start the new partnership from the beginning course. Specific descriptions of the different partnerships are available on the [Partnership web page](#).

**May I arrange my own partnership?**

Partnership is a faculty-guided community health experience based in pre-established community settings. You may not arrange a partnership with an outside community setting.

**What is practicum (NUR 480)?**

Practicum is a course taken during the last seven weeks before graduation. It has both required weekly clinical hours and weekly seminar time. Students complete 154 hours in the clinical area; the clinical location is based on student interest and health care organization availability. Practicum provides a culminating, intensive clinical experience that gives the opportunity to refine clinical practice. Emphasis is placed on integrating the multiple roles of professional nursing and serves as a vehicle to enhance critical thinking and communication skills.
The primary purpose of Practicum is to develop competency in nursing care including organizational, prioritizing and decision-making skills. Seminar topics explore areas such as delegation, end-of-life and professional ethics as applied to a wider range of health care settings. All students will develop a capstone project which is presented orally and requires application of competent technical skills. The seminar meets weekly for 2 hours with faculty. These seminars are MANDATORY. There are assigned readings and assignments for each class. Student presentations are scheduled during this seminar.

The semester prior to graduation you will receive an email via the CONUNDER list serve asking you to complete the paper work on the Practicum web page https://usm.maine.edu/nursing/senior-practicum. The web site provides guidance for choosing a practicum site, possible practicum locations, and the form to complete for practicum placement.

May I arrange my own Practicum?
Students do not arrange their own Practicum placements. Please check the Guide to Choosing a Practicum Site on the web site: http://www.usm.maine.edu/nursing/guide-choosing-practicum-site

What are the “ATIs”?
Nursing students are required to take specific tests from the Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) when enrolled courses which require these tests. This testing program helps students prepare for the NCLEX-RN examination and helps the School of Nursing with curriculum evaluation.

When/Where should I begin studying for the NCLEX?
It is recommended that students begin studying for NCLEX during or immediately following their last semester of the program. Resources for studying are suggested during the Leadership, Management & Ethics course taken during the student’s last semester. A review course is offered after completion of the nursing program; the fee for the review course is incorporated into course fees throughout the program. Another recommended resource is offered through the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, information for which can be found here http://learningext.com/

Does USM provide any assistance with finding jobs after graduation?
Advising on every campus has advisors and resources that help students locate job opportunities while in school and after graduation. See their website for more information http://usm.maine.edu/success

Where can I get more information about USM and the nursing program?
The Undergraduate Student Resources page has links to resources for USM nursing students, including links to the Student Handbook, the USM Catalog, as well as clinical and partnership information.

Your advisor is a source of support and information for you. In addition, Brenda Webster, Student Services Coordinator 207-780-4802, is a resource for all USM nursing students.