



**Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program**  
**DNP Student Handbook**  
**2025-2026**

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## **Welcome to the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program**

The faculty and staff at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte) welcome you to the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program. We are proud to offer our DNP program to students interested in advancing their clinical practice, scholarship, and leadership skills. Our DNP program is a practice-focused doctoral program designed to prepare health systems/organizational nursing leaders (non-APRNs) and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) to lead innovation in nursing practice and healthcare.

The Post-Master's DNP program educates nurses prepared in advanced practice nursing roles (NP, CRNA, CNL, CNM, and CNS) or health systems/organizational leadership in clinical inquiry, scholarship, policy, and innovation in health care. The post-baccalaureate Nurse Anesthesia Across the Lifespan DNP provides students both the theory and clinical practice required to meet the educational requirements to take the national certifying examination upon graduation. The DNP degree prepares graduates of both concentrations to analyze systems of care and provide transformational leadership to improve patient safety, quality of care, and implement evidence-based, person-centered healthcare practices.

Translation of research findings into evidence-based practice is emphasized throughout the program, and broad goals of the program include the ability to interpret, analyze, and apply research findings to clinical and systems/population level practice settings, determine and measure system and population outcomes, manage information systems, and use appropriate technology for health and risk management and communication.

We are committed to preparing competent and compassionate healthcare professionals who will achieve the DNP as their terminal degree in nursing for clinical practice. This handbook serves as a guide to the DNP program; it ensures clarity regarding the curriculum requirements and progression criteria for the DNP program. It is our hope that you will find the handbook helpful as you progress through the program.

On behalf of the faculty, staff, and administration, we wish you much success as you pursue your doctoral education with us through the DNP Program at UNC Charlotte. Our goal is for you to experience a supportive, innovative, and rich learning environment as you complete your degree and educational journey.

For general DNP program information, **please contact:**

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## General Information

This student handbook is designed for graduate students enrolled in the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program at the University of North Carolina Charlotte (UNC Charlotte). The DNP program provides baccalaureate and master's prepared nurses with opportunities for practice-based doctoral education. The DNP program is taught by the graduate nursing faculty as well as advanced practice nurses and leaders from the university and the community.

The DNP program has been developed to meet recommendations of the American Association of Colleges and Nurses (AACN), the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF), the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) and American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP).

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree offered by the UNC Charlotte prepares graduates to analyze systems of care and provide transformational leadership that will improve patient safety, quality of care, and implement evidence-based (translational), culturally competent care practices. Graduates from this program will be able to interpret and apply research findings to practice settings, determine and measure system and population outcomes, manage information systems, and use appropriate technology for health and risk communication. DNP graduates will have the skills and abilities to substantially contribute to system reform to achieve goals articulated by the National Academy of Medicine, the National Academy of Sciences, and the National Quality Forum.

The Philosophy, Mission, Core Values and Goals of the School of Nursing at UNC Charlotte can be found on the [School of Nursing website](#).

The baccalaureate degree program in nursing, master's degree program in nursing, post-graduate APRN certificate program in nursing, and the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program at UNC Charlotte are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) (<http://www.ccneaccreditation.org>). The Nurse Anesthesia concentration is also accredited by Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Programs (<https://www.coacrna.org>).

## Program Outcomes

Upon completion of the DNP program, graduates will:

- Analyze and integrate evidence from nursing science with evidence from other relevant scientific disciplines to form a scientific foundation for advanced practice in nursing.
- Apply clinical scholarship, scientific evidence, and analytical methods to improve health care outcomes.
- Develop and evaluate systems to enhance safety and quality of health care.

- Advocate and participate in collaborative interdisciplinary efforts to improve health outcomes at the practice/organization, community, state and national levels.
- Engage in person-centered healthcare and ethically sound advanced nursing practice.
- Demonstrate leadership in the improvement of patient outcomes and transformation of health care delivery.
- Directly manage complex health problems of clients or develop and implement organizational systems to facilitate access and navigation of the health care system.

## **DNP Core Competencies**

Students are expected to attain and integrate the Level 1 sub-competencies, Level 2 sub-competencies, and advanced specialty/role competencies into practice reflected in [The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education](#).

## **Other UNC Charlotte Handbooks**

[SON Student Handbook](#): Contains procedures for all students related to due process, progression requirements, etc.

*Carolinas Medical Center and Nurse Anesthesia DNP Handbook*: Contains procedures and expectations for students enrolled in the Carolinas Medical Center and UNC Charlotte Nurse Anesthesia DNP program.

## DNP Program Overview

The DNP Advisory Committee is composed of the UNC Charlotte DNP Program Coordinator, the Director of Graduate Nursing Programs at Atrium Health, two elected DNP program faculty members from each DNP concentration, a DNP student representative from each concentration, and the Associate Director of the Graduate Division and the SON Director as Ex-officio members.

Responsibilities of the Advisory Committee include:

1. Approvals of admission recommendations.
2. Recommendations for changes to courses and curriculum.
  - a. The Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the SON Graduate Curriculum committee.
  - b. Curricular changes are implemented per internal approval processes.
3. Student progression through the program.
  - a. DNP handbook with guidelines specific to DNP students.
  - b. DNP Scholarly Project guided by a DNP Scholarly Project Advisory Committee.
  - c. Approvals of completed DNP Scholarly Projects prior to submission to NinerCommons.
4. Recommendations for graduation.
5. Other program issues that may arise.

Curricular issues identified by the DNP Advisory Committee are considered and approved through the appropriate internal approval channel at UNC Charlotte.

## DNP Program Contact Persons

- Dr. Katherine Shue-McGuffin (704-687-7958 / [kdshue@charlotte.edu](mailto:kdshue@charlotte.edu)) – Doctor of Nursing Practice Program Coordinator, UNC Charlotte School of Nursing
- Dr. David Langford (704-687-7967 / [drlangfo@charlotte.edu](mailto:drlangfo@charlotte.edu)) - Associate Director of Graduate Nursing Programs, UNC Charlotte School of Nursing
- Dr. Susan McLennon (704-687-7974 / [smclenno@charlotte.edu](mailto:smclenno@charlotte.edu)) – Director of the School of Nursing, UNC Charlotte School of Nursing

## Curriculum Plan

**Post-Master's DNP:** The Post-Master's DNP program requires 42 post-master's graduate semester credit hours and completion of a total of 1,000 clinical hours (including 500 hours in the same clinical practice specialty from the MSN program). Applicants who completed fewer than 500 hours in their MSN program, and do not hold an approved national certification, will be expected to complete additional clinical hours in order to achieve the total of 1,000 for the DNP program.\* Approved national certifications include:

- ANCC or AANP National certification as a Nurse Practitioner in specialty
- AMCB certification as a Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)
- NBCRNA as a Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)
- AONE Certification in Executive Nursing Practice (CENP)
- ANCC Nurse Executive-Advanced (NEA-BC)

- ANCC Clinical Nurse Specialist in specialty
- ANCC Informatics Certification (NI-BC)
- CNC as a Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL)

Following the CCNE Standards for Accreditation of Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs (2024), the DNP program focuses on an active area of practice specialization within the discipline.

\*Students who are admitted to the Post-Master's DNP program with less than 500 clinical hours from their MSN, or who do not hold an active certification (listed above), will be required to enroll in a clinical elective course, NUDN 8999 (1-4 credits) to complete their clinical hours in addition to the program's 42 credit hours. The number of hours needed will be determined by the program coordinator following a gap analysis.

**Nurse Anesthesia DNP:** The Nurse Anesthesia Across the Lifespan is a post-baccalaureate DNP concentration requiring a BSN to apply. It provides students both the theory and clinical practice required to meet the educational requirements to take the national certifying examination upon graduation. The specialty in Nurse Anesthesia Across the Lifespan is offered in partnership with Carolinas Medical Center. Clinical experiences are offered at Atrium Health facilities in the Charlotte area. The program is 89 credit hours and includes a minimum of 2,000 clinical hours. It is full-time, campus-based, and can be completed in 9 semesters.

All DNP students are required to complete the curriculum that includes a sequence of courses as listed in the plan of study that follows and a DNP Scholarly Project.

**Doctorate of Nursing Practice Program—UNC Charlotte**  
**Program of Study: DNP Post-MSN Full-Time Admission (42 Semester Hours)**

FULL-TIME YEAR 1		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FALL Semester (8)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NUDN 8140</b> Foundations and Applications of Evidence Based Practice (3)</li> <li>• <b>NUDN 8150</b> Healthcare Program Evaluation and Quality (3)</li> <li>• <b>GRAD 8990</b> Academic Integrity (0) <b>Online 0-credit hour course required by the Graduate School</b></li> <li>• <b>NUDN 8441</b> Clinical Residency and Project Development I (2) <b>(Individual projects directed by faculty)</b></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMMERSION/ORIENTATION AT UNC CHARLOTTE</b>  <b>PROJECT TOPIC APPROVAL PRESENTATION</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPRING Semester (8)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NUDN 8145</b> Leadership and Project Planning (3)</li> <li>• <b>NUDN 8147</b> Applied Biostatistics (3)</li> <li>• <b>NUDN 8442</b> Clinical Residency and Project Development II (2) <b>(Individual projects directed by faculty)</b></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMMERSION/ORIENTATION AT UNC CHARLOTTE</b>  <b>PROJECT PROPOSAL PRESENTATION</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMER Semester @ UNCC (9)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NUDN 8202</b> Community Epidemiology (3)</li> <li>• <b>NUDN 8160</b> Global Health &amp; Social Justice (3)</li> <li>• <b>Elective:</b> Elective of choice (3)</li> </ul>
FULL-TIME YEAR 2		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FALL Semester (9)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NUDN 8220</b> Health Care Policy and Ethics (3)</li> <li>• <b>NUDN 8230</b> Economic &amp; Financial Aspects of Healthcare System (3)</li> <li>• <b>NUDN 8443</b> Clinical Residency and Project Development III (3) <b>(Individual projects directed by faculty)</b></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMMERSION/ORIENTATION AT UNC CHARLOTTE</b>  <b>IMPLEMENTATION DE BRIEF PRESENTATION</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPRING Semester (8)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NUDN 8260</b> Leadership, and Healthcare Systems (3)</li> <li>• <b>NUDN 8270</b> Technology for Communication and Transforming Healthcare (3)</li> <li>• <b>NUDN 8444</b> Clinical Residency and Project Development IV (2) <b>(Individual projects directed by faculty)</b></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMMERSION/ORIENTATION AT UNC CHARLOTTE</b>  <b>FINAL PROJECT DEFENSE</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMER Semester</b></p> <p>Summer to complete elective and/or finish project.</p>



**Doctorate of Nursing Practice Program—UNC Charlotte**  
**Program of Study: DNP Post-MSN Part-Time Admission (42 Semester Hours)**

PART-TIME YEAR 1		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FALL Semester (6)</b></p> <p><b>NUDN 8140</b> Foundations and Applications of Evidence Based Practice (3)</p> <p><b>NUDN 8150</b> Healthcare Program Evaluation and Quality (3)</p> <p><b>GRAD 8990</b> (0) Academic Integrity <b>0-credit hour course taught by Graduate School</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMMERSION ORIENTATION AT UNC CHARLOTTE</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPRING Semester (6)</b></p> <p><b>NUDN 8145</b> Leadership and Project Planning (3)</p> <p><b>NUDN 8147</b> Applied Biostatistics (3)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMMERSION ORIENTATION AT UNC CHARLOTTE</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMER Semester (3)</b></p> <p><b>NUDN 8202</b> Community Epidemiology (3)</p>
PART-TIME YEAR 2		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FALL Semester (5)</b></p> <p><b>NUDN 8441</b> Clinical Residency and Project Development I (2) <b>(Individual projects directed by faculty)</b></p> <p><b>NUDN 8230</b> Economic &amp; Financial Aspects of Healthcare System (3)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMMERSION ORIENTATION AT UNC CHARLOTTE – PROJECT TOPIC APPROVAL PRESENTATION</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPRING Semester (5)</b></p> <p><b>NUDN 8442</b> Clinical Residency and Project Development II (2) <b>(Individual projects directed by faculty)</b></p> <p><b>NUDN 8260</b> Leadership and Healthcare Systems (3)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMMERSION ORIENTATION AT UNC CHARLOTTE – PROJECT PROPOSAL PRESENTATION</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMER Semester (6)</b></p> <p><b>NUDN 8160</b> Global Health &amp; Social Justice (3)</p> <p><b>Elective:</b> Elective of choice (3)</p>
PART-TIME YEAR 3		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FALL Semester (6)</b></p> <p><b>NUDN 8220</b> Health Care Policy &amp; Ethics (3)</p> <p><b>NUDN 8443</b> Clinical Residency and Project Development III (3) <b>(Individual projects directed by faculty)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMMERSION ORIENTATION AT UNC CHARLOTTE – IMPLEMENTATION DE BRIEF PRESENTATION</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPRING Semester (5)</b></p> <p><b>NUDN 8270</b> Technology for Communication and Transforming Healthcare (3)</p> <p><b>NUDN 8444</b> Clinical Residency and Project Development IV (2) <b>(Individual projects directed by faculty)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IMMERSION ORIENTATION AT UNC CHARLOTTE – PROJECT FINAL DEFENSE</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMER Semester</b></p> <p>Completion of elective and/or finish project if needed.</p>

**Carolinas Medical Center  
Nurse Anesthesia Program/UNCC  
Academic and Clinical Schedule DNP**

Year One (38)		
Summer 1 (9)	Fall 1 (13)	Spring 1 (16)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STAT 6127 Introduction to Biostatistics (3)</li> <li>• NUDN 8270 Technology for Communication and Transforming HealthCare (3)</li> <li>• NUDN 8202 Community Epidemiology (3)</li> <li>• GRAD 8990 Academic Integrity (0)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NUAN 8156 Applied Physics and Chemistry (3)</li> <li>• NURS 6273 Advanced Human Physiology (3)</li> <li>• NUAN 8155 Advanced Pharmacology of Anesthetic Agents (4)</li> <li>• NUAN 8161 Principles of Nurse Anesthesia I (3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NURS 6230 Advanced Health Assessment (3)</li> <li>• NURS 6430 Advanced Health Assessment Practicum (1)</li> <li>• NUDN 8302 NUAN Responsible Conduct of Research (2)</li> <li>• NUAN 8157 Advanced Pathophysiology in Nurse Anesthesia I (3)</li> <li>• NUAN 8154 Advanced Pharmacology of Non-Anesthetic Agents (4)</li> <li>• NUAN 8162 Principles of Nurse Anesthesia II (3)</li> </ul>
Year Two (28)		
Summer 2 (7)	Fall 2 (12)	Spring 2 (9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NUAN 8158 Advanced Pathophysiology in Nurse Anesthesia II (3)</li> <li>• *NUAN 8484 Clinical Residency I (1)</li> <li>• NUAN 8163 Principles of Nurse Anesthesia III (3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NUDN 8145 Leadership and Project Planning (3)</li> <li>• NUDN 8140 Foundations and Applications of Evidence Based Practice (3)</li> <li>• NUAN 8164 Principles of Nurse Anesthesia IV (3)</li> <li>• *NUAN 8485 Clinical Residency II (2)</li> <li>• NUDN 8641 Project Development I (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *NUAN 8486 Clinical Residency III (4)</li> <li>• NUDN 8230 Economic and Financial Aspects of the Healthcare System (3)</li> <li>• NUDN 8642 Project Development II (2)</li> </ul>
Year Three (23)		
Summer 3 (5)	Fall 3 (9)	Spring 3 (9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *NUAN 8487 Clinical Residency IV (4)</li> <li>• NUDN 8643 Project Development III (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NUDN 8220 Healthcare Policy and Ethics (3)</li> <li>• *NUAN 8488 Clinical Residency V (4)</li> <li>• NUDN 8644 Project Development IV (2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NUAN 8172 Nurse Anesthesia Review (2)</li> <li>• NUAN 8171 Professional Aspects (3)</li> <li>• *NUAN 8489 Clinical Residency VI (4)</li> </ul>

TOTAL NUDN/NURS/GRAD CREDITS (EXCLUDES PROJECT) 30

TOTAL CLINICAL MAJOR CREDITS 53

TOTAL PROJECT CREDITS 6

TOTAL ALL CREDIT HOURS 89

## Student Enrollment Status

**Full-time enrollment** status for the DNP program at UNC Charlotte School of Nursing is defined as taking a minimum of 8-9 semester credits for fall and spring semester and a minimum of 6 semester credits for summer semester, except when fewer credits are needed for graduation.

**Part-time enrollment** status for the DNP program at UNC Charlotte School of Nursing is defined as taking a minimum of 5-6 semester credits for fall and spring semester and a minimum of 3 semester credits for summer semester, except when fewer credits are needed for graduation.

The Post-Master's DNP program of study for full-time students is a minimum of 2 years (5 semesters). The program of study for part-time students is a minimum of 3 years (8 semesters). The Post-Master's DNP is a distance-based program. The Nurse Anesthesia DNP program of study is full-time, campus-based, and can be completed in 9 semesters.

Maximum time allowed to complete the DNP degree is 6 years.

## Student Advisement

Each student will be assigned an advisor on admission. The advisor is to mentor the student and provide advice and academic support as needed to complete the program of study plan. The courses are designed to be taken in a sequence to support the terminal DNP Scholarly Project. It is important **not** to deviate from the plan of study. Any deviation from the plan of study may prolong graduation from the program. The scholarly project must be successfully completed prior to graduation. Delays in project implementation, analysis, or presentation may add additional semesters to your plan of study. Plans of study should be reviewed with your academic advisor every semester to ensure accurate enrollment in courses.

## **Overview of Clinical Residency Requirement & Scholarly Project Development Process**

All DNP students will meet the requirements for residency and/or project development in the four courses titled: Clinical Residency I and Project Development I, II, III, & IV (NUDN 8441-8444; NUDN 8641-8644) and through the DNP Scholarly Project Advisory Committee approval of the Final Scholarly Project Defense.

Student learning opportunities during each Clinical Residency and Project Development course are designed to enrich the students' knowledge and practical skill foundations in areas that will facilitate development and completion of the DNP Scholarly Project.

### **A. Course Requirements for Clinical Residency – Post-Master's DNP ONLY:**

The residency of each Clinical Residency and Project Development course is comprised of four components: clinical hours, clinical learning contract, reflective discussions, and scholarly activities. A brief description of each component follows.

#### **1. Clinical Hours**

The clinical hours are completed during the four residency courses and are designed to facilitate student clinical learning specific to the student's primary area of interest and consistent with the DNP Essentials and specialty competencies. These experiences include in-depth work with experts in nursing, as well as other disciplines, and systematically provide meaningful student engagement within practice environments for feedback and reflection. Student learning opportunities are designed to enrich the student's knowledge and practical skill foundations in areas that will facilitate achievement of the DNP Scholarly Project. All DNP Projects include:

- Focus on a change that impacts healthcare outcomes either through direct or indirect care.
- Have systems (micro-, meso-, or macro- level) or population/aggregate focus.
- Demonstrate implementation in the appropriate arena or area of practice.
- Include a plan for sustainability (e.g. financial, systems or political realities, not only theoretical abstractions).
- Include an evaluation of processes and/or outcomes (formative or summative). DNP Projects should be designed so that processes and/or outcomes will be evaluated to guide practice and policy. Clinical significance is as important in guiding practice as statistical significance is in evaluating research.
- Provide a foundation for future practice scholarship

For post-master's DNP students, a minimum of 540 academically supervised hours will be required in the DNP Scholarly Project and Clinical residency courses. Students may choose their current place of employment as their clinical site with the intention of enhancing their clinical role. Hours obtained at the student's place of employment are separate from regular work hours. Proficiency may be acquired through a variety of methods (case studies, practice contact hours, completing specified procedures,

demonstrating experiential competencies, or a combination of these elements) and according to the agreed upon Clinical Learning Contract created in the Clinical Residency courses with the course faculty and clinical expert. Clinical learning contracts will be approved by clinical experts and course faculty in the Clinical Residency and Project Development courses I-IV.

Students who have not earned 500 clinical hours upon entry in the program, and who do not hold an approved national certification, will be required to earn additional clinical hours through a variable credit hour clinical elective course (NUDN 8999).

## **2. Clinical Learning Contract**

Each student will develop an individualized DNP Learning Contract in collaboration with the course faculty and clinical expert during each residency course (See the DNP Clinical Scholarly Project Guidelines).

The purpose of the clinical learning contract in each residency course is to increase the student's exposure to and involvement in doctoral level clinical practice under the direction of a clinical expert. The student is responsible for identifying and proposing a collaborative arrangement with a clinical expert who has practice expertise or works in a clinical setting of interest. Students may obtain additional affiliation agreements and clinical requirements according to the School of Nursing policies, as well as agency requirements, prior to beginning a clinical residency experience. Input from the clinical expert is important as the contract is developed. The student and clinical expert must establish mutually agreed upon objectives and evaluation criteria. The specific objectives, requirements, and evaluation criteria will depend on the practice focus in which the student is participating, the student's level of education, and the student's educational needs. The Clinical Learning Contract will be approved by course faculty in Clinical Residency and Project Development courses I, II, III & IV. As part of the clinical contract, clinical hours must be documented and submitted on the DNP Residency/Scholarly Project Log. These two items must be 1) uploaded to the DNP online learning platform (Canvas) and 2) submitted to the UNC Charlotte DNP Program Coordinator prior to the end of the semester. A student will not be able to continue to matriculate through the DNP program unless the UNC Charlotte DNP Program Coordinator acknowledges having received these two completed items. A brief description of how the objectives were met at the end of the residency should also be included on the Learning Contract.

Although the clinical expert provides input on student performance, **faculty are responsible for determining final grades of all DNP students.**

## **3. Reflective Learning**

All students participate in reflective learning as a means of integrating clinical leadership and inquiry into practice. Students synthesize what has been learned and reflect upon how the course content was integrated into their practice.

Formal, professional reflection allows the student to integrate ethics, health policy, collaboration and health information technology. This allows them to synthesize what has been learned. Students will reflect back on clinical cases, common diagnoses, and population concerns and discuss how ethics were considered, how informatics were used with team members, patients and families, how health policy and politics were considered, and how health disparities were impacted in those situations. Students will outline how they used their leadership skills in those situations, demonstrating what was learned about their work, their strengths, and what more they could bring to the situation. These reflective narratives will be embedded in course discussions.

#### **4. Scholarly Activities**

Students participate in multiple academic and scholarly activities. For example, students are expected to attend conferences, seminars, journal club, grand rounds, morbidity and mortality meetings, patient conferences, practice-based lectures, interdisciplinary committees, quality improvement committees and any other opportunities available at their site. In addition, students are required to be involved and contribute to interdisciplinary initiatives. The scholarly activities should support the objectives in the Clinical Learning Contract. Students will evaluate their participation in the Clinical Learning Contract.

Students must submit documentation of fulfillment of DNP competencies in the online learning platform for each clinical residency and project development course, including documentation of practice hours, clinical contracts, and other activities related to DNP competencies.

### **B. Course Requirements for Clinical Residency – Nurse Anesthesia DNP**

Clinical Residency hours are managed by the nurse anesthesia faculty at CMC in conjunction with the identified Clinical Residency courses in order to meet the case, contact, and procedural requirements for certification. Students account for their hours and cases through the established policies of the Nurse Anesthesia clinical program offered at CMC and outlined in the CMC/UNCC Nurse Anesthesia Student Handbook.

### **C. Requirements and Process for DNP Scholarly Project Development & Completion**

The DNP Scholarly Project is a project that brings together the practice and scholarship aspects of the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree. It is designed to address complex practice issues that affect groups of patients, health care organizations, or health care systems utilizing informatics, technology, and in-depth knowledge of the clinical and behavioral sciences. The clinical scholarship required in the DNP Scholarly Project reflects mastery and competency in the student's area of expertise.

DNP Scholarly Projects are developed and completed through a 4-course series spanning four semesters. The course faculty serves as the student(s) project chair. DNP Scholarly Projects may be proposed as individual projects or small groups where each

member of the project group contributes an independent piece of the larger group project. The doctoral projects focus on improving clinical practice and are done in conjunction with a clinical site(s). Projects are evaluated by an advisory committee that includes the chair, an expert from the clinical site, and one additional full-time faculty member academically prepared in the program's specialty focus. The clinical expert's role is to assist the student in accessing the necessary clinical site resources, mentoring the student in the clinical area, and providing feedback to the chair and student regarding the student's project. The chair is responsible for directing the students' progress toward completion of the project and evaluating the project outcome in consultation with the advisory committee. Students work with their chair to identify advisory committee members in the second year of the Nurse Anesthesia DNP program and in the first year of the Post-Master's DNP program.

Students identify a clinical practice problem in collaboration with the chair and advisory committee, propose a workplan for a quality improvement project related to the clinical problem, implement the project, and disseminate the outcome(s). If the project requires approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), a protocol application must be submitted for approval prior to implementing the project. Defense of the Scholarly Project is conducted in a final oral examination that is open to members of the University community along with a written project outcomes report. The oral examination is met through presenting the project to an audience, which can include a verbal or poster presentation to a professional meeting, a clinical organization, or to an audience of students and faculty. The written report will conform to the [SQUIRE guidelines](#) for reporting quality improvement initiatives. The chair, with input from the advisory committee, provides feedback on the quality improvement workplan and evaluates the final project presentation. After successful completion, a copy of the written report will be submitted to Atkins Library's NinerCommons. The Project Completion Form is submitted to the Graduate School at the completion of the DNP Scholarly Project.

Development of the DNP Scholarly Project is facilitated through each of the Clinical Residency/Project Development courses. The actual DNP project is evaluated by the DNP Scholarly Project Advisory Committee and culminates in a scholarly presentation and submission to NinerCommons. A dissemination activity such as presenting a poster at a regional or national conference is expected upon completion of the project. Post-Master's DNP students may choose to work in private practices, clinics, inpatient units, hospital systems, and other institutions and communities; Nurse Anesthesia students will use Atrium Health facilities in the assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the DNP Scholarly Project. The student, the practice setting, and the student's DNP Scholarly Project Advisory Committee must jointly agree upon the scholarly initiative. The student must complete any required IRB approvals prior to implementing the project. A brief description of the Project Development course activities facilitating the DNP Scholarly Project follows.

- **Clinical Residency I and Project Development I:**
  - Topic development (Problem and Significance)
  - PICOT question (Clinical question)
  - Needs Assessment (Literature Review and Rationale)
  - Specific Aims (Measurable objectives and expected outcomes)
- **Clinical Residency II and Project Development II:**
  - Project proposal development
  - Project design
  - Data collection procedures
  - Authorship project agreement\*
  - IRB process – CITI Training
- **Clinical Residency III and Project Development III:**
  - Project implementation
  - Data analysis
  - DNP role development
- **Clinical Residency IV and Project Development IV:**
  - Finalizing the scholarly project
  - Dissemination of information including manuscript and public presentations

\*It is best practice in student milestone projects such as Scholarly Projects to discuss authorship order and responsibilities in advance of project completion. This discussion should occur in Clinical Residency I/Project Development I and/or Clinical Residency II/Project Development II courses. Guidelines and Resources can be found at <https://www.authorshipproject.org/>.

## **B. Sites for Clinical Residency/Project Development**

**Post-Master's:** Students are responsible for securing a site for their Clinical Residency and DNP Project development. The site must be approved by the faculty teaching the Clinical Residency and Project Development I course and DNP Coordinator. A current site of employment, or another site, may be used when the project identified is not within the current job duties and is an expansion of their clinical role. Hours obtained at the student's place of employment are separate from regular work hours.

For students not using their workplace, it is estimated that 3-6 months may be required to secure the appropriate contractual agreement to use the site for the DNP Scholarly Project; therefore, students are encouraged to begin securing a site in the first semester of the program. Students may not begin their project until a site agreement has been signed.

**Nurse Anesthesia:** The specialty in Nurse Anesthesia Across the Lifespan is offered in partnership with Atrium Health. Students' clinical experiences are offered at Atrium Health facilities in the Charlotte area. As part of the partnership, clinically relevant practice issues



are identified by the Anesthesia Department at Carolinas Medical Center and presented to students. Students select one of the topics and develop a Scholarly Project in groups of two or three.

## **DNP Scholarly Project Advisory Committee**

The DNP Scholarly Project Advisory Committee monitors the progression of the student through the project process. The student(s) and chair will meet throughout each semester. Additional information regarding the Project Chair and Committee are located in the DNP Scholarly Project Guidelines.

All students must have an advisory committee to provide input and evaluate their doctoral scholarly project. This committee includes the chair, an expert from the clinical site, and one additional full-time faculty member academically prepared in the program's specialty focus. Faculty serving on the advisory committee must hold terminal degrees and be eligible to be appointed as Regular or Associate members of the Graduate Faculty. The Chair must be a full-time faculty member within the doctoral program. The committee for doctoral students is indicated on the Appointment of Professional Advisory Committee form (available online at the Graduate School's website).

It is expected that all DNP Scholarly Project Advisory Committee members will be present for the Scholarly Project final defense. If there is an exceptional case in which a committee member needs to participate in the defense from a remote location, the student and all committee members must agree prior to the defense. Additionally, the student must ensure that the defense is open to the public.

The Committee is responsible for:

- Guiding the student through the project planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Determining the successful completion of the project requirements. Failure to successfully complete the DNP scholarly project more than twice will result in termination from the program.

The student is responsible for obtaining all signatures on the [Appointment of DNP Scholarly Project Advisory Committee form](#).

## **Steps and Timeline for Project Completion and Work with Committee**

Each semester students are expected to work with their committee to reach certain milestones in completing their Scholarly Project in order to graduate on time. The milestones are as follows:

- Clinical Residency I and Project Development I
  - Selection of committee members (submission to Graduate School)
  - Topic Approval by chair and committee
- Clinical Residency II and Project Development II
  - Presentation of Scholarly Project Proposal (submission to Graduate School)

- Summer Semester (Between Clinical Residency/Project Development II and III)
  - IRB preparation and submission
- Clinical Residency III and Project Development III
  - Project implementation
- Clinical Residency IV and Project Development IV
  - Presentation of Scholarly Project
  - Submission of Completion of Scholarly Project form to Graduate School (see academic calendar for submission deadlines)
  - Project dissemination (submission of written project to NinerCommons and professional presentation of project)

Explanation of the steps:

1. Topic Approval: Students submit an oral and written presentation to the DNP project Chair and Advisory Committee for approval and feasibility of their topic. Students must prepare a powerpoint presentation describing the key components of the project topic at the end of the first semester. If a student fails to pass the oral presentation, the committee and the student will work to refine the topic.
2. Presentation and Approval of Project Proposal: Students submit a written project proposal to their committee in advance of an oral presentation. Students make a formal presentation to their committee of their scholarly project proposal. Upon a successful proposal defense, students will complete the Proposal Defense Report for Scholarly Project. A student or student group is allowed a second attempt to present their implementation plan to the committee if they are unsuccessful the first time. Failing the presentation on the second attempt will result in dismissal from the program.
3. IRB Approval: The student will work with their chair to secure IRB approval from the appropriate institutions during Clinical Residency II and Project Development II and the following summer semester. Typically, IRB approval at the institution where the project will occur is the first step, followed by approval at UNC Charlotte. The sequence differs for the Nurse Anesthesia students.
4. Presentation and Approval of Scholarly Project: Students submit their final written project to their committee 3 weeks in advance of an oral presentation. Students make a formal public presentation to their committee and invited guests of their scholarly project. Following a successful defense, students will complete the Final Defense Report for Scholarly Project form. A student or student group is allowed a second attempt to present their final project to the committee if they are unsuccessful the first time. Failing the final presentation on the second attempt will result in dismissal from the program.

## Multiple Author Policy

The Multiple Authorship policy applies directly to the School's DNP program and the requirement that students conduct a scholarly quality improvement project as part of their DNP curriculum:

- I. Group projects, with the goal of individual student projects derived from the common clinical question, will share the following commonalities:
  - A. At least two-interrelated scholarly, quality improvement projects that share a common clinical question, literature review, and design, and where each member of the group is focused on a smaller part of the larger project such as when the project involves multiple sites, different populations, etc.
  - B. The smaller individual projects are expected to stand alone, but together complement one another in addressing the larger clinical question.
  - C. Students are under the direction of faculty or a faculty committee in meeting the objectives of the project. Students contribute equally to the shared elements of project conception, design, and implementation related to the larger clinical question, but conduct independent work on their part of data collection, data analysis/interpretation, recommendations, and dissemination of the final project manuscript and oral presentation.
- II. As the students author papers resulting from their work derived from the larger collaborative group, there will be shared written materials across all group members' individual work.
  - A. The citation and order of authors on a single paper will be determined by the student authors and faculty/committee members in compliance with University Policy [University Policy 318](#). Students will receive equal credit on the project for their contribution regardless of author order.
  - B. As a result of having derived individual projects from a common clinical question and its common background/significance, statement of the problem, literature review, and project design, there may be large portions of shared written material across each group member's individual project when they submit their individual written project for review.
  - C. All authors of the written Scholarly Projects, whether individual or group, are responsible for properly citing others' work in their project(s). This includes referencing the larger project and its group members.

Consistent with the policy of the graduate school that dissertations and scholarly projects must be reviewed by plagiarism software, it is the responsibility of the faculty mentoring/chairing student work to review with the student any conflicts found and assess, verify, and either approve or suggest changes in the document.

It is best practice in student milestone projects such as Scholarly Projects to discuss authorship order and responsibilities in advance of project completion. This discussion should occur in

Clinical Residency I/Project Development I and/or Clinical Residency II/Project Development II courses. Guidelines and Resources can be found at <https://www.authorshipproject.org/>.

## **IRB Approval**

Research and Scholarship conducted at UNC Charlotte is subject to a wide range of federal and state policies established to ensure ethical conduct in research. The [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) ensures respect, fairness, and safety in human subjects' research. DNP Scholarly Projects must be submitted to the IRB at the clinical site as well as UNC Charlotte for review and approval prior to beginning any project. Only the agency's official IRB can determine the status of a proposed project.

## **Degree Completion and Graduation**

To graduate from the DNP program, the student must successfully complete the coursework, meet the clinical hour requirement, implement, and present a scholarly project. Faculty is responsible for determining final grades of all DNP students. Students should submit the Online Graduation Application at the beginning of the term in which they anticipate defending their scholarly project. Adherence to Graduate School deadlines is expected. Degree requirements are completed when students successfully defend their Scholarly Project, submit the signed completion form to the graduate school, and upload the final copy of their project to NinerCommons. Students are encouraged to review their individual DegreeWorks audit to ensure they have met all graduation requirements. Students participate in the commencement ceremony at the end of the term in which they complete their degree.

## **Use of Degree Credentials**

There is no degree credential for doctoral candidacy. Although sometimes used, the DNP(c) designation is not an accepted convention to indicate doctoral candidacy. A doctoral candidate should use the degree initials that have been earned. It is appropriate to state that one is a doctoral candidate in text form, e.g., in the biographical information that accompanies a published article. It is acceptable to use the DNP credentials only after one has successfully completed the degree.

## **Time Limits for Degree Completion**

All requirements for a professional doctoral degree (DNP) must be completed within six (6) calendar years, beginning with the student's first term in the program. The time limit cannot be paused, even if the student takes an approved leave of absence. No course older than six years may be applied towards a professional doctoral degree (including transfer credit). Any course that exceeds this limit must be retaken. Failure to adhere to the time limit may result in the termination of a student's enrollment.

The Graduate School may consider requests for a single extension of one (1) year in cases with rare, extenuating circumstances. In such cases, the student and graduate program must provide a signed timeline for program completion that does not exceed one year. Failure to adhere to the

approved timeline for completion will result in automatic termination of the student's enrollment for a lack of satisfactory academic progress. Multiple extensions will not be approved.

## **Amount of Transfer Credit Accepted**

DNP students may transfer up to 30% of the required graduate program's credit hours (with a grade of B or better) with approval of the DNP Program Coordinator and the Graduate School. Students may not transfer credits that were used in completion of another degree. No course being transferred may be older than 6 years at the time of graduation.

**Financial Aid:** Contact UNC Charlotte's [financial aid office](#) for information.

## **Grades Required**

In compliance with Graduate School Policy graduate students are subject to academic suspension under the following conditions. An accumulation of three marginal C grades in any graduate course, has a GPA less than 3.0, or makes a grade of U or N in any graduate course.

The DNP program's academic suspension policy is as follows:

- 3 grades of C or 1 grade of U or N in NUDN courses
- No C grades in NUAN courses (Nurse Anesthesia concentration)
- Must maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher throughout the program

## **Grading and Appeal Policies**

Please refer to UNC Charlotte's [Graduate Catalog](#) for a complete description of grading and appeal policies.

**Grading Scale:** The following scale will be used for grading all nursing course-related activities and deriving the final course grade. Please see the Nurse Anesthesia Student Handbook for the grading scale of courses offered at Carolina Medical Center.

A	90-100%
B	80-89.9%
C	70-79.9%
U	≤ 69.9%

## **Student Complaints**

Student issues or complaints regarding the program that are not related to grades, should be taken to the Program Coordinator at UNC Charlotte following the procedure in the SON Undergraduate and Graduate Student Handbook. Issues that cannot be resolved at the level of the Program Coordinator will be taken to the Director of the SON.

For UNC Charlotte the process for filing a grievance is in the [UNC Charlotte CHHS Handbook](#).

## DNP Program Instructional Technology Requirements

Below are the minimum instructional technology requirements adopted for this program. In order to be successful in completing the DNP courses students need a solid, basic set of computer skills. The skills needed include, but are not limited to:

- Basic skills in using a word processor and perform tasks such as cutting and pasting and creating presentations in presentation software
- Saving your files in several different formats and locations
- Uploading files in online applications
- Downloading and installing software
- Internet skills should include, using email and file attachments, using your browser effectively, making bookmarks, chatting and using search functions. This is a hybrid program. A computer with the software and hardware listed on the IT form are required to attend this program. It is **required** that you have a laptop with the listed requirements on the IT form and bring it to orientation and classes.

Each student is expected to have Internet access and access to a laptop computer with web cam and microphone capability and the following software. **Software is available from UNC Charlotte for students without charge.**

- Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint, Excel)
- SPSS
- Adobe Reader (free download at <http://get.adobe.com/reader>)
- Endnote (optional)

## Clinical and Health Requirements

Clinical requirements are considered met for students conducting their project at their workplace. For students not using their workplace for the project, they are required to follow the SON policies below:

University: Immunizations

School of Nursing: Clinical Agency Mandates