



**Department of Nursing**

**Doctor of Nursing Practice Student  
Handbook**

Welcome to West Chester University and the Department of Nursing graduate program. We hope that you will find your experience here to be challenging and rewarding.

This handbook supplements the current West Chester University Graduate catalog and other university publications. The guide includes valuable information for your success in the Program. You are strongly encouraged to keep and refer to this handbook throughout your course of study.

Please note that the material in this handbook is subject to change as University or department policies are revised. Your advisor is there to guide you, but it is still your responsibility to complete all requirements, conform to policies in force, and meet all deadlines. Periodic checking of the Department and University website and consultation with your advisor can help to prevent an untimely delay in your date of graduation or problems with your practice experiences.

We look forward to a rewarding association with you and hope you will take advantage of all that our Department and the University have to offer.

The Graduate Faculty

## Department and Faculty Contact Information

Department Information	West Chester University Department of Nursing Phone: 610-436-2219 Fax: 610-436-3083
Department Chairperson	Cheryl Schlamb, DNP, CRNP Associate Professor <a href="mailto:cschlamb@wcupa.edu">cschlamb@wcupa.edu</a> (610)738-0544
Graduate Program Director:	Veronica Wilbur PhD, FNP, CNE, FAANP Associate Professor <a href="mailto:vwilbur@wcupa.edu">vwilbur@wcupa.edu</a> (610)436-2839
	<p>Jacquelyn Owens, DNP, RN, FNP-BC Adjunct Faculty <a href="mailto:jowens@wcupa.edu">jowens@wcupa.edu</a></p> <p>Cheryl Monturo, PhD, MBE, ACNP-BC <a href="mailto:cmonturo@wcupa.edu">cmonturo@wcupa.edu</a> (610)436-2693</p> <p>Deb Mandel Ph.D., MSN, RNC-OB <a href="mailto:dmandel@wcupa.edu">dmandel@wcupa.edu</a></p> <p>Megan Mraz RN, MSN, PhD <a href="mailto:mmraz@wcupa.edu">mmraz@wcupa.edu</a> (610)436-3474</p> <p>Cheryl Schlamb, DNP, CRNP</p> <p>Veronica Wilbur PhD, FNP, CNE, FAANP</p>
Administrative Assistant	Cynthia Pistritto <a href="mailto:cpistritto@wcupa.edu">cpistritto@wcupa.edu</a> (610)430-4181
Secretary	Stacey Pedicone (610)436-4181 <a href="mailto:spedicone@wcupa.edu">spedicone@wcupa.edu</a>

## Mission Statement & Philosophy

The mission of the West Chester University Department of Nursing is to provide the highest quality of undergraduate and graduate nursing education to students who come from diverse populations. All graduates are prepared to provide evidence-based quality nursing care, and to become nursing leaders within the nursing profession. The baccalaureate program provides the art and scientific foundations of entry into nursing practice. The graduate programs provide preparation into advanced nursing practice and education roles; thereby, giving students the ability to synthesize knowledge, strengthen communication, and empowerment to promote health care. The Doctor of Nursing Practice program further prepares advanced practice nurses at the highest level to fully evaluate and contribute to increasingly complex health care systems. These contributions are based on contemporary nursing science, organizational, political, cultural, and economic principles. Graduates of these nursing programs will be professionals capable of assuming leadership in present and emerging health care roles, citizens who contribute to society and who are committed to life-long learning and personal development.

The Department of Nursing affirms the WCU Vision, Mission and Values Statements and the College of Health Sciences Mission Statement. It shares the University's commitment to teaching, research, and service to individuals, families, communities and populations. The following statement reflects the Department of Nursing's philosophical beliefs.

The Department of Nursing recognizes that individuals, families, communities and populations are entitled to optimum health and quality health care. Nurses play an integral role in health promotion, disease prevention and enhancing the quality of life throughout the lifespan. According to the ANA "nursing is the protection, promotion and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities and populations." Advanced practice nursing roles include expert clinician, educator, researcher, consultant, and leader. The nursing programs at West Chester University recognize the responsibility to provide innovative educational programs that reflect the growing needs and current trends of diverse populations.

The faculty of the Department of Nursing provide a caring and supportive environment while respecting the diversity of the student body and communities which it serves. The University community cultivates and supports faculty/student collaboration and mentoring. The students are treated as individuals with unique qualities and learning needs. Through professional actions, the faculty reflects the Department's philosophy of excellence in nursing practice, creation of evidence-based research, establishing strong interdisciplinary associations and fostering supportive relationships with colleagues, students, and the community.

The 2008 AACN *Essentials* document (*The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education*), the 2011 AACN *Essentials* document (*The Essentials of Master's Education*), and the 2006 AACN *Essentials* document (*The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice*) provide structure for the curriculum content of all programs. The faculty designed programs facilitate the students' abilities to creatively respond to a continuously changing health system. Innovative educational experiences are cooperatively planned to meet the needs of both the students and clients empowering them in the nursing- client partnership. The interpretation, development and implementation of ethical evidence-based research are stressed throughout the educational process.

Ethical decision making, accountability, critical thinking, and effective communication skills are emphasized. This is achieved by the application of nursing theory and empirical evidence to professional practice. All programs promote lifelong learning, leadership, and prepare the student for advance professional degrees or post-doctoral studies.

*December 2015*

## Program Goals

The **DOCTOR of NURSING PRACTICE (DNP)** is a practice-oriented program of study that provides the terminal academic preparation for advanced nursing practice. Graduates of this program will be qualified to assume leadership roles in a variety of settings: management of quality initiatives, executives in healthcare organizations, directors of clinical programs, and faculty positions responsible for clinical program delivery and clinical teaching. The program is offered in a distance-education format, except for the first two-credit course required on-campus or required virtual experience.

At the end of the DNP program, the graduate will be able to

1. Utilize collaborative leadership skills on inter- and intra-professional teams to foster effective communication, enrich patient outcomes, and foster change in healthcare delivery systems;
2. integrate evidence-based strategies to ensure safety and quality health care for patients, populations, and communities;
3. evaluate information systems, considering ethical and regulatory issues to improve patient care and healthcare systems;
4. assess policies, trends, and forces influencing healthcare policy to design, implement, and evaluate the effect on future patient outcomes;
5. analyze the scope of healthcare economics and key information sources as they affect health care for patients and populations; and
6. conduct a comprehensive systematic assessment of health and illness parameters incorporating diverse and culturally sensitive approaches.

### Admission Requirements

Applicants to the Graduate Program must meet the [Graduate Nursing Requirements](#). All qualified applicants are admitted to the program.

## CURRICULUM

### Requirements for the Doctor of Nursing Practice

#### Plan of Study

Students may begin the DNP program in any fall semester. The structure of the program is a cohort model for full-time students. Post-MSN-DNP students may complete the program in approximately three years or more, but no longer than six years.

<b>3 Year Plan – Full Time</b>		
<b>Year 1 Fall</b>	<b>Year 2 Fall</b>	<b>Year 3 Fall</b>
NSG701 (2)	NSG705 (3)	NSG810 (4)
NSG702 (3)	NSG707 (3)	
<b>Year 1 Spring</b>	<b>Year 2 Spring</b>	<b>Year 3 Spring</b>
NSG709 (2)	NSG704 (3)	NSG811 (3)
NSG706 (3)	NSG708 (3)	NSG812 (3)
<b>Year 1 Summer</b>		
NSG703 (3)		

A part-time plan is available, but we encourage students to stay within the cohort model for timely graduation.

Students must maintain a 3.00 cumulative average to remain in good standing.

For more information on academic standing, see the [Graduate Catalog](#).

## Course Descriptions

### **NSG 698 DNP Practicum Transition Course (3) credits**

This course is designed for pre-DNP students who did not complete 500 practice hours in their master's degree and need to complete practice hours prior to their DNP program. The student will complete 250 practice hours under the supervision of a preceptor during this 3-credit course. This is a 250 clinical hour practicum course.

### **NSG 701 Transition to Doctoral Study (2) Credits**

Students address the evolution of the doctorate and its development in the nursing profession. Current and future practice issues that affect the advanced practice nurse are examined. Analysis of the PhD, DNS, and DNP are explored. Driving forces leading to the need for the Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) are considered along with evidence-based findings from nursing leaders and organizations. A dialogue about the DNP Project is introduced (on-campus section of course).

### **NSG 702 Leadership for Advanced Nursing Practice (3) Credits**

Students examine the role development of advanced nursing practice, including a strong focus on ethical practice. Theoretical leadership concepts are synthesized in relation to personal and professional values. Emphasis is on working with multiple disciplines and on leading multiple and diverse constituencies. Issues of creativity, power, innovation, communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, and resources management are addressed.

### **NSG 703 Healthcare Policy and Advocacy (3) Credits**

Students explore the roles and accountability of healthcare providers in responding to the health and social needs of the public and shaping health policy. The course introduces students to the concepts and tools of health policy development and the skills necessary to be an effective health policy analyst and advocate.

### **NSG 704 Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Practice in Healthcare I (3) Credits**

Students utilize analytic methods to critique existing literature and other evidence to implement the best evidence for practice. Methods of designing processes to evaluate outcomes of practice, practice patterns, and systems of care within a practice setting are explored



**NSG 705 Analytical Methods of Evidence-Based Practice in Healthcare II (3) Credits**

Students design and evaluate quality improvement methodologies to promote safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable and patient-centered care. Quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis is covered. Emphasis is placed on applying relevant findings to affect practice guidelines and improve quality in practice and the practice environment.

**Prerequisite:** Successful completion of NSG 704.

**NSG 706 Nursing Ethics in Clinical Practice and Leadership (3) Credits**

Students examine ethical principles and legal precedents affecting clinical practice and healthcare policy. Strategies to assist in the resolution of current ethical issues within a student's particular practice or research area are developed through the application of select theories and concepts. Ethical issues are addressed through a case-based approach.

**NSG 707 Healthcare Economics for the Advanced Practitioner (3) Credits**

Students describe the scope of healthcare economics and key information sources as they affect the advanced practitioner. Highlights of the characteristics of healthcare financing and the quality of health economics financing are explored.

**NSG 708 Program Evaluation (3) Credits**

Students review evaluation methods best suited for professionals in practice and leadership roles. Standards of evaluation, planning designs, and approaches are examined. Students examine methodologies for classifying interventions and outcomes and for the evaluation the quality of healthcare delivered to individual clients and aggregate populations. Issues related to the implementation of outcomes and quality management programs are explored.

**NSG 709 Nursing Informatics (2) Credits**

Students use information systems and technology, and provide leadership, to support and improve patient care and healthcare systems. Emphasis is on the knowledge and skills expected of a DNP graduate in analysis of technology, design, and selection of information systems, proficiency in quality-improvement technologies, and evaluation of patient care systems. Related ethical, regulatory, and legal issues are discussed.

**NSG 810 Application of Evidence-Based Practice (4) Credits**

This course will provide the learner with the opportunity to conceptualize the concepts of scholarship, leadership, and advocacy into their advanced nursing practice. The learner will identify the focus of their DNP project. This project

should be appropriate within the domain of scholarship of the learner. This course will culminate with recognition of a need and problem statement, a needs assessment and development of goals and objectives. Prior to data collection or intervention DNP students complete the protection of human subjects/IRB process. **Prerequisite: Successful completion of all NSG 700 level courses.**

### **NSG 811 DNP Project Seminar I (3) Credits**

Students in DNP Project Seminar I synthesize and integrate newly acquired knowledge and skills and begin the implementation of their DNP project. Students continue to prepare and refine the DNP Project paper for submission, measure project outcomes and evaluate the sustainability of their DNP Project. Students must present their work in a scholarly manner to colleagues and faculty. **Prerequisite: Successful completion of NSG 810.**

### **NSG 812 DNP Project Seminar II (3) Credits**

This course will provide the learner with guidance and support in project evaluation and analysis. Students will prepare the DNP Project paper for submission, measure outcomes, ensure sustainability of the project and disseminate results. Students must present their work in a scholarly manner to colleagues and faculty. The completed DNP Project, presentation and paper are required for completion of the DNP Project Seminar II and graduation. **Prerequisite: Successful completion of NSG 811.**

## Clinical Practicum Requirements

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) (2008), "nursing as a practice profession requires both practice experts and nurse scientists to expand the scientific basis for patient care." (p.7). Therefore, the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) focuses on both practice and scientific inquiry and designates clinical hours as part of the curriculum. The new AACN Essentials (2021) focus on the accomplishment of competencies through scholarship and practice.

### Premise

The WCU graduate faculty acknowledge the following:

- Many doctoral students hold positions in a leadership role within a healthcare organization.
- They have job responsibilities that require high-level expertise, but they seek additional education to take it to the next level.
- Within their roles, they can seek out different experiences that fulfill practice time and DNP Essential competencies.
- It is not easy to achieve all clinical hours at the end of the program.

The WCU graduate faculty have determined that:

- A steady accumulation of hours throughout the program enhances the AACN Essentials and optimal student learning achievement.
- Student learning outcomes and the Essentials drive the selection of clinical hours.
- All hours must be above and beyond any job responsibilities.
- Students may engage in clinical hours while working in their current nursing role; however, these hours must be outside the job description.
- Faculty may accept or deny clinical hours on an individual basis for students based on the type of experience.
- All experiences, whether performed at their institution or outside, need to ensure that each student has a wide range of DNP practice hours/experiences at the doctoral level to fulfill the requirement of DNP Essentials to meet graduation requirements for the degree.

The nature of the hours is mutually agreed upon by the student and course faculty and is further detailed in each course's syllabus.

Students are required to complete *a minimum of 500 clinical practicum hours* throughout the DNP program.

### **Hours within Didactic Courses (NSG 702 through NSG 709)**

Each course contains a minimum of 20 - 40 practicum hours, of which a minimum of 20 hours must be directly related to the individual course purpose and objectives. Completing an average of 30 or more hours will keep students on track for the 500-hour practice completion. During the first week of each course, students will write an anticipated practicum hour completion plan and discuss the plan with the course faculty pending final approval.

### **Hours (NSG 810, NSG 811, and NSG 812)**

Practicum hours are directly related to the student's unique area of inquiry and support the DNP Project and the student's identified clinical practice goals and course objectives. Depending on the project and previously completed practicum hours, students will have to complete a range of 180 – 340 final hours between the three courses. The practicum hours are mutually agreed upon among the student, course faculty, faculty chair, and co-operating agencies. During the first week of each of these courses, students will write a practicum hour completion plan and discuss it with the course faculty and their faculty chair.

### **eLogs**

Students orient to the use of eLogs, which is a cloud base tracking system. This system allows students to track practicum hours that link back to the achievement of competencies. Within eLogs, students create a portfolio of hours, descriptions, and evaluation of practicum activities.

**A course-specific practicum log will be downloaded from E-logs and submitted to each D2L course at the end of each session/semester. A hard copy of each student log is maintained in the student file.**

The NSG 810, NSG 811, and NSG 812 practicum experience may include, but is not limited to:

- Practice experiences
- Conference attendance (pre-approved)
- Site visits
- Consultation with a national expert
- Planning meetings with the organization where the project will be implemented
- Leading the change team
- Creating/leading support groups
- Presentations

### **Practice Mentors**

The practicum hours in NSG 810, NSG 811, and NSG 812 require a practice mentor for the DNP Project. This individual is typically the external Member of the student's DNP Project Team. Mentors assist the student in conceptualizing and approaching practice through a scientific mindset – challenging the habits of practice, cultivating curiosity about the scientific and theoretical underpinnings of practice, and formulating practice inquiry questions. Students are encouraged to select mentors who are subject matter experts in their selected area of inquiry, and who agree to guide, advice, counsel, motivate, coach, and facilitate the work of the student.

To be successful with the DNP Project and as a mentee, students must establish clear goals and expectations, determine their personal and professional interests, be open to learning, correction, and even failures, and carefully choose the project topic and mentors. Successful mentoring relationships require commitment from parties, as well as the recognition of the needs of both and the understanding that these needs will change with time.

## **DNP Project Overview**

All Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students are expected to complete a DNP Project. This project is a faculty-guided scholarly process to address a theoretically and clinically relevant problem. The DNP Project Team should consist of the DNP student, a doctoral-prepared WCU faculty member and a project practice mentor who may be from outside the University. In some instances, additional experts/mentors/partners/facilitators can be formal or informal collaborators and may provide intermittent or limited support throughout the project stages as needed (AACN White Paper August 2015).

The DNP Project provides evidence of the student's practice inquiry knowledge and skills and her/his ability to apply research, clinical practice and leadership principles through problem identification, proposal development, implementation, and evaluation of a problem related to clinical practice, the health care delivery system, or a health care policy issue.

Much of what goes into DNP Project selection reflects the professional and personal interests of the student. As with any major undertaking, success includes a series of realistic and achievable goals and expectations. Students are expected to begin NSG 810 with a well-defined DNP Project, working closely with the WCU DNP Project faculty member.

The DNP Project is conducted during three consecutive courses.

- NSG 810: write the first section of the DNP Project document and obtain appropriate Institutional Review Board(s) approval.
- NSG 811: implement the project.
- NSG812: evaluate and disseminate the project results.

### **Types of DNP Projects**

Projects may include, but are not limited to, the following examples.

1. Practice Change Initiative represented by a pilot project, demonstration project, program evaluation, quality improvement project, research utilization project, or an evaluation of a new practice model.
2. Development of innovative products to foster patient engagement in health-related activities.
3. Substantive involvement in a large-scale clinical practice project.
4. Feasibility studies.

## Starting the DNP Project

In the courses prior to NSG 810, faculty guide students regarding possible topics and questions related to clinical practice, the health care delivery system, or a health care policy issue. The information obtained in the previous courses provide the DNP students with the opportunity to review and discuss the topics/ideas and discuss. Timelines for graduation application, confirmation of title project, and final project online submission apply and are published by the [Graduate College](#).

As a part of the process, students must also register their project with the Graduate School with the [Thesis/Doctoral Culminating Project – Registration and Research Compliance Form](#)

### NSG 810 DNP Project Requirements

**Project Faculty Member:** A WCU faculty member will be assigned as the project faculty member. The Member must hold an earned doctorate. The student and faculty member are expected to work closely throughout all stages of the doctoral project. The student and WCU team member will discuss their communication expectations and needs, as well as identification of a potential external project mentor.

**Project Practice (External) Mentor:** In consultation with your project faculty member, the student will identify a potential project practice mentor. It is preferred that the mentor holds an earned doctorate. This mentor will have clinical expertise or a research collaborative relationship that may either facilitate the student's access to the project site, population, or data, or supplement the clinical expertise of project faculty member. The mentor also typically agrees to serve as the student's practicum mentor. The student must obtain and submit a curriculum vitae (CV) for the project practice mentor. *Students should not contact, ask, or speak with potential project practice mentors until after they meet with their project faculty member, and receive approval of the potential mentor.*

**Agreement for Project Practice Mentor:** The student will complete the external appointment request (See Appendix A) and obtain a letter of support from the institution of the mentor (*if applicable*). This letter must include that the external institution agrees to support the DNP student in their project. The student shall submit the completed letter(s) to their Project Faculty Member and maintain a copy in his/her personal file.

**Timetable:** The student will develop a Project proposal timetable, including a plan to meet the clinical practicum hour requirement and review the plan with her/his Project Faculty Member.

**Refine the practice inquiry DNP Project question and purpose:** Once the student and Project Faculty Member agree on the type of project and a clinical question/purpose, the student will begin to write the Project proposal, consistent with the defined template attached in this handbook (see pages 16-17) and Rousch, K. M. (2019), *A Nurse's Step-By-Step Guide to Writing Your Dissertation or Capstone*. Indianapolis, IN: Sigma Theta Tau International.

**Write and revise:** The student will review the draft proposal with the Project Faculty Member and revise as recommended, allowing ample time between revisions. Once approved by the Project Faculty Member, the student will distribute the proposal to the external team mentor for review.

**IRB submission:** Prior to submitting the IRB proposal, the student shall complete and submit the Research Compliance Form (RCF) to the Graduate Studies Department as detailed on the form (see Appendix B). The student will then prepare and submit the proposal to the WCU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other appropriate IRB's (*as necessary*). The WCU IRB application must be reviewed and approved by the Project Faculty Member prior to submission. Any requests by the IRB to revise the application will be handled by the student; however, the revised document should be approved by the Project Faculty Member prior to resubmission to the IRB. *The student is not permitted to start official work implementing the project until the project receives IRB approval from all required organizational IRBs. IRB submission and approval is a requirement of NSG 810.*

### **NSG 811 DNP Project Requirements**

Implement the Project. During this time, the student will remain in close contact with their Project Team members. This course may also include initial evaluation of the project and analysis of data. The student should update the original proposal to delineate Chapters 1, 2, and references of the final project. They should begin to include the project implementation in Chapter 3 as well.

### **NSG 812 DNP Project Requirements**

Analysis and synthesis of results should occur in the beginning of this session with final writing and revision to follow. Chapters 4 and 5 will be completed during this course including tables, figures, and appendices.

The student will submit the final paper to the Project Faculty Member for review and approval (via D2L), based on a mutually agreed upon schedule. As with the project proposal, ample time should be allocated for revisions with attention to deadlines from the [Graduate School](#). Once approved, the student will distribute the proposal to the Project Practice Mentor for review.

The student will complete the signature page and forward this to the Project Faculty Member and then to the Project Practice Mentor for final signatures. The student will return this form to the Graduate Program Coordinator, who will forward this to The Graduate School.

**Prepare a final oral report:** Once the Project Faculty Member and Practice Mentor approve of the final project report, the student shall arrange a mutually agreed upon date and time for presentation and dissemination. The student will give a summary including significance or implications for theory, future research, clinical practice, health policy or education.

**University submission:** The final project will be submitted to the [Graduate School](#) and the Digital Commons

### **Writing the DNP Project**

The length of the DNP Project may vary depending on the project/option selected. Students may find that they need to rework sections several times to achieve clarity, brevity, and completeness. All work is to adhere to the most recent edition of APA style.

**Preliminary Pages including title page, acknowledgements, dedication, copyright, table of contents, etc. as per The Graduate School and Department Guidelines** (See Appendix D).

**Abstract** should not exceed 250 words

### **Chapter 1**

Introduction and Background including problem, purpose, questions

### **Chapter 2**

Review of the Literature



**Chapter 3**

Methods including Conceptual Framework, Setting, Sample, inclusion/exclusion criteria, data collection plan/management, Identification of key stakeholders, site support, Protection of human subjects and a Plan for dissemination to key stakeholders.

**Chapter 4**

Results

**Chapter 5**

Discussion including conclusions, implications (practice, theory/policy, research, education), limitations, lessons learned and recommendations.

**References****Tables****Figures****Appendices**

**West Chester University of Pennsylvania Department of Nursing  
Doctor of Nursing Practice Program  
Information for Project Practice (External) Mentor**

**NSG 810, NSG 811 and NSG 812 General Information**

All Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree students must successfully complete a DNP Project. The DNP Project is a faculty-guided scholarly process to address a theoretically and clinically relevant problem. The DNP Project provides evidence of the student's practice inquiry knowledge and skills and her/his ability to apply research principles through problem identification, proposal development, implementation, and evaluation of a problem related to clinical practice, the health care delivery system, or a health care policy issue.

Each of the three practicum courses (NSG 810, NSG 811 and NSG 812) includes a practicum component. The practicum hours are related to the student's unique area of clinical inquiry and support the DNP Project, the student's identified practicum goals, course objectives and enhance the DNP competencies as described in The American Association of Colleges of Nursing's *The Essentials – Core Competencies of Nursing Education* (2021).

Students are mentored by faculty and *selected practice mentor(s)* to conceptualize and approach practice through a scientific mindset – challenging the habits of practice, cultivating curiosity about the scientific and theoretical underpinnings of practice, and formulating practice inquiry questions. Students are encouraged to select mentor(s)

who are subject matter experts in their selected area of clinical inquiry, and who agree to guide, advise, counsel, motivate, coach, and facilitate the work of the student. In most cases, the preceptor will be the external Member of the student's DNP Project committee.

### **Practice Mentor Requirements**

- An earned doctoral degree is preferred, and the mentor provides a current curriculum vitae.
- The mentor – student relationship should begin with clearly defined expectations and address issues such as how long the relationship will last, how frequently the mentor and student will meet, and the need for confidentiality.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DNP PROJECT

### **1. What is the role of the Project Faculty Member?**

The *Project Faculty Member* works closely with the student as they plan and execute the doctoral project. The Member should be aware of all plans, timelines, changes and problems throughout the project process. The Member must hold an earned doctorate and be a WCU faculty member. The Member will be the assigned course faculty for NSG810, 811 and 812. All efforts will be made to maintain the same Member throughout all three courses.

### **2. How should I determine my Project External Mentor?**

The *Project External Mentor* should hold an earned doctorate with clinical expertise or a research collaborative relationship that may either facilitate the student's access to the study site, population or data or supplement the clinical expertise of the *Project Faculty Member*. The *Project External Mentor* also typically agrees to serve as the student's practicum mentor.

### **3. Does writing my DNP Project count as practicum hours? No.**

**4. Does everyone have to apply for IRB approval? Yes.** Students are expected to publish the results of their DNP Project projects so IRB approval is necessary.

### **5. Does my time preparing the IRB submission count as practicum hours? No.**

### **6. Will I have to get multiple IRB approvals?**

This will depend on the nature of the project and policies of the Project site.

### **7. What if my project proposal gets delayed in the IRB?**

If the application is delayed in the review process, the student will work with his/her *Project Faculty Member* to revise the timeline and expectations.

### **8. What are the characteristics of a successful mentee?**

- Clear definition of the support and help you feel is necessary
- Recognition that one person cannot help you meet all your mentoring needs
- Recognition that your needs for mentoring change over time
- Ability to accept and work through meaningful criticism
- Interest in working with mentors who will help you to grow professionally
- Respectful of mentor and faculty's time; adhere to meeting due dates
- Commitment to enable the relationship to develop and function

## Thesis/Doctoral Culminating Project – Registration and Research Compliance Form

This form is required and should be completed by all students who are doing a master's thesis or doctoral culminating project (dissertation, capstone, DNP project). The form serves the following purposes registers your project with the Graduate School, confirms committee chairperson, and aids in research compliance. Advising, as it relates to the project, is at the discretion of the student's advisor/committee chairperson and/or faculty committee.

### **SECTION I:** To be completed by the student

Name:

Student ID#

Phone Number:

WCU Email:

Check one:

Master's Thesis  DPA Capstone  EdD Dissertation  PsyD Dissertation  DNP Project

Degree:

Anticipated Title of Study:

Committee Chairperson:

Brief summary of your project:

Do you anticipate any subject interaction (human or animal) as part of this project? If yes, please briefly explain:

Do you plan on disclosing the name of any organization or individual? If yes, please explain:

If your project involves human or animal subjects, has this project already received IRB or IACUC approval? If yes, please provide protocol number and date of approval:

Estimated timeframe for project completion:

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Committee Chairperson:

Committee Chairperson Contact Information:

Date:

Anticipated Graduation Date:

**After SECTION I is complete, please send form to [thesisdoc@wcupa.edu](mailto:thesisdoc@wcupa.edu) or deliver to McKelvie Hall, The Graduate School, 102 W. Rosedale Ave. The graduate school staff will log the project and send the form to the ORSP representative for Section II.**

**SECTION II:** To be completed by Office of Research & Sponsored Programs (ORSP) Representative

No review required as student already gained appropriate approvals.

IRB Review Required:  Yes  No

Animal Care Review Required:  Yes  No

Comments:

Name & Role: _____
Signature _____
Date: _____

**Please send completed form to [thesisdoc@wcupa.edu](mailto:thesisdoc@wcupa.edu) or deliver to McKelvie Hall, The Graduate School, 102 W. Rosedale Ave.**

**Student, committee chairperson, and graduate coordinator will receive an email from the Graduate School with a copy of the signed form by the next business day after it is received from ORSP. If there are any concerns with the information communicated through the email or signed form, the student, committee chairperson, or Graduate Coordinator is encouraged to reach out to [thesisdoc@wcupa.edu](mailto:thesisdoc@wcupa.edu).**

## **DNP Project Submission**

### **West Chester University of Pennsylvania Digital Commons**

After the final Project Manuscript has been completed and approved by the *Project Faculty Member* and the *Project External Mentor*, students shall submit this to the West Chester University of Pennsylvania Digital Commons. The Graduate School website has all information about the digital commons. The student will communicate directly with the Graduate College for requested revisions and resubmissions. **AFTER** all submissions and approvals, the student will be cleared for graduation.

#### **[Graduate School Thesis Process Deadlines](#)**

#### **About the Digital Commons**

*West Chester University of Pennsylvania Digital Commons* is a showcase of scholarly works by WCU researchers, faculty and student, a departmental archive and our university press. Scholars at WCU may use it to disseminate, publicize, and archive their work. Researchers and other interested readers from anywhere in the world may use it to discover and keep up-to-date with WCU scholarship. The Commons is a central online system that manages the storage, access and preservation of a variety of materials and formats, including working papers, preprints, post-prints, multimedia teaching materials, books, theses and dissertations.

WCU Digital Commons also supports the publication of electronic journals and other original material. Publication support software includes processes for peer review and communication among editorial boards.

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# Highlights of Select Policies & Procedures

This section only includes highlights of select policies and procedures. Complete details of all policies and procedures can be found in the [WCU Graduate Catalog](#).

## Enrollment Policy

[Enrollment Policy](#): Students have a maximum of six years for degree completion. During that time students are expected to maintain continuous enrollment during fall and spring semesters. Failure to maintain continuous enrollment may affect degree completion due to course availability. Before a semester of non-enrollment, students are encouraged to contact their graduate coordinator, The Graduate School, Financial Aid Office (if applicable), and Center for International Programs (if applicable) to discuss implications of non-enrollment. A maximum of two semesters of non-enrollment are permitted before a student must enroll or request a leave of absence. Students who fail to re-enroll or request a leave of absence are subject to readmission.

1. Enrolled
  - a. Enrolled in at least 1 credit-bearing course.
2. Non-Enrolled
  - a. Enrolled in 0 hours of credit-bearing courses.
  - b. Students can have up to two consecutive semesters (fall and spring) of non-enrollment.
  - c. Students must apply for a Leave of Absence during the second semester of non-enrollment or enroll in credit-bearing courses for the upcoming semester in order to maintain good enrollment status.
3. Leave of Absence (LOA)
  - a. Students wishing to be excused from the enrollment policy due to extenuating circumstances must file a formal request for a Leave of Absence. Forms are available on [The Graduate School](#) website.
  - b. A Leave of Absence is not guaranteed, and students must request the LOA before the start of the semester in which the leave is requested.
  - c. The Leave of Absence form can be found on [The Graduate School](#) website.

# Grade Information

**Grade Information:** West Chester University does not recognize a grade of D for graduate study. Therefore, any grade below a C- in a graduate course is considered a failure and carries zero quality points.

- IP (In Progress) is given to indicate work in progress and will be used only for protected courses (theses, practicums, internships, recitals, and research reports); see "Removing 'In Progress' Designation."
- NG (No Grade) is given when a student fails to complete course requirements by the end of a semester and a time extension is granted by the instructor; see "Removing 'No Grade' Designation."
- W (Withdrawal) is given when a student withdraws from a course between the end of the first and the end of the ninth class week of the semester or the equivalent in summer sessions.

## Change of Grade Policy

Course grades are awarded by the professor of record and reported to the university registrar. These grades, other than NG or IP, are considered final, but may be changed at the discretion of the faculty member within 9 weeks from the start of the subsequent Fall or Spring semester. Any change submitted after that date requires approval of the Provost or their designee. Appropriate justifications for changing a final course grade include, but are not limited to:

- Computational error
- Completion of course work missed during the semester
- Other

## Deadlines for NG and IP Grade Changes

- NG Grades
  - For graduate classes, NG grades must be replaced by a final grade by the end of the 14th week of the subsequent Fall or Spring semester, or they will automatically change to an F.
- IP Grades
  - For graduate classes, IP grades must be replaced by the final grade by the end of the 14th week of the equivalent semester in the following year.



## Academic Standing

[Academic Standing](#): Graduate students whose cumulative grade point average falls below 3.00 will be placed on academic probation. Graduate students must raise their GPA to 3.00 by the end of the next semester (or full summer term) in which they register. An additional probationary semester may be granted at the discretion of the graduate dean. If a student fails to meet the conditions of academic probation, they will be dismissed. Graduate students earning a cumulative GPA of 2.00 or lower will be dismissed from their graduate program without a probationary period. Graduate students admitted provisionally who fail to meet the provisions of admission are subject to dismissal.

A graduate student earning an F grade in any course will be dismissed. Departments/programs reserve the right to establish an official policy in which students are not dismissed for an F grade. An F earned at West Chester University may not be made up at another institution of higher learning for the same course.

## Academic Integrity

[Academic Integrity](#): Any situation involving a violation of academic integrity is of major concern to the University. Faculty members preserve and transmit the values of the academic community through example in their own academic pursuits and through the learning environment that they create for their students. They are expected to instill in their students a respect for integrity and an understanding of the importance of honesty within their chosen profession. Faculty must also take measures to discourage student academic dishonesty.

Commitment to maintaining and encouraging high standards of academic integrity is demonstrated in many ways. One way is through the establishment of policies and procedures governing violation of the standards of academic integrity. The following policies, procedures, and definitions are intended to help faculty meet these responsibilities.

First, the instructor has both the right and responsibility to demand academic honesty if a student is to remain in good standing in the course and is to be evaluated fairly by the instructor. A grade certifies both knowledge and a standard of academic integrity. It is essential that the instructor retain the right to set the minimum academic penalty for academic dishonesty in a course, subject to the appeal rights of a student.

Second, cheating is not just a matter between an instructor and student in a specific course. While it is the right and duty of the instructor to set minimum penalties for dishonesty in a particular course, the University is responsible for the minimum standards of academic integrity and achievement on which degrees are based. It is the University that permits students to remain members of the academic community and finally certifies that students have attained sufficient academic credit and exhibited acceptable standards of conduct to entitle them to a degree.

Third, students accused of academic dishonesty have the right to have their case heard in a fair and impartial manner, with all the safeguards available within the bounds of due process.

## Course Policies

### [Course Policies](#)

#### **Course Repeat Policy**

Graduate students may repeat up to two courses, which are being applied to their degree. Courses may be repeated only once. Both grades earned for a course will remain on the student's record; however, the most recent grade (whether it is higher or lower) will be used in the GPA calculation.

This policy also applies to courses taken at the undergraduate level and applied to the graduate degree or certificate or teacher certification program, or taken as a prerequisite for the Program.

## Graduation and Degree Requirements

[Graduation and Degree Requirements](#): Each candidate for a graduate degree must apply to graduate on myWCU. An automatic fee of \$99 will be added to their account. The following are deadline dates for applying to graduate:

- May graduation - February 1
- August graduation - June 1
- December graduation - October 1

*DNP students will be eligible to process in Graduate Commencement after the completion of all doctoral courses and requirements have been met.*

## University Services and Student Life

[Resources](#) include Campus Services, Graduate Student Life, Health and Counseling Services, Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, Office of Student Conduct, Public Safety, Student Living, and Transportation.

[The Graduate School](#) is located in McKelvie Hall on Rosedale Avenue. Students may utilize the office for schedules and forms for registration, leave of absence, degree candidacy, and graduation. The telephone number is 610-436-2943 and the hours are Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### **Graduate Student Association (GSA)**

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is the student government of all people enrolled in graduate programs. The primary objective of GSA is to promote the overall well-being of graduate students at West Chester University. The GSA mission statement is as follows: The Graduate Student Association of West Chester University is a representative body through which the graduate students express their common concerns for the welfare of the student body, as well as for the continued progress and betterment of graduate studies at West Chester University. GSA achieves these goals through a number of methods:

- Serving on various University committees
- Maintaining a close relationship with graduate students
- Reimbursing students for conference attendance and participation
- Hosting career development workshops for students interested in entering the workforce and pursuing further academic degrees
- Holding social events for graduate students

All graduate students are members of the association by virtue of their graduate status. The GSA office is located in McKelvie Hall and can be reached at [gsa@wcupa.edu](mailto:gsa@wcupa.edu). For more information, go to the website [Graduate Student Association](#).

## **New Graduate Students**

Congratulations on your recent acceptance to West Chester University as a new graduate student! We look forward to having you as part of our community and are excited to see you succeed in this next stage in your education. Whether you are straight out of college, switching careers, or looking to increase your current potential, the West Chester University staff is here to help you along the way. Start here as a [new graduate student](#) and then find a [guide](#) of helpful links and resources.

# Distance Education Support

**General Technical Support:**

Contact the [WCU IT Helpdesk](#), call 610-436-3350, email [helpdesk@wcupa.edu](mailto:helpdesk@wcupa.edu)

**D2L Technical Support:**

Contact [WCU D2L Services](#), call 610-436-3350, email [d2l@wcupa.edu](mailto:d2l@wcupa.edu)

**Distance Education Support:**

Contact [Distance Education](#), call 610-436-3373, email [distanced@wcupa.edu](mailto:distanced@wcupa.edu)

**Hours:**

Monday to Thursday 8:00am to 8:00pm

Friday 8:00am to 4:30pm

Sunday 12:00 to 8:00 pm

## Technical Requirements and Considerations

### [Computer Requirements](#)

### Important Student Links:

- [Basics of APA Style](#)
- [Purdue Owl APA](#)
- [Library Services for DE](#)
- [How to... in the library](#)
- [DNP Resource Site](#)

## GRADUATE NURSING STUDENT ACTIVITIES

### **Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing**

The Honor Society of the Department of Nursing, West Chester University, was established in the spring of 1985. The first induction for the society was held on March 24, 1985. On April 17, 1994, the Honor Society was chartered as Xi Delta Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing in a ceremony conducted by Elizabeth Carnegie, DPA, RN, FAAN, Member of the Board of Directors of Sigma Theta Tau. The purposes of this society are to recognize superior achievement, recognize the development of leadership qualities, foster high professional standards, encourage creative work, and strengthen commitment to the ideals and purposes of the profession.

Each spring, Xi Delta Chapter hosts an induction ceremony to honor new members. [Membership](#) is open to both undergraduate and graduate students. Students in graduate programs who are registered nurses, legally recognized to practice in their country and have a minimum of a baccalaureate degree or the equivalent in any field, shall be eligible to be considered as a Nurse Leader at any point in the Program.

### **Mary Kline Lecture Series and Professional Day**

An annual campus-wide lecture series has been established by the Department of Nursing to honor Mary L. Kline, a distinguished member of the nursing faculty who retired in 1983 after fourteen years of dedicated teaching and service to the University. These lectures are held annually in the fall semester.

### **Student Representation on Department Committees**

Students are invited to serve as student representatives on department committees, such as the Student Affairs, Faculty Affairs, and a variety of other curriculum focused committees. Interested students may get information from a graduate faculty member.

### **Research Day**

Research Day is a WCU-wide event (Spring/Fall) that provides a venue for faculty and students to present, discuss, and demonstrate research and scholarship in all disciplines. It also serves as a valuable forum for researchers to practice their presentations for upcoming regional and national conferences.