

The University of Vermont

College of Nursing and Health Sciences

Department of Nursing

Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Project

Description and Guidelines

DNP Project Overview

All students enrolled in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program will complete a project as one of the requirements for completion of the program and graduation. The DNP candidate will produce an academic product that will be evidence of the mastery, utilization, and expression of the knowledge gained while working toward this degree. Students will demonstrate the identification and resolution of an identified practice issue via implementation of the DNP project and consequently will make a contribution to the practice setting, the community and/or in an academic setting.

Introduction

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) project provides DNP students with the opportunity to solidify and demonstrate their ability to apply the best evidence to promote clinical excellence as an emerging leader in the health care delivery system. The purpose of the DNP project is to discover, identify and apply the best evidence related to an issue of importance to nursing. The project will focus on an issue with relevance to a clinical practice setting, health care organization, or community setting. It is essential that the DNP project contributes to the enhancement of nursing practice toward the goal of improving the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. It is anticipated that the DNP project will result in innovative practices that will improve health care delivery and patient outcomes.

Successful completion of a DNP project demands scholarship to advance knowledge that will enhance health outcomes for individuals, families and communities. The purpose and intention of the DNP program is to prepare expert clinicians for leadership roles in *practice*, in contrast to PhD programs intended to prepare students for a career in *research*. While the PhD program focuses on the *discovery* of new knowledge, the DNP program focuses on the *application* of the best evidence to clinical practice. The DNP project utilizes practice inquiry as a basis for this work. "Practice inquiry is an ongoing, systematic investigation of questions about nursing therapeutics and clinical phenomena with the intent to appraise and translate all forms of best evidence to practice, and to evaluate the translational impact on the quality of health care and health outcomes" (Magyary, Whitney & Brown, 2006, p. 143). Based on this conceptualization, the DNP project can take the form of a practice change initiative, program evaluation, quality improvement, evaluation of a practice model, research utilization project, health policy initiative, or other project that contributes to enhancement of health care delivery.

Project Team

The topic for the DNP project is student determined, and involves the participation and supervision of a DNP project team. The faculty advisor of the team is a doctorally prepared member of the University of Vermont's Department of Nursing and a member of the UVM Graduate College. The second team member may be a mentor from the organization where the project is implemented or a second UVM faculty member.

The faculty project advisor will be chosen for the student. The project advisor will complement the student's area of interest based on the faculty's expertise in clinical practice, content knowledge or scholarly work. The second team member, the project mentor, will have expertise contributing to the development, implementation, and/or evaluation of the student's DNP project. It is the project team that

provides approval of and final evaluation of the DNP project and determines whether the DNP student has successfully completed the project.

After the project team is formed, it is expected that the student will engage in discussion with the project advisor about the proposed direction and timeline of the DNP project. The student and advisor agree upon a timeline to reflect agreed upon expectations and due dates that will ensure timely completion of the DNP project and graduation. The student will work closely with his or her project advisor throughout the duration of the project. The project advisor will be the primary resource for advice and guidance. The student will consult with her or his advisor concerning project scope, focus, requirements and procedures.

The next steps for project development are to refine and articulate the problem based on a review of the pertinent literature, identify goals, identify stakeholders, and develop an implementation plan inclusive of a detailed timeline, and a budget as necessary. The DNP proposal is then developed, reviewed by the DNP project team, and approval is sought. Following approval of the proposal by the project team, and prior to implementation, the University of Vermont's Institutional Review Board (IRB) will review the DNP project proposal. To find more information on obtaining IRB approval and complete the tutorial, go to <http://www.uvm.edu/osp> and click on "Human Subjects Research". Following approval by the IRB, project implementation and evaluation will follow.

The DNP project team is responsible for providing guidance to the student in the development of the DNP project proposal and for critiquing the readiness of the proposal. The team will mentor the student during the identification, implementation, and evaluation phases and will evaluate the student's performance on the proposal and final DNP project and presentation.

The Project Proposal

Students will collaborate with their DNP project advisor on the development of the written DNP project proposal. The student must work closely with their team to develop a realistic timeline for completion of the DNP project proposal. Upon completion of the project proposal, the student will complete **the comprehensive examination**. The integration of project and comprehensive examination is designed to allow students to demonstrate mastery of knowledge acquired throughout the DNP program and to show how the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice are integrated within their project (<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/dnp/Essentials.pdf>). Students within the nurse practitioner (NP) tracks will also integrate the NONPF DNP competencies into their comprehensive examination.

Timeline for Project*

- DNP Project & Seminar I– Spring Semester
 - Beginning of semester: topic for DNP project established
 - By end of first month of semester, team members chosen.
 - By middle of semester, draft of [Standards for Quality Improvement Reporting Excellence \(SQUIRE\) 1-12](#) completed, inclusive of synthesis of the literature.
 - By end of the first semester, DNP project proposal will be (SQUIRE 1-12) fully developed, reviewed, presented, and approved by the DNP project team.

- DNP Practicum I/ Immersion – Summer Semester
 - Preparation for implementation of DNP Project
 - Institutional Review Board review & approval completed for DNP project proposal.
 - Preparation for implementation of DNP project at project site.
- DNP Project & Seminar II & Practicum II/ Transformation Practicum – Fall Semester
 - Analysis of DNP Project implementation
 - Implementation of DNP Project
 - Report of implementation of DNP Project process to project team based on Step 13 of SQUIRE
- DNP Project & Seminar III – Spring Semester
 - By end of semester, development, review, analysis, presentation and approval of DNP project using SQUIRE format by week 10 of the semester

*The above timeline is a guideline for the DNP project. It is understood that altered timelines and flexibility may be needed related to timing of matriculation into the DNP program and circumstances related to the DNP project.

DNP I Project Proposal Deliverables

- Table of literature review: synthesis table submitted to seminar faculty
- Proposal Format: SQUIRE 1 through 12. Presentation and abstract of proposal
- Note: Comprehensive Exam will be based on this proposal
- IRB submitted prior to implementation of project

DNP Project Implementation and Evaluation

Following approval of the DNP project proposal and successful completion of the comprehensive examination, the project will be implemented and evaluated. Following implementation and evaluation, students will create a written summary report. The DNP project is a culmination of knowledge gained through all DNP coursework as applied to an identified clinical or system's issue. It is expected that students will collaborate with community stakeholders in an effort to influence health care quality, delivery, and/or systems for the benefit of individuals, groups and/or populations. The DNP project will provide advanced clinical judgment and expertise, along with critical thinking and leadership in the development and implementation of the project. It is expected that high level scholarship be exhibited in writing in a concise project summary report using SQUIRE format - Step 13 - Results.

DNP II Project Deliverables

- Project implementation. Concise write-up of project implementation process at end based on SQUIRE Step 13 (Results).

DNP III Project Deliverables

- Analysis of project (SQUIRE 14-17)
- Single page abstract
- Poster and presentation (PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, etc.)
- Initially present to nursing faculty, and then project site
- In collaboration with faculty, dissemination required
- Upload abstract and PDF of presentation and/or poster and/or journal article to ScholarWorks prior to week 12 of the final semester

The Project Presentation

The DNP project will be presented upon completion. This will be a public presentation of the project in an appropriate forum and offers the opportunity to explain and showcase the student’s work. Students are expected to clearly articulate the integration of the knowledge learned throughout the program of study. The final presentation will serve to demonstrate the goals and accomplishments of the project, the implications for improving nursing practice and health care, and how stakeholders may benefit from the project.

Project Formatting

To assist in scholarly writing, you may access services for Graduate Students at the UVM Writing Center (<http://www.uvm.edu/wid/writingcenter/>).

DNP Project Timetable

Necessary Tasks and Form Completion	May Graduation	October Graduation	December Graduation
Project Team established by: (Form to Beatriz Cobeo/DON)	April 1 (of previous year)	September 1 (of previous year)	November 1 (of previous year)
Proposal Accepted by: (Form to Beatriz Cobeo/DON)	May 1 (of previous year)	October 1 (of previous year)	December 1 (of previous year)
Comprehensive Exam completed by: (Schedule with Beatriz Cobeo/DON)	Mid- May or Mid-September (of previous year)	End of February (of same year)	End of April (of same year)
Project Presentation Notice: (Email Beatriz Cobeo for Posting)	3 weeks prior to presentation	3 weeks prior to presentation	3 weeks prior to presentation
Oral Presentation of Project by: (Schedule with Beatriz Cobeo/DON)	April 1	September 1	November 1
Intent to Graduate form to Graduate College	February 1	July 1	October 1
Final Project Submitted by:	April 15	Sept. 15	November 15

Timeline for DNP Project Completion

(See course syllabi for more detailed information)

Year Two Spring Semester

GRNS 422 DNP Project & Seminar I (1 credit)

The seminar will provide structure, guidance and support for the Doctor of Nursing Practice project. This seminar will be devoted development of the topic for the project, finding Project Team members, completing the literature review and writing the project proposal.

Pre-requisites: STATS 200; GRNS 321, 323, 324

GRNS 322 is currently scheduled for the final FALL semester of program

Pre-/ Co-requisite GRNS 325, 326, 328, GRNS 400

Summer Semester

GRNS 423 DNP Project Practicum I (1 credit/ 120 hours)- Primary Care NP / GRNS 427 DNP Transformation Practicum I- Ex Nurse Leader (1 credit/ 120 hours)/

The DNP Project will be initiated; including summary tasks and milestones, business plan, identification of resources assigned to tasks and task interdependencies. This practicum time will be spent in the clinical setting of the project identifying and finalizing project stakeholders, barriers, boundaries, logistics and objectives/goals.

Year Three Fall Semester

GRNS 424 DNP Project & Seminar II (1 credit)

The seminar will provide structure, guidance and support for the Doctor of Nursing Practice project. This class will be used to work with Project Team members to fully develop the Project, obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board and plan the logical progression of the Project.

Pre-requisites GRNS 422, 423; Co-requisite GRNS 425; Pre/Co-requisite GRNS 322

GRNS 425 DNP Project Practicum II (1 credit)/ Primary Care NP / GRNS 428 DNP Immersion Practicum - Ex Nurse Leader (2 credit/ 240 hours)

This practicum/ immersion time is when the DNP project is implemented and the plan for practice improvement takes place in the clinical setting of the project. The mastery of the DNP essentials, NONPF competencies and advanced critical thinking and analysis will be evidenced throughout the implementation and evaluation of the DNP project.

Co- req GRNS 424 Pre-requisites GRNS 422, 423; Pre/Co-requisite GRNS 322

Year Three Spring Semester

Pre-requisites GRNS 424, GRNS 425 (Primary Care) / GRNS 428 (Nurse Ex Leader)

GRNS 426 DNP Project & Seminar III (1 credit)

The seminar will provide structure, guidance and support for the DNP project evaluation. The student will develop a summary expression of the project that will include discussion of project outcomes using predetermined measures and any necessary changes to those measures, evaluation and/or measurement of the outcomes of the project, and methodology for a summary report. The DNP project will be disseminated in the most appropriate way(s), as determined by student and team members.

Reference: Magyary, D., Whitney, J.D., & Brown, M.A. (2006). Advanced practice inquiry: research foundations for the practice doctorate in nursing. *Nursing Outlook*, 54(3), 139-15