## Table of Contents

Program Information............................................................................................................. 3  
History and Philosophy........................................................................................................ 3  
Purpose.................................................................................................................................. 3  
Comparison of the DNP and PhD Program ........................................................................ 4  
Curriculum Overview ........................................................................................................... 4  
Course Format....................................................................................................................... 4  
DNP Practica.......................................................................................................................... 5  
Scholarly Practice Project................................................................................................. 5  
DNP Practica General Guidelines..................................................................................... 5  
Guidelines and Policy for Practice Mentors and Clinical Contracts.............................. 5  
General Guidelines for DNP Practica ............................................................................. 6  
Completion of DNP Degree................................................................................................. 7  
DNP Advisor and the Student’s Plan of Study .............................................................. 7  
Change of Academic Advisor .......................................................................................... 7  
DNP Scholarly Practice Project and Final Report ......................................................... 7  
Organization of the Scholarly Practice Project Proposal and Final Report..................... 7  
Approval of the Scholarly Practice Project Proposal ................................................... 9  
Submission of the DNP Project Proposal to the Institutional Review Board ............. 9  
Implementation of the DNP Scholarly Practice Project ............................................. 9  
Writing the DNP Scholarly Practice Project Final Report .......................................... 9  
Approval of the DNP Scholarly Practice Project Final Report .................................... 9  
Application for Degree and Intent to Graduate ............................................................ 10  
Electronic Submission of the DNP Scholarly Practice Project Final Report ................ 10  
Time Limitations for Completion of Degree .................................................................. 10  
DNP Courses and Milestones ......................................................................................... 11
Program Information

History and Philosophy
The University of Virginia (UVA) School of Nursing (SON) opened the first Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program in Virginia in 2007 in response to the demands associated with increasing complexity in the health care system, expansion of scientific knowledge, and growing concerns regarding the quality of patient care delivery and outcomes. The UVA program, now fully accredited by the Commission for Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), supports the vision for transformational change in education for professional nurses who practice at the most advanced level. The American Association for Colleges of Nursing (AACN) position statement on the DNP degree recommends that nurses practicing at the highest level should receive doctoral-level preparation. More recently, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) statement on the Future of Nursing recommends that nurses achieve higher levels of education and training to meet the increasing demands of contemporary health care.

In the fall of 2013 a post-baccalaureate option to the DNP was initiated for students interested in obtaining an Adult-Gerontology Acute Care (A-G AC) Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) and/or Nurse Practitioner (NP) Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) specialty. This pathway was expanded to include Family NP, Pediatric NP, and Psychiatric-Mental Health NP in 2015. Students obtaining a DNP in this manner are poised to become the kind of advance practice nurses originally envisioned by the AACN; that is, that entry into advanced nursing practice would be with a DNP.

The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice, developed by the AACN, provide guidelines for DNP programs and to serve as a basis for accreditation of programs. The DNP Program at UVA was designed to meet these Essentials. The program encourages DNP students to also take elective courses from any School or department throughout the University.

Purpose
The purpose of the Doctor in Nursing Practice Degree is to prepare DNP students to:

1. Perform at the highest level of nursing practice.
2. Assume leadership roles in complex healthcare delivery systems.
3. Critically appraise existing literature and other evidence in a specialty area to determine and implement best practices.
4. Improve patient outcomes by expanding DNP student knowledge of evidence based practice.

Program Objectives for the proposed DNP program are derived from the AACN document, The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice. At the completion of this program, students are expected to demonstrate the competencies required for the highest level of nursing practice. DNP graduates will be able to do the following:

- Integrate nursing science with knowledge from ethics, the biophysical, psychosocial, analytical, and organizational sciences as the basis for the highest level of nursing practice;
• Demonstrate organizational and systems leadership for quality improvement in healthcare systems;
• Apply clinical scholarship and analytical methods to evidence-based practice;
• Use information systems technology and patient care technology to improve and transform health care;
• Demonstrate leadership in health care policy for advocacy in health care;
• Collaborate with interprofessional and intraprofessional teams to improve patient and population health outcomes.

Comparison of the DNP and PhD Program
The PhD is a research degree that prepares nurse researchers to direct and conduct research. The focus of the PhD program is on development of high level skills in research processes and methods. Students who want to pursue a career in nursing research should consider this degree option.

The DNP is a practice degree that prepares nurses at the highest level of specialty nursing practice competence. The focus of the DNP program is on the promotion of evidence-based nursing practice in a variety of settings as well as the ability to apply knowledge about research processes and evidence-based practice to promote system level care delivery improvement. Students who want to pursue the highest level of expertise in a nursing specialty practice area should consider this degree.

“Just as graduates of research-focused doctoral programs, it is recommended that graduates of practice-focused nursing programs who aspire to hold a faculty position have additional preparation in the educator role and pedagogies in addition to preparation in an area of advanced nursing practice”

Curriculum Overview
The DNP program has a post-MSN pathway for students with a specialty MSN degree or a post-baccalaureate pathway for students with a generalist MSN or BSN degree. All students must have a nursing degree from a college or university accredited by either the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN; formerly NLNAC-National League of Nursing Accrediting Commission) or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Student’s entering with a specialty MSN must also hold certification, where relevant, or be eligible for certification in an advanced nursing specialty area.

The plan of study for the post-MSN Pathway to the DNP requires a minimum of 40 credits over a period of two years. The plan of study for the post-baccalaureate pathway to the DNP requires a minimum of 72-84 credits (depending on the specialty) over a period of three years. All plans of study can be found on the School of Nursing website under Academics.

Course Format
The specialty courses in the post-baccalaureate pathway are primarily face-to-face didactic classes with the possibility of a few online courses. All specialty clinical practica are supervised. After these courses are completed, the student will be awarded either an MSN degree (for BSN students) or a post-MSN certificate for those with a specialty master’s.
The post-MSN DNP courses are scheduled in an executive format, with face-to-face didactic classes meeting at the beginning and end of each term and on a monthly basis within the term. In addition, each course involves online class sessions. Some instructors may also add synchronous class sessions to accompany online learning during the term.

**DNP Practica**

DNP students need a minimum of 1,000 hours of post-baccalaureate practice experience to achieve the DNP competencies and meet the AACN requirement. It is anticipated that most specialty master’s students will come to the DNP with at least 500 supervised specialty practice hours. If their program did not require 500 hours, students will need to schedule additional clinical hours with a practice mentor to meet the 500 hour MSN-level clinical hours expectation. The Prior Supervised Clinical Practica Hours, Plan for DNP Practica form (http://nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/dnp/) should be completed at the time of the DNP Orientation. Student in the post-baccalaureate pathway will meet the minimum 1,000 practice hours.

**Scholarly Practice Project**

The DNP program culminates in the successful completion of a Scholarly Practice Project. This project is designed by the student in collaboration with the student’s DNP Advisor, Practice Mentor, and DNP Practicum Course Professor. The project must be a significant, evidence-based contribution to nursing practice and be suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed, practice-focused nursing journal. Examples of an acceptable Scholarly Practice Project include: a quality improvement project, program needs assessment, evidence-based program development, evaluation of an existing program, development of an assessment or therapeutic protocol, or a cost/benefit analysis of program models. Through this scholarly project, students are intended to demonstrate synthesis of scientific knowledge in their specialty practice area, and contribute to existing nursing knowledge.

**DNP Practica General Guidelines**

**Focus of DNP Practicum Hours in the DNP Program**

Beyond the MSN, clinical practice experiences at the DNP level expand the student’s practice to DNP level expectations. All students will be expected to complete a minimum of 504 DNP Practicum hours with an identified Practice Mentor in the student’s specialty. Three semesters are devoted to the DNP Practica, during which time the students are expected to meet all of the DNP Essentials and Competencies.

Students work out the details of the hours needed with their DNP Advisor. Students in the post-MSN pathway may fulfill these practice requirements in their own work settings, through arrangements with a Practice Mentor in that setting. It may be helpful for the student to schedule a joint meeting with the DNP Advisor and Practice Mentor early in each Practicum course to clarify the student’s learning objectives and plan for student’s DNP Practicum hours.

**Guidelines and Policy for Practice Mentors and Clinical Contracts**

*Students may not begin any Practicum activities until an approved clinical contract with the healthcare facility is in place. Students should to the following:*
1. **Identify a Practice Mentor** in the student’s place of practice. The Practice Mentor should be doctoral-prepared (if possible), an expert in the student’s field, willing to be the student’s Practice Mentor, and agree to write an evaluative letter at the end of each Practicum.

2. **Ensure that a contract with the facility is in place.** Check the current list of Clinical Site Contracts to see if the School of Nursing has an existing contract with the desired practice facility. Note: if the site is part of a larger, corporate organization (e.g., Sentara Health Care), search by that organization’s name, not the specific facility name or city. If the student wishes to work with an individual provider or a facility with which we do not have a contract, a Clinical Contract Request Form (website above) should be submitted. The Compliance Coordinator for Academic Affairs will begin the contract negotiation. *Note: This process takes 6 – 8 weeks so you should begin your search long before your Practicum begins.*

3. The student is responsible for reading the contract, abiding by it, and **completing and submitting any requisite forms.**

4. The School of Nursing’s part of the contract with the facility is that the student has met our requirements for a criminal background check, immunizations, and clinical competencies. **However, the facility may want additional verification which you will be responsible to complete at your own expense** (e.g., drug test, an additional criminal background check, etc.).

5. If the facility wants a copy of your immunization record, you may go to [www.healthyhoos.virginia.edu](http://www.healthyhoos.virginia.edu) and print out a copy of your record for the facility or call 434-924-1525 with additional questions.

**General Guidelines for DNP Practica**

- DNP Practicum hours may be done at the student’s job site and students may receive pay for the work done to satisfy practica requirements. *However, the work must go beyond the student’s usual work responsibilities.*
- DNP Practicum work must be approved by the student’s Practice Mentor in the practice setting.
- The student must document a minimum of 504 approved practice hours.
- Part-time students may register for variable credit in DNP Practicum I and II. DNP Practicum III for all students varies from one to six credits, depending on individual student needs. All three DNP Practica must be done consecutively.
- Each DNP Practicum credit = 56 hours of practice time. Four credits of DNP Practicum is equal to 224 practice hours.
- In DNP Practicum I students will write a proposal for their Scholarly Practice Project, implement the project in DNP Practicum II, and in DNP Practicum III students will present the results of the project in a formal setting, write the results of the project, and complete a manuscript for publication.
- Students taking DNP Practicum hours during Summer Session must complete and submit the Summer Session DNP Practicum Enrollment form at [http://www.nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/dnp/](http://www.nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/dnp/).
Completion of DNP Degree

The student and the DNP Advisor have joint responsibility for ensuring that each step in fulfilling DNP degree requirements is completed and that an official record is kept.

DNP Advisor and the Student’s Plan of Study
Upon entry into the DNP program, each student is assigned a DNP Advisor who will guide and monitor the student’s progression through the program. On entry into the program, students should meet with their DNP Advisor to review the full-time or part-time plan of study. This plan addresses course work and DNP Practica. The student is responsible for completing the Planner in the Student Information System (SIS) to record the plan of study.

Prior to registering for the second term in the DNP Program, every student (part-time or full-time) is required to update the SIS Planner which will be approved by the student’s DNP Advisor. If the Planner is not completed, the student’s registration will be blocked.

Change of Academic Advisor
Once in the program, it is not uncommon for students to discover that another faculty member may offer a better match for the student’s specialty interests than the DNP Advisor initially assigned. It is entirely acceptable for the student to change advisors by submitting to the SON Registrar a Change of Advisor Form (http://nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/) with the signatures of both the former and the new DNP Advisors.

DNP Scholarly Practice Project and Final Report
The proposal for the Scholarly Practice Project is developed in DNP Practicum I. The DNP Advisor works closely with the student in developing the proposal. The Course Professor for DNP Practicum I will also assist, as well as the Practice Mentor if desired. The DNP Project is implemented during DNP Practicum II and the results of the DNP Project are written during Practicum III (added to the proposal). The Final Report includes the proposal (written in past tense and incorporating any changes) as well as the project results. Once the final report is completed, the student then begins the process of paring down the report into a publishable manuscript, following the author guidelines of the selected journal.

Organization of the Scholarly Practice Project Proposal and Final Report
The Scholarly Practice Project proposal and final report formatting follows the American Psychological Association’s (APA) guidelines. The content and sequence of the proposal and final report follows the guidelines recommended by Standards for Quality Improvement Reporting Excellence (SQUIRE; http://www.squire-statement.org/guidelines). Students should refer to SQUIRE guidelines for details of what is to be included in each section.

SCHOLARLY PRACTICE PROJECT PROPOSAL

Sections 1 – 12 comprise the proposal. These sections are written in the future tense i.e. what the student plans to do.

1. Title
2. Abstract
INTRODUCTION
3. Background Knowledge
4. Local Problem
5. Intended improvement
6. Study question

METHODS
Students will work closely with their DNP Advisor as well as the Course Professor in developing this section.
7. Ethical issues
8. Setting
9. Planning the intervention
10. Planning the study of the intervention
11. Methods of evaluation
12. Analysis
References are included but not considered a separate section.

DNP SCHOLARLY PRACTICE PROJECT RESULTS
Sections 13 – 19 are added to the proposal (sections 1 – 12) to complete the DNP Scholarly Practice Project Final Report. Because the project has been completed, verbs will be in the past tense—including the proposal (Sections 1 – 12).
13. Outcomes (Results)

DISCUSSION
14. Summary
15. Relation to other evidence
16. Limitations
17. Interpretation
18. Conclusions
19. Funding
References are included but not considered a separate section.

DNP SCHOLAR PRACTICE PROJECT FINAL REPORT
After the sections above are complete, the student then adds to the document the Author Guidelines for the selected professional journal and a manuscript of the project for submission to the journal.
20. Author Guidelines
21. Manuscript prepared for publication
Approval of the Scholarly Practice Project Proposal

Toward the end of each semester, a DNP Scholarly Project Proposal Day will be scheduled. All Practicum I students who have completed their proposal will orally present their proposal. A PowerPoint or similar format will be used for the presentation. The audience for the proposal presentations will be all presenting students, each student’s DNP Advisor, Practice Mentor (if desired), the Course Professor for Practicum I as well as other invited faculty and clinical experts. The presenting students will receive some feedback from their peers immediately following their presentation.

Within a week after the presentations occur, each student’s DNP Advisor, Practice Mentor (if desired) and Course Professor will determine whether or not the proposal has been approved or if changes need to be made. After the proposal has been approved by the DNP Advisor, Practicum I Course Professor, and Practice Mentor (if desired), each student will obtain their signatures as well as the signature of the DNP Program Director on the DNP Scholarly Practice Project Proposal Approval Form (http://www.nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/dnp/) and submit the completed form to the DNP Program Manager.

Submission of the DNP Project Proposal to the Institutional Review Board

After the proposal has been approved and prior to implementation of the DNP Project, each student must obtain approval through the appropriate Institutional Review Board—for either Health Sciences Research (IRB-HSR; http://www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/hsr/) or the Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-SBS; http://www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/sbs/). At the completion of DNP Practicum I, students will be guided as to which IRB is most appropriate for the proposed project.

Implementation of the DNP Scholarly Practice Project

After (and not before) IRB approval has been obtained, the student implements the DNP Project, under the direction of the DNP Advisor, DNP Practicum II Course Professor, and other relevant practice experts (such as the Practice Mentor). The implementation of the project is in accordance with the approved proposal. Changes to the IRB-approved protocol cannot be made without prior approval of the DNP Advisor and possibly the IRB.

Writing the DNP Scholarly Practice Project Final Report

After collection of all data, the student works with the DNP Advisor to analyze and interpret the data collected. After this process, the student then writes up the results (see SQUIRE Guidelines above) and combines the results and following sections with the proposal. After this process is completed, the student then prepares a manuscript for submission to a professional practice-oriented journal. The DNP Project Final Report should be submitted to the student’s DNP Advisor, DNP Practicum III Course Professor, and Practice Mentor or other expert (if desired) at least two weeks prior to the scheduled DNP Final Project Presentation Day (see below).

Approval of the DNP Scholarly Practice Project Final Report

Toward the end of each semester, a DNP Scholarly Project Presentation Day will be scheduled. All Practicum III students who have completed their DNP Project Final Report will present their work for approval. The presentations will be open to the public. Each student’s DNP Advisor, the Course Professor for Practicum III, and the Practice Mentor or other expert (if desired) will attend. All faculty and DNP students are strongly encouraged to attend as well.
The DNP Practicum III Course Professor will moderate the presentations. After each presentation, the student’s DNP Advisor will oversee general feed-back and questions from the audience. Within one week after the presentations are completed, the DNP Practicum III Course Professor and each students’ DNP Advisor will determine whether or not the written and orally presented DNP Practice Projects are approved. If approved, the student will obtain the appropriate signatures on the DNP Scholarly Practice Project Final Report Approval Form (http://www.nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/dnp/) and submit the completed form to the DNP Program Manager. An electronic copy of the DNP Project Final Report is also sent to the DNP Program Director for final approval.

If the DNP Practicum III Course Professor and DNP Advisor believe that the student’s DNP Project Final Report or presentation does not meet expectations, they have the option of assigning the student a failing grade. Alternatively, specific instructions for how the DNP Project Final Report can be improved with a timeline for completion will be offered.

**Application for Degree and Intent to Graduate**

Students must apply for their degrees online in SIS by the deadline for the term in which they plan to graduate:

- Fall: September 30
- Spring: January 31
- Summer: June 30

The student must be registered during the semester in which they defend their DNP Scholarly Practice Project. If the DNP Project has been successfully completed but not in time for graduation that semester, the student must request Continuous Enrollment the following semester to be able to graduate.

Candidates who do not receive a degree in the session for which their application has been approved must renew their application in SIS at the beginning of the session in which candidacy for the degree is desired. Candidates who find that they will not be able to receive their degree in the session for which their application was approved must remove their names from the degree list by a specific date in the session (see the SON Registrar). If this is not done a duplicate diploma fee will be charged by the University Registrar.

**Electronic Submission of the DNP Scholarly Practice Project Finan Report**

The final step in obtaining the DNP degree is submission of the approved DNP Scholarly Practice Project Final Report to the University Library’s digital repository, also known as LIBRA. Detailed instructions for the submission can be found at http://libra.virginia.edu/. Answers to many questions may also be found at http://www.library.virginia.edu/libra/. Submission deadlines for each semester’s graduation are below.

- Fall - November 30
- Spring - April 30
- Summer - July 31

**Time Limitations for Completion of Degree**

Students must complete all requirements for the degree including the DNP Scholarly Practice Project within seven years of matriculation. Establishing a program plan and a timetable at the outset and
adhering to them closely help to ensure steady progress. This is especially important at the DNP Project stage, when the only structure is that created by the student. Many adult students have serious family and employment obligations that compete for the time and effort needed for DNP study. It is expected nevertheless that they will sustain the focus and momentum necessary to complete their studies within the seven-year limit. In case of interruption of work by military service, time spent in service will be excluded from the computation of this seven-year period.

**DNP Courses and Milestones**
The table below summarizes the milestones required of all students prior to graduation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DNP Orientation</td>
<td>• Complete Prior Supervised Clinical Practica Hours Form (MSN-DNP students only)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8240</td>
<td>DNP Seminar</td>
<td>• Identify question for DNP Project with input from Course Professors and DNP Advisor*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8650</td>
<td>Managing Information Technology</td>
<td>• Develop electronic professional portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Create a consumer health information website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Create a spreadsheet with data from a large dataset involving data extraction from practice information systems and database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8610</td>
<td>Health Promotion &amp; Population Health</td>
<td>• Identify conceptual framework for DNP Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8660</td>
<td>Evidence Based Practice</td>
<td>• Complete literature review on DNP Project question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 9610</td>
<td>DNP Practicum I: Development of a Scholarly Practice Project</td>
<td>• Document practicum activities and hours in portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Present DNP Project Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Submit DNP Scholarly Practice Project Proposal Approval Form**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Submit protocol to the appropriate IRB for approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 9620</td>
<td>DNP Practicum II: Implementation of the Scholarly Practice Project</td>
<td>• Update practicum activities and hours in portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Implement DNP Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify professional journal for publication of DNP Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Submit abstract for presentation at professional conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 9630</td>
<td>DNP Practicum III: Evaluation &amp; Dissemination of Scholarly Practice Project</td>
<td>• Update practicum activities and hours in portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Write up results of DNP Project into DNP Project Final Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Complete manuscript for publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Present DNP Project to public audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Submit Approval of DNP Scholarly Practice Project Final Report Approval for Submission to Libra form**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Upload DNP Project Final Report to Libra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* DNP Project = DNP Scholarly Practice Project
** Completed DNP Milestone Entered into SIS