

Practicum Hours

Informed by The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice (2015), practice experiences for postmaster's entry students are designed for opportunities to expand on proficiency and mastery of APRN or systems competencies. Graduates are expected to collaborate with other professionals in complex health environments with diverse populations to translate and apply evidence for clinical decision making. They are also leaders in developing, evaluating and disseminating standards of care while advocating for policy and initiatives that improve health outcomes.

All DNP students are required to complete a minimum of 1000 practice immersion hours post baccalaureate in nursing. Practice immersion hours are designed to demonstrate synthesis of expanded knowledge acquired within the DNP curriculum. The practice portion of the curriculum demonstrates the student's capability to meet the core competences of the DNP degree.

Practical learning experiences are structured across a series of three specialty focused practicum courses, I, II, and III that include course objective strategies for meeting overall program outcomes. The series of courses provides the student the opportunity to develop, propose, implement, and present the DNP project. The project reflects and demonstrates synthesis of the student's knowledge from all curriculum courses and unique practice experiences in the student's specified area.

The practice immersion hours (relevant to their DNP project) can be demonstrated through a variety of methods including:

- In-depth work/mentorship/collaboration with experts from nursing, as well as other disciplines
- Meaningful student engagement within practice environments
- Building and assimilating knowledge for advanced specialty practice at a high level of complexity
- Experience in the context within which the DNP project is implemented
- Integration and synthesis the DNP Essentials and specialty requirements necessary to demonstrate competency in an area of specialized nursing practice.

Ratio of Credit Hours to Clock Hours:

- **Didactic.** Courses offered on-line or in a blended format. UNCW SON documents these activities through the class schedule or syllabus assuring that DNP students are meeting the minimum semester credit hour requirement for the credit awarded. One credit hour for one hour of activity per week – 1:1
- **Independent Study.** Independent learning or experience involving self-directed learning under indirect supervision by course or clinical faculty (credit varies according to type of activity).
- **Practicum.** Practica are designed to demonstrate synthesis of expanded knowledge acquired within the DNP curriculum. One credit hour for four hours of activity per week–1:4. Practicum hours are not validated by student employment or expertise prior to the DNP program. The practicum hours signify the capability of the student to meet the AACN Essentials for DNP education. A minimum of 1000 hours post BSN is required. The hours can be demonstrated through a variety of methods including:

- Most students complete practice immersion hours at their site of employment as an APRN.
- Students are required to submit a signed “Letter of Understanding” between UNCW and their employer or practice site. The letter, though not a formal contract, is a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that the student’s employer is aware of the enrollment in the DNP program at UNCW. Furthermore, the student will be able to work on the identified project topic within this professional practice setting under the supervision of an identified faculty adviser and in association with an agency facilitator.
- For students not employed in a setting appropriate to their area of study in the DNP program, UNCW will execute affiliation agreements with a specified agency and clinical liaison which the student identifies.
- All requirements for establishing the practicum should be completed and on file at the time of enrollment in the course.
- DNP students may be asked to complete unique immunization/certification requirements depending on the nature of their clinical situation. Clinical mentors and/or agencies may require a drug screening or additional criminal background check. Costs associated with these processes are the responsibility of the student.

DNP Clinical Log. All practicum experiences must be recorded in a clinical log, which includes verification of practice immersion hours at particular sites with specific clinical liaisons and the student’s meeting of program outcomes and DNP Essentials. At graduation the student must have recorded all required practice immersion hours and essential practicum work. This log will become part of the student’s permanent file.