

Creighton University College of Nursing

DNP Scholarly Project Guidelines

Overview

The expectations for the DNP Project are consistent with the stated purposes of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program. It is a scholarly demonstration of the synthesis of the student's work and lays the groundwork for future scholarship.¹⁶ "The theme that links these forms of scholarly experiences is the use of evidence to improve either practice or patient outcomes¹²." Through successful completion of the DNP Project, students are capable of improving health care through selectively contributing to the development of nursing practice. Students collaborate with scholars from nursing and other disciplines to design, manage, and evaluate clinical practices and organizational systems. The DNP Project is conducted according to ethical principles, addresses identified needs, and is designed to benefit a group, population, health care organization/system, or community.¹⁷

The DNP Project documents achievement of the program objectives. Required core and support courses provide the underlying scientific basis and the scholarly and analytic methods for evidence-based practice and for improving and transforming health care and health care delivery systems. The advanced nursing practice courses provide specialty content and experiential activities aimed at the application of skill sets associated with clinical decision-making, quality and safety initiatives, organizational and systems management and leadership, and policy advocacy.

"...practice-focused graduates are prepared to generate new knowledge through innovation of practice change, the translation of evidence, and the implementation of quality improvement processes in specific practice settings, systems or with specific populations to improve health or health outcomes."¹⁸

1. All DNP Projects should: "Focus on a change that impacts healthcare outcomes either through direct or indirect care."
2. "Have a system (micro-, meso-, or macro-level) or population/aggregate focus."
3. "Demonstrate implementation in the appropriate arena or area of practice."
4. "Include a plan for sustainability (e.g. financial, systems or political realities, not only theoretical abstractions)."
5. "Include an evaluation of processes and/or outcomes (formative or summative). DNP Projects should be designed so that processes/outcomes will be evaluated to guide practice and policy. Clinical significance is as important in guiding practice as statistical significance is in evaluation research."
6. "Provide a foundation for future practice scholarship."

¹⁵ Approved by Faculty Organization: 12/04/09

¹⁶ American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). (2006). The essentials of doctoral education for advanced nursing practice (p.20). Washington, DC: Author.

¹⁷ National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF). (2007). NONPF recommended criteria for NP DNP Projects in the practice doctorate program (p. 1). Washington, DC: Author.

Types of DNP Projects

Students, with guidance from their academic advisors, their professional experience within a specialty area, and input from stakeholders, identify and select topics. Students conduct their projects with the approval and guidance of their DNP Project Team and may complete the DNP Project alone or as a member of a collaborative team. The types of DNP Projects include:

Quality Improvement (QI)

The student identifies a problem in conjunction with stakeholders. The problem is investigated using appropriate tools, and improvement strategies and outcomes are delineated based on integrative research reviews. A plan for improvement is developed and approved by stakeholders. The plan is implemented using theoretically based change strategies. An evaluation of the change is conducted for both short-term and long-term sustainability. The DNP Project and outcomes are presented to stakeholders and will be disseminated to a larger audience in a method approved by the DNP team.

Program Development and Evaluation

If a student chooses a program development project, the student will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment regarding an identified issue influencing a population. Based on this assessment, an integrative research review, and collaboration with key stakeholders, the student will develop a program proposal designed to address the identified issues.

If the student chooses a program development and evaluation the student will conduct an assessment of the inputs, processes, and outcomes of a specific program. The outcomes of the program are evaluated using appropriate measures and methods. Selected outcomes of the program are compared to evidence-based outcomes generated from a systematic review of research. The program evaluation project and outcomes are presented to stakeholders and will be disseminated to a larger audience in a method approved by the DNP team.

Evaluation of New Practice Model, Guideline, or Innovation

The student evaluates a recently implemented practice model, guideline, or innovation. The student conducts a systematic review of research on the key tenets of the model and delineates the strengths and limitations of applying the model in the micro- or macro-system. The project involves conducting an evaluation using a systematic approach and appropriate standards and tools. The practice model, guideline, or innovation evaluation project is presented to stakeholders and will be disseminated to a larger audience in a method approved by the DNP team.

¹⁴American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2015). The Doctor of Nursing Practice: Current issues and clarifying recommendations. Report from the task force on the implementation of the DNP.

Faculty Research

Opportunities exist in which students may be involved in replicating or extending on-going clinically-based faculty research at the discretion of the faculty member. If selected for involvement in faculty research, a student will engage in activities integral to the project and to meet the project objectives. The student could conduct a study using one of the multiple methods of quantitative or qualitative inquiry specific to the expertise of the qualified faculty. Quantitative methodology is the investigation of phenomena that lend themselves to precise measurement and quantification, often involving a rigorous and controlled design. Qualitative methodology is a naturalistic approach that explores human experiences in depth. Approaches may include case study, phenomenology, or brief ethnography. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a methodology in which the student engages an interested group of community members in a collective effort to test new ideas and implement action for a desired change.

Participatory action research (PAR), often used in public and global health arenas, follows a cyclic, systematic, and adaptive method of collective inquiry. It involves assessing, planning, taking action, collecting evidence of outcomes, analyzing and evaluating outcomes, reflecting, and continuing the process for change.

Other types of DNP Projects may be considered at the discretion of the faculty.

DNP Project Team

Members of the team include the Committee chairperson and one additional member (as approved by the Committee chairperson). Prior to the semester in which the student plans to enroll in NUR 899/900, the student will be assigned a DNP Project Team Chair. After the DNP Project Team Chair has been assigned, any request to change a team chair or team member must be made in writing with rationale to the Assistant Dean, Graduate Programs. The Assistant Dean, Graduate Programs has the right to make a change or to maintain the team as originally assigned.

1. Criteria for DNP Project Team Chairperson:
 - a. Holds full-time 9 or 12-month faculty appointment in the CON or is eligible to serve in the special faculty role and agrees to be available for consultation during off months.
 - b. Has an earned doctoral degree.
 - c. Has expertise relevant to the DNP Project, e.g. methodology, process, content.
 - d. Available to the student on a regular basis for the duration of the project.
2. Role of project/committee chair:
 - a. Approves the initial project topic and plan. Assists with refinement of the topic.
 - b. Guides selection of additional team members.
 - c. Approves plan and agenda for team meetings.
 - d. Guides the development and preparation of the DNP Project proposal, including planning, development, implementation, and evaluative processes. Determines that the DNP Project is reflective of the role/setting/population for which the student is being prepared.
 - e. Consults with the Assistant Dean, Graduate Programs if a student's performance is not consistent with agreed upon expectations.
 - f. Assists student to prepare proposal and application for submission to all relevant IRB's and assures IRB compliance with all appropriate regulations.
 - g. Retains authority for approval of final project.
 - h. Reviews and evaluates drafts of the final written project and dissemination method, approves venue for dissemination and validates submission of project.

- i. Reviews and approves the Health Sciences Library Repository submission.
 - j. Serves as second author on manuscript submission and any presentations.
 - k. If the student chooses not to make revisions to a submitted manuscript/abstract, the Project Chair can do so. The student will remain first author.
3. Criteria for Practice Mentor:
- a. The Practice Mentor may hold faculty status in the University or may be an external individual with expertise in the student's project.
 - b. Available to the student on a regular basis for the duration of the project.
4. Role of Practice Members:
- a. Critique drafts of the developing DNP Project proposal.
 - b. Participate actively in two or more team meetings (approval of implementation of project and approval of presentation/project completion).
 - c. Review, provide feedback, and approve PowerPoint presentation.
 - d. Can serve as third author on manuscript/presentation if participates extensively in the review/preparation process.

DNP Project Supporting Core and Specialty Courses

The work of Stevens is used as a framework or guide for the development of the doctoral DNP Project. The research core, seminar, clinical specialty, and residency courses are integral for the project development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination processes. The BSN to DNP student completes NUR 685, NUR 686, NUR 899, and clinical specialty, and residency courses. The Post-graduate to DNP student completes NUR 686, NUR 900, and NUR 901. All DNP students integrate elements of the evidence-based decision-making process with systematic review of the scientific literature. Students identify a problem of clinical importance, search and critically appraise the literature related to the identified problem and its resolution, and propose an evidence-based approach for addressing the problem and improving outcomes.

Project Development

BSN to DNP

The BSN to DNP student completes a minimum of 3 credit hours in NUR 899, during which the DNP Project is developed. NUR 899 is taken as a co-requisite course in 1-hour increments with clinical practicum courses. This allows the student to develop the project within the practicum setting.

NUR 899 First Hour/Co-requisite with Clinical Specialty Practicum III

During the first hour of NUR 899, the student and DNP Project Chair review the student's ideas for a DNP project. Previous assignments in prior courses may provide direction for the project topic. Arriving at a topic involves identifying a problem in the practicum area and confirming with stakeholders that this is a problem that there is support for exploring further in the specific clinical setting. The anticipated timeline for the first hour of NUR 899 includes the submission/revision to the committee chair of these proposal components: problem, significance of the problem, theoretical model or framework, literature review, and methodology.

NUR 899 Second Hour/Co-requisite with Clinical Specialty Practicum IV

During the second hour of NUR 899, the student completes revisions of the components of the proposal submitted during the previous semester. The methodology should include detailed procedures and selection of instruments, data analysis, and a project timeline. The student will obtain a letter of support from the agency where the project is to be implemented. After approval from the DNP Project Chair, the proposal is formally presented to the DNP Project Team (Chair and Practice Mentor(s) for final review. The written proposal must be distributed a minimum of one week prior to the scheduled meeting. Following approval from the DNP Project Team, the student will complete the College of Nursing DNP Project Review Form. The form and the completed written proposal will be submitted for internal review by the College of Nursing DNP Project Review Committee by July 1. The student and / or DNP chair will be contacted by a member of the College of Nursing DNP Project Review Committee with any questions or needs for clarifications / revisions. After receiving approval, the proposal is submitted to the appropriate IRB. All DNP Projects must be submitted to Creighton University IRB regardless of project type. The clinical agency where the project is being implemented may also require the student to submit to the agency's IRB committee in addition to submission of the project to the Creighton University IRB.

NUR 899 Third Hour/Co-requisite with Clinical Specialty Practicum V

During the third hour of NUR 899, the student implements the project, and collects and analyzes any data. Meetings with the DNP Project Chair and / or Team may be scheduled to monitor progress or discuss and make recommendations related to issues that arise. The student should determine, with the assistance of the DNP Project Chair, an appropriate method of dissemination. In order for the student to progress to the Residency Course, all components of the project through data collection must be completed. Additional credits of NUR 899 may be required if data collection has not been completed at the end of the 3rd credit of NUR 899 and residency will be postponed.

MSN to DNP

The MSN to DNP student completes a total of six credit hours in NUR 900, during which the DNP Project is developed. NUR 900 is taken in two or four-hour increments to provide a longer duration to explore and develop aspects of the project and to receive guidance and feedback on the project. One hour is a seminar credit hour and one is a practicum credit hour (75 hours). The project requires that the student is employed or has access to a setting reflective of their master's specialty preparation.

NUR 900 (Section A; First two-hour block)

NUR 900 consists of 1 credit hour of seminar and 1 credit hour of practicum (75 hours). During the first hour of NUR 900 the student and DNP faculty chair discuss potential topics for the DNP Project. Arriving at a topic involves identifying a problem in the practicum area and confirming with stakeholders that this is a problem that there is support for exploring further. The anticipated timeline for NUR 900 is the submission/revision to the DNP faculty chair of these proposal components: problem, significance of the problem, theoretical model or framework, and literature review. The practicum each semester will serve as a venue for the post-master's DNP student to design their DNP Project by: collaborating with stakeholders within multiple microsystems or a macrosystem; creating and fostering relationships within professional and lay groups; identifying policy implications for multiple microsystems or a macrosystem; applying principles of negotiation, systems design, and conflict management in planning the implementation of the DNP Project. CITI training must be completed.

NUR 900 (Section B; Second two-hour block)

During the second seminar hour of NUR 900 the student completes the revision of the components of the proposal submitted during the previous semester. In addition, the following components are submitted/ revised: methodology including detailed procedures and selection of tools, data analysis, and timeline. Students will obtain a letter of support from the agency where the project is to be implemented. After approval from the DNP faculty chair, the proposal is distributed to the practice mentor for final review. The proposal must be distributed to team members a minimum of one week prior to the scheduled meeting. The student schedules and conducts the committee meeting. Following approval from the DNP Project Team, the student will complete the College of Nursing DNP Project Review Form. The form and the completed written proposal will be submitted for internal review by the College of Nursing DNP Project Review Committee by July 1. The student and / or DNP chair will be contacted by a member of the College of Nursing DNP Project Review Committee with any questions or needs for clarifications / revisions. After receiving approval, the proposal is submitted to the appropriate IRB. All DNP Projects must be submitted to Creighton University IRB regardless of project type. The practicum credit hour continues activities begun the previous semester.

Prior to enrollment, the academic advisor will review previous practicum hours documented on the student's transcript. It is required that with prior courses and the courses enrolled in at Creighton, 1000 practicum hours must be completed.

NUR 900 (Third two-hour block)

During the third seminar hour of NUR 900 the student implements the project and collects and analyzes any data. A committee meeting may be scheduled to monitor progress or discuss and make recommendations related to issues that arise. The student should determine, with the assistance of the DNP faculty chair, an appropriate method of dissemination. The practicum credit continues activities begun the previous semester.

Process to Request Additional NUR 899/900 Credits

NUR 899 is a 3-credit (minimum) course. Students will enroll in 1 credit of NUR 899 at a time until all course requirements have been met. If the DNP project is not through the data collection/implementation phase at the end of the third credit, an "Incomplete" will be recorded as the final course grade and additional credit(s) of NUR 899 will be required prior to being able to progress to Residency.

NUR 900 is a 6-credit (minimum) course. Students will enroll in 2 credits of NUR 900 at a time until all course requirements have been met. If the DNP project is not through the data

collection/implementation phase at the end of the sixth credit, an “Incomplete” will be recorded as the final course grade and additional credit(s) of NUR 900 will be required prior to being able to progress to Residency.

- If a student has enrolled in four credits of NUR 899 or 7 credits of NUR 900 and has not completed course requirements, the student is required to petition the Graduate A & P Committee for approval to register for each additional credit. Complete [Request Additional Credits Survey](#)
- Request will be reviewed by the Graduate A&P committee and final decision determined
- Notification of the final decision will be communicated by the Graduate A&P chair to the student, the academic advisor, the DNP chair, and the academic coach
 - The decision by the Graduate A&P committee will be either:
 - Allowing the student to enroll in an additional credit of NUR 899/900
 - Changing the “I” grades to “U” (Unsatisfactory) for the NUR 899/900 courses

Residency Course

In the College of Nursing, the final clinical or practicum/residency course in a graduate student’s program of study is considered to be the capstone course. As such, the final clinical course offers students the opportunity to demonstrate that they have achieved the goals for learning established by the faculty in the College of Nursing and the beginning competencies established by national organizations for the various advanced nursing practice roles. The course is designed to assess cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning and to do so in a student-centered and student- directed manner, which requires the command, analysis, and synthesis of advanced nursing practice knowledge, skills, and abilities. The capstone course integrates learning from all required courses in the students’ program option with the rest of the students’ academic experiences. The course requires the application of that learning to clinical practice experiences appropriate to the advanced nursing role, to the completion of a DNP Project that was initiated and developed in earlier courses and tested during the capstone experience, and to selected other assignments designated by the faculty as methods for evaluation of the student’s achievement of the learning goals and beginning competencies established for the role. Further, the capstone course enables the student to demonstrate a broad mastery of learning appropriate to initial employability in the chosen advanced nursing role and to further career development. ¹⁹

During the residency course, students will disseminate the DNP project. Additional requirements to successfully complete the residency course are delineated in the course syllabi.

All projects require a presentation to the DNP Team. The team agenda and meetings are set after approval of the chair. Materials should be distributed a minimum of one week prior to the meeting. The DNP Project Chair and team member(s) evaluate the completed project, make suggestions for revision of the presentation, and approve the successful completion of project requirements.

Two levels of dissemination are required.

Tier 1: All must be completed:

- Presentation to DNP Project Team
- Presentation to Stakeholder (presentation or executive summary)
- Submit final scholarly paper to the Health Sciences Creighton Digital Repository (CDR)

Tier 2: Discuss and work closely with the DNP Project chair in choosing a minimum of 1 of the following options. Dissemination beyond the options listed below must be pre-approved by the DNP Project chair or Creighton DNP Project Committee.

Must justify in written form the rationale for the decision (value to self, value to the organization, value to the health system)

- Accepted poster or podium presentation to a regional, national, or international professional conference
- Presentation at Iota Tau Scholarship Day
- Presentation at Creighton University Research Day
- Health System Wide Grand Rounds
- Health System Research Day
- Submitted manuscript (peer-reviewed)
- White Paper
- Ted Talk
- Legislative proposal for change

¹⁹Adapted from Morse, R. (n.d.). The capstone course. Retrieved on August 16, 2006 from <http://users.etoan.edu/m/moorerc/capstone.html>.

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