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Program Information

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

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

Purpose

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

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

Program Objectives

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

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

Comparison of the DNP and PhD Program

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

The DNP is a practice degree that prepares nurses at the highest level of specialty nursing practice competence. The focus of the DNP program is primarily on the promotion evidence-based nursing practice in a variety of settings. Students who want to pursue the highest level of expertise in a nursing specialty practice area should consider this degree.

Curriculum Overview

The DNP program has entry points for students with an MSN or BSN degree. DNP students in the MSN track already have a master’s degree in a nursing specialty area from a college or university accredited by either the National League of Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) AND hold certification, where relevant, or are eligible for certification in an advanced nursing specialty area. The MSN-DNP program of study requires a minimum of 39 credits, as follows:

Course Format
Face-to-face didactic classes are scheduled in an executive format, with classes meeting at the beginning and end of each term, and on a monthly basis within the term. In addition, each course involves online class sessions. Some instructors may also add synchronous class sessions to accompany online learning during the term.

Core Courses
All students take 18 credits of core courses, designed to emphasize competencies consistent with AACN Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice. These core courses provide the foundation for the competencies required of all DNP graduates and prepare them for effective leadership at the highest level of evidence based practice.

Cognates
In collaboration with their advisor, students choose six credits of relevant cognate graduate courses (at the 5000 level or above) to add depth and breadth to their nursing specialty focus.
These credits may be chosen from within the School of Nursing or from a number of interdisciplinary programs and courses throughout the University of Virginia, including those offered by Law, Medicine, Engineering, and the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences (GSAS). This allows students to take optimal advantage of the richness and diversity of opportunities afforded by UVA. The purpose of cognate courses is to allow students to gain depth and breadth of knowledge related to their nursing specialty area and that supports their Capstone Project.

Students may transfer courses from other universities and should complete a Course Transfer Form (http://nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/). Previously taken graduate-level courses may be considered, but should have been completed within 5 years from the time the student is admitted to the program, cannot have counted for another degree (e.g., cannot fulfill the requirements for MSN), and should be clearly related to the Capstone Project. Students may transfer up to 12 credits from other colleges or universities. Cognates should be taken prior to (or concurrent with) the Capstone Project proposal defense.

To determine cognates, students should first consult with advisors for recommendations. Possible cognates include:

- UVA offerings in other schools or departments, such as the Department of Public Health Sciences or Curry School of Education for students who can come to Grounds once a week. As noted, we encourage students to take advantage of the wide-ranging course offerings at UVA.

- For students living at a distance from UVA, this recommendation may not be feasible. Instead, students may seek graduate-level courses in universities near their home location, including other states or countries, if there are courses that would support their Capstone endeavor. For example, some other schools have DNP programs that offer online courses. The quality of the course/school should be a consideration, and students should work with their advisor in evaluating courses from other schools. Advisor approval is necessary for cognate courses, including those transferred in from other institutions.

- Students may develop an independent study in collaboration with a faculty member to work on an area that supports their Capstone Project.

- Students planning to assume faculty roles are encouraged to take educational courses as electives for additional credit.

- A list of cognate courses suggested by other DNP students can be found on the DNP Student Collab site.

**Practica**

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

**Capstone Project**
The DNP program culminates in the successful completion of a 6 credit Capstone Project. This project is conceptualized in the early stages of the program and continues throughout the program. The Capstone Project is designed by the student in collaboration with a three-member committee and must be a significant, evidence-based contribution to nursing practice and be suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed, practice-focused nursing journal. Examples include: program needs assessment, evidence-based program development, evaluation of an existing program, development of an assessment or therapeutic protocol, or a cost/benefit analysis of program models. Through this scholarly project, students are intended to demonstrate synthesis of scientific knowledge in their specialty practice area, and contribute to existing nursing knowledge. Additional information is provided under Completion of DNP Degree and Capstone Guidelines below.
## MSN-DNP CURRICULUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Prerequisites</th>
<th>Term Offered</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8610</td>
<td>Health Promotion &amp; Health Behavior Research</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall, Summer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8620</td>
<td>Concepts &amp; Methods in Health Systems Research</td>
<td>GNUR 8660</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8640</td>
<td>Nursing Ethics for Advanced Practice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8630</td>
<td>Culture and Health</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8660</td>
<td>Evidence-based Practice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8650</td>
<td>Managing Information Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8430</td>
<td>Capstone Proposal Writing Seminar</td>
<td>GNUR 9610</td>
<td>Fall, Spring</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total: 18**

### Cognate Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognate 1*</th>
<th>Cognate 2*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 8001</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Courses selected to add depth and breadth to the student’s mastery of the chosen specialty area.*

**Total: 6**

### Clinical Practica

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 9610</td>
<td>DNP Practicum I**</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 9620</td>
<td>DNP Practicum II**</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Two individualized to achieve 500 hrs. of supervised clinical practice**

**Total: 10**

### Capstone Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GNUR 9991</td>
<td>*DNP Capstone Project</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total: 6**

**TOTAL DNP PROGRAM CREDITS = 39**

*Two or more semesters are typically required to complete the Capstone Project*
# Recommended Program of Study

## Full-Time Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall Credits</th>
<th>Spring Credits</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall Credits</th>
<th>Spring Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GNUR 8650</strong>: Managing Information Technology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>GNUR 8660</strong>: Evidence-Based Practice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>GNUR 9610</strong>: DNP Practicum I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GNUR 8610</strong>: Health Promotion &amp; Health Behavior Research</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>GNUR 8620</strong>: Concepts &amp; Methods in Health Systems Research</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer</strong></td>
<td><strong>GNUR 8630</strong>: Culture &amp; Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cognate Course</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total DNP Program Credits = 39**

## Part-Time Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall Credits</th>
<th>Spring Credits</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall Credits</th>
<th>Spring Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GNUR 8650</strong>: Managing Information Technology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>GNUR 8660</strong>: Evidence-Based Practice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>GNUR 9610</strong>: DNP Practicum I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GNUR 8660</strong>: Evidence-Based Practice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>GNUR 8620</strong>: Concepts &amp; Methods in Health Systems Research</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summer</strong></td>
<td><strong>GNUR 8630</strong>: Culture &amp; Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total DNP Program Credits = 39**

*Each student must work with their advisor to determine an individualized optimal sequence of courses and practica

** Two or more semesters are typically required to complete the Capstone Project*
Practica Guidelines

Focus of Clinical/Practice Hours in the DNP Program
Beyond the MSN, clinical practice experiences at the DNP level expand the student’s practice to DNP level expectations. All students will be expected to complete a minimum of 500 practice hours at the DNP level with an identified clinical or content expert. Particular areas of focus for these practice experiences include:

1. Translation of research evidence into practice, including the complexities of motivating and achieving sustainable practice changes and staff behaviors in clinical environments.

2. Systems leadership for improving patient and healthcare outcomes.

3. Specific DNP competencies that the student may lack or has yet to develop. Students are encouraged to review the DNP Essentials document and identify specific competencies in their practices that they would like to strengthen through their clinical hour requirements.

4. Development of skills that support successful completion of the student’s Capstone Project.

Students work out the details of the hours needed for Practicum I (GNUR 9610) and Practicum II (GNUR 9620) in collaboration with their Practicum Supervisor (usually but not necessarily the Academic Advisor) and the Practicum course professor. Students may fulfill these clinical requirements in their own work settings, through arrangements with a local clinical or content expert. It may be helpful to schedule a joint meeting of the Practicum Supervisor, student, and clinical or content expert early in each Practicum course to clarify the student’s learning objectives and plan for student clinical hours.

Guidelines and Policy for Clinical or Content Experts and Clinical Contracts
Students may not begin any Practicum activities until an approved clinical contract with the healthcare facility is in place. Students should to the following:

1. **Identify a clinical or content expert** in the student’s place of practice. The clinical or content expert should be doctoral-prepared (if possible), an expert in the student’s field, willing to be the student’s clinical or content expert, and agree to write an evaluative letter at the end of each Practicum.

2. **Insure that a contract with the facility is in place.** Check our current list of Clinical Site Contracts to see if we have an existing contract with your facility. Note: if your site is part of a larger, corporate organization (e.g., Sentara Health Care), search by that organization’s name, not the specific facility name or city. If you wish to work with an individual provider or a facility with which we do not have a contract, complete a Clinical Contract Request Form (website above) and notify Devonia Love.
(dnc6r@virginia.edu) who will begin the contract negotiation. Note: This process takes from 6 – 8 weeks so you should begin your search long before your Practicum begins.

3. Whether you select a currently contracted facility or initiate a new contract, you are responsible for reading the contract, abiding by it, and completing and submitting any requisite forms.

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

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

General Guidelines for DNP Practica
- Practica hours may be done at the student’s job site.
- Students may receive pay for the work done to satisfy practica requirements, but the practica work must go beyond the student’s current work responsibilities.
- Practica work must be approved by a clinical or content expert in the student’s clinical or specialty area.
- The student must document a minimum of 500 approved clinical/practice hours.
- Students must develop individual objectives for their practica experiences in collaboration with their Practicum Supervisor.
- Students must document meeting these objectives as well as the Practica course objectives.
- Credits cannot be double-counted towards different degrees (e.g., MSN and DNP).
- Practica courses have a coordinating course professor and each student has a Practicum Supervisor.
- Practica may be registered for variable credit. That is, a student can register for one or more credits up to 5 (for Practicum I) or 4 (for Practicum II) total credits during the course of their studies.
  - Practicum I is a prerequisite for Practicum II and consists of 5 credits. Students who take fewer than 5 credits in a semester will receive a grade for the number of credits taken, based on the individual objectives approved by the Practicum Supervisor. Each credit = 56 hours of clinical practice time. Five credits of practicum are composed of 280 clinical practice hours. During this practicum, students conduct a literature search and write a literature review paper to be submitted during the course of taking the 5 credits. If the student has not satisfactorily completed the literature review at the finish of the fifth credit for Practicum I, the student will receive an incomplete until the literature review is graded by the Practicum Supervisor.
  - Practicum II consists of 4 credits. Four credits of practicum are composed of 224 clinical practice hours and 56 hours for GNUR 8130 Capstone Proposal Writing.
Seminar. During this practicum, students write and may defend their Capstone Proposal. An Incomplete (IN) will appear in SIS for Practicum II until the Capstone Proposal defense has been successfully completed.

Completion of DNP Degree and Capstone Guidelines

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

Academic Advisor and the Student’s Program of Study

Upon entry into the DNP program, each student is assigned an academic advisor who will guide and monitor the student’s progression through the program. On entry into the program, each student should meet with their academic advisor to develop a plan of study. This plan addresses course work and clinical practica. At the initial meeting, student and academic advisor should review the need for clinical practica hours, with consideration of previous supervised clinical hours. The student is responsible for completing the Planner in the Student Information System (SIS) to record the plan of study.

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

Change of Academic Advisor

It is not uncommon for students to discover, once in the program, that another faculty member may offer a better match for the student’s clinical specialty interests than the academic advisor initially assigned. It is entirely acceptable for the student to change advisors. The student submits to the Registrar a Change of Advisor Form (http://nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/) with the signatures of both the former and the new advisors.

Capstone Advising

As soon as the student has identified a focus area for the Capstone Project, a Capstone Chairperson is selected. The Capstone Chairperson may or may not have served as the academic advisor. The identification and selection of the chairperson is initiated by the student and the selection of this individual is dependent upon mutual agreement of the student and the faculty member who is asked to guide the Capstone Project. The choice of the Capstone Chairperson should be made based on the student’s proposed area of clinical inquiry and the faculty member’s clinical and scholarly interests.

The Capstone Chairperson must be a doctorally-prepared faculty member in the SON who is a nurse. Students may refer to a current list of doctoral faculty (http://www.nursing.virginia.edu/people/faculty-expert/) and their research and clinical interests. In the unusual event that a non-nurse faculty member in the SON is requested by the student to chair the capstone committee, the DNP Program Director will appoint a faculty member who is a nurse to co-chair the committee. The nurse co-chair’s responsibility will be to ensure that the process for completion of the capstone project is consistent with SON standards (as outlined in DNP Handbook).
and the intent for scholarly nursing practice inquiry is met by using evidence to impact nursing practice and/or evaluate practice-based models of care.

The Capstone Chairperson must be the committee member most competent to supervise the project as a whole, but need not be the primary resource person for all aspects of the project. A recommended approach for students to use in identifying a Capstone Chairperson is to become informed about faculty members’ clinical and scholarly interests and areas of expertise. The student and Capstone Chairperson will work together, often intensively, over an extended period of time, so careful selection is essential. The Capstone Chairperson assumes primary responsibility for assisting the student in developing a continued plan of study, monitoring the student’s progress, and guiding the student throughout the Capstone Project.

With the help of the Capstone Chairperson, the student selects members of her/his Capstone Committee. The committee must consist of a minimum of three members, at least two of whom must be faculty of the SON of UVa appointed to the rank of assistant professor or higher. A Professor Emeritus may serve on a Capstone Committee and count as an SON member. The third member may be a SON faculty member or someone from outside the SON who is an expert in the student’s clinical area. The Capstone Committee Chairperson is included as one of the two SON members. At least two of the members must be doctorally-prepared, and all must be at least master’s-prepared.

To formalize the Capstone Committee or to make changes in the Capstone Committee, signatures from all committee members are obtained by the DNP student and recorded on the form, DNP Capstone Committee Appointment or Change Form (http://nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/dnp/) and should be submitted with the signatures of each committee member and the designated individuals on the form.

Registering for Capstone Credits
Students enroll in six credits of GNUR 9991 Capstone every semester from the beginning of their Capstone until the Oral Defense of the Capstone Project is defended and approved. Completing the Capstone Project within one term is unlikely, though by applying full time effort on the project for one semester, it is possible. It is more likely that the student will spend one term conducting the project and the following term writing and defending the Capstone Project Report to the University Community. The cost for Capstone credits is lower than credits for other coursework because it is assumed that this Capstone work is being conducted independently with supervision from the student’s Capstone Committee. Students must be registered during the term in which the final Capstone Project is defended. Typically, the term in which a student defends the Capstone Project is the term of their graduation from the University. However, a student who needs additional time to revise their Capstone after their defense may enroll in an affiliated status (“Doctoral Completion” or “Degree Conferral in Absentia”). Contact the SON Registrar for additional information.

Students who graduate during summer, fall and spring terms are eligible to participate in the hooding and commencement ceremonies the following May. In order for the final Capstone to be filed with the University in a timely manner, students should follow the following timeline so that the final manuscript preparation can be completed in time to file the final Capstone with the University:
1. Students planning to graduate in Spring semester should plan to defend their Capstone Project no later than the first week in April.
2. Students planning to graduate in Fall semester should plan to defend their Capstone Project no later than the first week in November.
3. Students planning to graduate in Summer should plan to defend their Capstone Project no later than the first week in July

Developing the Capstone Proposal

The Capstone Proposal is developed in GNUR 8430, DNP Capstone Proposal Seminar. Once a student has completed and/or is enrolled in all nine required courses (including the Proposal Writing Seminar and cognates) and has formed a Capstone Committee, he or she is eligible to defend the Capstone proposal which will also complete the requirements of Practicum II. The proposal must be defended in the presence of the Capstone Committee and formally approved by all committee members.

The Capstone Committee Chair is the major advisor to the student for the Capstone project. It is not necessary for the student to consult committee members equally about each aspect of the clinical problem and approach. Members should be consulted primarily on those aspects directly related to their areas of special competence. Additional faculty or clinical resource persons may be consulted as needed. It is the joint responsibility of the student and chairperson to make the final decisions on problem and method, even if decisions are made that one or more committee members believe to be less than optimal. The committee’s responsibility is to act in an advisory capacity rather than as directors of the project. The student’s responsibility is to recognize useful advice and to integrate the project into a coherent whole.

Organization of the Capstone Proposal

A suggested organization of the Capstone is provided below. Students should consult with their Capstone Committee Chair for possible variations to this organization which may be appropriate to their project. All pages should be numbered consecutively with Arabic numbers in the upper right corner beginning with the Title Page. Following this organization should provide the student with a fairly complete working draft of the Final Capstone manuscript which will also include an updated methods section, results, discussion and conclusions.

The sequence of content is:

Title Page with copyright (p. 1)

Abstract (p. 2) (Maximum of 350 words; see APA guide for format)

Table of Contents (p. 3)

I. Introduction and Research Question (30 page limit, double spaced)
   A. Overview of the problem needing a solution or the question to be answered,
   B. The purpose of the present study
   C. Theoretical Framework
   D. Research Question

II. Review of the literature (10-15 pages)
   A. The problem needing a solution or the question to be answered,
B. The literature summary
C. Implications for Nursing
D. Implications for present project and/or research
E. State the rationale for the project question(s) based on the literature review
F. Research Question

III. Methods (10-15 pages)
A. Brief introduction…..
B. Research Design
C. Purpose of the study/project
D. Hypotheses (if relevant) or project question(s)
E. Definition of Terms
F. Setting
   a. Intervention (if applicable)
   b. Or Program Description
G. Description of the Sample
H. Measures
   a. Reliability
I. Procedures
J. Protection of Human Subjects
K. Data Analysis plan
L. Strengths and weaknesses of the design
M. Nursing Practice Implications
N. Products of the Capstone

References

**Capstone Proposal Defense and Approval**
Depending on the committee members, it may not be necessary to get feedback from them regarding the final draft of the proposal prior to the defense. It may be suitable to wait to get members’ reactions at the proposal defense. Drafts of part or the entire proposal can be very useful, however, in individual discussions with committee members prior to the defense.

At the beginning of the semester in which the Capstone Proposal will be defended, the student arranges a Capstone Proposal Defense meeting of the committee (usually two hours in length) to discuss the proposal and to rule on its acceptability. When the proposal is complete and the chairperson has approved the proposal for distribution, the student distributes the proposal to the committee members, at least two weeks prior to the Capstone Proposal Defense date. After the final proposal has been distributed to committee members, the student should contact DNP Program Manager, Renée Breeden at rcb9b@virginia.edu to arrange a meeting of the committee for the Capstone Proposal Defense.

Although the student is responsible for arranging the meeting and distributing copies of the proposal, the committee chairperson will conduct all sessions. The proposal defense should be viewed as a working session in which differences of opinion can be resolved. It is a good idea for the student to take careful notes of the issues raised and decisions reached during the proposal
defense. Committee members’ suggestions are usually intended to insure the project’s feasibility, clinical relevance and quality. It is to the student’s advantage to consider them seriously.

The student must bring a copy of the Capstone Proposal Approval Sheet (http://nursing.virginia.edu/Registrar/forms/dnp/) to the Capstone Committee members’ signatures. After the proposal is approved by the Capstone Committee, a signed copy of the approval sheet is filed with the Office of the Associate Dean for Academic Programs. Students may have up to three opportunities to successfully defend their proposal.

**Conducting the Capstone Project**

After the Capstone proposal has been approved, the process of implementing the project may begin. In most cases the Capstone Project involves the use of primary or secondary data about human subjects, therefore both administrative approval and human study approval must be obtained before data collection begins.

*Administrative Approval.* The student must secure a letter from the appropriate official in the project setting, which states that the project described may be conducted there. When the project is to be conducted in a setting outside of UVA, administrative approval must be obtained prior to requesting approval from the Human Investigation Committee. If the study is to be conducted within the University of Virginia Health System, approval must be obtained from the Human Investigation Committee before securing administrative approval from the Health System.

*Institutional Review Board Approval.* Before beginning data collection (or analysis of pre-existing data), the student must assure the protection of human rights by having the proposal reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the study/project setting. Projects conducted at UVA or in settings that do not have an IRB must complete the application process for either the UVA Health Sciences Research (IRB-HSR) or the Social and Behavioral Sciences Review Board (IRB-SBS). The advisor will assist the student in determining which committee is more appropriate. Every proposal must be judged by the HSR to conform to 45 CFR 46: The Federal Regulations Governing Human Experimentation, or to be exempt from those regulations according to criteria set forth in the regulations. Information and forms for IRB-HSR approval are available at the website (http://www.virginia.edu/vprgs/irb/). Prior to submitting a proposal to the HSR each investigator must complete the self-study module available at: http://www.virginia.edu/vprgs/irb/training.html.

The Director of the UVA IRB-HSR has determined that in certain situations, where students are conducting research where they are employed and an IRB is functioning at their place of employment, the student does not need the UVA IRB to review the protocol. However, the student must apply to the appropriate IRB at the setting where they are employed. Once the study has been approved by the alternate IRB, the student must submit the completed DETERMINATION OF UVa AGENT FORM (available at: http://www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/hsr/forms.html) to the UVA IRB-HSR along with the IRB approval from the institution where they will be conducting their research.

The Capstone chairperson is jointly responsible with the student for the accuracy of the information provided on any Human Subject Review Form and must co-sign the Institutional Review Board for Health Sciences Research (IRB-HSR) or the Social and Behavioral Sciences Review Board (IRB-SBS) forms with the student.
Procedures and time delay in obtaining administrative and research review clearance vary with the project and type of research. Institutional Review Boards meeting schedules are posted on their web site. Students are required to close all studies with the respective IRB per agreement with their Capstone Chairperson. The SON pays $1000/study/year so it is important to close the study after all data have been collected and analyzed.

**Capstone Project as Part of Funded Grants**

DNP students who elect to do Capstone Project with Principal Investigators who have funded grants must secure permission for copyrighting their final project, if necessary, from their Capstone chairperson and/or the Principal Investigator with whom they are conducting the project. It is advisable to reach an understanding at the outset about authorship and credit for any publications that may result from the project.

**Technical Requirements in Writing the Capstone Report**

The proposal should identify the major clinical and methodological issues of the problem, and be presented in excellent academic writing style. The SON requires that Capstone Projects be written according to the format recommended by the chairperson and consistent with the nature of the project. However, the standard format for all manuscripts in the School of Nursing is the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* and will generally be used. The student should be consistent in the use of the particular style manual selected throughout the writing of the Capstone Project. Students who have weak writing skills should hire a professional editor to assist with their Capstone drafts and not expect their Capstone Chair to provide time-consuming editing of multiple drafts.

In general, typewritten drafts of each section of the Capstone are submitted to all committee members for their comments and suggestions. Some members prefer to read the rough draft section by section; others prefer to read the rough draft in its entirety. Others prefer not to see the drafts at all. Obtain this information from your committee members early.

The final Capstone Report includes the Capstone proposal, journal title for submission of a manuscript, author guidelines, and publishable manuscripts based on the Capstone Project.

- The final product includes the Title Page (See sample under Forms at www.virginia.edu/registrar), an abstract (350 word max) and introductory and concluding narrative to tie the manuscript into a comprehensive project.
- Student must submit journal name and author guidelines to Capstone committee for approval.
- Student must be the first author on any manuscript resulting from the Capstone and involving others. It is customary for the Capstone Chair to be second author. Whether or not other committee members are also included as authors depends on their level of effort in the Capstone and the written document. Students should refer to and follow the journal guidelines on authorship.
- Copies of the reprints are acceptable and will be submitted as an appendix to the Capstone when the article has already been published.
- Legally acceptable releases from copyright owner(s) are submitted where applicable.
- Completed Capstone Project Reports are organized with the preceding Capstone Proposal Sections and the following Sections below. Note: *The Proposal sections must be revised*
to reflect what was done (i.e., past tense) vs. the future tense of the proposal. Other revisions may also be needed.

IV Results (10-20 pages)

- Present the actual statistical or practical results; refer to tables and figures where appropriate
- Use sub-headings to organize the results according to the research questions, hypotheses, etc.
- Include Tables and Figures with the statistical or practical results in the Appendix.
- Provide the relevant Statistical details
- Do not interpret or comment on the results/findings in this section.
- Save all comments for the Discussion

V Discussion

A. Discuss and Interpret the results in the context of the literature review
B. Strengths and weaknesses of the design
C. Nursing Practice Implications
D. Implications for further research, study, development…
E. Products of the Capstone (include listing of presentation and publications)

Appendixes:

- Questionnaires/questions
- Figures, tables, written materials for the participants
- Letters of support (access for study)
- IRB approval documentation
- Instructions for Authors from publication appropriate for publication.
- Draft manuscript(s) formatted for submission to selected journals
- PDF’s of published manuscripts

Scheduling the Final Defense of the Capstone Project

When the Capstone Project has been written and the Capstone Project chairperson agrees that it is ready for defense, the student has the responsibility to distribute the finished copy of the Capstone Project to committee members and to arrange a location, a date, and a time (usually two hours) that are satisfactory to all committee members for the oral defense of the Capstone Project. The student is expected to allow at least two weeks between distribution of the finished copy of the Capstone Project Report and the scheduled defense to allow committee members to read the Capstone Project Report critically. Committee members have the responsibility to inform the student of the time necessary and to read the Capstone Project Report in the agreed-upon time. The student informs the secretary for the DNP Program Director of the date and time of the defense. The secretary will prepare and post an announcement and schedule a room in the SON. The oral presentation of the Capstone defense is open to the public.
Format and Procedures of the Oral Defense of the Capstone Project

It is the student’s responsibility to bring the following forms to the oral defense of the Capstone Project (see “Forms” at www.virginia.edu/registrar: Title Page with spaces for signatures [see DNP Sample Title Page](http://nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/dnp/), and the DNP Final Capstone Defense Approval Sheet [http://nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/dnp/]). The student gives these documents to the chairperson at the beginning of the session.

After an introduction of the committee members and student by the Capstone Chair, the student begins the oral defense with a 20 – 30 minute presentation of the Capstone Project, including aims, evidence for the project, methods, findings, limitations, and implications. A PowerPoint presentation is recommended. In the ensuing discussion, committee members may question the student about any aspect of the project itself and the relevant clinical and methodological considerations. The committee chairperson may invite members of the audience to ask questions or make comments, but is not required to do so.

Ideally all members of the committee are present in person for the defense. In the event of an emergency in which the chair cannot be present, the following protocol will be followed: (1) telephone conference call with chair present by phone and/or video or (2) vice-chair (a member of the committee appointed by the chair in consultation with the student) assumes responsibility of chair. Because many DNP students live at a distance, the final capstone defense may be broadcast over Collab-Blackboard with the presenting student’s approval.

After this public session, the student and the audience are asked to leave the room while the committee critiques the Capstone Project, identifies any changes or additional work to be done, and determines the outcome of the Capstone Project defense. The student is then invited back into the room and is informed of the result.

The committee discusses with the student any changes or additional work to be done and establishes a time by which such changes or additions are to be submitted. If the changes or additions are minor, committee members will usually, as a matter of convenience, sign the title page and the DNP Final Capstone Defense Approval Sheet (http://nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/dnp/). The chairperson, however, will not sign, date, or submit either form or return the signed title page to the student until all changes or additions have been submitted and found acceptable.

If major changes or additions to the Capstone Project are required, a date will be established for their presentation and defense. Neither the chair nor the members will sign and date the forms with a recommendation of approval until and unless these major changes or additions have been presented and defended and the entire Capstone Project found satisfactory.

Approval of the Oral Defense of the Capstone Project

When the student has passed the oral defense and all required changes or additions have been made and judged satisfactory by the chairperson and the committee, the chairperson gives the student the signed and dated title page to be included in copies of the Capstone Project Report. The chairperson also submits to the Dean of the SON (with copies to the Director of the DNP Program) the DNP Final Capstone Defense Approval Sheet. The Dean adds her/his signature to the form then returns the Capstone Project Approval Sheet to the School’s Registrar and the Director of the DNP program.
In the event that:

- the committee judges the Capstone Project to be so unsatisfactory in execution that making it acceptable would virtually require starting over, or
- the student does not submit and defend the required changes or additions by the agreed-upon date, or
- the committee judges the submitted changes or additions to be unsatisfactory,

the committee may report that the student has not passed the Capstone Project and oral defense and may recommend, on a Report of Final Examination, that the degree not be awarded. In such a situation, the committee should submit to the Dean the Report of Final Examination with the committee’s recommendation, along with a written report detailing the rationale for the recommendation.

**Final Inspection and Approval of the Capstone Project Report**

Candidates for the DNP degree must submit an electronic copy of the Capstone Project Report for final inspection by the DNP Program Director or Program Manager along with the signed Title Page and signed DNP Final Capstone Defense Approval Sheet. After these documents are submitted, the DNP Program Manager will document in SIS that the milestone has been met, allowing the student to upload the Capstone into Libra. To avoid any unforeseen delays in the process, students should submit these documents as early as possible but no later than one week prior to the Libra deadlines below.

The electronic Capstone must be uploaded into Libra:

- by May 1 for Spring graduation
- December 1 for Fall graduation
- August 1 for Summer graduation

with no exceptions. If a deadline is missed, the student must register for and graduate the following term. In this case the student should complete and submit a Degree in Absentia Request Form (http://nursing.virginia.edu/registrar/forms/).

**Electronic Submission of the Final Capstone Report**

The SON utilizes the Libra electronic submission format. Electronic Dissertations and Theses or (EDT) submissions:

- save library and department shelf space
- provide world-wide access to UVa scholarly works
- DNP and PhD candidates save time with a streamlined workflow
- students are no longer required to pay for printing and binding their manuscripts and submission of their dissertations to Proquest

Detailed instructions for EDT submission can be found at http://libra.virginia.edu/. Answers to many questions may also be found at http://pages.shanti.virginia.edu/libra/.

Students who wish to order personal bound copies of their Capstone Report may do so (see instructions below under Ordering Personal Copies). **It is imperative that the left margin be 1½” for all pages (including tables) or the pages will not be completely visible with the binding. Do not trust your computer settings!** Measure each type of page to make sure the left margin is
Students who do not wish to order bound copies to not need to adhere to the above requirement.

**Student Responsibilities for Electronic Submission of Capstone Project Report**

- Capstone reports filed in Libra will be given the same world-wide access as those submitted to Proquest; therefore students must be even more vigilant about copyright issues. You may choose an embargo period up to five years during which time there will be no access to the manuscript in Libra.

- The standard format for all manuscripts in the School of Nursing is the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

- Students are responsible for ensuring that they upload the final, approved version of their Capstone Report with the appropriate title and approval pages. Documents in Libra cannot be deleted or corrected.

- Pay particular attention to Copyright Concerns with ETDs and the ETD Deposit Agreement. If you use other’s work (images, charts, drawings, photographs, computer programs, etc.) you must EITHER obtain the copyright holder’s permission OR make a good faith effort to make a Fair Use determination.

- The Libra FAQ page has links to several Fair Use checklists and evaluator tools that can help you determine if your use to copyrighted material is covered under Fair Use.

- After your Capstone Defense milestone is satisfied in SIS, you may upload ONE pdf document. Your pdf must include the appropriate title and approval pages as well as your complete, final, approved Capstone report.

- Please note that the title page shall include the typed names of your committee members, but *not their actual signatures* (as the signatures should not be posted online). If you do not have access to Adobe Acrobat Pro, or other package that merges pdf documents, you may reserve a workstation in the UVa Digital Media Lab in Clemons Library where you can scan your title and signature pages, and merge them with your thesis/dissertation pdf to create one document.

Go to [Libra](#) and follow the instructions to upload your document. Some fields will be pre-populated, others require your input. Please ensure that your upload document is complete; you will not have the option of replacing your uploaded document.

- If your name is incorrect, you may edit it.

- Your department will be pulled from SIS and is not editable.

- You must enter your primary advisor’s UVa computing ID (not email alias). His/her name and department will be pulled from LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) and are not editable.

- You may enter an additional advisor.

- The title of your Capstone will be pulled from SIS. You should verify the spelling and alphabetization of your Capstone title in your Academic Requirement report in the Student Center of SIS (under the Satisfied/Not Satisfied line) prior to beginning the upload process. If this is not your final, correct title, you may not edit it but please contact the SON Registrar’s Office so that the title can also be changed in SIS before uploading.

- Be sure the type of publication (thesis or dissertation) and level (DNP) are correct. If not, contact the SON Registrar’s Office.
• Abstract and Keywords are not required but are strongly encouraged.
• An overnight process will provide communication from Libra to SIS that your submission was successfully completed, and thus complete the appropriate SIS milestone to indicate that you have satisfied graduation requirements.

Obtaining Personal Bound Copies of Capstone Report
Students who so desire may order bound copies of their Capstone Report. Instructions are available at http://www.virginia.edu/uvaprint/. You may order bound copies at any time.

Application for Degree and Intent to Graduate
Prior to the end of the semester preceding the semester in which the student intends to graduate, indicate their intent to graduate in the Student Information System (SIS). Degrees are granted in December, May, and August. The student must be registered during the semester in which they defend their Capstone. If the Capstone has been successfully completed but not in time for graduation that semester, the student must request Degree in Absentia the following semester to be able to graduate.

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

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