

# Doctor of Nursing Practice Student Handbook

2023-24

*Other [Handbooks](#):*

- **General Student Handbook:** Information related to compliance, health and safety, University policies, and so on
- **Graduate Programs: Academic Policies:** Policies in respect to advising, grading, progression, student employment, and so on

## Ways to Navigate the Student Handbook

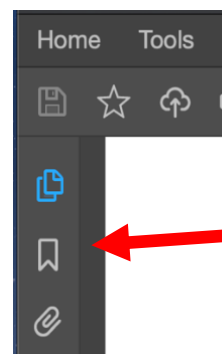
1) **Use hyperlinks in the Table of Contents (TOC):** Hover over a topic and click

2) **Use Bookmarks in Adobe Reader DC (free)**

(You can also use Acrobat Pro, or DC if you already own them.)

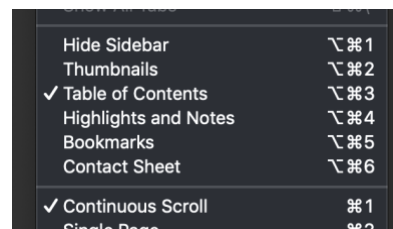
- Download and open the file in Acrobat Reader.
- Click on the Bookmarks symbol on the left side of the document (see example).
- A table of contents will appear on the left that lists all headings throughout the document. You can click on any one of them to quickly access a specific section of the document.

NOTE: If you do not see this icon: Select "View > Show/Hide > Navigation Panes > Bookmarks" from the Adobe Acrobat main menu.



3) **Use TOC in Preview (MAC)**

- Download and open the file in Preview.
- If the column with the table of contents does not appear on the left: Select "View" and uncheck "Hide Sidebar".
- To see the table of contents, select "View" and check "Table of Contents".
- A table of contents will appear on the left that lists all headings throughout the document. You can click on any one of them to quickly access a specific section of the document.



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## WELCOME

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program prepares nurses for the highest level of professional nursing practice. Graduates are prepared for advanced nursing roles in direct clinical practice and leadership roles in areas that support clinical practice. Graduates receive preparation in such key areas as: evidence-based practice, organization and systems leadership, finance, health policy, information technology, population health, patient safety, and translational research with the goal of improving health outcomes.

## PURPOSE

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program of study builds upon baccalaureate education and expands current MSN education to prepare nurses for the highest level of advanced nursing practice. Graduates of the DNP program receive preparation in such key areas as: evidence-based practice, organization and systems leadership, finance, health policy, information technology, population health, patient safety, and translational research with the goal of improving patient and population health status and outcomes. The DNP degree does not create a new role; rather it provides advanced practice nurses and nurse executives with additional knowledge and skills that better prepares them to address evolving and increasingly complex societal needs.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The DNP graduate will be prepared to function at the highest level of advanced nursing practice. The educational outcomes of the DNP program are guided by *The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice* (2006).

The DNP graduate will be able to:

1. Integrate nursing knowledge with knowledge from ethics and the biophysical, psychosocial, organizational, and information sciences as the bases for advanced nursing practice and innovative approaches to health care delivery
2. Lead organizational and system change to improve quality and safety outcomes in the healthcare system.
3. Demonstrate practice expertise, specialized knowledge and relationship centered care in a distinct focus or specialty area of advanced nursing practice.
4. Evaluate information systems, patient care systems and technologies to optimize outcomes for individuals and populations.
5. Advocate for the development, implementation, and evaluation of health care policy at the institutional, local, state, national, and/or international levels.
6. Develop strategies and systems for risk reduction/illness prevention, health promotion, and health maintenance appropriate for diverse individuals, populations, and communities.
7. Lead teams and support collaboration to assure high quality patient and system outcomes.
8. Demonstrate scholarly inquiry to improve health outcomes through: (a) critical appraisal and translation of evidence into practice; (b) application of analytical methods to practice change projects; (c) dissemination of findings from evidence-based practice and research.

## CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

The DNP degree is awarded upon completion of an academic program of study. The curriculum for the DNP program is based on national accreditation standards and has been modeled after DNP programs offered through peer schools (those housed in research intensive universities with an academic health system). There are two pathways of entry into the DNP program at UNC-Chapel Hill: BSN to DNP and MSN to DNP.

All students in the BSN to DNP program are registered nurses with a baccalaureate or master's degree in nursing. Those admitted with baccalaureate preparation will take 3 years of full-time study consisting of approximately 60 to 74 credit hours. The plan of study will be confirmed with each student upon matriculation and include required coursework for advanced practice, leadership, and practice-based inquiry; completion of 1,000 practice hours of direct care or systems specialty practice experiences and DNP residency hours. Any Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) graduate is eligible to sit for national certification exams with an approved credentialing organization.

There are two options for BSN-prepared nurses to obtain their DNP degree: (a) the APRN option prepares APRNs to function at the highest level of advanced nursing practice in their population focus, and (b) the Health Care Leadership and Administration option prepares graduates to function at the highest level of advanced nursing practice in roles that support clinical practice such as administration, informatics and outcomes management.

Full-time MSN to DNP students will take four semesters of study. They will require 36 credit hours, approximately 500 residency hours, and the completion of an evidence-based practice DNP Project. All students are required to meet [The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice](#) (AACN, 2006). The DNP Essentials specify that to achieve the DNP student outcomes, programs should provide a minimum of 1,000 practice hours post-baccalaureate as part of a supervised academic program. All DNP students, including those in post-master's programs, are expected to complete a minimum of 1,000 post-baccalaureate practice hours. Most MSN to DNP-APRN students enter the program with 500 or more practice hours from their prior master's program. Some MSN to DNP HCLA students may not have had 500 clinical practice hours in their prior master's program and will need to complete additional hours in the DNP program to meet graduation requirements. Students entering with a master's in a health-related field may also need to complete additional clinical hours in the DNP program to meet graduation requirements. Upon matriculation, all MSN (or Master's) to DNP students will provide written confirmation of supervised clinical hours received during their prior degree program.

## TIMELINE TO DEGREE

Students complete the BSN to DNP program in 3 years and the MSN to DNP program in 2 academic years. Students meet with Lead Faculty to go over the [plan of study](#) and practice hour expectations for their advanced practice or specialty area. Students should also arrange to meet with their faculty academic advisors each semester.

Students should refer to the **DNP Project Timeline** (see DNP Toolbox below) on a regular basis to review their program progression with their academic advisor, Lead Faculty, and/or DNP Project Chair each semester.

## DOCTORAL BENCHMARKS (Full-Time Study)

There are several benchmarks throughout a student's doctoral career. The table below provides an overview of the typical benchmarks for a full-time student.

Benchmarks	MSN to DNP	BSN to DNP
Plan of Study	Fall, Year 1	Fall, Year 1
Finalize DNP Project Topic	Fall, Year 1	Fall, Year 2
Confirm DNP Project Chair & Committee	Fall/Spr, Year 1	Fall/Spr, Year 2
Qualifying Examination	Fall, Year 1	Fall, Year 2
DNP Project Proposal Defense	Spr, Year 1	Spr, Year 2
IRB Approval	After proposal defense	After proposal defense
DNP Project Implementation	Fall, Year 2	Fall, Year 3
Final Defense of DNP Project	Spr, Year 2	Spr, Year 3

## DOCTORAL EXAMINATIONS

The Graduate School at the UNC Chapel Hill requires that all doctoral students complete a series of three examinations: a doctoral written examination (*qualifying examination*), a doctoral oral examination (*proposal defense*), and a final oral examination (*final defense*) covering the DNP Project and other topics as required by the examining committee. These examinations determine if students have comprehensive knowledge relative to their field prior to degree completion.

Students in the DNP program will complete three examinations. The *first* written examination will be a qualifying examination. The *second* examination is the oral defense of the written proposal, and the *third* examination is the final oral defense of the DNP Project. [All students must be registered for NURS 994 for the oral defense and final oral defense.](#)

## QUALIFYING EXAMINATION PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the qualifying exam (QE) is to ensure all Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students are progressing in their ability to think critically, analyze, and synthesize content from the core areas of practice-based inquiry, theory, and leadership. This content is covered in courses listed below, depending on the student's plan of study:

- NURS 921 Theoretical Principles of Evidence-Based Practice
- NURS 922 Critical Appraisal of Evidence
- NURS 934 Clinical Scholarship and Professional Communication

All students must successfully complete courses from the list above specific to their plans of study before taking the QE.

### QUALIFYING EXAM COMMITTEE (QEC)

Responsibilities. The DNP Executive Committee (DNPEC) is responsible for writing the QE questions, and the QEC will administer the exam annually at the scheduled time as determined by the DNPEC. A set of general instructions developed for the QE will be provided to the students.

Constitution of the QE Committee. The QEC is comprised of at least three School of Nursing faculty members who hold status as Regular Graduate Faculty or hold a Special Appointment to the Graduate Faculty and meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Actively mentor DNP students as an academic advisor
- Serve as a DNP Project committee chair or member
- Actively engage in the DNP Program (e.g., serving on DNPEC, DNPAC, Committee Chair, teaching a DNP level course)

The size of the QEC will be evaluated annually. As student enrollment increases, the size of the QEC will increase to balance workload. The Committee will not include faculty who have taught NURS 921, NURS 922, or 934 during the academic year in which the QE is administered.

The DNP Lead Faculty will serve as the QE Chair and will solicit faculty volunteers via e-mail to serve on the QEC. The names of faculty volunteers who meet the above criteria will be presented to the DNPEC for informational purposes and will then be submitted in writing by the DNPEC Chair to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP Programs. Should the pool of volunteers be inadequate, the DNPEC Chair will make personal appeals to individuals meeting the QEC criteria.

### QE STRUCTURE

The QE is a written exam. All students will take a uniform QE and respond to a common set of exam questions that focus on broad concepts that can be applied to individual areas of interest. This approach provides a consistent assessment of students' knowledge.

The QE will be offered annually at the end of the fall semester, at the conclusion of the first semester of full-time study for MSN to DNP students and conclusion of the third semester of study (fall, 2<sup>nd</sup> year) for BSN to DNP students and part-time MSN-DNP students. All students must be registered during the fall semester in which the examination is taken, in accordance with Graduate School policy.

Any student who encounters extenuating circumstances that would prevent them from taking the exam as scheduled may request an individualized plan developed by the QEC in collaboration with the Chair of the QEC and the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP Programs.

A grading rubric developed by the QEC and approved by the DNPEC, will be used to ensure consistent evaluation of exams for all students. This grading rubric will be made available to students at the time of the exam.

### ADMINISTRATION OF QE

- Early in the fall semester, the DNP Lead Faculty/QE Chair will discuss the policies and procedures for the QE with all eligible students. Documents (3) describing the QE Policy, general instructions, sample title page, and study guide will be made available to DNP students on the Sakai site.

- The DNP Lead Faculty/QE Chair will post the QE and Grading Rubric to all students through the secure Sakai site, and/or provide a hard copy to students who request one in writing.
- The QE exam will be administered during the final two exam days of the fall semester. Students will have two days (48 hours) from the time the QE is released to complete the examination and submit their responses.
- Exams will be blinded about student names; students will submit their QE using their PID as identification. The DNP Division Manager will submit the blinded QE to the QEC by noon on the first business day following the closing of the exam.
- The QEC will grade and submit their responses to the DNP Lead Faculty/QE Chair through Sakai within 5 working days following receipt of the blinded QEs from the Division Manager.
- Three QEC members will read each student's response to questions and rate each response as "Pass" or "Unsatisfactory". Each student response to the three QE questions must receive a rating of "Pass" from two of the three QE Committee reviewers to pass the QE.
- Students who receive a "Pass" on all three QE questions will pass the QE. If one of the three questions is unsatisfactory (did not meet expectations), the student will have the option to rewrite and resubmit the question within 48 hours from the time of notification. Students with two or more questions rated as unsatisfactory will fail the exam.
- As soon as grading is complete, the DNP Lead Faculty as QE Chair will submit the results for each individual student to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP Programs. The Associate Dean, or a designee, will email the results of the QE to students. Students will be informed of their results prior to the first-class day of the spring semester.
- If a student is required to rewrite a question, a 48-hour exam time will begin at 5 pm of the day the student receives email notification that a rewrite is required. The re-written question will be graded by the QEC members who requested the re-write. For the student to pass the re-write, they must receive a rating of "Pass" from two of the three QEC members. A student's Project Chair or Primary Advisor is not allowed to assist the student with the rewritten submission.

### RE-TAKING THE QE

If a student fails the QE, the grading rubrics with reviewer comments will be emailed to the student and copies placed in the student's file in OAA. Students are strongly encouraged to share a copy of the exam and grading rubrics with reviewer responses with their DNP Project Chair or in the absence of the Chair, the academic advisor.

A student may not re-take the examination a second time until at least three months after the first attempt according to Graduate School policy.

- Students who retake the QE a second time in the subsequent spring semester will be allowed to enroll in courses during the spring semester only.
- Students will not be able to enroll in courses in the summer semester following a failed QE until they pass the exam.
- The re-take QE will be graded by the QEC members using the procedures outlined above.
- The QEC members will complete grading the re-take two weeks after the receipt of students' exam response, and students' final grade will be submitted to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP by the Committee Chair.
- The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will immediately notify students and their advisors by email regarding the student's performance on the re-take QE.
- Students who fail the re-take QE will be academically ineligible to continue in the DNP program.
- Those students who seek reinstatement into the DNP program must follow the procedures in accordance with the Graduate School Handbook.

Students who do not retake the QE at the end of the three-month period (March) are ineligible to retake the exam until the next formal exam period (December). If they have registered for NURS 994 during the spring semester, but do not retake the exam at the end of the three-month period, they will be required to drop NURS 994. Students will not be able to progress to NURS 994 until they have passed the QE.

*Approved DNPEC 10/1/14; Rev 2/24/16; 8/8/18; 4/30/2020; 7/2022 pending*

### DNP PROJECT TOOLBOX

Students are encouraged to read through *The Graduate School [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#)* early in the process and then refer to this guide through each phase of the DNP Project.



## DNP PROJECT TIMELINE

- [\(Word\) BSN\\_DNP-Project-Timeline.docx](#)
- [\(Word\) MSN-DNP-Project-Timeline.docx](#)

This DNP Project timeline describes the steps and activities necessary for meeting program milestones, completing the DNP Project, and graduating on schedule. This timeline is for full-time students; the timeline will remain the same for part-time students but will be extended.

Students will be introduced to this timeline upon matriculation; it will be referred to in all scholarly inquiry coursework (NURS 922, 923, 941, 942, 943). Students should share and discuss this timeline with their DNP Project Chair.

## DNP PROJECT TEAM

### COMPOSITION OF THE DNP PROJECT TEAM

Each DNP Project Team must be composed of at least three members — a DNP Project Chair and two other members. A majority of the members including the DNP Project Chair must be SON faculty (must be doctorally-prepared) with a graduate school appointment or a special appointment as regular graduate faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill. The third committee member may be from “outside” the SON and is generally someone who can serve as a clinical partner in the agency where the Project is conducted. *The outside member does not have to be doctorally prepared but should at a minimum have an earned graduate degree.*

**Note.** If you have any questions about a faculty member and whether they hold a graduate school appointment or special appointment, please see the DNP Division Manager.

### IDENTIFYING A DNP PROJECT CHAIR

The DNP Project Chair is the faculty member that will work most closely with the DNP student during his/her program of study. Ideally, the DNP Project Chair shares an interest in the student’s topical area or is someone who has other strengths that will be helpful to a student as they embark on their Project.

The process of identifying a DNP Project Chair begins by talking with your academic advisor or the DNP Lead Faculty since they have working knowledge of School of Nursing (SON) faculty interests or can advise you on how to find out the information you need.

### STEPS FOR FORMING THE DNP PROJECT TEAM

**Step 1:** Meet with your DNP Project Chair to discuss the composition of your DNP Project Team.

Once you and your DNP Project Chair have agreed on who the other two committee members may be, you will meet/contact these potential faculty or professionals and determine their willingness to serve on your DNP Project committee. Once you have a committee of three, go to step 2.

**Step 2:** Obtain and complete Part I of the “Doctoral Committee Composition Form”. A hard copy of this form is in the Graduate Suite (Room 1300) in Carrington Hall. An [electronic copy of the form \(PDF-fillable\)](#) may be completed ([see example](#)). You submit this form after you have passed the QE (qualifying exam).

**Step 3:** Submit the completed committee composition form (hard copy or electronic PDF) to the DNP Division Manager. Please save the email confirmation that your documents have been received.

**Step 4:** If an “outside” person is serving on your committee, submit their CV (or resume) with a brief statement of what their contribution to your project will be (see examples below). *Please make sure your DNP Chair has reviewed these materials.* Email the CV and brief support statement to the DNP Division Manager.

*Examples: **Outside Member Contribution***

\_\_\_\_\_ is a (role) at \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital/Clinic. S/he has expertise in the provision of rural health care and provides practice leadership at a critical access hospital that provides acute care for underserved communities. S/he will serve as the

Project Champion for implementation of this QI project. S/he will contribute to the scholarship of this project by providing mentorship in respect to evaluation and adaptation of processes in a rural hospital setting. She will also collaborate on the development of the manuscript.

\_\_\_\_\_ is a Nurse Practitioner at \_\_\_\_\_. S/he has expertise in implementing quality improvement projects with adolescents and young adults in primary care. She has led QI initiatives to improve vaccination rates among college students and controlled substance documentation. S/he will contribute to the scholarship of this project by serving as the Project Champion for implementation of the QI project, providing mentorship for data evaluation and analysis, and collaborating on the development of the manuscript.

**Note.** Each authorization is done on a student-by-student basis. If someone from outside the SON has been approved to sit on a MSN or PhD committee, this does not mean they are approved to sit on your DNP Project committee. Similarly, even if someone was approved to sit on a specific DNP Project committee in the past, this does not mean they are currently approved to sit on your committee.

*Step 5:* The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will review your committee composition after all the documentation has been received. Approval will be sought from the Graduate School for the outside person. *This may take up to 10 to 15 working days.*

*Step 6:* You and your chair will be notified when the approval is received from the Graduate School. You should continue working with your DNP Project Chair on your proposal while these approvals are in process.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS, DNP PROJECT CHAIRS, AND DNP PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

The DNP student is ultimately responsible for the development, design, implementation, and evaluation of the DNP Project including submission of the final manuscript to the Graduate School. It is the student's responsibility to stay in close communication with the DNP Project Chair and Team, submit original work, and take initiative to move the Project forward to completion. Students will respect the time and effort of each team member and be responsive to feedback and suggestions given.

The DNP Project Chair will assist the student with focusing the topic, developing the proposal, establishing a timetable, identifying a DNP Project site, identifying the DNP Project Team members, and supervising the student through each phase of the DNP Project. The Chair will provide timely and effective feedback on DNP Project manuscript drafts and determine when revised drafts are ready for review by the other members of the DNP Project Team.

The DNP Project Team member(s) shares responsibility with the DNP Project Chair for assuring that the student completes a high-quality DNP Project. The responsibilities of DNP Project Team members include guiding the development of the Project, reviewing and critiquing manuscript drafts by the established deadline(s), participating in team meetings, providing effective feedback, and assisting the student in their area of expertise to improve the quality of the DNP Project.

Please remember:

- All decisions regarding the composition of a student's DNP Project Team must be approved by the DNP Project Chair, the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP, and the Graduate School.
- All DNP Project Team members are expected to attend and evaluate the student's performance for the Proposal Defense and the Final Defense of the DNP Project. When necessary, participation via distance-based capabilities is appropriate and should be mutually agreeable to the student and other committee members.

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflicts occasionally arise between a student and his/her DNP Project Chair or committee members. Sources of conflict may include but are not limited to poor fit of a chair or committee member with the direction the DNP Project has taken, disagreement about a timeline for project completion or the content of the project proposal. Both students and faculty members can initiate action to change the membership of a committee, but it is anticipated that whenever possible this will be a cooperative process. *The student should keep in mind that changes to the committee membership may lengthen their timeline for program completion.*

If a conflict is disrupting the progress of the DNP Project, the student should follow the procedure below.

1. In all cases, the student must make a documented effort to resolve the issue directly with the chair or committee members involved in the conflict.
2. If unable to resolve the conflict, the student may follow up with the chair (except in those instances when the conflict is with the chair), followed with the DNP Lead faculty.
3. If the conflict cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, the chair or the student may forward the disagreement in writing to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP for further mediation.

The student should discuss the decision to change the membership of the DNP Project Team with the DNP Project Chair. If the Chair is in agreement, the student must communicate directly with both the incoming team member and outgoing team member to inform them of the reason for the change. A new DNP Project Team committee form must be submitted for approval by the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP and/or Graduate School. In most cases, the proposal defense, if it has already occurred, will need to be repeated with the newly formed DNP Project Team.

If the student elects to request a change in respect to the DNP Project Chair, s/he must meet with the current and future DNP Project Chair. If the current and future chairs are in agreement to a change, the student should submit a written request for approval of this change (via email) to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP. The student is responsible for communicating final approval of this change to both parties. If agreement is not reached, then the student should make an appointment with the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP to discuss the situation further. In both cases, the written request should include the rationale for the change in committee membership or the DNP Project Chair. Again, a change in committee membership or the role of chair may lengthen the timeline for the project and program completion.

A DNP Project Chair who leaves the University prior to the student's graduation may, with permission from the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP and the Graduate School, continue as the chair. The "in-absentia" chair must be approved as a fixed-term appointee by the Graduate School. If the student continues with an "in-absentia chair" the student must also have an academic advisor who will be responsible for all required School of Nursing and Graduate School paperwork.

### PURPOSE OF THE DNP PROJECT

The purpose of the DNP Project is to provide each student the opportunity to demonstrate clinical scholarship by completing an evidence-based project to improve practice and healthcare outcomes.

The DNP Project may be conducted at the group, population, systems, or policy level. There are many types of projects that will meet the above purpose including: quality improvement projects; translation of evidence to practice; clinical or practice-based inquiry; healthcare delivery; program evaluation; and healthcare policy. These projects often arise from clinical practice and may be done in partnership with another entity: clinical agency, school, health department, church, government, voluntary organization, or community group.

The DNP Project will be **developed, implemented, and evaluated** with a systematic approach using methods and tools that meet clinical practice standards and the standards of the UNC-Chapel Hill Graduate School. All graduates will submit a written DNP Project worthy of dissemination. The SON recognizes that a DNP Project is not a dissertation, nevertheless, the UNC-Chapel Hill Graduate School currently requires all doctoral students to follow the procedures outlined in the Graduate School [Thesis and Dissertation Guide](#).

The student is ultimately responsible for the development, design, implementation, and evaluation of the DNP Project including submission of the final manuscript to the Graduate School. This practice-focused scholarship will be completed under the guidance of the DNP Project Chair and the DNP Project Team (or committee).

### ORGANIZING THE PROPOSAL

*These are guidelines only. You must consult with your DNP Project Chair and committee members to determine the elements of your DNP Project proposal as well as the order of those elements.*

Below are some common elements included in the organization of the DNP Project proposal:

1. **Title Page**
2. **Introduction**
  - *Problem Statement:* Concise overview of the practice problem and why it is important and worth exploring.

- *Purpose of the Project* (or clinical question[s]): Describes the goal(s) of the DNP Project and the outcomes the project is designed to achieve.
  - *Significance to Nursing or Healthcare*: Describe the potential significance of the project outcomes to advanced nursing practice or the quality of healthcare in the problem area.
3. **Review of the Literature (ROL)**  
The ROL provides the evidence base for your DNP Project and relates directly to your purpose or question(s). The review must be comprehensive and provide a logical argument to support the Project. This section may begin with background information and epidemiologic data that support the focus of the DNP Project. The student should summarize and synthesize key concepts and relevant research in the literature to answer the clinical question(s). The literature reviewed should be no older than 5 years from the date of writing the proposal, except for landmark studies that have impacted nursing or health care in the problem area. Only primary information sources should be cited. Students will need to obtain the primary information sources to make their own decision about the quality of the evidence and how it may apply to their question.
  4. **Conceptual Model and/or Theoretical Framework**  
Describe the conceptual or theoretical framework that will guide the design of the DNP Project and interpretation of the outcomes. A diagram of the model may be placed in an appendix. Remember, if the student is using a pre-existing framework or one that is already published, you will need to seek [copyright permission](#) to reprint the framework in your DNP Project manuscript.
  5. **DNP Project Plan**  
The DNP Project plan may include a needs assessment, organization or systems analysis, cost-benefit analysis, major stakeholders, outcome development, and sustainability. Some typical headings in this section may include:
    - Design
    - Methods
    - Setting and resources
    - Study population or sample (Participants)
    - Recruitment
    - Ethics and Human Subjects permissions (ethical considerations, risk-benefit)
    - Data Collection Instruments
    - Procedures for Project implementation
    - Key personnel/stakeholders
    - Evaluation (or Data Analysis)
    - Also consider
      - Barriers to implementation or sustainability
      - Anticipated resources and budget, if applicable
  6. **Limitations: Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project**
  7. **References** (See formatting requirements in the [Thesis & Dissertation Guidelines](#))  
A reference list includes only citations to sources used in the paper.
  8. **Appendices**

**Note:** The student must be registered for NURS 994 during the semester that the DNP Project proposal is defended.

### PREPARING FOR THE PROPOSAL DEFENSE

The student will develop drafts of the Project proposal for review and approval by the DNP Project Chair. When the DNP Project Chair agrees that a written draft is ready for committee review, the student will circulate the draft to other committee members for review and critique. In general, a committee member requires at least 2 weeks (10 working days) to provide feedback and comment. When the committee agrees the manuscript is ready for the proposal defense, the student will consult with the DNP Project team to schedule a date, time, and room for the defense.

**Remember:** The DNP Chair in collaboration with the student is responsible for ensuring that all requirements for remote participation are met and that:

- All members of the committee and the candidate have the technology to participate in the defense and the remote technology is sufficiently tested prior to the defense.
- All visual materials are emailed to the committee prior to the defense.

- Remote participation be uninterrupted.
- If interrupted, that the defense is paused until all remote participations are fully restored or alternate technology (such as cell phone) is put in place.
- If audioconferencing is the only option available, arrangements must be made by the candidate to distribute all visual materials to the committee in advance of the defense.

### THE PROPOSAL DEFENSE MEETING

- (Word) [Steps for the DNP Proposal-Defense](#)

The student, the DNP Project Chair and both members of the DNP Project Team are expected to be physically present at the proposal defense. When necessary, participation via distance-based capabilities is appropriate and should be mutually agreeable to the student and other committee members. As a general rule, if the Chair as the student's chief advocate is not able to be physically present, the defense date must be rescheduled.

At the proposal meeting, the student will present a synopsis of the issue and scope of the proposed Project. The committee will have the opportunity to ask questions regarding the proposed Project as well as offer recommendations to improve the quality of the Project.

If revisions to the proposal are required, they will be specified by the committee at the time of the meeting. A plan and timeline for addressing revisions will be developed by the DNP Project team and presented to the student at that time. The DNP Project Chair will prepare a written description of the required revisions to distribute to the student and DNP Project Team members. The student may not proceed with IRB approval or Project implementation until the committee has approved the proposal.

#### PAPERWORK

1. DNP Committee Approval Form, Section II.
2. [Doctoral Exam Report Form, Section II](#): Report of Oral Examination

The Doctoral Exam Report Form and the DNP Committee Approval Form will be circulated by the DNP Division Manager for signatures via email. Please be sure your chair alerts the DNP Division Manager of your proposal date so these forms go out in a timely manner to other committee members.

### IRB APPROVAL (OR OTHER AGENCY APPROVALS)

After the proposal is approved by the DNP Project Team, the student will consult with the UNC Institutional Review Board (IRB) to determine whether IRB approval is required. In addition, any approvals that may be required from the clinical agency where the Project will be implemented must also be obtained.

**The DNP Project cannot be implemented until all necessary approvals have been received** (including a signed clinical contract between the son and agency: see DNP Project hours) and are in place. the DNP Project Chair will monitor these approvals with the student.

### THE FINAL DEFENSE

- (Word) [Steps for the DNP-Final-Defense](#)

**Note.** Please contact the DNP Division Manager if you would like an announcement sent out regarding your final defense. You will need to include in addition to the title, date, time — a **Zoom meeting ID** if the proposal defense is remote.

The final oral examination (defense) is primarily a true defense of the DNP Project. It may be open to the public, limited in attendance to the candidate and the committee, or a combination of the two.

The student, the DNP Project Chair and both members of the DNP Project Team are expected to be physically present at the final defense. When necessary, participation via distance-based capabilities is appropriate and should be mutually agreeable to the student and other committee members. As a general rule, if the Chair as the student's chief advocate is not able to be physically present, the defense date must be rescheduled.

**PAPERWORK**

[Doctoral Exam Report Form, Section III & IV](#): Oral Defense of Project Findings; signed by DNP Chair and Project Team members. The Doctoral Exam Report Form will be circulated via email by the DNP Division Manager for part III and part IV signatures.

**DNP PROJECT SITE, PROJECT HOURS, AND CONTRACTS****DNP PROJECT SITE**

The DNP Project site refers to the setting in which you implement your project. Examples of a site may include a traditional clinical setting (inpatient unit, outpatient practice, primary care office), schools, churches, or virtual environments.

Important things to keep in mind:

- The site must be approved by the DNP Project Chair.
- The contract for the site must be secured by the SON **before** implementation can occur.
- The DNP Project topic must align with needs of the site.
- A DNP Project Team committee member is often selected from the site to facilitate implementation.

**DNP PROJECT HOURS**

All DNP students, including those in post-master's programs, are expected to complete a minimum of 1,000 post-baccalaureate practice hours that include precepted clinical hours and the DNP Project. For MSN-DNP students, precepted practice hours (generally up to 500 hours) spent in master's nursing programs can be counted as post-baccalaureate practice hours, provided they can be verified.

Incorporated into the DNP program are approximately 500 practice hours related to the student's unique area of interest that support the DNP Project. The learning objectives for the practice hours will be mutually developed between the student, the DNP Project Team, and mentor(s) from cooperating agencies.

DNP Project hours are a component of the two practice inquiry courses (NURS 922 and NURS 923) and the hours associated with NURS 994 (6 credits of NURS 994 are required for the doctoral degree). All DNP Project hours must be tracked; tracking of hours will be described further by course faculty in NURS 922. Students who have successfully passed the qualifying examination and require additional hours outside of the above coursework should meet the Lead Faculty in their practice area.

The DNP Project hours are defined as the time spent engaged in activities related to development of the DNP Project: scholarship, consultation and collaboration, and engagement at the agency/site with champions and stakeholders who will facilitate implementation of the DNP Project. These aspects of the project hours provide in-depth learning and meaningful engagement with nurses and other experts in other disciplines.

Specific activities that meet requirements for project hours include:

**SCHOLARSHIP**

- Research/reading to develop topic/idea
- Review of literature
- Development of proposal
- Development of final paper

**CONSULTATION/COLLABORATION**

- Consultation with SON faculty to identify and secure a DNP Project Chair
- Meetings with the DNP Project Chair, DNP Project Team members, or other faculty to discuss development of the topic/ proposal/methodology or any aspect of the Project

**ENGAGEMENT AT THE RESIDENCY SITE**

- Determining if the DNP Project site is an appropriate setting for implementation
- Networking to develop champions and stakeholders for the DNP Project

- Attendance at meetings that support development of the DNP Project, facilitate networking, or promote the success of your clinical scholarship

Activities that **do not meet** requirements for residency hours include any activity related to class assignments or class readings, basic administrative activities (e.g., tracking hours), time spent in class, or travel time.

### DNP PROJECT SITE CONTRACTS

- (PDF) [DNP Project Site Information Form](#)

Prior to beginning a DNP Project, the School of Nursing must establish a contract with each agency. To provide the necessary information for these contracts, students will complete the DNP Project Site Information Form when enrolled in NURS 922 by a specified deadline. This form includes information such as the DNP Project Chair's name, agency address and phone number, lead provider or site representative's name and contact information, tentative start date, and brief project description. It can take **up to 3 months** to secure a contract with clinical agencies, so it is important that students complete this form in an accurate and timely manner. *In rare situations, it may take more than 3 months to secure a contract.* **Students may not begin their projects until they and their DNP Project Chair have been notified that the contract is established.**

The DNP Project Site Contract includes maintaining clinical compliance requirements at the agency. Specific compliance requirements will be project specific and take into account factors such as whether the student will have direct patient contact or need access to medical record or other information. It is important that this information is provided on the DNP Project Site Information Form. Student compliance requirements will be tracked through CastleBranch.

### STUDENTS WHO ARE EMPLOYEES AT THE PROJECT SITE/AGENCY

If the DNP Project will be completed at the student's place of employment:

1. A student may not enroll for course credit and be paid for the same hours.
2. If a student is an employee of a site or has any other formal relationship with the site where s/he has been placed to do course work as a student, roles must be clearly defined and separated, in writing and in advance of the placement, as follows:
  - a. A faculty supervisor (DNP Project Chair) must be listed for each student.
  - b. Program or course content and educational objectives for the student's experience at the site must be detailed.
  - c. If a student is also an employee of site or has a formal relationship with the site, the hours in which the student is functioning as an employee/in the other role vs. the hours the student is functioning as a student must be defined.
3. In order to avoid potential conflict between the site's expectations regarding levels of productivity related to site objectives and the student's use of time at the site to meet DNP project learning objectives, a student may not bill for a service s/he provided while in a student role.

Contact [Dr. D'Auria](#) if you have any questions about the above information.

### STATISTICAL SUPPORT

There are many campus resources related to methods and statistical support. **Dr. Mary Lynn will be able to consult with you for the 2023-24 AY.** We also have many faculty who are familiar with statistics and QI methods. In addition, the [Odum Institute for Research in Social Science](#) offers courses and services related such things as data management and quantitative and qualitative methods.

### COMPLETED DNP PROJECTS

- (Word) [List of Completed DNP Projects](#)

### ACADEMIC ACTIONS & CONSEQUENCES

### FORMAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE (LOA)

The advantage of a leave of absence LOA is that it stops the student's academic clock for the period of time requested. Leaves are not granted retroactively. Leaves should be applied for before or at the beginning of the semester. When seeking a formal leave of absence, students must submit a "Request for Leave of Absence" form (Required forms may be found at The Graduate School Form Finder web site. Students must:

1. Meet with their academic advisor and Lead Faculty to determine their standing in the program.
2. Obtain a brief written statement of support for a leave of absence from the Lead Faculty.
3. Submit all materials (request form and statement of support) to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP for signature.

The MSN/DNP Division Office will forward the request form to the Graduate School. A copy of the request form will be sent to student, Lead Faculty, and the Assistant Dean-OSA. The student will receive official permission for the LOA from the Graduate School.

### FORMAL WITHDRAWAL OR MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

For a formal withdrawal or medical leave of absence, a student must meet with their faculty advisor and Lead Faculty. Students who have taken a formal withdrawal or medical leave of absence must provide evidence that the original problems requiring the withdrawal or medical leave have been resolved when seeking readmission.

If a student decides to withdraw for reasons other than illness, or if a medical withdrawal cannot be authorized, the student must contact the Associate Dean MSN/DNP and the Lead Faculty in their specialty area. An official withdrawal involves the completion of an "Application for Withdrawal" form. The student must obtain clearance signatures from course instructors and certain University offices, as determined by the dean's office, before the form is submitted.

If a student requests a formal withdrawal from the graduate program while in their first semester of work, they must reapply to the University Graduate School.

### READMISSION PROCESS

It is the student's responsibility to notify the faculty advisor and Lead Faculty of all situations that impact progression in the program. It is strongly recommended that students who leave the program for any length of time, stay in close communication with the academic advisor and Lead Faculty to update them on their situation on a regular basis.

A student may be required to repeat coursework to prepare them for returning to the appropriate advanced practice standing. Standing in the specialty area upon return to the program will be determined by the Lead Faculty and graduate faculty in the student's specialty area.

When seeking readmission, students must submit the following materials 1 month prior to the published University deadline for the semester in which they are seeking readmission:

1. Complete a "Request for Readmission" form available on the Graduate School web site.
2. Meet with their academic advisor and Lead Faculty to determine their standing in the program.
3. Obtain a brief written statement of support for readmission to the specialty area from the Lead Faculty which includes any readmission requirements approved by specialty faculty.
4. Submit all materials (request form and statement of support) to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP for signature.

The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will forward the request form to the Graduate School. A copy of the "Request for Readmission" form will be sent to the student, Lead Faculty, and Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. The student will receive official notification of readmission from the Graduate School.

Any student seeking readmission, who cannot complete his or her program of study by the end of their respective calendar clock, must seek formal readmission to the graduate program. A request for a 1-year extension of the 5-year time period for MSN students and 8-year clock for DNP students may be requested in special situations.



Students must formally request readmission (see above) to the program before the School of Nursing deadlines for the semester in which they are seeking readmission. The School of Nursing must have sufficient time to process readmission requests to meet the published deadlines of the University.

<b>School of Nursing Deadlines</b>	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Summer</i>	<i>Spring</i>
Formal Leave of Absence or Break in Continuous Enrollment < 1 yr	June 1	March 1	Nov 1
Formal Withdrawal, Medical Leave, Break in Continuous Enrollment > 1 yr	May 1	Feb 1	Oct 1

#### **FORMAL DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM**

Students dismissed from the School of Nursing graduate practice programs may reapply for readmission. Students will be required to provide evidence that subsequent performance is likely to meet or exceed minimum standards. Such application for readmission will be considered only when clearly exceptional circumstances can be documented to support the readmission request. The student's application and supporting evidence for readmission will be reviewed by the School of Nursing admissions committee (MSN or DNP) as well as the University Office of Graduate Admissions.

#### **ACADEMIC OR CLINICAL DIFFICULTIES**

Students who are having academic or clinical difficulties are encouraged to contact the course instructor, clinical faculty, and clinical preceptor, if applicable, as early as possible in the semester. It is also recommended that students appraise their academic advisor and Lead Faculty of academic or clinical difficulties.

At mid-semester, the Associate Dean MSN/DNP requests from course coordinators the names of students who may be experiencing academic or clinical difficulties. This list will be shared with the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, the student's academic advisor and Lead Faculty. Course coordinators will be instructed to ask for a meeting with each student who is experiencing academic or clinical difficulties, informing them of their academic standing, and setting up a plan to facilitate their ability to meet course objectives. The course coordinator will refer the student back to their faculty advisor and Lead Faculty for further guidance and assistance.

Students who are not making satisfactory progress in a course will set a time to meet with the course coordinator and develop a formal learning contract with the course coordinator or a designated course faculty member. The contract should identify the areas of deficiency and specify corrective actions to satisfactorily meet course and/or program objectives.

The academic and clinical performance of master's students is reviewed at mid-semester and at the end of each semester. In programs of study where course work is sequential or clinical performance is unsatisfactory or marginal, the student may not progress in the program until improvement is made and course objectives are met. These situations will be reviewed at the end of each semester (see Progression Review Process).

*Approved 9/9/2013, MEC; DNPEC 2013*

#### **ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESSION**

The School of Nursing regularly monitors and assesses the academic performance and progression of each student enrolled in the School of Nursing graduate practice programs, specifically, the Master of Science in Nursing ("MSN") program and the Doctor of Nursing Practice ("DNP") program to assure timely progression to degree completion. The purpose of this review is to assure that each student is making satisfactory progress in the student's program of study based upon stated criteria established by the School of Nursing and the University. This review also provides an opportunity to identify resources and support for students who are having difficulties.

The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP or the Lead Faculty in each practice area will provide information regarding the program's academic requirements to each student at the time of matriculation.

### THE MSN/DNP PROGRESSION REVIEW COMMITTEE

The MSN/DNP Progression Review Committee ("Committee") is the body responsible for assessing and monitoring academic performance and progression of graduate practice students in the MSN and DNP programs. The Committee is a standing sub-committee of both the Master's Executive Committee ("MEC") and the Doctor of Nursing Practice Executive Committee ("DNPEC"). The Committee is composed of six voting members: a chair and one faculty representative from each of the five advanced practice areas. The Chair of the Committee is appointed jointly by the MEC and DNPEC for a three-year term. It is recommended, but not required, that the Chair of the Committee have previously served as a member on the Committee. The Chair of the Committee will also serve as a standing member of the MEC and DNPEC committees. The Chair is responsible for constituting and maintaining the Committee's membership, orienting new members, administering the Committee's meetings, and sending written notification to the students who were reviewed by the Committee of the Committee's decision.

The Advanced Practice Area faculty who will serve as members of the Committee are nominated by their respective faculty and must currently teach or advise in the MSN or DNP programs. Each member of the Committee will serve a three-year term and may be re-appointed for one subsequent three-year term. The Associate Dean of the MSN/DNP Program ("Associate Dean-MSN/DNP") and the Assistant Dean of the Office of Student Affairs ("Assistant Dean-OSA") will serve as ex-officio (non-voting) members of the Committee.

If any member of the Committee has a conflict of interest, which would prevent the member's impartial review of a student, the Committee Chair will appoint an alternative faculty member to serve on the Committee as a substitute for the member who maintains the conflict of interest. A conflict of interest arises when a Committee member has had prior interactions with a student that are relevant to the situation or circumstances under review or that could suggest the possibility of bias in the decision-making process. The MEC and DNPEC chairs may appoint a substitute Committee Chair if there is a conflict of interest that prevents the Committee Chair's participation in a progression review.

The Committee will meet to conduct progression review shortly following receipt of final grades by the School of Nursing Registrar at the end of each semester. The Committee will review all students who:

- Are on academic probation.
- Received a grade of "L" or "F" in the current semester.
- Have unresolved temporary grades such as "IN," "AB," or "NG;"
- Withdrew from a required course during the past semester or have requested a retroactive withdrawal.
- Were non-compliant with health and safety requirements at any point in an academic term; or
- Exhibited unprofessional behavior in their role as a student in the School of Nursing.

In addition, the Committee will review all DNP students who have been recommended for review by their academic advisor based upon one or more of the following circumstances:

- Student ending the second year (MSN to DNP) or third year (BSN to DNP) of full-time study without a scheduled DNP project proposal defense;
- Student ending the third year (MSN to DNP) or fourth year (BSN to DNP) of full-time study without a scheduled DNP project final defense; or
- Faculty, Course Coordinator, or Academic Advisor request that the Committee review a student.

Additional meetings of the Committee will occur under special circumstances during the semester, for instance, to address a student's non-compliance with health and safety requirements.

Shortly after receipt of the semester grades by the School of Nursing registrar, the Assistant Dean-OSA will forward the names of all students who meet the criteria outlined above and their grades to the Chair of the Committee and to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP. In addition, near the end of each academic semester, the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will query course coordinators, academic advisors, and the Committee Chairs to identify students who will require progression review. The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will notify students in their program area who will be subject to progression review and will ask them to submit any relevant information to the Associate Dean in writing prior to the meeting.

During the meeting, the Assistant Dean-OSA will present the academic records of all students who are being reviewed by the Committee. The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will also present relevant information received from an individual student, course faculty, academic advisor, or Lead Faculty in their program area, as applicable. In addition, the Committee may request information from other individuals who may have pertinent information regarding a student's academic or clinical performance. The student being reviewed will not be present during the meeting.

After receiving all the information, the Committee will discuss the student's performance and vote upon decisions to be made with respect to the student's progression in the program. A simple majority of the voting members of the Committee is required for any decision regarding a student's progression in the program. Such decisions may include any combination of the following:

- A written warning that the student is progressing at a rate that will lengthen the student's time to graduation;
- A requirement that the student perform specific remedial work and/or repeat coursework;
- Academic probation;
- Dismissal from the program if, in the judgment of the Committee, the student does not show sufficient promise to continue in the program; and/or
- Any other measure that would address the Committee's concerns about the student's performance.

Shortly following the meeting of the Committee, the Chair will send a letter to the student describing the Committee's decisions. Copies will also be sent to the OSA for placement in the student's academic file and to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP.

In cases in which dismissal from the program is the Committee's decision, the letter also will contain the Committee-specific requirements for readmission, and the process for appeal.

The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will then notify the Lead Faculty, academic advisor, and The Graduate School of the decision for a student in their program area. In the case of a DNP student, the student's DNP Project Chair will also be notified.

#### **APPEALS**

The student may appeal the Committee's decision to the Dean. All appeals must be in writing and signed by the student. Appeals should be submitted no later than the last day of classes of the next succeeding semester. Any appeal must contain a summary of the evidence and arguments that the student believes support the student's position in the appeal.

*Approved MEC and DNPEC, 11/2016*

*Updated 8/7/23*

## REINSTATEMENT PROCESS

Students declared academically ineligible due to grades may petition the Graduate School for reinstatement after endorsement from the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP.

Students seeking reinstatement must notify their Lead Faculty and academic advisor as soon as they are aware of their academic ineligibility or the potential for academic ineligibility. The Lead Faculty will notify the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP of the names and the semester for which any student in their specialty area is seeking reinstatement.

In order to determine whether a student's request for reinstatement is eligible for endorsement, the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will convene a committee made up of the student's academic advisor, Lead Faculty, and one other graduate faculty member from the student's specialty area, the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP, and the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs (ex-officio). The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will chair the meeting and be a nonvoting member. The student will be notified of the day and time of the meeting and be invited to meet with committee members.

In collaboration with the student, the committee will develop a plan to support the student's success that may include student activities and program supports. A simple majority of the voting members of the committee is required for any decision or recommendation regarding a student's progression in the program. If the committee's judgment is that no plan is likely to support success, reinstatement will be denied. However, such a decision will not be made without offering the student the chance to personally meet with the committee.

The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will prepare a brief summary indicating the decision of the committee. This summary should include any conditions for continuance in the program, which may include, but are not limited to, extended study and tutorial assistance. A copy of this statement will be sent to the student and placed in the student's folder. (**Note:** The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP will complete the reinstatement form including the committee's decision; the form will be delivered to the Graduate School for approval.)

Students have the right to appeal the progression decision in writing to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the School of Nursing within 10 working days of notification by the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP.

Students who are reinstated are on academic probation and are automatically declared academically ineligible if they receive a grade below P.

Second reinstatements are only granted by the Graduate School in exceptional situations and with strong endorsements from the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP. Therefore, the review committee for a student requesting a second reinstatement will be made up of the student's academic advisor, Lead Faculty, and one other graduate faculty member from the student's specialty area, the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP (nonvoting member), the Assistant Dean of Student Services (ex-officio), and two uninvolved graduate faculty members suggested by the Chair of the DNP Executive Committee. A simple majority of the voting members of the committee is required for any decision or recommendation regarding a student's progression in the program.

Students who fail comprehensive examinations twice are not eligible for reinstatement but may appeal directly to the Administrative Board of the Graduate School.

## APPEALS

Students may appeal the denial of reinstatement to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Graduate School (in that order). The only grounds for appeal are procedural, denial of due process, arbitrariness, or discrimination.

## COURSE POLICIES

*Note: See the GRADUATE ACADEMIC POLICIES handbook for general policies governing such things as advisor assignments and transfer of coursework.*

## CLASS ATTENDANCE

Regular class attendance is a student obligation. A student is responsible for all the work, including tests, laboratory and clinical assignments and written work, of all class meetings. Each individual instructor of classes at the graduate level has the authority to prescribe attendance regulations for his or her class.

A faculty member wishing to require class attendance must have a systematic method of monitoring student attendance and a stated process for factoring excessive absences into the student's grade or any recommended remedial activity. The attendance requirement and any mechanism for calculating the grade must be given to students in writing at the beginning of the course.

Attendance does not apply to recognized religious holidays. Students do not have to attend class on any major religious holiday that is regularly observed. Faculty members make every effort to avoid scheduling papers or exams on religious holidays, but the student is required to make up any work that is missed.

In the School of Nursing, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs has delegated the handling of absences to course coordinators. The Associate Dean-MSN/DNP must be informed of all unusual situations.

## ATTENDANCE AT REGULAR EXAMS OR TESTS

Students are expected to take tests as scheduled unless an excused absence is obtained from an appropriate course faculty representative before the time of the test. A grade of F will be given to a student with an unexcused absence from a test.

All graduate faculty and students are expected to be familiar with the [Honor Code of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) and conduct themselves according to the principles it contains.

## ATTENDANCE AT CLINICAL EXPERIENCES

Students are expected to uphold the clinical policies and procedures of the School of Nursing. Specifically, students are required to:

1. Attend all clinical experiences except when ill.
2. Complete all required clinical hours by the end of the semester in which they are enrolled.
3. Notify the course faculty and/or clinical preceptor of an absence due to illness or emergency prior to the scheduled clinical time if possible.
4. Assume responsibility for making up any specific experiences. Make-up laboratory time is at the discretion of the course faculty and/or clinical preceptor.

Course faculty and/or a clinical preceptor may deny a student access to a clinical experience if the student is:

1. Unprepared for patient care, e.g., does not meet all the health and safety requirements and documentation as outlined in the Student Handbook (most current version) or does not meet the requirements as set forth by the clinical site.
2. Physically or mentally ill.
3. Under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
4. Unaware of his/her own limitations or fails to seek help when he/she recognizes his/her limitations.
5. Unprofessional in appearance or behavior.

## APPROPRIATE CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Faculty and students are mutually responsible for enforcing optimal classroom behavior and thus helping to create an appropriate learning environment for all.

All students shall be given the opportunity to learn in an environment that is free from noise, intrusions, and disruptions. Students should remain attentive to the activities of the classroom and behave in a manner that allows others to be attentive. Noise must be avoided and includes, but is not limited to beepers, cell phones, children, side conversations among students, monopolization of conversation, reading newspapers, and frequent getting up and down while class is in session.

## FINAL EXAMINATIONS

Final examinations are not required of graduate courses; therefore, there is no published final examination schedule for graduate courses. In general, exams for graduate courses are scheduled on the same day and time that the course was held during the semester. The course coordinator will discuss the timing of the final exam at the beginning of the semester with students. If conflicts arise with scheduling among graduate courses, students are encouraged to discuss this with the course coordinator. If the conflict cannot easily be resolved, the course coordinator will take this issue to the Associate Dean MSN/DNP for further discussion and resolution.

In the University in general, no exams or classes are to be scheduled on reading days. If graduate students or faculty believe that the agreed upon exam schedule should change and a final examination be given on a reading day, students must be given the opportunity for an anonymous vote on the proposed change. If any student objects, the final exam cannot be held on a reading day or faculty have the option of offering the exam on the reading day and on a second day during the final exam period so that all students are accommodated.

In courses with a final examination, no special preparation quizzes may be given during the last five days of class before the beginning of the final examination period. Only examinations requiring an exceptional portion of practical work should be longer than three hours. The length of the final examination should reflect the credits allocated to the course. Appropriate time should be allocated to take exams.

A student who has three final examinations scheduled within a 24-hour period may petition the AD MSN/DNP to have one of the scheduled examinations rescheduled. Any petition for a change in the examination schedule because of the "three exams in a twenty-four hour" rule must be made to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP before the first day of the final examinations. In all cases in which an examination is to be rescheduled, the instructor may reschedule that examination during the final examination period, but not later than the end of the following semester.

Students in the Graduate Program of the School of Nursing who have failed to comply with course requirements may be prevented from sitting for the final examination (e.g., students who have not turned in all their assignments).

*Approved MEC, 9/9/2013; DNPEC, 2013*

## CLINICAL PLACEMENTS

The following roles and responsibilities of students, faculty (including the faculty advisor, course coordinator), Lead Faculty, and the Clinical Site Coordinator have been identified to coordinate placements for graduate students within the School and to clarify communication links between the School and clinical agencies.

### ROLE OF STUDENTS

- Students are admitted to a specific advanced practice area.
- Students will communicate to their Lead Faculty member, by a specified deadline, the names and contact information for potential preceptors in their geographic area.
- Requests for clinical placements are responded to in the order in which they are
- A delay in submitting requests may prevent obtaining the best possible or preferred placement site.
- Once clinical sites are confirmed, students will receive information about health and safety compliance requirements for the specific site. Commencement of clinical and practicum experiences rely on timely completion of compliance requirements based on deadlines that will be shared with students each semester.

Students are advised on the following parameters and expectations for the clinical placement process:

- Providing the names and contact information for a potential preceptor does not guarantee they will be assigned to that preceptor and agency.
- Students should not contact sites/preceptors directly; this causes communication problems for both the School and clinical agency.
- When possible, placements will be secured in the student's geographic "home" region. However, the learning needs and travel times for all students must be considered during the assignment.

- Student clinical placement locations will require travel.
- *Students can anticipate travel up to 1.5 hours one-way to a clinical site placement.*
- *Situations may arise when travel one-way may be up to 2 hours.*
- Students are responsible for their own transportation to clinical sites and should consider this factor when calculating and planning for their educational expenses and scheduling.

A clinical site may be able to provide only a portion of the necessary clinical hours. In those cases, students will have clinical experiences at two different clinical sites during the same semester (up to 3 different clinical sites during a major capstone course).

### ROLE OF THE FACULTY ADVISOR

Faculty and/or academic advisors should direct students to communicate with their Lead Faculty about clinical placement issues. Faculty members are encouraged to advise the Lead Faculty of potential new placement sites and preceptors.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COURSE COORDINATOR

The responsibilities of the **course coordinator** of a clinical management course or practicum include:

- Informing the appropriate Lead Faculty of potential sites and preceptors.
- Establishing informal faculty contact as an important part of the relationship between the School and agency placement sites.
- Collaborating with the appropriate Lead Faculty to match students to placement sites.
- Communicating with the preceptor about evaluations of student's performance.
- Communicating with students about the need to complete preceptor and site evaluations.
- Confirming the completion of graduate students' clinical hours to facilitate student progression and reimbursement of ambulatory community-based preceptors.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEAD FACULTY

The **Lead Faculty** in each Advanced Practice Area (AGPCNP, AGACNP, FNP, HCS, PNP-PC, and PMHNP) lead the process of coordinating clinical placements for graduate students with assistance from the Clinical Site Coordinator (CSC), faculty, and students.

The responsibilities of the Lead Faculty in an advanced nursing area include:

- Advising and assisting with the identification of potential new placement sites and preceptors for students.
- Compiling written requests for placement sites using Qualtrics (student clinical site preferences survey), NurSys and Typhon systems
- Receiving a list of secured sites from the CSC.
- Directing course coordinator to send "Letter of Course Assignment" re: student-to-site match to agency preceptor/contact
- Directing course coordinator or designated person to send orientation materials (course guidelines, evaluation sheets and preceptor guidelines) to agency preceptor/contact informing CSC of changes involving clinical assignments of students.

Submitting requests for clinical placements to the CSC will take place at the following time period

- Requests for Spring Semester: Mid-September
- Requests for Summer Session I and II: Mid-February
- Requests for Fall Semester: Mid-March to Mid-April

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CLINICAL SITE COORDINATOR

The responsibilities of the Clinical Site Coordinator (CSC) include:

- Sending requests for clinical site placements to preceptors/contacts as requested by Lead Faculty.
- Securing placements based on consultation with Lead Faculty and responses from
- Informing the Office of Contracts and Compliance of new sites and contract
- Notifying Lead Faculty and Office of Contracts and Compliance of confirmed sites.
- Notifying sites when a student drops a course or withdraws from the program.

- Notifying each Lead Faculty of changes in clinical agencies that may impact students in the

## CHANGE IN ADVANCED PRACTICE AREA OR FOCUS

Students who find their career goals have changed after entering the graduate practice programs in the School of Nursing may submit a one-time request to change the Advanced Practice Area (APA) or substantive focus within an APA to which they were originally admitted. This policy includes students who desire to change the substantive focus of their program within an APA, such as the oncology focus in the AGPCNP advanced practice area. The intent of this policy is to assist the matriculated student in making a well-reasoned decision as well as to foster timely admission decisions and allocation of faculty and clinical resources.

Any change of APA or focus within an APA, will be made on a space-available basis, dependent on-site placement, and faculty resources, and in accordance with applicable admission policies and procedures.

### STEPS FOR REQUESTING A CHANGE

- (PDF) [Change of APA or Focus within an APA Request Form](#)

*Requirements for submitting a Request to Change Advanced Practice Area or focus area:*

1. Students must consult with both their advisor and their current Lead Faculty prior to submitting a request. They will advise the student, discuss the request to change his/her APA/Focus within an APA, and review the applicable process and policies. If after this consultation, the student elects to remain in his/her current APA, no further action is required.
2. If the student chooses to proceed, the student will complete and sign the “Change of APA/APA-Focus Request Form.”
3. The student will bring the completed form to their current Lead Faculty for signature.
4. The student will submit the original signed copy of the form to the Graduate Admissions Counselor, in the Office of Student Affairs (OSA). The Graduate Admissions Counselor will distribute electronic copies (PDF) of the completed form to the current Lead Faculty, the Lead Faculty of the requested APA, and the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP in the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA).

*By signing the form, the student is acknowledging their understanding of the following:*

- The approval by the Admissions Committee (MAC or DNPAC) for a student to change an APA and/or a focus area within an APA will be dependent, among other factors, on whether space is available in the requested APA/ focus area within an APA.
- If the requested change is approved, the student will accept the change of APA/focus within an APA and relinquish his/her place in the current APA or focus area within an APA.
- If the request to change APA/APA focus area is not approved, the student will make a decision as to whether to remain in the current APA/APA focus area or withdraw from the MSN program.

### FOCUS CHANGE WITHIN AN APA ONLY

AGPCNP students who wish to add and/or change a specialty (e.g., Adult Oncology) should complete the first four “Steps for Requesting Change” listed above and thereby acknowledge the implications of their change request. Students requesting a Focus change within an APA only do not need to complete the steps listed in the following section.

*Following submission of the Change of APA or Focus within an APA Request Form, the student must submit additional required documents to the Graduate Admissions Counselor in OSA. Students requesting a change of APA/Focus within an APA shall be considered by the MAC or DNPAC in conjunction with other applicants for the desired APA. The required documents include:*

- A current internal official UNC-CH transcript
- A Professional Statement that **strictly** follows posted guidelines (see Application Instructions) to include, among other elements:
  - Evidence of the necessary credentials specific to the requested APA. (For example, if the student requests a change to the Pediatric Nurse Practitioner area, he or she must provide evidence of at least one year of clinical experience relevant to pediatrics.)



- The rationale for the request to change APAs, including how study in that particular area will prepare them for their future practice goals.

Following the review of an admissions committee and decision, the OSA will inform the student of the outcome in the same timeframe and format as all applicants are notified of admissions decisions. OSA will additionally return the *Change of APA/ APA-Focus Request Form* with a copy of the letter from the admissions committee to the Associate Dean-MSN/DNP who will notify the respective Lead Faculty of the student's status.

### DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

The *Change of APA or Focus within an APA Request Form* and support documents must be submitted to the appropriate Admissions Committee via the Office of Student Affairs by the spring application deadline of January 15th. The relevant Admissions Committee must consider these requests as part of the MSN or DNP applicant pool for the following fall semester.

The goal is to facilitate an approved change of APA/focus area within an APA by either the summer semester when graduate clinical courses diverge (e.g., AGPCNP from FNP) or prior to the beginning of fall semester when the clinical course sequence of the newly selected major generally begins.

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### IMPORTANT PAPERWORK

Below are names and descriptions of paperwork and forms that must be completed and emailed to the MSN/DNP Division Office at varying time periods across a student's program of study. All paperwork and forms are maintained in the student's folder in the MSN/DNP Division office until graduation. Below, we have provided links to these forms as well as examples of [how to fill them out](#).

**Note.** Most of these are multi-part forms that will be used to document two or more events across a student's program.

Time period	Form Examples	Description
Matriculation; Pre-registration Periods	Plan of Study Examples: <a href="#">FNP</a> <a href="#">MSN-DNP (FT)</a>	Official plans of study (POS) for the student(s) specific specialty area are used to monitor student progression and completion of graduation requirements.
Qualifying Examination	Part I: <a href="#">Doctoral Exam Report Form</a>	Part I of a 4-part form that will be used to record other milestone events across the program.  The Chair of the Qualifying Examination (QE) committee will sign Part I of the form after the student successfully passes the exam.
DNP Project Chair; DNP Project Committee	Part I: <a href="#">Report of Doctoral Committee Composition</a>	Part I of this 2-part form (PDF fillable) documents the DNP Project Chair and the DNP Committee members' names and faculty status. The committee must be approved prior to the proposal defense.
Defense of DNP Project Proposal	Part II: <a href="#">Doctoral Exam Report Form</a>  Part II : <a href="#">Report of Approved Dissertation Project</a>	Part II of a multi-part form that is signed by the DNP Project Chair and committee member(s) after a successful proposal defense. The DNP Division Manager circulates the form.  These signed documents indicate the student's readiness to begin the DNP Project and submit the proposal to the IRB if indicated

Time period	Form Examples	Description
Final Defense of DNP Project (Grad School form will state 'dissertation')	Part III: <a href="#">Doctoral Exam Report Form</a> (Report of the Final Oral Examination)  Part IV: <a href="#">Doctoral Exam Report Form</a> (Report of the Final Dissertation)	Part III of a multi-part form that is signed by the DNP Project Chair and committee member(s) after a successful final defense. The DNP Division Manager circulates the form.  Part IV is completed when the Committee has approved the final written manuscript. Signed paperwork will be forwarded to the Graduate School by OAA.

### FORM FINDER

Links to electronic copies of all Graduate School forms can be located on the Graduate School Web site ([Form Finder](#)). Frequently used forms include Request Leave of Absence, Readmission Application, Request Reinstatement, and Extension of Time.