ASPEN UNIVERSITY

2024-2025

Doctor of Nursing Practice Handbook

4615 East Elwood Street
Phoenix, AZ 85040

Statement

All students must abide by the Academic Catalog in addition to the programmatic guidelines outlined in this handbook. Both the catalog and handbook are updated annually at a minimum. Students should check back regularly for updates.

To find additional information about this program, please see the program page with the Academic Catalog and university website.

Program Administration

Dean of Nursing & Health Sciences
Dr. Marcos Gayol, Ed.D, MSN, MPH, MBA, RN, CNE, CPH

Associate Dean of Nursing & Health Sciences
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Certified as true and correct in content and policy by

Joanne Weiss, Provost

August 31, 2024

Advisory Board Information

Program Advisory Board

Purpose: The Program Advisory Board acts in an advisory and consultative capacity to promote, assist, and perpetuate the goals and objectives of Aspen University nursing program. This board meets twice per year.

Functions:

- Identify emerging health care needs that may require programmatic and institutional response

- Provide an opportunity for the exchange of viewpoints between business/professional persons, alumni, and academicians as they relate to nursing education.

- Provide a direct liaison between faculty and the community for the purpose of promoting the activities and mission of the Aspen University nursing program and the nursing profession.

- Advise and inform the EAC on local, state, and national perceptions regarding nursing education and the nursing profession, suggest possible avenues for marketing the program.

Membership: The dean and various members of the community of interest: current student, alumni, nurses, leaders in health care

DNP Statement and Goals

DNP Statement

To support and advance the mission of Aspen University, the mission of the Aspen University School of Nursing and Health Sciences is to enhance the health and quality of life for individuals, families, and communities at local, state, and national levels through excellence in teaching, scholarship, and practice. The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program prepares nurses to effectively assume leadership roles in practice environments within a diverse society and communities as well as across a spectrum of healthcare settings to focus on improved health outcomes for society as a whole.

Program Learning Goals

- **Theoretical Underpinnings:** Evaluate scientific knowledge underpinnings for translation, integration, application to practice, and create a theoretical framework based on research.

- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Collaborate with professionals in other disciplines to improve person-centered care and population health outcomes.

- **Population Health:** Establish collaborative approaches to improve equitable health improvements in both traditional and non-traditional partnerships to include the healthcare delivery continuum for patient-centered care, public health prevention and disease management of diverse populations.

- **Nursing Scholarship:** Generate, translate, and disseminate evidence-based practices to improve and transform healthcare.

- **Innovation, Quality, and Safety:** Improvement science focused on enhancing quality and system effectiveness.

- **Leadership:** Improve the quality of nursing practice, by using leadership strategies and systems-based thinking and practice, to lead organizations to change through personal and professional development.

- **Healthcare Technology and Informatics:** Utilize data-driven decision-making to inform the delivery of safe, high-quality healthcare services supported by healthcare technology.

- **Healthcare Advocacy:** Advocate for improved diverse, inclusive, and equitable healthcare and policies.

- **Personal, Professionalism, and Leadership:** Life-long learning, collaborative disposition, support of nursing expertise, and assertion of leadership.

Project and Preceptorship

Doctor of Nursing Practice Project and Preceptorship

In the Aspen University Doctoral program, the cornerstone requirement for all students is the successful completion of the DNP Project. This undertaking involves the creation and approval of a DNP project by a specially appointed DNP Project Team, designated by Aspen University. The DNP courses offered within the program provide a comprehensive framework and guidance for crafting the DNP Project.

The DNP Project serves as a testament to the original work carried out by each student on their journey toward earning a Doctoral degree. This project represents a fusion of existing research and the student's innovative contribution to the broader body of human knowledge and the field of practice. It underscores the student's ability to collect, analyze, and effectively communicate data using critical thinking, analytical prowess, and synthesis skills.

Each Doctoral Student is tasked with crafting a DNP Project that showcases the outcomes of their project development and implementation. A successful project should constitute a substantial and original piece of work, firmly rooted in an appropriate body of literature. It should also possess relevance to the nursing field, whether in the historical context, contemporary practice, or potential future developments. Furthermore, the project should make a noteworthy contribution or advancement within the nursing field.

The responsibility lies with the student to collaborate with their DNP Project Team, in conjunction with the Faculty Chair, to determine the appropriate level of support and guidance required. As deemed necessary, students are encouraged to seek additional expertise and resources to enhance their project. As students progress toward the final stages of their doctoral program, it is expected that they will require less external assistance in conducting their project, composing the Project Manuscript, and acquiring the necessary guidance to successfully complete the DNP journey.

Doctoral students in this program are essentially scholars in the making, equipped with clear objectives and an unwavering commitment to realizing their initial goals set at the commencement of their doctoral journey. The DNP Project Team will evaluate and approve the resulting DNP Project upon a final review. While training, editing, and other forms of assistance are encouraged and deemed acceptable, it is imperative to emphasize that the DNP Project must be the sole work of the student, without any external production or interference.

Immersion Hours

The evidence of 1000 Immersion hours is required for the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree at Aspen University. Students may complete these supervised hours in a variety of settings, including acute care facilities, assisted living facilities, sub-acute and ambulatory care organizations, healthcare service support organizations, such as insurance companies, pharmaceutical organizations, care coordination services, clinics, and home care facilities.

Students are required to have a DNP Immersion Approval Letter prior to engaging in immersion hours. Students will work directly with the Office of Field Experience (OFE) to complete the paperwork necessary for the immersion site and preceptor agreements. The OFE can be reached at: ofe@aspen.edu.

Many students may complete their immersion hours in their place of employment; however, an on-site preceptor will be a doctoral-prepared professional with career experience in healthcare leadership, be affiliated with the site, and have knowledge of the student's Project topic. The on-site preceptor, in conjunction with the Faculty Mentor Chair, will supervise and verify the immersion activities, though the student may complete certain activities independently and not in the presence of the preceptor but still under the preceptor and faculty mentor's chair's guidance. The supervised immersion activities will be reported to the Faculty Mentor Chair for verification by means of the immersion hours log that the preceptor must sign, and the student must submit to ProjectConcert as evidence of immersion hours completion. Furthermore, the Faculty Mentor Chair supervises the student in conjunction with the preceptor and the Faculty Mentor Chair evaluates the student and student's work and assigns the grades to the student.

The DNP Project courses each have three required teleconferences which give allow the Faculty Mentor Chair to hear about project progression from the preceptor and student, the opportunity provides opportunities for the student, preceptor, and Faculty Mentor Chair to ask questions and receive clarification, and the opportunity to monitor, report, and assess the immersion activities for appropriateness and approval. Immersion activities will vary, per the site and student's project topic and need. Activities may include direct care, attendance of courses, classes, seminars, conferences, meetings, webinars, and interviews. For any potential immersion activity consideration, the student will need approval from the Faculty Mentor Chair.

* A possible maximum of 500 immersion hours previously completed and verified may be banked and used towards the 1000 total DNP immersion hour requirement near the end of the program. For consideration, please complete the Verification Form located in the appendices Additional Forms section. The remaining immersion hours will be completed during the DNP Project courses. Students receiving prior immersion hours are required to complete their DNP Project and the time required will need to meet the 1000 total DNP immersion hour requirement as well as the requirements needed to complete their DNP Project in its entirety, regardless of banked hours.

Logging Banked Hours

You can only complete this once you have an approved DNP Previously Completed Hours Form approved by the Office of Field Experience. Once it has been approved, the Office of Field Experience will make this entry format available to you for a short amount of time. You will need to add the hours before you lose access to this entry format.

- Click on Experience. Click on New. Make sure to select "DNP Previously Completed Hours (Banked)."

- Select today's date. Enter the hours that were approved. Select the DNP Coordinator name. Select Completed Verification of Precepted Graduate Hours. Select the associated immersion course. Type in a description of the activities of the previously approved hours. Click Save - "Continue editing this entry."

- Click on the Document tab. Click Add Document. If it is greyed out, remember you need to save the entry before attaching a document.

- It will open a pop-up. Type in file name. Chose file from your computer. Click Add Document.

- Then click Submit.

You can only complete this once you have a Verification of Precepted Master's Degree Hours Form approved by the DNP Program Director. Once it has been reviewed for completion, the DNP Program Director will provide you with instructions for claiming these hours during your DNP Program. You may begin using your banked hours (in daily increments of up to 12 hours) during your final immersion courses. To do so, you should make an experience entry as usual in ProjectConcert. In the "specify other" box along the bottom of the entry, you should write "previously-precepted hours." The hours are already approved in your ProjectConcert, though this step communicates to the faculty that you are using banked immersion hours.

Project Dissemination

Aspen University upholds the long-standing tradition that requires students to contribute to the scholarly community by making their projects accessible to those who are interested. In the realm of nursing scholarship, these contributions encompass activities that systematically advance the domains of teaching and nursing practice. Such contributions can take various forms, including presentations, and policy proposals aimed at influencing organizations or government agencies.

Upon the DNP Project's final approval, students are encouraged to submit the manuscript for potential publication to Proquest or in a peer-reviewed journal or to consider presenting their findings at a conference. This dissemination of knowledge ensures that the valuable insights and discoveries generated through their hard work benefit a broader audience within the academic and professional spheres.

In instances where the DNP Project is the result of an organizational collaborative effort, it is essential to structure the project in a manner that clearly identifies the Doctoral Student's significant contribution. This demarcation ensures transparency regarding the roles and contributions of both the student and their collaborators. Furthermore, the student bears the responsibility of defending the DNP during any evaluation or discussion.

Moreover, any published articles authored by the student, stemming from activities conducted for the DNP Project, may be incorporated into the DNP project, provided that these published works are logically interwoven and integrated into the overall DNP in a coherent and meaningful manner. It is imperative that the student's role as the sole or primary author of the published work is distinctly acknowledged and maintained throughout the project. This acknowledgment underscores the student's scholarly achievements and reinforces their intellectual contributions to the field of nursing.

Evaluation of Immersion Site and Preceptor

At the conclusion of each immersion experience, it is essential for students to provide their evaluation of their own learning experience and assess the expertise of their preceptor. These evaluations are mandatory and must be submitted electronically through ProjectConcert®.

The Site Evaluation and Preceptor Evaluation forms will be accessible to students in the subsequent courses that are linked to their immersion hours. Specifically, these evaluation forms will become available within the final immersion course and will remain open for submission for a duration of three weeks.

By actively engaging in this evaluation process, students not only contribute valuable feedback but also play a role in enhancing the overall quality of their educational experience. These evaluations are a vital tool for continuous improvement and help ensure that future immersion experiences are both educational and beneficial.

DNP Writing Style

The DNP writing style is guided by the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). Aspen University recognizes the 7th edition. The APA writing style is followed consistently throughout the program in matters of form and style. Of critical importance, sources must be cited and properly referenced. Templates and outlines for project manuscripts are located within the DNP Lounge.

DNP Project Team

Each doctoral student must work with a qualified DNP Project Team (formally called DNP Committee) that is knowledgeable in methods of graduate-level study and research, as well as in the subject area concerned. In addition to the student, the 3-person DNP Project Team is comprised of the Faculty Mentor (Chair) Chair, Faculty Reviewer (Content Specialist), and Independent Reviewer. The student will also need a site/clinical preceptor and the preceptor may serve as the Independent Reviewer. The Faculty Mentor Chair acts as the Project Chair and is also the course instructor for all DNP Project DNP Practicum and Capstone courses., acting as the Project Chair for the student. The Faculty and Independent Reviewers must have appropriate understanding and interest in the topic of the DNP research project. All members of the DNP Project Team must hold a doctoral degree and one member must hold a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree, ensuring that all members of the DNP Project Team are well versed on doctoral-level work as well as in the field of the program. The student is permitted to select the DNP Project Team members Independent Reviewer in consultation with the Faculty Mentor Chair, but Aspen University Program Leadership (DNP Program Coordinator, Deans, and Director) makes the final decisions. To select Faculty and Independent Reviewers, the student sends a statement of request to the Faculty Mentor along with the rationale for selecting the individual.

The professional relationship between the student and the DNP Project team is characterized by enthusiasm, professionalism, and regular and reciprocal communication. In the ideal relationship between the DNP Project Team members, the student receives constant, timely, and quality feedback on progress. This type of interaction and feedback can be accomplished in a variety of ways. However, the emphasis of interactions and feedback is on both the frequency of interactions and quality feedback to maintain a dialogue on the issues and research questions raised by the student's investigative work.

The Faculty Mentor Chair assists the student in formulating the DNP Project Team and oversees its progress. The Faculty Mentor Chair also serves the roles of supervisor, advisor, director, counselor, coach, role model, guide, collaborator, facilitator, advocate, chair, and the like. The Faculty Mentor Chair supervises the immersion experience and communicates with the preceptor and student during the Project and related immersion hours. At the beginning of each DNP Project course the Faculty

Mentor Chair will have a required teleconference with the preceptor and the student to discuss project objectives, goals, and immersion activities to provide clarity to the student and the preceptor at the beginning, middle, and end of the course.

The Faculty Mentor Chair facilitates communications and resource exchanges among all members of the DNP Project Team and is accountable for the DNP Project Team's work. The Faculty Mentor Chair provides guidance and supervision for the entire DNP process, timely and practical reviews including specific constructive critiques to the student, communicates appropriate concerns to the student, and communicates with all the members of the DNP Project Team and Aspen University administrators. The Faculty Mentor Chair is responsible for contacting and chairing meetings of the full DNP Project Team. When there is a difference of opinion or conflict, the Faculty Mentor Chair negotiates with all DNP Project Team members and the student.

The Faculty Mentor Chair serves as a guide and consultant to the student throughout the DNP process and ensures the integrity of Aspen University's DNP guidelines. The Faculty Mentor Chair is an expert in providing guidance to the student about research including the research topic, problem statement, current literature review, research design and planning, data collection, analysis and reporting, DNP document preparation, and the like to maximize the student's progress for successful and ethical doctoral research. The Faculty Mentor Chair maintains documentation of all communication within the DNP Project Team, ensuring that all necessary forms are completed, signed, and submitted to Aspen University administrators.

If the Faculty Mentor Chair is unable to serve for the entire duration of the student's DNP project, the Program Director will arrange for a replacement Faculty Mentor Chair .
Any additional human resources should be discussed with the Faculty Mentor Chair . Such resources might comprise a DNP editor, academic advisor, or a subject matter expert (SME), such as a statistics expert. All individuals associated with the DNP process should be acknowledged for their contribution. Any expense incurred by the student for external services rendered is managed independently between the student and the service provider. Hiring a writer or buying a completed DNP product is not acceptable and grounds for termination.

Institutional Review Board

Aspen University established an Institutional Review Board (IRB) in 2013 to protect the interests of human participants in research. The primary role of the IRB is the review of all human subject research conducted at Aspen University to ensure that the research fulfills the requirements of the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP), meeting the requirements of OHRP's Division of Compliance Oversight (DCO) reviews institutional compliance with the federal regulations governing the protection of human subjects in Title 45 Part 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations (45CFR46). Also see IRB Policies, Regulations, and Rules. Aspen University IRB follows the OHRP IRB Guidebook, which provides a basic understanding of the background and purposes of the IRB review system. Aspen University's DNP faculty and students complete the CITI training, and IRB approval processes to demonstrate compliance with federal regulations.

Federal regulations require that researchers give special consideration to protecting the welfare of certain subjects. Special provisions exist for research involving:

- Children and Minors

- Prisoners

- Pregnant Women and Fetuses

- Institutionalized Mentally Disabled

- Elderly

- Economically or Educationally Disadvantaged

In general, these regulations allow IRBs to approve research with populations that are of minimal risk or that benefit the subjects directly. Review and approval of research involving vulnerable (protected) populations may require additional time if outside expertise is needed for further evaluation of the study.

Before the student may begin to collect and analyze data, the application to the IRB must be submitted and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Only the IRB has the authority to approve research. The student is responsible to acquire IRB approval to ensure that the research is conducted in the appropriate manner and that the participants meet selection and eligibility requirements. The IRB reviews research proposals based on the following queries:

- Are the risks to subjects and protected groups minimized?

- Are the risks reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits?

- Is the selection of subjects equitable?

The student ensures that the participant's informed consent is appropriately obtained and that the study is properly designed and scientifically valid. Informed consent is obtained before data is collected. Once data is collected, analyzed, and documented, the student is responsible to provide the participants with a copy of the DNP Project, providing the participants with an opportunity to accept or reject the manner in which their data is applied. Participants reserve the right to retract their data up to the time of formal publication.

The IRB at Aspen University considers that the human participants (subjects) of the study are protected by demonstrating:

- Respect for persons (volunteers choose whether to participate in the research);

- Beneficence (doing no harm to research subjects);

- Justice (human participants have the right to be aware of the potential risks of research) as defined by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects.

The DNP Project Team in conjunction with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviews and approves a student's DNP Project proposal. The proposal must include IRB approval and the final approval of the Chairperson for the IRB Committee.

Oral Defense

Oral DNP Proposal Defense

Development of the DNP Project is accomplished as a part of the requirements within the DNP Project Immersion courses. Under direction of the Faculty Mentor Chair, the student develops a research proposal for submission and approval by the DNP Project Team. The proposal provides a thorough description of the proposed study project, following proposal guidelines as directed by the Faculty Mentor Chair. The student presents the proposal to the DNP Project Team in an oral hearing via a one-hour

teleconference. Upon the DNP Project Team's approval of the proposal, the student is authorized to begin the study project. The Faculty Mentor Chair issues written approval to the student using the approval form: Approval of the DNP Proposal.

Final Oral DNP Defense

The Final Oral DNP Defense is the last formal step in the DNP process. It is a requirement all committee members are present for the Final Oral DNP Defense. The Doctoral student produces and presents the DNP Project before the DNP Project Team via teleconference. The DNP Project Team determines the general format of the DNP and the abstract based on the University's general design guidelines. The Faculty Mentor Chair should ensure that the DNP is in final form before requesting evaluations from the other members of the DNP Project Team. Each of the team members must be available for the final defense.

The student arranges the Final Oral DNP Defense teleconference and solicits and coordinates the availability of the DNP Project Team members. Based upon the student's presentation, one of three votes may be awarded:

- Accepted without revision.

- Accepted with minor revisions.

- Accepted with major revisions and another defense is required.

Where revisions are required, the student must make any iteration in a timely manner and submit the final copy to the Faculty Chair. Where acceptance is denied or the student has not met the allotted timeframe, the student must retake DNP courses. This option may only be exercised once.

Following the successful oral defense, the entire DNP Project Team will sign the Approval of the DNP Proposal Form or Approval of the Final Project Form. The Faculty Chair will then send the completed approval form and a copy of the current DNP manuscript to the School Dean with a recommendation for approval. If the decision of the DNP Project Team is not unanimous, the case is referred to the Deans for resolution. If the decision of the DNP Project Team is a failure recommendation, the Faculty Chair, Program Director, and Deans formulate a course of action that may include re-registration in DNP courses.

Office of Field Experience

Aspen University's School of Nursing & Health Sciences offers programs that require immersion, practicum, or internship experiences. Before participating in a course requiring an immersive/practicum hours experience, students will have to meet complete specific documentation and obtain an approval letter before they can begin the immersion, practicum, or internship course. The staff in the Office of Field Experience (OFE) at Aspen University coordinate and address questions for student immersion, practicum and internship sites, and preceptor arrangements.

The OFE can assist students with questions and expectations for the immersion site and preceptor requirements in addition to addressing questions and support for document requirements. The OFE also supports questions related to ProjectConcert®