RN-BS Capstone FAQs

N445 RN-BS Capstone Clinical Component

GENERAL INFORMATION

Why does NURSING 445 RN-BSN Capstone have a clinical component?
The baccalaureate degree program in nursing at UW-Milwaukee is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (http://www.ccneaccreditation.org). CCNE requires that all students in RN-BSN programs have a clinical component to their degree program to enable them to apply and integrate new knowledge in a clinical setting. We use a capstone clinical project to meet the clinical component requirements of our program. The goal of the clinical project experience is to provide an opportunity for RN students to experience, integrate and learn from a nursing role that is different from their current or past roles. Although many of our RN students work in direct patient care, they often choose to plan their Capstone clinical project experience in a non-direct care role. Direct care clinical experiences are also possible if they are completed in a role that is not the student’s current role.

How many clinical hours are required?
60 clinical hours are currently required in all the UWM College of Nursing RN-BSN Nursing programs. Up to 10 hours of the 60 clinical hours can be used off site to complete a required clinical project. Your 60 clinical hours can be spent working with your preceptor, attending meetings and gathering information for your project. In addition to the clinical hours required, students will also need time to complete multiple assignments in the N445 course.

Can I complete my clinical hours in the setting where I currently am employed?
We strongly encourage students to complete their clinical hours in the agency or system where they are currently employed when possible. Past students have found that completing their Capstone clinical project in their own workplace is much more successful than trying to do this in a new setting. Using your current workplace for your Capstone project will make it much more likely that you will be able to meet the goals and outcomes of the Capstone course. This is because you may already know of quality improvement issues on your own (or another) unit and you have access to nurse managers, educators and CNS staff who are very willing to help their own employees with successful educational projects. You will also be able to do your clinical project hours around your own work schedule if you stay in your own setting. You CAN complete your clinical project hours on your own unit or another unit – as long as you are not in your current role (i.e. acute care staff nurse and instead are in an alternate role (educator, manager, etc.). An example might be that a student who is employed in an acute care staff nurse role might complete clinical hours as a member of quality improvement team. See the information on clinical settings below.

CLINICAL SETTINGS

Do I need to find my own clinical setting or will the UWM College of Nursing do that?
Please see the above answer – we strongly encourage students to complete their project at their workplace. If you are unemployed or in a setting without a qualified preceptor, we can help you to find a clinical project setting. As noted above, we encourage students to arrange their own clinical placement and hours through their current employer or an agency contact whenever possible. Many health care systems are very willing to help to place their own RN students in clinical experiences required for educational purposes. Froedtert and Children’s have agreed to place all their own employees in RN-BSN programs and other systems are willing to facilitate placements as well. For students who are unemployed or unable to find an appropriate preceptor, the College of Nursing will arrange a clinical. If we arrange your clinical site, we cannot guaranty any specific settings, population, hours or sites. Due to the very limited availability of clinical project sites, we cannot guaranty any specific clinical experiences, locations, hours or sites and this can be difficult for students.
What types of settings can be used for the clinical experience?

The primary focus is that the student completes a quality improvement clinical project in a nursing role they are not currently in. Because many of our RN-BS-Nursing students work in direct patient care, this often means a clinical project experience in a non-direct care role such as that of a nurse educator, nurse manager, clinical nurse leader or clinical nurse specialist. Examples of non-direct care clinical projects include working with a CNS or nurse educator on a specific project, policy update or quality initiative, working on a Magnet committee and creating an education module or program for staff or patient education. Direct care clinical projects include agencies such as schools, health departments, parish nursing, community health centers, clinics, urgent care centers, dialysis centers, homeless centers, day care centers, home care and hospice agencies and cardiac rehabilitation departments. See the “General Information – N445” information sheet for additional clinical practicum examples.

Does the UWM College of Nursing need to have a contract with my clinical setting?

No – we do not require a formal affiliation agreement or contract with your clinical project setting – this is only required if your setting requires it. The UWM College of Nursing will accept either a formal valid affiliation agreement or a letter of agreement with the agency you are completing your clinical project in. UWM has existing education contracts with many health care systems, agencies and institutions in the metropolitan Milwaukee area. If you live outside the Milwaukee area, we may be able to help to facilitate a contract with the agency you wish to use for your clinical hours.

Do I need to take time off of work? Can I complete my clinical hours on evenings and weekends?

Most of our RN-BSN students work full time and need to find a way to compete the required 60 clinical project hours. Clinical hours can be completed at whatever time is negotiable between the student and preceptor. Most community health agencies are only open during the daytime on weekdays. Students who use these agencies often use vacation time or days off work to complete their clinical hours. Some home care, hospice, parish nursing, urgent care and free clinic agencies do offer evening and weekend hours, but this is very site dependent. If you can find a project at your workplace, you can work around your own schedule. If you can find a clinical site that offers alternate hours, you may be able to complete your clinical hours during the evening or on weekends.

What should I wear at my clinical site?

There is no Capstone uniform – student should wear whatever is worn in the agency by the nursing staff. Some agencies prefer business casual clothing and others require scrubs or a lab coat. Please ask your preceptor for guidance about what to wear during clinical hours.

PRECEPTORS

Do I need to have a preceptor?

Yes – a preceptor prepared at the RN, BSN level or above (MSN, CNL or DNP) is required to supervise your clinical project hours.

Who is qualified to be my preceptor?

All preceptors MUST be prepared at the RN, BSN level or above (MSN, CNL, DNP). Nurses prepared at the Associate Degree level only are not eligible to be a preceptor. MD’s are also not eligible to be preceptors.

How can I verify that my preceptor has agreed to work with me?

We will need your preceptors email, phone and mailing address contact information so that we can verify that he/she is willing to be your preceptor for N445. Your preceptor will need to sign a form stating that he/she agrees to be your preceptor.

Can I work only with my preceptor?

You should work primarily with your preceptor, but he/she may wish to facilitate additional clinical experiences with other members of the health care team in the agency. If both you and your preceptor feel that working with additional health care team members will be valuable to your learning, you may do this as a part of your clinical experience.
THE CLINICAL PROJECT

What is the clinical project?

Capstone students in all our programs are required to complete a 60-hour quality improvement clinical project in their clinical practicum site. The Capstone clinical project is meant to be a project that meets the needs of the agency and attempts to improve the outcomes of care in that agency. You will need to work with your preceptor to determine the most appropriate clinical project for your site. Examples of clinical projects include a staff education presentation, an online staff or patient teaching module, development or updating or a clinical guideline, care plan or policy, data collection related to a Joint Commission, Magnet or quality review initiative. See the “Capstone Clinical Project Examples” information sheet for many additional clinical project examples.

How will I know if my clinical project is appropriate for NURSING 445?

First you will need to consult with your preceptor and determine a need that exits in the agency. Each Capstone student will also be assigned to a clinical faculty member. That faculty member will assist you in determining if your project meets the needs of the agency and the requirements of the assignment in the course. Your N445 seminar faculty can also help you to determine an appropriate clinical project.

Is there a course assignment related to the clinical project?

Yes – one of the assignments in this course is a written description of your clinical project. This assignment is worth 20% of your final grade in the course. There is a detailed rubric for the evaluation of the clinical project in the N445 course syllabus.

PREPARING FOR NURSING 445 RN-BSN CAPSTONE

When do I need to begin the process of preparing to take the 445 Capstone course?

We suggest that students begin preparing for Capstone at least one full semester ahead of the date they wish to enroll in the N445 Capstone course. We will be sending out an email survey to all N445 Capstone students the semester before they enroll in the course. The survey will ask you to tell us your plans for completing your N445 clinical hours. You MUST return this survey by email to be enrolled in the N445 Capstone course.

You will need to determine whether you wish to arrange your own clinical project and preceptor (strongly encouraged – see above). If you are unemployed or unable to find an appropriate preceptor through your workplace, the College of Nursing must be notified at least one semester before you enroll in Capstone through our survey email. If we arrange your clinical site, we cannot guaranty any specific population, location, hours or sites. We will request your clinical site preferences, but due to the limited availability of specific sites, we cannot guaranty any specific clinical experiences, hours or sites.

How do I find my own preceptor?

The best way to find a preceptor and a project is to start to network through your current employer. Contact your own nurse manager, educator or CNS and tell them you will need to do a 60-hour quality improvement project for your final Capstone course and ask for ideas that may be on their “wish list”. It may also be possible to contact a nursing education department representative at your employer. You will need to find a preceptor prepared at the RN-BSN level or above who is willing to precept you for 60 hours of clinical time. You will also need to discuss a potential clinical project with your preceptor. Once you send your possible preceptor’s contact details to us, our preceptor coordinator will then contact your potential preceptor and determine if we have an existing contract with the agency. It may require additional time to attempt to pursue a contract if we do not have a current contract with your preferred clinical agency and they require one. Contracts are usually facilitated by the education liaison or nursing leadership office in a clinical agency.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

Please direct your questions to your advisor or to the Capstone course coordinator. If they are unable to answer your questions, they will seek guidance from the appropriate program director or faculty member. We look forward to seeing you in N445 – Capstone. Thank you for taking the RN-BS-Nursing journey with us!

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