Rural and remote clinical program

As part of its undergraduate program, the School of Nursing & Midwifery supports students who wish to gain clinical experience in a rural, regional or remote area of South Australia or the Northern Territory.

Rural and remote placements are offered to students in the second and third year of the program. Further information about rural and remote placements may be found at: http://nursing.flinders.edu.au/students/index.php?id=316.

Who can apply?

The Rural and Remote Clinical Program is open to undergraduate nursing students undertaking Nursing Practice topics in year 2 and in year 3. This opportunity exists for BM students in semester 6.

How long are the clinical placements?

The length of clinical placements ranges from four to 16 weeks depending on the venue and year level. Extended placements of 16 weeks to satisfy clinical requirements for nursing topics in two semesters are available to combined rural/regional hospital experience and remote community venues, but may be taken only by year 3 students. Clinical placements usually commence at the same time as metropolitan block placements (except in the Northern Territory).

What shifts do students have to work?

This depends on the venue. Early, late, day and nightshifts may be worked, including weekends.

In remote areas, students work clinic hours or four or five days per week, plus on-call time if desired (to attend emergencies and unexpected events). Year 2 students in semester 3 and 4, and year 3 students in semester 5 will work four days per week, with one programmed study day per week. Year 2 students can only attend rural venues in South Australia.
Where can students go for placement?

The Rural and Remote Clinical Program provides placements throughout South Australia. Please check the School’s Rural and Remote webpage at:

Alice Springs Hospital and remote area Northern Territory communities are available only to 3rd year students.

How to apply

The closing date for application is in mid-semester 2 each year (usually August) for placements in the following year—the due date is on the form. Late applications will not be considered until all other applications have been processed. Students can access an application form at the School of Nursing & Midwifery Office or download from the School’s ‘Clinical placements’ page. Students will be advised via their student email address when forms are available. Forms should be returned by the due date to:

Clinical Placement Office
School of Nursing & Midwifery
Flinders University
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001

Criteria for selection

Students must justify their application for rural and remote clinical experience. A description of the student career plan is important.

Rural and remote placements pose new challenges. Students should be adaptable, flexible, resourceful, able to tolerate periods of solitude, amuse themselves, and complete their academic work independently. During rural and remote placements there is less support in terms of teaching staff, email and internet access is not always available, and books/articles can take a while to arrive from the Flexible Delivery Library Service.
Selection includes supporting reasons such as previous experience living in a rural area, membership of University rural clubs like the Flinders University Rural Health Society (FURHS), or the desire to experience life and work in a rural or remote area.

Satisfactory academic progress and clinical reports are essential for selection.

**When will students be notified?**

Students who meet the criteria for the Rural and Remote Clinical Program will be informed by email of provisional selection at the end of the year. The email will advise students of the preparation required and travel arrangements. Clinical and academic records will be checked prior to departure and any student receiving a ‘Fail’ grade for a topic will not be permitted to go to rural and remote placement.

**Double degree students**

Double degree students will need to make specific arrangements for health science core and stream topics by notifying topic coordinators well in advance of placements, identifying potential clashes, and negotiating extensions or additional work.

**Preparation**

Students need to inform family, friends, clubs and sporting organisations well in advance of their proposed absence, and may need to save some money to cope with the additional expenses of placement and missing work for a period of time.

**What support does the School of Nursing & Midwifery provide?**

- **Immunisation**

  Students going to Central Australia must complete an immunisation form and send it to the hospital at least six weeks before departure. No form or no immunisation means placement will be cancelled (this has nothing to do with the University—it is a stipulation of the Northern Territory Department of Health &
Community Services). The School of Nursing & Midwifery will pay the cost of any compulsory immunisation for students attending a rural and remote placement.

The University Health Service will provide assistance with what is required, including the minimum vaccination requirements, free of charge.

Compulsory immunisations include:
- measles/mumps/rubella
- chicken pox
- adult diphtheria and tetanus/diphtheria toxoid/tetanus toxoid
- Mantoux test and TB assessment (available only at the Communicable Diseases Clinic)
- hepatitis A
- hepatitis B.

➢ **Travel**

Students book their own transport to and from the venue. The School will reimburse students for the equivalent of bus, train or air travel to the value of $500, whichever is the cheaper. Present the School Office with a paid ticket/invoice, along with a completed ‘Reimbursement of Travel Expenses’ form (available at: [http://nursing.flinders.edu.au/students/index.php?id=316](http://nursing.flinders.edu.au/students/index.php?id=316)).

➢ **Accommodation**

The School only pays for accommodation in Alice Springs, but this could change and become the student’s responsibility. Most venues subsidise student’s accommodation and some subsidise meals while on duty. Further information can be found on the Rural and Remote webpage at: [http://nursing.flinders.edu.au/students/index.php?id=316](http://nursing.flinders.edu.au/students/index.php?id=316).

➢ **Austudy/Abstudy**

The Clinical Placement Administrator can arrange letters of support for students to access the Austudy/Abstudy living away from home rate while on placement in rural and remote areas.
Family arrangements

Neither the School nor the venues involved will make arrangements for families or pay costs of accommodation and travel for students’ families.

Scholarships

Some students may be eligible for rural scholarships to provide further support during their studies and while on clinical placement. Check the following websites for details:

http://www.flinders.edu.au/scholarships/default.cfm,

Student responses to the program

An evaluation of undergraduate students’ experiences of rural and remote clinical placements found positive responses (Neill & Taylor 2002).

Additional information about venues participating in the rural and remote clinical placement program, student comments and a student photo album is available from: