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Doctoral Student Handbook Purpose

The DNP Handbook defines the conceptual framework for Aspen University DNP program, including the knowledge and understanding, skills and practices, and the dispositions and identity expected of DNP students. This Handbook, plus specific school supplements, provides all the information necessary to successfully complete the DNP program.

Conceptual Framework for Aspen University

Aspen University’s conceptual framework is based on the belief that professional education should help individuals develop professional understandings, practices, and identity. The program will recruit individuals from diverse settings and communities who seek to become effective researchers, professionals, and leaders who:

1. Transform their domain and society;
2. Ask questions and engage in inquiry both individually and with others to determine the effects of decisions, policies, and practices on all involved in their domain;
3. Accept responsibility with others for the improvement of the domain (e.g. processes, methods, tools, knowledge bases) and take action with others to create better environments for the successful deployment of these improvements;
4. Provide opportunities for all who depend upon the domain to reach their goals;
5. Establish safe environments that supports risk taking, accepts mistakes, and enables beginners, learners, and professionals to practice, improve, grow, and become both effective and efficient with autonomy and while modeling citizenship;
6. Pursue learning themselves and regularly assess their beliefs and the effects of their actions to improve their knowledge, skills, professionalism, and leadership practices;
7. Affirm that learning takes place in contexts other than education organizations.

Conceptual Framework for Doctoral Programs

Doctoral programs provide an academically rigorous and supportive learning environment where communities of learners think about and talk through ideas; ask interesting and provocative questions; engage in inquiry; examine issues from multiple perspectives; exercise curiosity, imagination, and creativity; and take action to improve education and community environments and opportunities.

The following knowledge, skills, and dispositions are embedded within the coursework and performance assessments throughout Aspen University Doctoral programs. The standards on which these capacities are based form the core of the program’s goals and align with national accreditation standards for programs in leadership and learning.

Knowledge and Understanding

A Doctoral graduate develops the knowledge and understanding necessary to fulfill the role of contributor to their domain with the ability to promote the highest standard of performance and service to those requiring value from professionals in the domain. Additionally, the graduate understands:

1. The key theories of the domain and a leader’s vision for the domain providing societal value;
2. The importance of ethical, effective, and safe professional environments for all practitioners;
3. The influence of society (e.g. law, policy, politics, and culture) on the domain and its practitioners;
4. The application of domain theories, processes, and practices in the domain’s environment;
5. The importance of advocacy for just, humane, ethical, and equitable professional performance;
6. Organizational theory and development;
7. Change theory and change management;
8. The strategic, tactical, and operational use of resources (humans, capital, consumable, etc.);
9. Principles and practices of effective communication, interpersonal relationships, and public relations;
10. Design of inquiry and the use of information management in the conduct and application of continuous improvement, research, deployment, operations, and decision-making.
Skills and Practices

A student in an Aspen Doctoral program develops the skills and practical ability to:
1. Use effective written, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills, tactics and strategies;
2. Assume stewardship of the vision of an organization in the domain;
3. Act with a reasoned understanding of major technical, historical, philosophical, ethical, social, and economic influences affecting the domain in a democratic society;
4. Shepherd the planning process through consensus building and delegation;
5. Initiate, manage, and evaluate the change process;
6. Use motivational theory to create conditions for change and improvement;
7. Frame, analyze, and resolve problems using appropriate problem-solving techniques and decision-making skills;
8. Respect the rights of others with regard to confidentiality and dignity, combining impartiality and sensitivity to individual diversity;
9. Manifest a professional code of ethics and values;
10. Conduct and use research to improve decision making, policies, and practices in the domain;
11. Apply a systems perspective to the creation, sustainment, and operation of strategic, tactical and operational plans and the processes and operations to realize them;
12. Use appropriate interpersonal skills and promote multicultural awareness, gender sensitivity, and racial and ethnic appreciation;
13. Apply and assess current technologies for domain improvement;
14. Accept responsibility for the improvement of the environment for all domain practitioners and those they serve, and take appropriate action to create those environments to build efficiency and effectiveness;
15. Align resources with the organizational vision and develop accountability systems.
16. Collaborate with multiple stakeholders to constructively resolve conflict and develop healthy relationships while planning and problem-solving as a team.

Dispositions and Identity

A Doctoral graduate seeks to:
1. Act in an ethical manner with integrity and fairness; practice equity, respect individuals, and demonstrate a caring attitude;
2. Take responsibility for personal actions and behaviors;
3. Work collaboratively with colleagues, demonstrate social and relational skills, and understand and use team-building strategies to motivate and inspire groups towards a common vision;
4. Demonstrate willingness to explore and understand personal cultural competence and biases, to be self-aware, and to demonstrate self-regulation in these matters;
5. Contribute understanding and commitment to a democratic society and democratic discussions;
6. Exercise habits of mind that demonstrate persistence and commitment to continuous learning and professional development; listening with understanding; flexible thinking and the ability to take multiple perspectives; willingness to take responsible risks; independent thinking with accountability; appreciation, empathy, and celebration; and energy, enthusiasm, and hopefulness;
7. Believe that all students and educators can learn and should be challenged and supported.
DNP Program Mission
The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree is designed to be a practice-focused program that combines a scholarly approach to the discipline of nursing, while advancing the profession of nursing through practice. Intensive practice immersion experiences inform the preparation of a practice-focused DNP Project. The program prepares professional registered nurses for high-level, executive leadership roles in nursing.

Potential Careers for DNP Graduates
Students who earn a Doctorate of Nursing Practice typically pursue the following careers:

- Nursing Leadership and Management
- Nurse Executive
- Positions that require significant and specific expertise, credentials, and certifications*

*Note: Earning a DNP does not prepare the student as an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN).

School Advisory Councils
The Aspen University Schools have established an Advisory Council that:

- Includes members who are not otherwise employed or contracted by the University;
- Consists of practitioners in the field for which the program prepares students;
- Convenes at least annually;
- Provides advice on the current level of skills, knowledge, and abilities individuals need for entry into the occupation; and
- Provides advice on the adequacy of Doctoral programs’ objectives, curriculum, and course materials.

Program Goals, Learning Objectives, and Outcomes

DNP Program Goals:
1. Evaluate scientific underpinnings for practice and create a theoretical framework based on research.
2. Improve the quality of nursing practice, by using leadership strategies and systems thinking, to lead organizations to change.
3. Analyze clinical scholarship and analytical methods to provide a foundation for evidence-based practice.
4. Critique information systems and patient-care technology to improve and transform health care.
5. Advocate for improved health care policy.
6. Collaborate with professionals in other disciplines to improve patient and population health outcomes.
7. Create innovations for prevention of disease and improvement of population health.

Program Structure
Aspen University offers an educationally sound and up-to-date curriculum that is supported by quality instructional materials. The curriculum and instructional materials are comprehensive to ensure students achieve the program objectives, and its content is supported by sound research and practice. The curriculum and instructional materials reflect current knowledge and practice, and effective procedures are used continuously to remain current.

During the program, students:
- Reflect on their own possibilities and problems as professionals and leaders;
- Read and study a broad range of highly interdisciplinary literature;
- Acquire the skills necessary to research and more fully grasp the complexity of their own organizations;
- Draw on the knowledge and experience of Professors/Faculty Mentors and fellow cohort members;
- Develop a profound understanding of the professional and leadership for the domain;
• Construct effective professional career and domain objectives;
• Practice scholarly writing expected in doctoral level work.

The reading difficulty of the instructional materials is keyed to the reading competence of students in the program. Instructions and suggestions on how to study and how to use the instructional materials assist students to learn effectively and efficiently. The program Professors/Faculty Mentors make effective use of appropriate teaching aids and learning resources, including educational media and supplemental instructional aids.

Aspen University Doctoral programs adhere to the following accreditation standards for education objectives, curriculum, and materials:

1. Learning objectives for the degree program and learning objectives for the courses, research projects, supervised clinical practice and fieldwork, applied research exercises, thesis, DNP, and other required academic and professional activities are clearly stated.
2. The learning objectives indicate the competencies a graduate of the degree program attains upon successful completion of the program, including expected skills, knowledge, attitudes and insights characteristic of doctoral degree holders.
3. The learning objectives and outcomes are advanced, focused, and scholarly, providing the breadth and depth of learning required for a doctoral degree program. Material and topics in the curriculum are clearly at the frontiers of knowledge and contribute to competence in the subject area or profession at an advanced level.
4. Aspen University Doctoral program learning activities include seminars, professional meetings, discussions with colleagues, participation in sustained synchronous or asynchronous online conferences at predetermined points throughout the program, access to library services, and access to online chat rooms with fellow students, Professors/Faculty Mentors, and relevant professionals.
5. The learning objectives and outcomes are comparable to those of doctoral-awarding resident and/or education programs at appropriately accredited organizations.
6. The program requires the student to work with a supervisory DNP committee that is knowledgeable in methods of graduate-level study and research as well as the subject area concerned.
7. The program of study includes coverage of the history and development of the field of study and its foundational theoretical principles.
8. The program requires a Comprehensive Examination. The Comprehensive Examination is taken before the students begins the 3 DNP Project courses to demonstrate a solid foundation of knowledge in nursing practice and leadership. The DNP requires the verbal defense of certain projects during the curriculum which will demonstrate formative program competencies and skill development. Oral defense of a summative DNP project paper is required to demonstrate summative program outcomes and for graduation.
9. The program of study requires the graduate to demonstrate the ability to contribute positively to the practice of nursing through a DNP project on a topic of the student’s interest.
10. The program demonstrates interaction between Professors/Faculty Mentors, Preceptors and DNP Program Leadership.
11. Supervised immersion hours totaling 1000 post-BSN hours are required before graduation.
12. Aspen University requires prior formal review and approval for all research involving humans. The institution requires prior formal review through an institutional review board (IRB), which has been designated to approve, monitor, and review all projects.
13. When technology is used, training and support in the use of that technology is provided for students, Professors/Faculty Mentors, and involved practitioners.
14. The program of study requires the graduate to demonstrate the ability to evaluate and incorporate emerging relevant technologies applicable to the profession. It requires the graduate to demonstrate the skills necessary to advance the body of knowledge and practice in the profession or the field of study and to analyze and evaluate current trends in them.
15. Students enrolled in a doctoral degree program have access to library resources sufficient for completing the requirements for the doctoral degree program.
16. All of the credits and requirements for the doctoral degree must be satisfactorily completed at the degree-granting organization.

17. A DNP requiring basic, original, or applied research is required of all students. The topic of each DNP is approved by an Advisory DNP Committee appointed by the University.

18. An oral defense of the student’s DNP with the DNP Committee is required. No degree is awarded unless a majority of the DNP Committee approves the DNP.

**Aspen University Doctoral Program Admission Requirements**

Each applicant to an Aspen University Doctoral program must have completed the following:

- Online application to the Program
- Review by the Director of Graduate Nursing or Dean of Nursing, if necessary
- Current resume
- Official Transcripts Showing Completion of a Master’s Degree from an Accredited College or University
  - Degree does not need to be in the domain of the Doctoral program
  - Proof of graduate-level, supervised nursing clinical or practicum experience, if applicable (such as a MSN practicum, or APRN clinical hours)
  - Applicant must have an overall GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale
  - International students must submit a foreign degree evaluation
  - Applicants whose native language is not English and who have not earned a degree from an appropriately accredited college or university where English is the principal language of instruction must demonstrate college-level proficiency in English through one of the following for admission: A minimum score of 550 on the paper-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL PBT), or 80 on the Internet-Based Test (iBT), a 6.5 on the International English Language Test (IELTS), or 58 on the PTE Academic Score Report
- Graduate-level Registered Nurses and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses may petition a consideration for the transfer of immersion hours. A maximum of 500 immersion hours may be approved for banking based on the evaluation by the Director of Graduate Nursing or Program Coordinator, after review of the graduate-level, supervised, nursing clinical hours completed during previous coursework and practicum experiences from an accredited program. The hours must be verified by the academic institution’s program administration for which the hours were completed

**NOTE:** Depending on a student’s goals for this program, the student should check local and state regulatory requirements for program acceptance. This program is not designed as a professional certification program. Different states and municipalities often have specific requirements concerning appropriate degree programs.

**Experiential Learning**

Aspen University grants no experiential learning credit for applicants in its Doctoral programs.

**Tuition and Fees**

Aspen University tuition and fees are clearly stated on the website that students must use to complete the program application and course enrollments.

**Program Completion Requirements**

Doctoral programs are designed to be completed in four years from the date of initial enrollment. A student must complete the program in no fewer than two years from the date of initial enrollment. A student is expected to complete the DNP within three years after beginning their DNP course. The entire program must be completed within a maximum of 10 years.

*Completion of all DNP courses and credits*
Completion all Immersion Hours

Required Comprehensive Exam
The student must pass the Comprehensive Exam prior to beginning the DNP Project courses.

Required Project Courses

DNP850A - Project I: Committee Selection, Problem Identification, IRB

The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree is designed to be a practice-focused program that combines an evidence-based scholarly approach to the discipline of nursing, while advancing the profession of nursing through practice. This course is the foundation for completion of the DNP capstone project. The student will develop a purpose statement, problem statement and research question that will relate to advanced practice nursing leadership and administration that will become the basis of an evidence-based research project to complete the requirements of the DNP program. Students will also develop a draft of chapter one, and outline chapters two and three of the DNP capstone project documenting their learning aligned to the Academic Quality Review guidelines for the DNP evidence-based project. The program prepares advanced practice nurses for high-level leadership in nursing.

Intensive practice immersion experiences inform the preparation of a practice-focused DNP Capstone Project. Upon completion of the A and B versions of this DNP Project course, students must document a combined total of 280 logged practice hours.

Required Text Book:

- DNP Capstone Projects: Exemplars of Excellence in Practice - 978-0826130259

DNP850B - Project I: Committee Selection, Problem Identification, IRB

DNP 850B is a continuation of DNP 850A. The Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree is designed to be a practice-focused program that combines an evidence-based scholarly approach to the discipline of nursing, while advancing the profession of nursing through practice. This course is the foundation for completion of the DNP capstone project. The student will develop a purpose statement, problem statement and research question that will relate to advanced practice nursing leadership and administration that will become the basis of an evidence-based research project to complete the requirements of the DNP program. Students will also develop a draft of chapter one, and outline chapters two and three of the DNP capstone project documenting their learning aligned to the Academic Quality Review guidelines for the DNP evidence-based project. The program prepares advanced practice nurses for high-level leadership in nursing.

Intensive practice immersion experiences inform the preparation of a practice-focused DNP Capstone Project. Upon completion of the A and B versions of this DNP Project course, students must document a combined total of 280 logged practice hours.

Prerequisite:

- DNP850A
DNP851A - Project I: Literature Review, Methodology, Implementation

This course is designed to guide students through two integral components of the project process, the literature review and project development. Under the direction of a dissertation committee, students will frame the project within the context of the relevant academic literature. Using this knowledge, students will design the methodology of the project and will complete the required ethical training to conduct the project. At the completion of this course, students will have finalized Chapters 2 and 3 and will be prepared to implement the project.

Intensive practice immersion experiences inform the preparation of a practice-focused DNP Capstone Project. Upon completion of the A and B versions of this DNP Project course, students must document a combined total of 280 logged practice hours.

Prerequisite:
- DNP850A
- DNP850B

Required Text Book:
- DNP Capstone Projects: Exemplars of Excellence in Practice - 978-0826130259

DNP851B - Project II: Literature Review, Methodology, Implementation

This course is a continuation of DNP850B and is designed to guide students through two integral components of the project process, the literature review and project development. Under the direction of a dissertation committee, students will frame the project within the context of the relevant academic literature. Using this knowledge, students will design the methodology of the project and will complete the required ethical training to conduct the project. At the completion of this course, students will have finalized Chapters 2 and 3 and will be prepared to implement the project.

Intensive practice immersion experiences inform the preparation of a practice-focused DNP Capstone Project. Upon completion of the A and B versions of this DNP Project course, students must document a combined total of 280 logged practice hours.

Prerequisite:
- DNP850A
- DNP851A
- DNP850B

DNP852A - Project III: Results, Oral Defense, Publication

This course is the final course in the DNP program. Students will analyze the data gathered during the project to determine if the project outcomes have been met. Students will identify strengths and weaknesses of the project implementation as it relates to a broader application of the project. Students will also identify areas for future project...
to impact change and improvement in the health care related field. Papers are finalized aligning to the Academic Quality Review benchmarks for the DNP capstone project and students successfully complete an oral defense.

Intensive practice immersion experiences inform the preparation of a practice-focused DNP Capstone Project. Upon completion of the A and B versions of this DNP Project course, students must document a combined total of 280 logged practice hours.

**Prerequisite:**

- DNP850A
- DNP851B
- DNP851A
- DNP850B

**Required Text Book:**

- DNP Capstone Projects: Exemplars of Excellence in Practice - 978-0826130259

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**DNP852B - Project III: Results, Oral Defense, Publication**

This course is a continuation of the final course in the DNP program. Students will analyze the data gathered during the project to determine if the project outcomes have been met. Students will identify strengths and weaknesses of the project implementation as it relates to a broader application of the project. Students will also identify areas for future project to impact change and improvement in the health care related field. Papers are finalized aligning to the Academic Quality Review benchmarks for the DNP capstone project and students successfully complete an oral defense.

Intensive practice immersion experiences inform the preparation of a practice-focused DNP Capstone Project. Upon completion of the A and B versions of this DNP Project course, students must document a combined total of 280 logged practice hours.

**Prerequisite:**

- DNP852A
- DNP850A
- DNP851B
- DNP851A
- DNP850B

**Required GPA**

Students must earn a minimum 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale.

**Comprehensive Examination:** The Comprehensive Exam is a doctoral student’s opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the program’s core content courses and the scholarly writing process prior to beginning to write the DNP Capstone Project manuscript. The Comprehensive Exam is taken after all courses other than the DNP Capstone Project I, II and III are completed. Each student must pass this exam to continue in the program.
The student will be given two attempts to complete the examination. If the student does not pass on the first attempt, the student must meet with the Dean of Nursing or the Director of Graduate Nursing Programs for a coaching opportunity to develop a success plan for achieving an improved result on the final attempt. If the student does not succeed on the second attempt for the comprehensive examination, the student is dismissed from the program.

Library Resources

Aspen University uses ProQuest, CINAHL, and EBSCO as a component of the comprehensive online library service that is available exclusively to all students of Aspen University. This resource is a compilation of current and historical industry journals, news articles, and full-text publications—everything to support innovative research across all programs. From the popular to the highly specialized, this library compiles high-quality, curricula-aligned content—all of it geared toward best supporting students’ studies as they progress through their programs. The library is regularly updated to provide research students with the resources sufficient to complete doctoral program requirements.

Library database compilations that apply to the doctoral program students include:

- ProQuest Research Library provides access to a wide range of academic subjects such as business, education, literature, political science, and psychology. The database includes over 3,850 titles, with more than 2,620 in full-text. ProQuest Research Library consists of two components: a core list of periodicals, and fifteen subject-specific modules that supplement the core list. The fifteen subject modules are: Arts, Business, Children, Education, General Interest, Health, Humanities, International, Law, Military, Multicultural, Psychology, Sciences, Social Science, and Women’s Interest.
- ProQuest Education Journals is a definitive resource for those who need access to top education publications. Including over 750 titles, with more than 600 available in full-text, ProQuest Education Journals cover not only the literature on primary, secondary, and higher education, but also special education, home schooling, adult education, and hundreds of related topics. Image articles include all the charts, tables, diagrams, and other graphical elements often used to enhance the editorial value of articles that focus on education topics.
- The CINAHL Database provides access to health care books, nursing dissertations, selected conference proceedings, standards of practice, audiovisuals and book chapters. It includes full-text journals, legal cases, clinical innovations, critical paths, research instruments and clinical trials.
- The EBSCO Database offers resources accessible to any researcher at any time. The newest addition, American Doctoral Dissertations, is an essential index of leading dissertations that can be easily accessed.
- Melody Hainsworth, PhD, Aspen’s Librarian, offers Aspen students 24/7 librarian services and can be contacted within the Aspen classroom.

Student Services

All relevant student inquiries are welcome and answered promptly and thoroughly. Professors/Faculty Mentors and student services personnel are available to students for help and guidance as needed. In addition, online discussions associated with the course delivery system provide a cohort learning environment.

Aspen University provides its academic grading policies or assignment marking system and applies them with fairness and consistency. Provisions are made to meet the individual differences of students and to provide counseling and guidance, as required, to assist students to satisfy program requirements, to achieve required program objectives and individual course learning objectives, and to achieve their education goals. Students who are unable to make satisfactory progress through the program are encouraged to continue until they either show inability to make satisfactory progress or demonstrate satisfactory progress.

An active program is followed to encourage students to start, continue, and finish the program in which they have enrolled. Reactions of students are systematically sought as one basis for evaluating and improving instructional materials, the delivery of instruction, and education services.

Learning with Technology

The online delivery system offered at Aspen University has proven to be effective and user-friendly. Professors/Faculty Mentors go through training and orientation of the platform before being assigned to a class and
receive a Faculty Handbook outlining the use of the platform and instructional expectations. Each student receives an orientation from an advisor and general guidelines in the “Getting Started” section of each course. In addition, students are encouraged to contact Student Services for Desire2Learn training. At any time that a Professors/Faculty Mentors or student expresses difficulty using such course-delivered technology, Aspen offers telephone support during regular office hours or by email.

**Student Achievement and Satisfaction**

Aspen University’s outcomes assessment plan provides an ongoing review of student achievement and satisfaction. The plan has three components: (1) student learning outcomes; (2) measurement of student learning outcomes; and (3) program, course and services improvements resulting from the measurement. The plan reflects an ongoing process of reviewing performance and achievement of objectives.

The University’s administrators and Professors/Faculty Mentors review the program and courses in conjunction with assessment tools and measurements to determine if objectives are being achieved and, if not, how the program and courses can be improved. Because a variety of education goals and objectives have been identified by Aspen University, comprehensive assessment strategies require the use of more than one measurement instrument to determine program and course effectiveness. The Aspen University president provides overall leadership for the assessment program with support from the Chief Academic Officer, Executive Chairpersons, and other support staff.

Doctoral students’ achievement of learning objectives is measured by:

- Comprehensive Examination
- DNP Course Assignments
- Doctor of Nursing Capstone Project
- Immersion Hours

The following indirect measurement tools are used to measure overall quality and to assess student satisfaction with the courses and program.

- Student End-of-Course Evaluations
- Annual Faculty Satisfaction Survey
- Graduate Interview
- Alumni Survey
- Employer Survey
- Student Testimonials

To measure student satisfaction, Aspen University surveys students in each of its courses with the “End-of-Course Survey.” In addition to questions on curriculum, Professors/Faculty Mentors and student services, this survey contains the following three questions:

1. Did you achieve, or will you have achieved upon completing your studies, the goals you had when you started the course or program?
2. Would you recommend these studies to a friend?
3. All things considered, were you satisfied with your studies with us?

The survey containing these questions is distributed to each student completing a course, and data is collected and analyzed. Annually, Aspen University provides to DEAC a sample of this survey and a description of how it was conducted. The description includes the names of the courses surveyed (all courses), the timeframe used to collect the data, and the number and percent of “Yes” answers to the three questions listed above.

**Organizational Improvements**

Aspen University summarizes outcomes assessment data gathered. After summarization and review of the data, one of the following options may be proposed for each area of assessment: (1) continue current policies and programs as
now constituted; (2) where concerns are indicated, monitor data for a prescribed period before recommending action; or (3) where an immediate change is indicated, develop a plan of action and timeline for implementation.

The following areas can be impacted by the results of the outcomes assessment process:

- Organizational Policy
- Program Curriculum
- Course Content
- Text Materials
- Instructional Methods
- Student Services
- Admissions and Registration
- Faculty-Staff Communication

**DNP Program Administration**

The Dean of Nursing, Director of Graduate Nursing and Nursing Coordinator for the DNP program hold an equivalent degree from a recognized and accredited college or university and enough academic experience to warrant such a position.

**Dean of Nursing**
Dr. Nina Beaman, RN - email: nina.beaman@aspen.edu

**Director of Graduate Nursing**
Dr. Marcos Gayol, RN - email: marcos.gayol@aspen.edu

**Project/Immersion Coordinator**
Dr. Randall Mangrum, RN - email: dnpcoodinator@aspen.edu

**Professors/Faculty Mentors**

Every Professors/Faculty Mentors who teaches Aspen University doctoral students holds a DNP, PhD, EdD or other doctoral-level degree from appropriately accredited college or university.

**Doctor of Nursing Capstone Project and Preceptorship**

All students in an Aspen University Doctoral program are required to successfully complete the DNP, which entails producing a research project that is approved by the DNP Committee appointed by Aspen University. The DNP courses provide a comprehensive template for producing the DNP project. A DNP Capstone Project is a record of original activity conducted by the student in contribution to earning a Doctoral degree. The DNP is scholarly work based on a combination of existing research and an original project that contributes to the body of human knowledge and field of practice. It demonstrates the Doctoral Student has the ability to collect, analyze, and report data based on critical, analytical, and synthesis skills. Each Doctoral Student must write a DNP Capstone Project that presents the results of a project carried out by the student. An appropriate project involves a substantive piece of original innovative work grounded in an appropriate body of literature. It is relevant to the nursing field as practiced in the past, the present, or in the potential future. It presents a significant contribution or advancement in that field.

It is the student’s responsibility to work with their DNP Committee as determined appropriate in collaboration with the Faculty Mentor. The student bears full responsibility for a successful outcome. As additional expert resources and guidance are believed necessary, the student explores and acquires any such assistance. As a student enters the last stages of the doctoral program, the expectation is that they need little help in conducting their project, writing the Capstone Project, or obtaining the advice needed to complete the DNP journey. Doctoral students are scholars in the making, with clear goals, adequate investigative tools, solid research agendas, and the determination to achieve the goals they set forth in the beginning stages of the doctoral journey. The DNP Committee will accept the resulting Capstone Project for completion of the DNP requirements after a final review and approval. Training, editing, and other forms of assistance are acceptable and recommended, but under no circumstances may someone produce a DNP Project other than the student.
Immersion Hours
The evidence of 1000 Immersion hours is required for the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree at Aspen University. Student’s may complete these supervised hours in a variety of settings, including acute care facilities, assisted living facilities, sub-acute and ambulatory care organizations, healthcare service support organizations, such as insurance companies, pharmaceutical organizations, care coordination services, clinics, home-based care facilitation. For any potential site consideration, the student will need written approval from the Program Coordinator. Many students complete their immersion hours in their own place of employment, however the on-site preceptor (supervised by the Faculty Mentor) will be a doctoral prepared professional with career experience in healthcare leadership, be affiliated with the site and have knowledge of the student’s Project topic. The on-site preceptor will supervise and verify the immersion activities, though the student may complete certain activities independently and not in the presence of the preceptor but still under the preceptor and faculty mentor’s guidance. The supervised immersion activities and reported to the Faculty Mentor for verification by means of the immersion hours log that the preceptor must sign, and the student must submit to the classroom and DNP Lounge dropbox as evidence of immersion hours completion. Furthermore, the Faculty Mentor supervises the preceptor. The DNP course teleconference give the Faculty Mentor the opportunity to monitor, report, and assess the immersion activities for appropriateness and approval. For any potential preceptor consideration, the student will need written approval from the Program Coordinator. Immersion activities will vary, per the site and student’s project topic and need. Activities may include attendance of courses/classes/seminars/meetings/webinars and interviews, researching, and active professional shadowing. For any potential immersion activity consideration, the student will need approval from the Faculty Mentor.

Matriculation of the Aspen University’s DNP 1000 Immersion Hours:
- Policy and Advocacy - Immersion Hours: 80
- Global Population Health - Immersion Hours: 80
- DNP Project I A& B - Immersion Hours: 280 or additional hours as needed (**If applicable, at this point the student must have provided evidence of previous Immersion Hours outside of course work for credit).
- DNP Project II A&B - Immersion Hours: 280 or additional hours as needed
- DNP Project III A&B - Immersion Hours: 280 or additional hours as needed

** A possible maximum of 500 immersion hours may be banked and used towards the 1000 total DNP immersion hour requirement. For consideration, please complete the Verification Form located in the DNP Lounge. The remaining immersion hours will be completed during the DNP Project courses.

The DNP writing style is guided by the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). The APA writing style is followed consistently throughout the program in matters of form and style. Of critical importance, sources must be cited and properly referenced. Generally, the DNP includes a title page, acknowledgements, abstract, table of contents, and list of tables and figures, followed by five distinct chapters: 1) Introduction, 2) Literature Review, 3) Methodology, 4) Results, and 5) Conclusions and Recommendations, followed by references and appendices. A detailed DNP outline is available in Appendix K: DNP Outline.

DNP Committee
Each doctoral student must work with a qualified DNP Committee that is knowledgeable in methods of graduate-level study and research, as well as in the subject area concerned. The DNP Committee comprises the Faculty Mentor (Chair), Faculty Reviewer (Project Specialist), and Independent Reviewer (Content Specialist). The Faculty Mentor is also the course Professors/Faculty Mentor for the three DNP courses acting as the Chair for the student. The Faculty Mentor assists the student in selecting an appropriate Faculty Reviewer and Independent Reviewer. The Faculty Reviewer must be an Aspen University Professor/Faculty Mentor who understands the University’s DNP process. The Independent Reviewer must have appropriate understanding and interest in the topic of the DNP research project. This individual may be a peer or someone representing a different organization. The individual may be a visiting scholar or Professor representing a different program or another field of study. Selection of the Independent Reviewer should consider the relative fields or sciences involved in the research study. All members of the DNP Committee must hold a doctoral degree and one member must hold the Doctorate degree being sought, ensuring that all members of the committee are well versed on doctoral-level work as well as on the field of the program. The student is permitted to select the committee members in consultation with the Faculty Mentor, but
Aspen University Program Leadership (Dean and Director) makes the final decisions. To select committee members, the student sends a statement of request to the Faculty Mentor listing the individuals being solicited and explaining the rationale for the selection.

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

The Faculty Mentor assists the student in formulating the DNP Committee and oversees its progress. The Faculty Mentor also serves the roles of supervisor, advisor, director, counselor, coach, role model, guide, collaborator, facilitator, advocate, chair and the like. The Faculty Mentor supervises the immersion experience and communicates with the preceptors and student during the Project and related immersion hours. At the beginning of each DNP course (DNP850 A&B, DNP851 A&B and DNP852 A&B) the Faculty Mentor will have a teleconference with all preceptor and the student to discuss project objectives, goals and immersion activities to provide clarity to the student and the preceptor.

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

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

If the Faculty Mentor is unable to serve for the entire duration of the student’s DNP process, the Faculty Reviewer may serve the role of Faculty Mentor and assist the student in selecting a replacement for either the Faculty Mentor role or the Faculty Reviewer role accordingly.

Any additional human resources should be discussed with the Faculty Mentor. Such resources might comprise a DNP editor, academic advisor, or a subject matter expert (SME), such as a statistics expert. All individuals associated with the DNP process should be acknowledged for their contribution. Any expense incurred by the student for external services rendered is managed independently between the student and the service provider. Hiring a writer or buying a completed DNP product is not acceptable and grounds for termination.

Institutional Review Board

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

Federal regulations require that researchers give special consideration to protecting the welfare of certain subjects. Special provisions exist for research involving:
1. Children and Minors
2. Prisoners
3. Pregnant Women and Fetuses
4. Institutionalized Mentally Disabled
5. Elderly
6. Economically or Educationally Disadvantaged

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

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

1. Are the risks to subjects and protected groups minimized?
2. Are the risks reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits?
3. Is the selection of subjects equitable?

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

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

1. Respect for persons (volunteers choose whether to participate in the research);
2. Beneficence (doing no harm to research subjects);
3. Justice (human participants have the right to be aware of the potential risks of research) as defined by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects.

The student must submit: 1) a copy of the approved proposal, 2) a copy of the approval form, and 3) the application to the IRB for its approval. The research proposal provides a thorough and detailed overview of the research topic, the research problem statement including hypotheses or research questions, review of the relevant research literature, and a complete description of the research methodology. These are in essence Chapters 1-3 of the Capstone Project. The necessary IRB forms are provided in Appendix C: IRB Application Form; Appendix D: IRB Approval Form; Appendix E: Informed Consent Letter; and Appendix F: Informed Consent Form.

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

**Oral DNP Proposal Defense**

Development of the DN Capstone Project is accomplished as a part of the requirements within the three Doctor of Nursing Capstone Project courses. Under direction of the Faculty Mentor, the student develops a research proposal for submission and approval by the DNP Committee. The proposal provides a thorough description of the proposed study, following proposal guidelines as directed by the Faculty Mentor. The student presents the proposal to the DNP Committee in an oral hearing via a one-hour teleconference. Any Professors/Faculty Mentor or student affiliated with Aspen University may attend but should refrain from participating in the defense process. Upon DNP Committee approval of the proposal, the student is authorized to begin the study. The Faculty Mentor issues written approval to the student using the approval form provided in Appendix A: Approval of the DNP Proposal.

**Final Oral DNP Defense**

The Final Oral DNP Defense is the last formal step in the DNP process. The Doctoral student produces and presents the DNP research before the DNP Committee via teleconference. The DNP Committee determines the general
format of the DNP and the abstract based on the University’s general design guidelines. The Faculty Mentor should ensure that the DNP is in final form before requesting evaluations from the other members of the committee. All the members of the DNP Committee produce an evaluation report following the Final Oral DNP Defense. Any Professors/Faculty Mentor or student affiliated with Aspen University may attend but should refrain from participating in the defense process.

The student安排s the Final Oral DNP Defense teleconference and solicits and coordinates the availability of the Advisory DNP Committee members. Based upon the student’s presentation, one of three forms of status may be awarded:

1. Accepted with no Changes
2. Accepted with Changes
3. Acceptance Denied

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

Following the oral defense, the Faculty Mentor submits the findings together with the evaluation forms and a copy of the final DNP manuscript to the CAO with a recommendation for final approval. The Faculty Mentor issues written approval to the student using the approval form provided in Appendix B: Approval of the DNP. If the decision of the committee is not unanimous, the case is referred to the CAO for resolution. If the decision of the committee is a failure recommendation, the Faculty Mentor and CAO formulate a course of action that may include re-registration in DNP courses.

The Advisory DNP Committee must evaluate the DNP and recommend the awarding of the doctoral degree only if the DNP is judged to demonstrate the following qualities. The DNP should demonstrate a host of characteristics, including:

1. Establish a historical context for the presentation of an innovative and creative approach to the problem.
2. Demonstrate understanding of the problem as revealed by analysis and synthesis of a broad literature base.
3. Articulate clarity in composition and careful documentation.
4. Merit publication in refereed journals or form the basis of a book or monograph.
5. Detail the design of the study so that other scholars can build on it in subsequent work.
6. Prepare the author to assume a position within the profession.
Appendix A

Approval of the DNP Proposal

Doctoral Student:

The DNP Committee of the above named Doctoral Student has met and reviewed the DNP Proposal entitled:

[TITLE]

The committee has determined that the proposed DNP is likely to:

1. Make a significant contribution to the field of knowledge;
2. Demonstrate the student’s ability to perform independent research;
3. Contain material worthy of publication in a form appropriate to the discipline.

We recommend acceptance of this proposal. It contains all appropriate content and forms.

Committee Members

Faculty Mentor:

Faculty Reviewer:

Independent Reviewer:

Approval

____________________________________  ____________________
Program Representative and Signature  Date

Completed forms and attachments should be submitted to:

Aspen University, 1660 South Albion Street, Suite 525, Denver, Colorado 80222

registrar@aspen.edu and CC’ed to Dr. Nina Beaman at nina.beaman@aspen.edu - Appendix B
Appendix B
Approval of the Project

Doctoral Student: ________________________________

The Advisory DNP Committee of the above named Doctoral Student has met and reviewed the DNP entitled:

[TITLE]

The committee has determined that the Project:

1. Makes a significant contribution to the field of knowledge;
2. Demonstrates the Student’s ability to perform independent research;
3. Contains material worthy of publication in a form appropriate to the discipline.

We recommend acceptance of this Project. It contains all appropriate content.

Signature of the Committee Members

Faculty Mentor name: __________________________Signature: __________________________

Faculty Reviewer name: __________________________Signature: __________________________

Independent Reviewer name: __________________________Signature: __________________________

Approval

______________________________ __________________________
Program Representative name and Signature Date

Completed forms and any attachments should be submitted to:
Emailed to: dnpcoordinator@aspen.edu
Appendix C

IRB Application Form

Cover Sheet - The cover sheet provides basic information regarding the study under consideration and the principal investigator(s).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student:</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
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<td>Address:</td>
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<td>Phone:</td>
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<td>Email:</td>
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<td>Faculty Mentor:</td>
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<td>Degree:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission #1:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission #2 (include rationale for 2nd attempt):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proposal Narrative - The proposal narrative is a detailed description of the study. Each of the sections in the narrative needs to be completed, or if a section does not apply write “N/A.” Each of these sections contains critical information that allows the reviewer to evaluate the study. These sections need to be written in lay language, avoiding jargon and acronyms. Failure to follow these rules causes delays in processing the submission. The responses to these questions allow the IRB to quickly place the study in the appropriate review category (exempt, expedited, or full review). These questions have been developed to decrease the response time of the IRB.

Introduction
Describe the project, including how it will impact the practice of nursing. Describe the purpose of the research and explain what the subjects are asked to do. Use simple terms and language understood by a person unfamiliar with the area of interest. Area-specific jargon should be avoided or explicitly explained. If using existing data or records, explain the sources of the data and the means of access to the data.

The broad purpose of this project is to . . .

Project Duration
State the starting date of the DNP process through the expected completion date.

Research Questions
The primary research question for the proposed study is:

The sub-questions are:
1.
2.
3.

Subject Population
The subject population consists of: Number: Male_____ Female _____ Total_____ Age Range: ___ to ___
Special Characteristics
(e.g., student, teacher, administrator): ______________________________________________________

Location of Subjects
If research is conducted through community agencies written documentation of approval and cooperation from such an agency or school should accompany this application.

Recruitment
a. Describe how subjects are identified or recruited. Attach recruitment information, (i.e., advertisement, bulletin board notices, recruitment letters, etc.).

b. If subjects are chosen from records, indicate who gave approval for use of the records. If records and private medical or student records, provide the protocol for securing consent of the subjects of the records and approval from the custodian of the records.

c. Who makes the initial contact with subjects? Describe how contact is made.

d. Do subjects receive inducements before, or rewards after the study? (Include this information in your consent documents.)

e. If subjects are school children and class time is used to collect data, describe in detail the activity planned for non-participant. Who supervises those children? (This information must be included in the consent form.)

Confidentiality of Data
The researcher alone would keep and have access to any documents regarding the data provided by the participants. The Informed Consent form to be signed by each of the participants would state such particulars.

a. Describe provisions made to maintain confidentiality of data. Who has access to data?

b. Where is data stored and safeguarded for five years? If tape recordings are created, explain who has access and how the tapes are retained.

Approvals
The signatures below certify that:

1. The information provided in this application form is correct
2. The learner (researcher) must seek and obtain prior written approval from the Committee for any substantive modification in the proposal.
3. Unexpected or otherwise significant adverse events in the course of this study must be promptly reported.
4. Any significant new findings which develop during the course of this study which may affect the risks and benefits to participation must be reported in writing to the Committee and to the subjects.
5. The research may not be initiated until final written approval is granted.

This research, once approved, is subject to continuing review and approval by the IRB. The student/researcher must maintain records of this research according to IRB guidelines. If these conditions are not met, approval of this research could be suspended.

[Type Name] ____________________________________________  ____________________
Student Date

As Faculty Mentor of the DNP Committee, I attest that the proposal submitted is prepared for IRB approval.

[Type Name] ____________________________________________  ____________________
Faculty Mentor Date

Completed forms and attachments should be submitted to the IRB at irb@aspen.edu.
Appendix D

IRB Approval Form

Name of Student: ______________________________________________________________________

DNP Title: _________________________________________________________________________

Date of Application: ____________________________

Application Type:
   ___ Exempt Review
   ___ Expedited Review
   ___ Full Review

Application Status:
   ___ Approved
   ___ Not Approved
   ___ Approved with Amendment

The student understands and agrees to maintain the confidentiality of any entity agreeing to assist with providing data; to obtain informed consent from any human participants in the study; and to retain and safeguard written consents and the data for a period of five years from all entities, presenting copies to Aspen University, to the participants, and to authoritative bodies when appropriate.

Approval

___________________________________________________________________________________  ____________________________
IRB Representative Name, Title and signature                                            Date
Appendix E

Informed Consent Letter (Example)

**Participant Letter** - A letter inviting the human subject(s) to participant in the study must accompany the informed consent form.

**Sample Letter**

[Name of Student]
[Address]

[Name of Participant]
[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Participant’s Name]:

Nursing across the country is in transition. The practice of nursing is in the process of change or at least considering some elements of change. I am a Doctoral Student at Aspen University conducting an innovative leadership project about

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire. It only takes a few minutes of your time. This questionnaire asks you to

Please complete and seal the questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed envelope within 30 days. All responses remain confidential and your anonymity is ensured. Your responses contribute to this timely project A copy of my final project paper will be mailed to you upon completion of this study. Please also sign and return the enclosed “Informed Consent” form.

I greatly appreciate your participation in this project. Please let me know if you have any questions concerning this study or the enclosures. I may be reached at [phone] or by e-mail at [address].

Sincerely,

[Student]
**Informed Consent Form**

**Informed Consent Form** - An important component to any submission to the IRB committee is the informed consent form. The student uses this form to document that the subject(s) were aware of the requirements of the study and that they were aware that they could refuse to participate or withdraw at any time up until publication of the project. Therefore, it is important that this document contain adequate information so that the subjects can make an informed decision regarding participation.

**[PROJECT TITLE]**

**Participant**

[Participant Name]

[Participant Address]

**Prospective Project Subject**

Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

You are invited to participate in a study designed to investigate . . .

[Student/], a doctoral student at Aspen University, CO is conducting this study. You were selected as a possible participant because . . .

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate.

**Background Information**

This investigation seeks to:

_______________________________________________________________________.

**Procedures**

Participation entails: ____________________________________________________________________________.

You would be asked to provide a pseudonym to replace your personal name. Only anonymous demographics would be used in this study. Providing your address or e-mail would make the findings of the study available to you once documented. The results of this study would be used to . . .

**Confidentiality**

The records of this study would be considered private information. In any sort of report that might be published, no information would be included that would make it possible to identify a participant. Only the student/researcher would keep and safeguard the research records.

**Human subject** herein means a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains data through interaction with the individual. Interaction herein includes communication or interpersonal contact between investigator and subject.
Voluntary Nature of this Study

Your decision whether to participate would not affect your current or future relationship with the student/researcher or the associated University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. You will also be provided with a copy of the concluded DNP so that you have an opportunity to examine the manner in which the data is being applied.

Compensation

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You would not receive monetary compensation or reward for your participation. The personal benefits of your participation are as mentioned in the following section.

Benefits of Participating in this Study

The possible benefits to participating in this study are . . .

Risks of Participating in this Study

There is minimal risk to participating in this study, meaning that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. If you experience some emotional discomfort after your participation, you are invited to contact the student/researcher at the telephone number or e-mail address listed in the following section to discuss your reactions.

Contacts and Questions

You may ask any questions you have by contacting the researcher by telephone at [phone number] or by e-mail at [e-mail addresses of both student and DNP Chair].

Statement of Consent

I have read the information herein, I have asked questions and received answers, and I have received a copy of this form. I consent to participate in this study.

_____________________________________________ ________________
Participant/Subject Date

Student/ Statement

All information contained herein is accurate. I have provided the participant with a copy of this form.

_____________________________________________ ________________
Student Date

Private information herein means information ascertained by the investigator and constitutes research involving human subjects. Private information includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, and information which has been provided for specific purposes by an individual and which the individual can reasonably expect would not be made public.

PARTICIPANT COPY
Appendix G

Application for Publication

Aspen University holds to the tradition that you are obligated as a member of the scholarly community to make your project available to interested persons. This obligation is met when you submit your DNP for publication.

To access the publication forms and complete the publication process, send the email at the following address: mail@phdbookbinding.com
Appendix H

IRB Policies, Regulations, and Rules

Aspen University Institutional Review Board (IRB) follows the OHRP IRB Guidebook, which provides a basic understanding of the background and purposes of the IRB review system. The following is a general overview of the considerations to be followed in a research undertaking involving human subjects.

Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs and Regulatory Compliance (919-515-4514) REG10.10.3


1. General

Federal law and University policy require that all research involving human subjects, conducted by ASPEN UNIVERSITY researchers (e.g., Professors/Faculty Mentors, students, DNP reviewers, and staff) must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. These rules are in place to protect the human subjects, the researchers, and the institution. The IRB may be accessed through email (irb@aspen.edu).

2. General Principles

All ASPEN UNIVERSITY researchers must adhere to strict ethical standards for the use of human subjects in their research. These standards are in place to protect the basic rights of their subjects. Any research that departs from the spirit of these standards violates University policy. Below are some guidelines that the IRB members consider during their reviews to maintain these standards.

2.1. All research procedures minimize the risks to subjects.

2.2. Any risk must be reasonable in relation to the potential benefits from the study.

2.3. Informed consent must be obtained from the subject before participation. This consent must be in writing unless exempted by the committee.

2.4. Subject must be provided with adequate detail regarding the study to make an informed decision regarding their participation. This information should be included on the consent form and should be written in lay language, so that the subjects can make an informed decision regarding participation.

2.5. Subject’s privacy must be maintained.

2.6. Subjects need to be made aware that they participate of their own choice and are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

3. Review Categories

There are three categories (or types of review) for projects that are submitted to the IRB:
3.1. Exempt Review (no human subjects)

3.2. Expedited Review (appropriate use of human subjects)

3.3. Full Review (potential inappropriate use of human subjects)

Upon submission to the IRB, the serving Faculty Mentor makes a recommendation for type of review. Final determination of the type of review is made by the Chair of the IRB upon consideration of the submitted materials. Exempt reviews (1-2 weeks) are typically conducted on those studies that involve no human subjects. Expedited reviews (2-4 weeks) involve review by two or three committee members where human subjects are involved. Full reviews (4-6 weeks) involve the entire IRB committee and perhaps external experts. The type of review conducted is checked on the approval form once the review has ended and the findings and recommendations are reported to the Faculty Mentor for discussion with the Doctoral Student.

The following map depicts the IRB approval process:
4. Definitions

4.1. Research - A systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Activities which meet this definition constitute research for purposes of this policy, whether or not they are conducted or supported under a program, which is considered research for other purposes. For example, some demonstration and service programs may include research activities.

4.2. Human Subject - Means a living individual, about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains:

4.2.1. Data through intervention or interaction with the individual; or

4.2.2. Identifiable private information

4.2.3. Intervention includes both physical procedures, by which data are gathered and manipulations of the subject or the subject’s environment that are performed for research purposes. Interaction includes communication or interpersonal contact between investigator and subject.

4.2.4. Private information includes information about behavior that occurs in a context, in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, and information, which has been provided for specific purposes by an individual and which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (for example, an academic record). Private information must be individually identifiable (i.e., the identity of the subject is or may readily be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information), in order for obtaining the information to constitute research involving human subjects.

4.2.5. IRB Approval - the determination of the IRB that the research has been reviewed and may be conducted at ASPEN UNIVERSITY within the constraints set forth by the IRB, and by other institutional and federal requirements.

4.3. Minimal Risk - means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

5. Procedures

5.1. Approval Processes - Described below is the process by which a principal investigator seeks approval from the IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research.

The following definitions are used:

5.1.1. Forms - There are four components to a package to be submitted to the IRB for review: the cover sheet, the preliminary questions sheet, the proposal narrative, and the informed consent form.

5.1.1a. Cover Sheet - The cover sheet provides basic information regarding the study under consideration and the principal investigator(s). For research whose principal investigator is a member of the ASPEN UNIVERSITY faculty, this form should be completed, and the ASPEN UNIVERSITY faculty member must sign attesting to their awareness of the University’s policies and procedures for the use of human subjects in research. For research whose principal investigator is not a member of the ASPEN UNIVERSITY faculty, such as the Doctoral Student, this form should be completed, and the principal investigator must sign attesting to their awareness of the University’s policies and procedures for the use of human subjects in research. Further, an ASPEN UNIVERSITY Professors/Faculty Mentors must sign illustrating that they have reviewed this application thoroughly and intend to oversee the research in its entirety and acknowledge their role as the principal investigator of record on their own behalf as well as on the behalf of the Doctoral Student.

5.1.1b. Proposal Narrative - The proposal narrative is a detailed description of the study. Each of the sections in the narrative needs to be completed, or if a section does not apply write “N/A.” Each of these sections contains critical information that allows the reviewer to evaluate the study. These sections need to be written in lay language, avoiding jargon and acronyms. Failure to follow these rules causes delays in processing the submission. The responses to these questions allow the IRB to quickly place the study in the appropriate review category (exempt, expedited, or full review). These questions have been developed to decrease the response time of the IRB.
5.1.1c. Participant Letter - A letter inviting the human subject (s) to participate in the study must accompany the informed consent form.

5.1.1d. Informed Consent Form - An important component to any submission to the IRB committee is the informed consent form. This form is used by the researcher to document that the subject(s) were aware of the requirements of the study and that they were aware that they could refuse to participate or withdraw at any time up until publication of the project. Therefore, it is important that this document contain adequate information so that the subjects can make an informed decision regarding participation.

Note: Research involving deception will require additional justification and documentation related to informed consent processes.

Each of these components needs to be included in the package submitted to the IRB. Incomplete packages are returned to the principal investigator without review.

6. Review - Two copies of all materials should be sent to the IRB. Upon receipt of a protocol package the IRB reviews the package for completeness and content. If the package is found to be complete, the package is reviewed. If there are concerns or needed clarifications the IRB committee corresponds directly with the principal investigator to resolve these issues. The review process can take anywhere between 2 - 6 weeks, depending on the clarity and complexity of the proposal.

7. Final Notification - Upon receipt of the notification from the IRB reviewers of the acceptability of the experimental protocol, the IRB sends a letter to the principal investigator stating that the research project has been approved for one year (beginning on the date of the letter).

8. Extensions - For those projects that require an extension beyond the one-year limitation from the date of IRB approval, the principal investigator must submit a letter to the IRB stating their intention to continue the research and document any modification to the research protocol. The letter should also contain a concise updated overview of the project. Upon receipt of this letter, the IRB re-reviews the protocol and if it finds the protocol acceptable sends to the principal investigator a notice of extension.

9. Retention of Documentation - A copy of all records relating to the research project (original submitted protocol, all signed consent forms, correspondence with the IRB, etc.) should be safeguarded and retained for at least five years after the completion of the research. When destruction of records is necessary, the records must be disposed of by shredding or other permanent and safeguarded means of destruction.
Appendix I
Comprehensive Examination Guide

The Doctorate Comprehensive Examination is a doctoral student’s opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the program’s required courses and the scholarly writing process. The Comprehensive Exam is taken after all necessary coursework is completed, and prior to commencing work on the DNP Project courses. Each student must pass this exam to continue in the program.

If a student does not successfully complete the Comprehensive Exam, s/he is required to retake any portion of the exam not successfully completed after receiving coaching from the Director of Graduate Nursing or the Dean of Nursing. If the student again does not successfully complete the exam on the second attempt, the student is dismissed from the program.

8-Hour Proctored Exam

The student may take an 8-hour proctored exam in which s/he answers four questions. The exam is open book. The exam must be completed on a computer at an approved testing center. The use of cellphones, portable tablets, mobile devices, notes, internet databases, etc. is NOT allowed.

Testing centers for taking Aspen University proctored exams are members of The National College Testing Association (NCTA: www.ncta-testing.org). The Consortium of College Testing Centers (CCTC: http://www.ncta-testing.org/cctc/) is a free referral service provided by the NCTA to facilitate distance learning. Student use the CCTC to find an exam location close to where they live or work. Students are required to present valid photo identification and are responsible for paying administration costs of the examination as set by the testing centers. The student may use the restroom, as appropriate, given that NO access to personal items, cellphones, portable tablets, mobile devices, notes, internet databases is permitted.

Comprehensive Examination Directions

To be successful on the Comprehensive Exam, each student is required to:

a. Readers must know which questions are answered.
b. Answer very carefully every component of every question and make clear within the essay how that has been done. Readers will look to make certain that every component of every question has been answered.
c. Be as thorough and detailed as possible. Readers must see deep and thorough knowledge of the subject matter.
   a. Each of the four (4) questions must be answered with an essay of approximately 500 words per essay question.
d. Each answer must follow APA writing style. In particular, sources must be carefully cited to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarized material will result in automatic failure of the Comprehensive Exam and may initiate dismissal from the program and University.
e. Each answer must contain a minimum of three (3) references.
f. Submit as one MSWord document to the individual designated by your program. Students must not submit essay answers separately.
g. Submit within 8-hour time period.
**Comprehensive Examination Assessment Rubric**

A student’s exam is graded Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory or Exemplary. To pass, the student must achieve Satisfactory or Exemplary on each assessment element listed below for each question answered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Element</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Writer does not make clear which question is being answered.</td>
<td>Writer restates question being answered.</td>
<td>Writer restates question being answered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Content Mastery</td>
<td>Writer does not answer every component of question.</td>
<td>Writer provides a compelling answer to every component of question.</td>
<td>Writer provides a compelling answer to every component of question. Answer is top 10% of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Analysis</td>
<td>Writer does not provide critical analysis.</td>
<td>Writer provides critical analysis.</td>
<td>Writer provides critical analysis. Answer is considered top 10% of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoroughness and Details</td>
<td>Answer is not thorough or detailed.</td>
<td>Answer is thorough and detailed.</td>
<td>Answer is thorough and detailed. Answer is considered top 10% of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Organization</td>
<td>Answer is not organized and/or does not meet page requirements.</td>
<td>Answer is well organized and meets page requirements.</td>
<td>Answer is well organized and meets page requirements. Answer is considered top 10% of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td>Answer does not follow APA writing style.</td>
<td>Answer follows APA writing style.</td>
<td>Answer follows APA writing style. Answer is considered top 10% of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>Answer does not include three cited references.</td>
<td>Answer includes a minimum of three cited references.</td>
<td>Answer includes a minimum of three cited references. Answer is considered top 10% of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission</td>
<td>Answers not submitted as one MSWord document.</td>
<td>Answers submitted as one MSWord document.</td>
<td>Answers submitted as one MSWord document.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J

Immersion Site Agreement

**NOTE: Agency will receive an original MOA from Aspen University as needed.**

This agreement is executed on _________________ (date), between Aspen University and ____________________________________________(Agency).

Whereas it is agreed by the parties that:

The mission of the Aspen University School of Nursing is to enhance the health and quality of life for individuals, families, and communities at local, state, and national levels through excellence in teaching, scholarship and practice. The Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) program prepares nurses to assume leadership roles in management, education, and clinical practice within a diverse society and across a spectrum of healthcare settings.

The parties to this agree as follows:

1. The students receiving immersion experience at Agency will be students in the graduate nursing program.
2. The students will be in the Agency during an academic period in which they are enrolled in a graduate nursing course. The graduate students will be under the direct supervision of a specified Preceptor agreed upon by the School and Agency.
3. Faculty and students will be subject to the rules and regulations established by the Agency to which they are assigned. A general orientation to the Agency will be provided and must be attended by all students prior to beginning the immersion experience.
4. Students will be responsible for their own transportation, meals, laundry and health care needs in the performance of this agreement. There will be no exchange of monies between the Agency, the School, the Preceptor, or the Student.
5. The School agrees that members of the faculty may serve as consultants and on committees of the Agency when requested by the Agency.
6. The specific areas of student assignment and student being assigned will be negotiated each period.
7. This agreement is for a period of three years unless terminated by either party upon giving 30 days advance written notice to the other party.
8. Students will provide evidence of current, unimpeded nursing license. These documents will remain on file with the University; however, proof will be provided to the Agency upon request.

Aspen University

By: _________________________________
Print Name: __________________________
Title: ________________________________
Date: _______________________________

Agency

By: _________________________________
Print Name: __________________________
Title: ________________________________
Date: _______________________________

Student: Submit this completed form directly to the DNP Coordinator through the DNP Lounge dropbox.
Preceptor Intent of Relationship

I, ________________________________, Graduate Nurse Student agree that it is my responsibility to arrange an immersion preceptor to meet the course requirements of Course DNP _______. I verify that I have discussed the requirements with the following person who agrees to serve as a preceptor for this course(s). I verify that I have provided this individual with a DNP Handbook.

Preceptor’s Name: ________________________________________________________
E-mail address: ____________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________
Telephone # _____________ Fax # ____________ Date Contacted _______

Site(s) we have agreed to utilize for the purposes of this course (i.e. office, clinic, hospital, nursing home):

Name of Site 1: ____________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________
Phone: __________________________________________________________________

______________________________
Signature of administrative representative or business manager
Printed Name: ____________________________________________________________

Name of Site 2: ____________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________
Phone: __________________________________________________________________

______________________________
Signature of administrative representative or business manager
Printed Name: ____________________________________________________________

Aspen University Approval:

By: _____________________________ Print Name: _____________________________
Date: ___________________________ Title: Program Coordinator

Student: Submit this completed form directly to the DNP Coordinator through the DNP Lounge dropbox.
Preceptor Profile

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Agency Affiliation: ____________________________________________________

Agency Address: _____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Preceptor’s e-mail address: _____________________________________________

Telephone No.: (____) _______________     Fax No.: (____)______________

Position Title: __________________________________________________________

EDUCATION

Nursing Degree (highest level attained)

___ RN ___ Other Credentials:

License

___ ___ ___

☐ Doctoral Degree

Degree from: __________________________________________________________

License No. ___________________ State _________   Expiration Date __________

EXPERIENCE  (Please attach a 5-year resume or CV)

I agree to function as a Preceptor. I have reviewed the DNP Handbook and accept the role and function as a Preceptor. The information provided herein is true to the best of my knowledge.

__________________________  ___________________________  ______________
Signature                Printed Name               Date

Aspen University Approval:

By: ____________________________  Print Name: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________  Title: Program Coordinator

Students: Attach and submit your preceptor’s CV along with this completed form directly to the DNP Coordinator through the DNP Lounge dropbox.
Student Profile

Full Name __________________________ Date: __________________________
Street address ________________________________________________________
City/State/Zip Code _____________________________________________________
Home Telephone __________________________
Other Telephone (if applicable) ___________________________________________
E-mail address_________________________________________________________

Potential Topic of DNP Project: (provide a short discussion of the intended topic):

Emergency Contact Person

Name: __________________________
Telephone: __________________________
Relationship: __________________________

Students: Attach and submit your CV along with this completed form directly to the DNP Coordinator through the DNP Lounge dropbox.
## Student Performance Evaluation

### Student Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>Dates Observed to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preceptor:</td>
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</table>

### Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) = Poor</th>
<th>(2) = Fair</th>
<th>(3) = Satisfactory</th>
<th>(4) = Good</th>
<th>(5) = Excellent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implements a variety of teaching strategies appropriate to learner needs, desired outcomes, content, and context</td>
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<td>Grounds teaching strategies in educational theory and evidence-based teaching practices</td>
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<td>Uses information technologies skillfully to support the teaching-learning process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creates opportunities for learners to develop critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills</td>
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<td>Shows an enthusiasm for teaching, learning, and nursing that inspires learners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develops collegial working relationships with students, faculty, and immersion agency personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintains the professional practice knowledge base</td>
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</table>

**Comments:**

### Evaluation

**Additional Comments:**

---

**Preceptor Signature:** ________________________________ **Date** __________________

**Student:** Submit this completed form directly to your Faculty Mentor.
# Immersion Hours Tracking Log

Student ________________________ Preceptor/Faculty Mentor ________________________
Course #/Name ________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th># of Immersion Hours</th>
<th>Preceptor or Faculty Mentor Signature</th>
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**Student:** Submit this completed form directly to your Course Dropbox for verification and into the DNP Lounge dropbox.
Site Evaluation

Course #/Name: _______________________________________

Site: _________________________________________________________

Completed By: ____________________________ Date: ____________

Directions: Please answer each question by placing an “X” in the appropriate box of the scale, which best represents your response.

**DOES THIS Immersion SITE HAVE..........?**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
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<td>12.</td>
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</table>

**Student:** Submit this completed form directly to your Faculty Mentor.
Preceptor Evaluation

Course #/Name: __________________________________________

Preceptor: ____________________________________________

Site: __________________________________________________________________________

Completed by: ________________________________ Date: ________ (student)

The purpose of this tool is to assist the student in providing the Immersion with formal feedback.

Directions: Please answer each question by placing an “X” in the appropriate box of the scale, which best represents your response.

Roles of Preceptor

**Advocate**

Did your Preceptor:

- Assist you with setting goals and providing constructive feedback?
- Maintains confidentiality of students/patients/staff?
- Maintain confidentiality of your work performance?
- Demonstrate understanding of and promote the Nurse Leader role?

**Role Model**

Did your Preceptor:

- Function as a patient/student/family/nurse advocate?
- Interact well with superiors, subordinates, and ancillary personnel?
- Consider your individual learning needs?
- Communicate nursing education knowledge well?
- Utilize other members of the health care and educational team? (i.e.: dietician, social worker, academic advisement, information technology, human resources)

**Student:** Submit this completed form directly to your Faculty Mentor.
**Teacher**

Did your Preceptor:

- Help you identify your learning needs?
- Suggest or provide additional learning experiences (i.e. related nursing education opportunities, etc.)
- Collaborate with you in making decisions about the educational environment and teaching strategies?
- Provide immediate and adequate feedback?
- Promote a climate that supports validation of and problem-solving of educational problems?
- Lead you through decision analysis?
- Encourage questions?
- Provide opportunities for you to grow in the educator role?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Consultant**

Did your Preceptor:

- Encourage you to be independent as you gained experience?
- Help you recognize and utilize resource persons other than himself/herself?
- Remain accessible for consultation as you gained competence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

**Additional Comments:**

**Student:** Submit this completed form directly to your Faculty Mentor.
Appendix K

DNP Project Outline

The outline provided in this appendix is an example to assist the student and DNP Committee in producing the DNP. Not all sections need to be applied. Discretion is used by the Faculty Mentor with input from the student and the Advisory DNP Committee concerning form and structure of the DNP.
BEGIN TITLE THREE INCHES FROM TOP OF PAPER

by

First Name, MI, Last Name

of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctorate in Education in Leadership and Learning

Aspen University
Month, Year

© First and Last Name, Year
(Note: If copyright not desired, delete this page)
Abstract

Abstracts are the only text that is not indented in the entire manuscript. The target length of an abstract is around 150 words. The abstract does not appear in the Table of Contents, and it is not a part of the proposal. The abstract provides a brief overview of the study, discussing 1) what the study was about, 2) how it was studied, and 3) what the significant findings were.
Dedication

This section is optional. The dedication does not appear in the Table of Contents and it is not a part of the proposal. A dedication is a proclamation, a mark of appreciation, affection, or special regard for an individual, organizational, or social entity. Dedications in the historical context have been known to be quite elaborate. More recent dedications are brief, often naming the author’s significant other, and often consisting of no more than a line or two dedicating the work to them. This section provides an opportunity to convey a personal commemoration of the work. It might contain a quote from some other literary work or an epigram of the author’s own invention, such as a poem, slogan, witty statement, or insightful belief. This is an opportunity to pass along a discovery made in the DNP journey to the benefit of those who will tread a similar path.
Acknowledgements

This acknowledgment section does not appear in the Table of Contents, and it is not a part of the proposal. Acknowledgements should include all parties who have contributed to the successful delivery of the DNP, such as committee members, supporters, academic advisors, editors, and invited participants. Supporters may include family members, friends, peers, co-workers, sponsors, or anyone who played a supportive role in the DNP process. Obtain permission and the correct manner in which to acknowledge individuals and organizational entities. This section should not be more than one page.
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  Statement of the Problem .....................................................................................
  Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................
  Theoretical Framework .........................................................................................

  Significance of the Study .....................................................................................
  Definition of Terms ..............................................................................................
  Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions ......................................................
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Discussion

Summary

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Conclusions

Recommendations

Summary

REFERENCES

APPENDIX A: [NAME]
List of Tables

Table 1: Single space title of tables but double space between ........................................... 

Table 2: Single space title of tables but double space between ............................................
List of Figures

Figure 1: Figures can be any configuration .................................................................

Figure 2: Figures can be any configuration .................................................................
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

This chapter is divided into nine sections: Background of the Study; Statement of the Problem; Purpose of the Study; Theoretical Framework; Significance of the Study; Definition of Terms; Delimitation, Limitations, and Assumptions; Nature of the Study; DNP Structure; and Summary. The overall purpose of this chapter is to discuss the contextual framework of the study. Reach agreement with your Faculty Mentor on outline development.

Next Major Heading

This section discusses the content to be addressed, followed by the individual section titles that represent the content. In this instance this title would be “Background of the Study.”

First-Level Sub-Heading

This heading is italicized and centered. It supports the main heading. Material to be broken down under this heading is also italicized.

Second-Level Sub-Heading

This heading is italicized and left-aligned. Repeat this heading style throughout. All material is double spaced. All lists are numbered rather than bulleted.

Background of the Study

This section provides an overview of the importance of studying [your topic]. It introduces a connection between the context of the study and the value of performing the study.
Statement of the Problem

This section addresses the conditions to be examined in this study. Discuss why you are undertaking this study. What problem exists that your study will seek to resolve? What do you intend to accomplish? This section is a kind of overview of your study.

Purpose of the Study

This section describes what the researcher intends to accomplish with respect to the problem. The broad purpose of the study is to do what exactly? Will your study identify a model for example? Who will benefit from your study (e.g., organization, community, industry, group of individuals)?

Theoretical Framework

This section provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings supporting the inquiry into the problem. Do you have a theory about the conclusions to be reached in your study? What framework of theory and resources will you incorporate in your study that would support its purpose? Would theorists such as Max Weber and Karl Marx offer support to the contention of your study? Would feminist theory be a valuable underpinning in your study? What theoretical posture will you take to validate the use of written discourse (literature) as a concrete way of knowing?

Delimitation, Limitations, and Assumptions

This section addresses the conditions the researcher assumes true to perform the intended examination and evaluation of phenomena related to the problem. It also describes how the study is narrowed, and it depicts the potential weaknesses of the study. Parameters in the study establishing its boundaries, exceptions, reservations, and qualifications are defined in the study as its delimitation and limitations (Creswell, 1994). Delimitation simply means how the study is
narrowed in scope by the researcher. List the delimiting points that narrow the scope of the study. An example would be a restriction to the period under study or to a particular group. Is there a particular geographic area under study? The study might be delimited to examining only education leaders who worked in the field for five years or more. This is a delimitation placed upon the study by the researcher. In this instance, it is a good idea to discuss the reason for this delimitation, perhaps citing a supportive source in which it is stated that it is more valuable or valid to obtain opinions from people who have served in their profession for five years or more.

A potential limitation (weakness beyond the researcher’s control) of the study may relate to the dependability of the available literature. The study may be limited by the extent to which data gathered in the investigation are accurate and reliable. If no effort has been made to examine the documents used in this investigation for authenticity, state that. Additional limitation may relate to certain methodology characteristics such as the following:

1. The extent to which analysis of the findings is enlightening or liberating.
2. The sensitivity in how the researcher relates to the material being studied.
3. The researcher’s ability to credibly and authentically reconstruct the findings.
4. The extent to which patterns discovered in the data correspond to predictions from a predetermined set of theoretical propositions underlying the research question.

A limitation of the study might be that the researcher only has access to a limited number of education leaders in each region of the United States.

Conditions that govern the investigation and that must prevail for the recommendations to be valid depend upon certain assumptions. What are they? Perhaps you wish to state that the findings in your investigation represent the degree to which the data provides a viable resource in performing research on your topic. The data collected that is sought should be sufficient to meet
the contention of the study. The findings should also be sufficiently representative of any group under study. An assumption in the study might be that ten education leaders working in the field for five years or more from each region of the United States would produce representative groups from which to compare perceptions.

Nature of the Project

This section provides a brief explanation and the rationale of the chosen methodology. State here what specific approach you plan to take. Select an approach that satisfies your research personality as well as the approach in studying your topic.

DNP Structure

This section describes how the DNP document is constructed. Although the study may largely follow the qualitative paradigm in its inquiry methodology, the structure of its content may be guided by a quantitative paradigm. The qualitative study tends to develop under wide variety of formats (Creswell, 1994). It may be recommended, however, that you apply the quantitative, five-chapter structure that this template follows. It tends to be widely accepted. A qualitative design can be any number of chapters that fall into whatever alignment works best for the researcher in conveying the study. The quantitative design maintains the structure of the five chapters as herein outlined. It is much harder to find acceptance for any other structure. The five chapters are grounded in tradition and perhaps easiest to follow, capturing all pertinent components of the traditional DNP.

This first chapter offers an introduction to this study, discussing the purpose of conducting the investigation. The contextual framework of the study as well as its key assumptions, delimitation, and limitations are described. The second chapter is a review of the literature, which attempts to sketch a wider pattern of similar research activities, discussing prior
studies and fitting the present study into a broader scheme. It further defines the parameters of the study and produces its contextual framework. Perhaps most importantly, it denotes the significant points in the project concerning your topic.

The third chapter includes an explanation of the methodology of the study’s design and procedures. It explains the protocol for data collection as well as the techniques used for examination and evaluation of the data.

The fourth chapter details the findings of the project. It includes the feedback on any survey questionnaire that may have been employed. This chapter produces factual findings.

The fifth chapter concludes the study with a discussion and recommendations for further projects. It recaps the fundamental stimuli guiding the investigation, highlighting the major results of the project. It draws a correlation between the results and the contention of the investigation, and it presents interpretation of the findings.

Content in the DNP should be left aligned having a 1.5 inch margin on the left side of the page. All other margins should be 1 inch, accept for the cover pages. The font should be Times New Roman 12 pt. To start a new chapter, begin on a separate page. Capitalize the chapter heading and use lower case letters for all subsequent titles in the chapter. Use double spacing throughout.

Summary

This section provides a summary of the important points of this chapter.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter is divided into whatever sections are needed to convey the existing literature about your topic and its methodology. Sections might include such areas as conceptual framework, topic rationale, related studies, and description of chosen research methodology(s), and a summary. The major purpose of this chapter is to discuss relative research activities that address what is known about the subject under study as well as the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study.

Conceptual Framework

This section provides a description of the literature supporting the researcher’s operational view of variables and constructs related to the study and connecting the constructs of the study to the larger context of social science research. This section supports the constructs (conceptual framework) related to the study. It addresses the importance of the topical area or field of study. It discusses the theoretical frameworks of the study. It further may discuss the history of the topic and its theoretical underpinnings according to the literature. Additionally, it may address the methodology employed in the study. Some suggested titles follow. Each addresses what the literature revealed concerning the particular area.

Scope and Importance of [Topical Area or Field of Study]

Theoretical Frameworks of [Topical Area or Field of Study]

History of [Topical Area or Field of Study]

[Name] Theory
Topic Rationale

This next section discusses the rationale for the writer’s definition of the theoretical base for the study in terms of defining the selection of topics from the literature.

Related Studies

This section addresses the existing studies relative to the focus of the study and/or what the literature offers relative to the topic chosen. This section may look different with each DNP Project but might be divided out by headings that represent facets of the problem addressed.

Methodological Framework

This section provides the literature that defines and supports the use of the selected methodology, outlining its appropriateness related to the design of the study.

Summary

This section provides a summary of the important points of this chapter.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is divided into six sections, which describe pertinent aspects of the inquiry: Description of Methodology, Design of the Project Data Collection, Data Analysis Procedure, and Summary. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology and procedures to be applied during the investigation.

Description of the Methodology

This section describes the research procedure that was applied in this study.

Design of the Project

This section describes how the project was designed, implemented and evaluated. The phenomena in the study have been operationalized (directed) for examination and evaluation in several phases.

Data Collection

This section describes the means by which data related to the phenomena under study was collected. The writer may have been the primary instrument for data collection, whereas a brief questionnaire guided the controlled collection of opinionative feedback. This section addresses all data collection instruments and measures (tests, questionnaires, interview protocols, and so forth). This section should include a description of each instrument or measure, its norming data, validity and reliability statistics, results of field tests conducted to determine validity, reliability, or appropriateness of the instrument. This is also a description of the procedures (detailed description of steps taken to implement methods) for the following
methods: sampling, protection of participants, data collection (including data organization, management, and storage), data analysis, and presentation of findings

Data Analysis Procedure

This section describes the techniques to be used for examination and evaluation of data. The methodological framework used in the study may stem from compilation of written discourse from which discourse analysis has identified patterns in the data. Discourse analysis describes a heterogeneous range of social science research based on the analysis of recorded talk (Silverman, 1993), and the writer is the primary instrument for analysis of the findings.

In an attempt to bring concrete structure to the study, a survey questionnaire may have aided in analysis, providing a kind of crib sheet for logic. The researcher’s role and responsibility in the study is to communicate the findings of the project in ways that meet the standards of the scientific research community. The writer must be a “linchpin” so that what becomes known to the researcher contributes to accumulation of knowledge above and beyond a local, context-bound situation (Elden & Levin, 1991, p. 133). To establish the fact that the criterion of validity is met, the study may make inferences from data and check the integrity of the inferences by drawing conclusions that most effectively address the topic studied.

The process of data analysis can be eclectic. There is generally no “right way” (Tesch, 1990). The data analysis in the study may have been conducted as an activity simultaneously with data collection, data interpretation, and narrative report writing. The analysis may have been based on data reduction and interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), meaning that the writer takes a voluminous amount of themes and then interprets this information by using some schema. Tesch (1990) called this process de-contextualization and re-contextualization. This process results in a higher level analysis.
Summary

This section provides an encapsulation of the project, analysis, and reporting methodology used in the study.
Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter is divided into the appropriate number of sections needed to convey the findings in a logical manner. It may include a summary of the findings and some more specific topic areas to address findings as they pertain to the topic of interest. The overall purpose of this chapter is to provide the facts concerning the findings of the study. Chapter 4 & 5 are not a part of the proposal.

Results

This section discusses the findings relative to the project and how they will impact the future of nursing practice.

Discussion

This section discusses the writer’s analysis of the findings, depending on the project methodology.

Summary

This section provides a summary of the important points of this chapter.
Chapter 5  

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  

Introduction  

This chapter is divided into three sections: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Summary. The purpose of this chapter is to present an overall analysis and interpretation of the findings in the study and to recommend areas for additional research.

Conclusions  

This section highlights the findings reported in Chapter 4, drawing a correlation between the results and the contention of the investigation, attempting to place the findings within the conceptual framework of this study. The framework of the project may incorporate the history of the topic and assist in highlighting the value of creating this project. Your conclusion should draw together the topic, raise any points which have not been addressed by the research, indicate areas where more research is needed. Conclusions should correlate to the research questions.

Recommendations  

This section includes suggestions for further innovations as developed from the data or found to be lacking in the literature. Such recommendations have developed during the investigation concerning the focus of the topic under study. The study may have revealed that there are several areas open for further or new investigation. Suggestions as such are denoted and logically organized in this section.

Summary  

This section provides a summary of the important points of this chapter including a brief restatement of the problem, the types of literature reviewed, and the research methodology.
employed in this investigation. What has been the broad purpose of the investigation? Restate the objectives and discuss whether they were met. How well did the methodology work in the study? This section generally provides an overview of the implications of the study.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendices contain any forms or survey questionnaires, consent forms, and other materials that were used in the study. Extraneous content would be placed in an appendix as well.