



THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING

DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE PROGRAM

MENTOR MANUAL

**University of Scranton
Department of Nursing
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This Manual is intended to serve as a guide for mentors in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program. Basic program information is listed along with the expectations of mentors, university faculty, and students. The university faculty and students greatly appreciate the significant amount of time and effort put forth by the mentors.

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Mission Statement

The Mission of the Department of Nursing at The University of Scranton is to prepare nurses at the baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral levels, who are grounded in the Catholic and Jesuit tradition, and committed to excellence in practice for the 21st century. Our graduates have the knowledge and competencies to deliver high-quality, evidence-based, holistic person-centered care.

Department of Nursing Philosophy

The Department of Nursing is an integral part of the J. A. Panuska College of Professional Studies of The University of Scranton and reflects the heritage, mission, values, and goals of the University and of the College.

The philosophy of the Department of Nursing is based on a holistic view of the person who has inherent worth, dignity, and human rights. The individual is recognized as a total entity, with consideration given to the interdependent functioning of the physiological, psychological, cognitive, social, cultural, and spiritual domains. Every person is unique and demands the respect of free choice. The person is in constant interaction with a changing environment. The integrity of an individual's potential for growth is maintained and supported.

Each person has the right and responsibility to determine and participate in decisions affecting health and deserves access to health care. Health is viewed on a continuum, as a dynamic state of physiological, psychological, sociocultural, and developmental adaptation. One's state of health is influenced by genetic endowment, sociocultural background, environmental forces, and lifestyle. The primary responsibility for health lies with the individual, and secondarily with the family and community.

The professional nurse accepts responsibility and accountability for the practice of nursing based upon sound clinical judgment. Nurses collaborate with members of the interprofessional healthcare team to promote optimal health. The professional nurse responds to the changing needs of individuals, families, communities, and populations within society. Professional nurses are guided by ethical principles, legal regulations, and standards of practice; and use clinical judgment to provide high quality, safe, and competent care. The professional nurse uses knowledge of the research process and evidence to advance nursing practice. Grounded in faith, evidence-based practice, and clinical expertise, our graduates are prepared to advocate for individuals, families, communities, and populations; and to provide leadership in the delivery of safe, comprehensive, person-centered care.

Learning involves a dynamic interaction between students and faculty. Self-directed learning is expected. The faculty guides, instructs, and facilitates student learning by encouraging development of intellectual curiosity, stimulating self-direction, and enhancing involvement both in professional activities and service to society. Faculty members serve as role models for the students as educators, leaders, researchers, clinicians, and advocates.

Purpose of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program

The DNP program is designed to prepare graduates for independent practice in advanced nursing practice specialties. The DNP graduate will possess enhanced organizational and leadership skills in health care delivery, expertise in the application of evidence-based practice to improve patient and health care outcomes, and the ability to lead inter-professional teams.

Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program Outcomes

Upon completion of the DNP program the graduate is prepared to:

1. Incorporate science-based theories from nursing and other disciplines to develop, implement, and evaluate practice approaches that improve health care.
2. Utilize organizational and systems leadership to promote quality, cost effectiveness, and patient safety in the delivery of health care.
3. Demonstrate leadership in the application and critical evaluation of evidence-based practice to improve patient and health care outcomes.
4. Apply information systems/technology to monitor and improve patient care and health care delivery systems.
5. Consistent with Jesuit values, advocate for health care policies that comply with ethical principles and address health disparities and vulnerable populations.
6. Organize and lead inter-professional teams to improve patient and population health outcomes.
7. Analyze epidemiological, biostatistical, and environmental data to develop, implement, and evaluate clinical prevention and population health initiatives.
8. Function independently in an advanced nursing practice role to improve patient outcomes in a specialty area of practice.
9. Engage in lifelong learning and service to others.

Overview of Post-master's DNP Program

The DNP is a practice doctorate that focuses on providing leadership for evidence-based practice. This requires competence in translating research into practice, evaluating evidence, applying research in decision-making, and implementing viable clinical innovations to change practice. Considerable emphasis is placed on a population perspective, how to obtain assessment data on populations or cohorts, how to use data to make programmatic decisions and program evaluation. Specifically, the DNP program at the University of Scranton provides doctoral education in a learning environment where ethical leadership, creative problem solving, service to patients and communities, inter-professional teamwork, appreciation of diversity, and commitment to performance excellence are the hallmarks. The emphasis of the DNP program is on preparing local, regional, national, and international nurse leaders who will use their expertise to provide sophisticated care to promote the health of individuals, families, groups, and communities in increasingly complex environments. The student will complete an evidence-based scholarly project with significant potential to positively change health care delivery or improve patient outcomes for vulnerable patients, families, communities, or populations. The DNP is designed for nurses seeking a terminal degree in nursing practice and offers an alternative to research-focused doctoral programs. DNP-prepared nurses are well-equipped to fully implement the science developed by nurse researchers prepared in PhD, DNS, and other research-focused nursing doctorates.

The post-master's DNP program at The University of Scranton is a 30-credit program that can be completed in 21 months (5 semesters), with entry in fall and graduation two years later in spring. The program is uniquely offered in an executive leadership format. It is specifically designed to accommodate full-time practice and full-time academic commitment. This hybrid model allows for on campus meetings augmented with online course work. It is the best of both worlds – incorporating the benefits of face-to-face on-campus learning with the flexibility of online learning. The executive leadership model with planned on-campus meetings over the semester allows for increased collaboration among students and regular face-to-face contact between students and professors, thus enriching the academic experience and facilitating direct access to faculty and advisors on a regular basis for guidance and support.

Students admitted to the post-master's DNP program must possess a master's degree in nursing (MSN) with preparation and/or certification in an advanced nursing practice specialty, have an MSN GPA of 3.2 or higher, and be licensed as a registered nurse.

The Scholarly Project

In addition to coursework, each student will complete an evidence-based scholarly capstone project with significant potential to positively change health care delivery or improve patient outcomes for vulnerable patients, families, communities, or populations. A Scholarly Project is the hallmark of the practice doctorate demonstrating an outcome of the student's educational experience. The scholarly project embraces the synthesis of both coursework and practice application. The outcome is an evidence-based deliverable product reviewed, evaluated, and approved by a project team comprised of the faculty advisor (project team leader) clinical and at least one other professional member (mentor) with expertise in the content area. Dissemination modes include the final scholarly paper and a scholarly presentation involving a professional poster and oral presentation.

The nature of the scholarly projects will vary. Projects are related to advanced practice generally in each student's nursing specialty, and the project must demonstrate significant potential to positively change health care delivery or improve outcomes for vulnerable groups, families, communities, or populations, rather than an individual patient. Projects most often evolve from practice and may be done in partnership with another entity, such as a clinical agency, health department, government agency, or community group. Examples of overall types of scholarly projects include:

- Quality improvement initiatives
- Development of evidence-based practice guidelines or programs
- Policy analysis
- Design and evaluation of new models of care
- Design and evaluation of health care programs
- Consulting project
- System modifications for quality improvement processes
- Enhancement of leadership skills toward the solution of health care problems
- Analysis of a state or national health care policy with a proposal or a change in the model or implementation of policy
- Develop and implement information technologies to improve outcomes
- Systematic review with practice recommendations and an outcome product, such as a clinical guideline, toolkit, or grant
- Using DNP Essentials for consensus-building for effective health care policy advocacy.
- Academic practice partnership: collaborating to improve quality
- A comprehensive program needs assessment with program development and evaluation
- The development of an assessment instrument / protocol, or a cost / benefit analysis of program models.

Practicum Hours

Each DNP student will complete clinical practice hours related to the scholarly project and /or to advance knowledge in the student's area of specialization. Advanced nursing practice students will be given credit for the clinical hours completed in their master's specialty program and will complete additional hours to fulfill the 1000 clinical hours total required for the DNP program. The number of clinical hours required for each student will be divided between the two DNP Scholarly Project courses (NURS 780 and NURS 790). A minimum of 125 hours is required in each DNP Scholarly Project course. Additional hours above the 125-hour minimum will be dependent upon the student's prior clinical experience at the master's level.

The practicum hours are designed to demonstrate synthesis and application of expanded knowledge acquired within the DNP curriculum. The clinical hours should be related to the scholarly project and /or to advance knowledge in the student's area of specialization. For example, the practicum hours can be demonstrated through a variety of methods including but not limited to:

- In-depth work/mentorship with experts from nursing or other disciplines
- Opportunities for meaningful student engagement within practice environments
- An opportunity to build and assimilate knowledge for advanced specialty practice at a high level of complexity
- An opportunity for further synthesis and expansion of learning
- Experience in the context within which the final DNP project is completed
- An opportunity to integrate and synthesize the essentials and specialty requirements necessary to demonstrate competency in an area of specialized nursing practice
- Programmatic efforts to address a clinical practice issue
- Data collection and analysis
- Direct care or practice experiences outside of the job description and responsibilities of the student with goals and learning outcomes

An affiliation agreement must be in place with all clinical sites where a student will obtain clinical experience, which includes developing and implementing the scholarly project, unless the student is currently an employee at the site. This includes the practice site as well as any ancillary sites a mentor may take the student, such as hospitals, surgery centers, nursing homes, charitable clinics, etc. A student may not go with the mentor to a site where the University does not have an active affiliation agreement. The faculty advisor or DNP program director must approve sites for the student's clinical experience to ensure that the sites are appropriate.

The DNP student will keep a log of the clinical practicum hours during NURS 780 and NURS 790 to demonstrate attainment of the program outcomes related to clinical competence. The DNP Clinical Practicum log will include time frame, clinical experience activity; related DNP program outcome and DNP Essential; and reflection.

Description of University Faculty Advisor Role

Each DNP student will have a University faculty advisor (project team leader) for the scholarly project and related practicum hours. The faculty advisor will hold doctoral preparation at either the PhD, EdD, or DNP level. Generally, the faculty advisor will be the instructor of record for the student when enrolled in NURS 780 and NURS 790. The faculty advisor will serve as the team leader of the Scholarly Project Team and will work with the student to select a minimum of one other team member/mentor, usually a professional from outside the University with expertise in the content area of the project. The Scholarly Project Team, under the auspices of the faculty advisor, is responsible for guiding the student in the development of the scholarly project; critiquing the readiness of the project proposal for presentation; mentoring the student during the implementation and evaluation phases of the project and evaluating the student's performance on both the proposal and final project presentation.

The faculty advisor will communicate with the team member(s)/mentor(s) as needed via written communication, phone conversations, and/or meetings regarding the student's objectives and progress.

Formal evaluation is done each semester by the faculty advisor and team member(s)/mentor(s) regarding the student's progress using evaluation tools provided by the University. While input from the team member(s)/mentor(s) is solicited and valued, the University faculty advisor is ultimately responsible for assigning the student's grade.

Description of DNP Student Role

It is the DNP student's responsibility to be aware of her/his own unique learning needs and to make them known to faculty and mentors. Students are expected to participate in mentor selection and negotiate their schedules to fulfill the scholarly project and practicum requirements. Students are responsible for providing their own transportation to the practicum sites and maintaining ongoing communication with their mentor(s) and faculty advisor. In addition, students are responsible for maintaining records of their practicum experiences and submitting written logs to their faculty advisor and mentor when indicated.

Student maintenance of proper communication with both the faculty advisor and the mentor(s) is critical to maximize the scholarly project and practicum experiences. Students are to take the initiative to discuss with the faculty advisor and mentor(s) any problems that are related to the scholarly project and practicum hours.

Description of Mentor Role

Each DNP student must have a mentor during the scholarly project/practicum courses (NURS 780 and NURS 790), who provides specialized knowledge, guidance, and support for the practicum and scholarly project. The mentor or DNP preceptor is selected by the student in consultation with the project team leader, based on the focus of the scholarly project and practicum objectives. The mentor must have expertise around the scholarly project/practicum focus and hold a graduate degree or advanced preparation in a specialty area of practice. Depending on the project and practicum the mentor may or may not be a nurse. The mentor must be approved by the project team leader. The project team leader/faculty advisor communicates with the mentor as needed via written communication, phone conversations, and/or meetings regarding the student's progress. Each mentor is given a copy of the Mentor Manual. Should the student have difficulty locating a mentor, the project team leader and program director will support the student in finding an appropriate mentor and clinical placement.

Mentors, also called DNP preceptors, are professionals with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing both career building and psychosocial support for the DNP student during completion of the scholarly project and/or practicum hours. The role of the mentor includes:

- * Orienting the student to the practicum site, when indicated
- * Facilitating a mutually respectful environment for learning
- * Being an expert role model
- * Providing on-going feedback and evaluation to the student
- * Directing the student to resources and readings
- * Supporting development and implementation of the scholarly project
- * Assisting the faculty advisor in evaluation of the scholarly project

Communication is vital, and mentors are encouraged to maintain active communication with either the DNP program director or the student's faculty advisor should question, or concerns arise. Telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for the chairperson of the Department of Nursing and director of the DNP program can be found at the beginning of this Manual.