



# West Coast University

College of Nursing

Doctor of Nursing Practice  
Handbook



# WCU

# Contents

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<b>Introduction</b> .....	3
<b>Program Administration &amp; Faculty</b> .....	3
<b>Institutional Mission</b> .....	3
<b>Institutional Learning Outcomes</b> .....	4
<b>Program Mission Statement</b> .....	4
<b>Program Learning Outcomes</b> .....	4
<b>Program Courses</b> .....	5
<b>Experiential Learning Expectations</b> .....	5
<b>DNP Essentials</b> .....	6
<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b> .....	6
Student .....	6
Faculty .....	7
Site Mentor .....	8
DNP Scholarly Project Committee .....	8
Practicum Site .....	8
<b>Project Details</b> .....	9
Preparation: Preplanning .....	9
NURS 760: Planning .....	9
NURS 761: Implementation .....	9
NURS 762: Evaluation .....	9
Evaluation of Final Project .....	9
<b>Forms</b> .....	10

# Introduction

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Welcome to your Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program. This handbook includes information about the program, courses, and scholarly project. The DNP program includes didactic courses and an on-site practicum for implementation of a translational research project in a practice setting.

## Program Administration & Faculty

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## Institutional Mission

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At West Coast University, we embrace a student-centric learning partnership that leads to professional success. We deliver transformational education within a culture of integrity and personal accountability. We design market-responsive programs through collaboration between faculty and industry professionals. We continuously pursue more effective and innovative ways through which students develop the competencies and confidence required in a complex and changing world.

# Institutional Learning Outcomes

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1. Implement intellectual and practical problem-solving skills through information assessment and critical thinking.
2. Demonstrate effective written communication skills.
3. Demonstrate effective oral communication skills.
4. Demonstrate computer proficiency and information literacy.
5. Describe ethical standards and legal guidelines associated with one's chosen career field.
6. Explain why knowledge of and respect for the societal contributions of diverse cultures and perspectives is an important quality in one's discipline.
7. Apply professional values and ethics, knowledge of roles and responsibilities, and effective communication skills as a contributing member of a cohesive interprofessional team.

## Program Mission Statement

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The Doctor of Nursing Practice program exists to promote foundational competencies that are core to all advanced nurse practice in an ever-changing and globally reaching healthcare environment. Academic, practicum, and interpersonal preparation are characterized by increased depth in organizational and systems' leadership within a culture of integrity and personal accountability. Standards of ethical behavior and decision-making are essential foundations that guide individuals to distinguish ethical principles and to understand the consequences and implications beyond personal and organizational self-interest. By pursuing more effective and innovative methodologies through which students utilize administrative expertise with the ability to analyze problems, structure and facilitate development, and find and implement solutions, WCU graduates can make a positive impact on society.

## Program Learning Outcomes

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1. Evaluate new practice approaches based on scientific knowledge and theories from nursing.
2. Adapt organizational and systems leadership for quality improvement and systems thinking.
3. Demonstrate clinical scholarship and analytical methods for evidence-based practice.
4. Analyze critical elements necessary to the selection, use and evaluation of health care information systems and patient care technology.
5. Influence health care policy at institutional, state and/or federal levels.
6. Lead interprofessional teams in the analysis of complex practice and organizational issues.
7. Analyze epidemiological, biostatistical, environmental, and other appropriate scientific data related to individual, aggregate, and population health.
8. Demonstrate advanced levels of clinical judgment, systems thinking, and accountability in designing, delivering, and evaluating evidence-based care to improve patient outcomes.

## Program Courses

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NURS 710: Scientific Foundations of Nursing Practice  
NURS 715: Translation of Research and Analytical Methods  
NURS 720: Biostatistics  
NURS 725: Leadership I: Organizational and Systems Leadership  
NURS 730: Informatics in Nursing and Healthcare  
NURS 735: Health Status Outcomes: The Individual and Family  
NURS 740: Clinical Prevention and Population Health  
NURS 745: Leadership II: Leadership in Complex Healthcare Organizations  
NURS 750: Social Ethics and Health Policy  
NURS 755: Economics and Decision Making  
NURS 760: Advanced Nursing Practice I  
NURS 761: Advanced Nursing Practice II  
NURS 762: Advanced Nursing Practice III

## Experiential Learning Expectations

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All graduates of a Doctor of Nursing program (DNP) must demonstrate experiential learning that is sufficient to demonstrate mastery of the DNP Essentials. Experiential learning is wide-ranging and can include supervised and unsupervised activities. The term *supervised* is used broadly and may include precepted or mentored experiences verified by faculty.

Mastery in doctoral nursing practice is acquired by the student through a series of applied learning experiences designed to allow the learner to integrate cognitive learning with the affective and psychomotor domains of nursing practice. Experiential learning experiences allow the learner to experiment and acquire competence with advanced knowledge and skills. These experiences provide the opportunity for delivery of services or programs of wide diversity and focus and may occur in multiple settings including hospitals, community settings, public health departments, primary care practice offices, and integrated healthcare systems. Experiential learning experiences are aligned to the American Associations of Colleges (AACN) *Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice* (AACN, 2006). The *DNP Essentials* outline foundational competencies in DNP programs. The *DNP Essentials* are listed below. A full listing and description of each essential is available through this [link](#). A minimum of 1,000 hours of practice post-baccalaureate is included as part of this supervised academic program.

# DNP Essentials

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- Essential I. Scientific Underpinnings for Practice
- Essential II. Organizational and Systems Leadership for Quality Improvement and Systems Thinking
- Essential III. Clinical Scholarship and Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Practice
- Essential IV. Information Systems/Technology and Patient Care Technology for the Improvement and Transformation of Health Care
- Essential V. Health Care Policy for Advocacy in Health Care
- Essential VI. Interprofessional Collaboration for Improving Patient and Population Health Outcomes
- Essential VII. Clinical Prevention and Population Health for Improving the Nation's Health
- Essential VIII. Advanced Nursing Practice

The doctoral student may engage in experiential learning at the student's employing agency. This arrangement allows the student to engage in new practice activities, framed by the learning objectives of the program and overseen or supervised by a site mentor or faculty member. This type of learning experience assists the student to acquire advanced nursing knowledge and leadership roles. Experiential learning experience hours will be verified and documented through Medatrax software.

Students are required to use the Medatrax electronic system for logging DNP experiential hours. The system is web-based and may be accessed without downloading software. Data entered are stored in a secure and HIPAA-compliant server.

Experiential learning culminates with the DNP Scholarly Project and includes presentation of findings to the DNP Scholarly Project Committee. Graded assignments include the presentation, poster, and scholarly paper. Students are encouraged to present publication-ready materials.

## Roles and Responsibilities

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### Student

The **student** is responsible for being self-directed in identifying initial and ongoing learning needs, for seeking learning opportunities to meet identified needs, and for being accountable for their performance in the advanced nursing practice role. **Students** should review and refer to the AACN Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice for alignment of experiential learning experiences.

The student will:

1. Discuss specific objectives and negotiate a schedule with the mentor or faculty prior to the actual experiential learning activity.
2. Provide a letter of cooperation as requested.

3. Demonstrate professional role behaviors for advanced nursing practice.
4. Demonstrate accountability for thoroughness and timeliness in completing assigned role responsibilities.
5. Maintain an experiential log according to course requirements.
6. Demonstrate progressive independence and competency in the advanced nursing leadership role.
7. Actively seek input into the evaluation process and participate in self-evaluation of strengths and identified areas for professional growth with faculty mentor.
8. Complete experiential hours log and reflection at the end of every term.
9. Present findings from the DNP Scholarly Project to the DNP Scholarly Project committee.

## Faculty

**Faculty** should review the AACN Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice. **Faculty** will facilitate student achievement of course and programmatic objectives through provision of didactic instruction, identification of appropriate experiential activities, observation, collaboration, and evaluation of an evidence-based doctoral project.

The faculty will:

1. Review the DNP Handbook and specific objectives of experiential learning experiences.
2. Review expectations of experiential learning with the student.
3. Evaluate experiential time log documentation through Medatrax.
4. Act as a counselor, consultant, and teacher.
5. Serve as a role model to demonstrate effective communication, leadership, and nursing practice at an advanced level.
6. Accessible to students for completion of practicum goals, objectives, and projects.
7. Provide feedback on the student's experiential learning activities.
8. Assess progress through review of the DNP experiential time log entries.
9. Encourage the student to verbalize and demonstrate the use of theoretical and conceptual frameworks for care and decision-making.
10. Provide an open environment to enhance the student's cultural competency.

In addition to the above, **faculty** teaching practicum/project courses will:

1. Maintain open communication with the persons involved in DNP project coordination.
2. Provide adequate supervision, teaching, and evaluation of the student for the achievement of practicum course and learning objectives as needed.
3. Schedule regular meetings with the student to discuss specific learning objectives and experiences.
4. Review the policies of the agency to be followed by faculty and assigned students.
5. Provide guidance to students regarding completion of required forms, agreements, and evaluations.
6. Submit final course grades following review of materials and DNP Scholarly Committee recommendations.

## Site Mentor

The **Site Mentor** functions as a mentor for the student throughout the project. **Site Mentors** are oriented to their role by the student. **Site Mentors** communicate with project faculty throughout the project courses through evaluations, phone calls, and/or email. **Site Mentor** qualifications are listed below:

1. Master's level education and/or commensurate experience.
2. Actively practicing in an advanced nursing or healthcare leadership role.
3. Area of practice must be relevant to the educational practice component.
4. Desire to be a site mentor interested in professional growth and sensitive to learning needs of the student.
5. Minimum two years' experience working in leadership specialty area.
6. Provide current Curriculum Vitae or resume to student and/or project faculty.

## DNP Scholarly Project Committee

The **DNP Scholarly Project Committee** consists of a minimum two DNP faculty members and at least one other eligible member. Eligible members can include DNP faculty, project course faculty, and administration, Post-Licensure Nursing faculty and administration, College of Nursing faculty and administration, and/or external stakeholders as identified and approved by DNP program administration. The committee serves to review project submissions and provide recommendations. Faculty submit final course grades following review of materials and DNP Scholarly Committee recommendations.

Project committee members are expected to have the following qualifications:

1. Doctoral degree in Nursing or Education from an accredited university.
2. Knowledge of adult learning theory and teaching methodologies.
3. Commitment to the role of the advanced nursing practice role and to the preceptor's role.
4. Ability to provide effective, constructive feedback to students and faculty.
5. Demonstrate effective interpersonal and communication skills and positive professional attitude.
6. Demonstrate leadership, decision-making, and critical thinking skills.
7. Have a current, unencumbered license as a registered nurse.
8. Have a minimum of two years' experience working in leadership specialty area.

## Practicum Site

Students choose the **practice site** in partnership with program administration. Students may be employed within the practice site. Students must obtain and submit the following from the practice site. If a student is unable to provide a practicum site, program administration and/or designee will assist with finding suitable placement.

1. Provide a signed Letter of Support on letterhead.



2. Sign a Memorandum of Understanding or Clinical Affiliation Agreement.

## Project Details

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### Preparation: Preplanning

Students complete **IRB Training** as a required activity during NURS 715 Translation of Research and Analytical Methods. Students may access IRB training and materials at any time through this [link](#).

Additional responsibilities:

- Students will identify a practice problem and support with current research and literature on the topic.
- Complete and submit the **Project Proposal Application** eight weeks prior to anticipated project start.

### NURS 760: Planning

Students identify stakeholders, project background and purpose, and complete the PICOT process.

Additional responsibilities:

- Complete a needs assessment.
- Conduct a literature review.

Students formalize the literature review and align the research topic to a conceptual or theoretical framework. Additional responsibilities include:

- Define significant terms.
- Identify methods, data collection, and data analysis plan.

### NURS 761: Implementation

Students implement the project at the practice site. Additional responsibilities:

- Submit final proposal to IRB.
- Definition of significant terms.
- Data collection and analysis.

### NURS 762: Evaluation

Students summarize and disseminate findings, implications, limitations, and recommendations as preparation for the final scholarly paper. Additional responsibilities:

- Schedule a time to present the final DNP Scholarly Project with the DNP Scholarly Project Committee. The DNP Scholarly Project includes a manuscript-ready paper, professional poster, and presentation of findings.

### Evaluation of Final Project

The DNP Scholarly Project includes a professional poster, presentation of findings, and final manuscript-ready paper.

- Presentation and poster templates are available in the Learning Management System.
- The final manuscript-ready paper is the scholarly evidence of achievement and mastery of the DNP Essentials and program outcomes.
- Final defense of the project and findings is facilitated through presentation to the DNP Project Scholarly Committee.

## Forms

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Forms or documents required for participation in the DNP Scholarly Project include the Project Proposal Application, Letter of Support, Site Mentor Evaluation, Site Mentor Agreement, and Memorandum of Understanding or Clinical Affiliation Agreement. Each form/document is described below.

- The **Project Proposal Application** is completed and submitted for review by the DNP Scholarly Project Committee prior to beginning NURS 760. A link to this form is available below.
- The **Letter of Support** is provided from the practice site, written on letterhead, signed, and should accompany the application. There is no template for this letter; however, examples can be provided if requested.
- The **Site Mentor Evaluation** form is completed by the Site Mentor to evaluate the student's performance during each project course. Students submit this form to the project course faculty during Weeks 4 & 8. A link to this form is available below.
- The **Site Mentor Agreement** is used to facilitate the agreement between the student and Site Mentor to participate and complete the DNP project. Students submit this form to the project course faculty prior to or during Week 3 of NURS 760. A link to this form is available below.
- The **Memorandum of Understanding** serves as the contractual agreement between the practice site, university, program, and student. Students should refer to program administration if the practice site prefers a clinical affiliation agreement. Students submit this form to the project course faculty prior to or during Week 3 of NURS 760.



Project Proposal  
Application.pdf



Site Mentor  
Evaluation of the StMentor Agreement.pdf



Student and Site